

The Life Story of the Sunlun Gu Kyaung Sayadaw

This detailed Biography of the Venerable Sunlun Sayadaw U Kawi (**Kavi*) was written by the Venerable U Sobaṇa (pronounced U Thaw-bana in Myanmar), the Vice-presiding Sayadaw (*Taik-Oke*) of Sunlun Gu Kyaung Monastery, as told by the Venerable Sayadaw U Kawi himself.

The man who would be Sunlun Sayadaw U Kawi had, in his many past lives, fervently aspired to be liberated from *Samsāra* (the innumerable rounds of rebirth), which is like a huge oceanic whirlpool where mind and matter are in continual succession of arising and perishing. He had, in numerous previous lives, done lots of good deeds to achieve that goal. At the time of Kassapa Buddha, the third Buddha of this earth (*Badda kappa, the present world, is blessed by five Buddhas*), he happened to be a parrot.

One day, the parrot (while flying in search of food) saw the Buddha. Though he was an animal, by virtue of his *Pāramī* with inherent intelligence and wisdom, he knew that this resplendent human before him was a unique noble personage.

Wanting to pay homage to the Kassapa Buddha, he flew down to the ground. With his two wings touching on top of his head in reverence, the parrot walked humbly towards the Exalted Buddha, bow down and offered fruits. With great compassion Kassapa Buddha accepted the offering, blessing the parrot with these words, “For this generous charitable deed, whatever your aspiration be, it shall be fulfilled as you so desired.” After saying so, the Buddha walked away.

The parrot gazed after Him in rapture. He was left feeling blissfully happy and immensely gratified, uttering to himself, “O to have offered with fruits I have to such a noble personage is indeed an invaluable deed!” Because the generosity of his offering is of enormous intent (*Cetana Javana*) and because the recipient happened to be the Buddha Himself, it generated enormous positive karma (*Kāmma*), so much so that when the parrot died, he was reborn for many successive lives in the seven realms of the sensual existence (the seven realms of celestial world) with incomparable riches, entourage and attendants at his disposal.

* *Kavi* : Learned person; sage. As the Venerable Sayadaw is famously known in Myanmar as

Sunlun Sayadaw **U Kawi**, his name is written all through out the book as such. The word ‘*Kavi*’ is the *Pali* equivalent.

After spending many glorious lives in the celestial world, he was then reborn as a human who became a very famous professor by the name of Ti-Kicchaka at *Takksila.

(N.B. *Sunlun Sayadaw* once remarked, “Those who had been acquainted with me and had been treated by me when I was the renowned Physician will come to me now. They will follow my guidance and be able to take up the Vipassana practice with the method I had acquired.”)

After passing away, he went into many rounds of rebirth again. During the period of Gotama Buddhā *Sāsanā*, at one life, he was reborn as a human and became the very famous Barr-mei Sayadaw, who was deeply revered by *King Manuha, a great patron of Buddha’s Teachings, who ruled over *Suvaṇṇa Bhummi*, now known as Thaton township in Myanmar.

After this life, he again went into rounds of rebirths. Finally, he was reborn into a family who lived in Sunlun village, south of Myingyan town in Upper Myanmar. His father was called U Thant, and his mother Daw Toke.

At the time of his conception, his father had a vivid dream in which a man with distinctly noble features came to their house asking permission to him, “Please let me stay at your house.” U Thant declined saying, “Oh no, please don’t stay in our house. We are very poor.” But seeing the stranger was not giving up to his repeated refusals, he finally accepted the visitor. The parents regarded the dream as auspicious.

After nine months of pregnancy, in the tenth month, Daw Toke delivered a healthy baby with unique features on the 2nd waxing day of *Tabaung* 1239 M.E., (1878), Sasana Era 2421, Monday, at just before four o’clock in the morning. Because of auspicious omens, the baby was named “Maung Kyaw Din,” meaning ‘famed one’ at his naming ceremony with the traditional washing of the baby’s hair.

The couple had three children altogether, Ma Thinn, a girl, Ko Kyaw Din (who would later become Sunlun Sayadaw), and Ko Aung Khine, another boy.

Ko Kyaw Din went to school at a monastery in Myingyan where Min Kyaung Sayadaw, the Abbot, looked after him well. But he was very slow in learning and could not progress much in class. So, at the age of fifteen, he dropped off school and

* Takksila : Taxila, name of a northern Indian province.

* King Manuha : ruled over *Suvaṇṇa Bhummi* (now known as Thaton, Myanmar) in the 11th century.

together with his father U Thant, he went to Myingyan and worked as an office boy at the office of the District Deputy Commissioner. Some years later, he married Ma Shwe Yi from his native village. They got four children but three of them died while still very young. Only a son named Ko Kan Nyunt also known as Ko Shane survived.

U Kyaw Din came to realize that there would not be much future prospects working as an office boy. So at the age of thirty, he resigned, went back to his native village to work in his parents' fields and so became a farmer.

One day, he had a conversation with a friend named U San Tin who was said to possess occult powers, and at certain occasions was said to be of service to the *Celestial Guardians of the world acting as medium. While he was talking, all of a sudden, U San Tin blurted out reciting a riddle :-

One thread, two threads ... what a mess!
This old lady **Amei Boke's** bulk of entangled threads.
Who in the world be able to clear up this tangle?
Spinning about with a shuttle on a loom,
Was Ma Khway dressed in a *pondaw*-designed *longyi* with green fringe and checkered blue.
The stump of the ruined pagoda is now radiating with light,
From the '*Kyun-bo*' teak loom, sound boomed and echoed thru' the ten thousand Universe!

He then started to explain the prophetic riddle to U Kyaw Din, "Don't you think the tangled threads become organized on a loom?"

"Yes, of course," U Kyaw Din replied.

"Well 'Ignorance' (*Avijjā*) of sentient beings is even more muddled than the old lady Amei Boke's bulk of entangled threads. And you, U Kyaw Din, is going to clear this up with the use of a shuttle called '**Mindfulness**' (*Sati*). A weaving factory will appear at south of Sunlun village. When it does, you will propagate Buddha's *Dhamma* at a place known as 'Kyun-po-pin Kone' (Kyun-po-pin means teak tree; 'Kone' is a little hilly place). And there will be two teak pillars there. 'The stump of the ruined pagoda is now radiating with light' foretells that the hidden and forgotten era of *Paṭipatti Sāsanā* (the Practice of the Buddha's Teachings), will rise and thrive again."

U Kyaw Din listened and said, "Oh no, don't say such ridiculous things."

"You wait and see," replied U San Tin.

* Celestial Guardians of the world : There are 4 Great Celestial Guardians of *Catu-maharaja Deva* realm (the lowest of the 6 Celestial Realms) who looked after the world.

That year, U Kyaw Din bought another plot of farm land. At the start of the rainy season, he called his wife Daw Shwe Yi and together they went to clear the fields. When they got there, U Kyaw Din told his wife, "Let's grow sesame in our new field this year. If it yields fifty baskets of sesame we'll offer a thousand lights at the village pagoda." Daw Shwe Yi agreed saying, "Never mind fifty baskets. If we get forty baskets, we'll do the offering." U Kyaw Din then confirmed, "Okay, let's promise each other then. But this time, let's not include music in the procession as is the custom. If young ladies in the procession get their jewelry stolen in the rowdy crowd, we'd be responsible. Let's make it simple."

Soon afterwards, they sowed sesame seeds in their newly acquired field. Young plants sprouted up at the beginning of the rainy season but wilted and almost died because of scarce rain. However, the plants survived and flourished when the rains came. Other people's sesame fields were destroyed but not those of U Kyaw Din. In fact, his fields yielded exactly forty baskets of sesame. No more, no less.

Daw Shwe Yi suggested, "Let's press it into sesame oil and as promised, we'll offer nine viss for the pagoda (where the thousand lights will be offered) and nine *viss for the *Samgha*." U Kyaw Din asked, "How many *bhikkhus* are we inviting?" to which his wife replied, "We'll invite four *bhikkhus* and offer two viss of oil to each, then set aside the remaining viss to cook for the guests' food." "Alright then, let's offer it that way," agreed U Kyaw Din.

So on the full-moon day of *Tha-din Gyut* (which marked the end of Rains Retreat Period) in 1281 M.E., which was on the 8th of October in the year 1919, they made light offering at the pagoda situated at south east of the village. At the congregation, *bhikkhus* recited *Paritta* and delivered a sermon after which they shared merits with the Libation Ceremony by pouring consecrated water. When night fell, they lighted up a thousand little lamps filled with oil. Daw Shwe Yi was kept busy entertaining guests in the traditional way with *betels, cheroots and pickled tea leaves.

U Kyaw Din went nearer to the pagoda to have a closer look at the burning lights of lamps. He watched the tips of wicks turning black, the flickering flames, and the oil boiling. While watching, the scene moved him so much that he trembled, with goose pimples appearing all over his body. He wondered, "What could be the matter with me? This is truly unusual. I'm sure if I make a wish now, it will certainly be fulfilled."

* viss : A measure for weight used in Myanmar.

* Betel : A climbing pepper whose leaves are chewed together with certain herbs and cracked betel nut, used especially by southern Asians.

All of a sudden, he felt a desperate desire to become a *bhikkhu*. So he wished fervently, “Please may I become a *bhikkhu*. On becoming a *bhikkhu*, may I be able to preach and teach Buddha’s *Dhamma*. And like me, may sentient beings understand and practice *Dhamma* according to what I preach and teach.”

After making the wish, he became worried thinking, “How am I going to teach *Dhamma* when I become a *bhikkhu* as I’m not a learned person?” But believing that somehow his aspirations would be fulfilled, he felt very satisfied and happy to have made his wish.

[*Sunlun Sayadaw later recounted, “At that time, I was so uneducated and had no knowledge to have wished for various supreme aspirations like Sammā-Sambodhi (Perfect Self-Enlightenment) or Paccekabodhi (Silent Buddha), or for Aggasāvaka, (Chief Ariya Disciples of Buddha) or Mahāsāvaka (Great Ariya Disciple). Unlike other people, I just wished short to the point, simply for Bhikkhu-hood.]*

That year, he became more and more prosperous. But he began to worry about it as there was a traditional belief that rapid rise in worldly possessions could lead to a person’s death. Even worse, he knew his horoscope at the moment was in planet Saturn, which was said to pave way for that person’s demise. Rather plaintively he wondered, “There is an *epidemic (plague) breaking out around Myingyan. Perhaps I will succumb to this monstrous plague. If I die now, I have only bad karma (*Kāmma*) but no merits, none whatsoever, to see me through. My prosperity has risen so much this year. Is it an omen of my impending death?”

He continued to worry obsessively of his death. That year in February 1920 (1281 M.E., *Ta-baung*), he had a dream one night. In that dream, he saw a Buddha Image coming into a makeshift *pandal in front of his house. Seeing the Image moving and smiling at him, he told his wife, “Here, hand me that rice bowl. I’m going to offer it myself to the Buddha.” When he took the rice bowl from his wife, the Image declared, “Oh, it’s so annoying. I’m talking to you only this once. I won’t talk to you in future.”

* epidemic : The much feared ‘plague’ epidemic was an annual occurrence in Upper Myanmar during those years.

* Pandal : Pavilion, a decorated covered area for temporary use for special occasions, also known as *man-dut* or *mandapa*.

He then woke up suddenly after this dream with his heart pounding loud and hard. With much trepidation he thought, “I’m sure going to die. It must be because of my imminent death that I dreamed like this.” He panicked and woke up his wife, related his dream and asked for some candles for offering. “Okay, I’ll find some candles for you. But you mustn’t tell about your dream to anyone,” implored his wife.

He took the candles and went off to the village pagoda. There, he met his friend U Chi Dyne who asked, “Why on earth are you here at this hour?” to which he replied, “I came to offer lighted candles to the Buddha at the pagoda because I’m so afraid I’d die.” U Chi Dyne asked his friend’s birth date and year, calculated his astrological charts and said, “According to the horoscope, it says a two-legged being (in astrological terms, it means a human being) would depart from your house,” (which was tantamount to a person’s death).

U Kyaw Din exclaimed, “Oh dear, don’t predict like that. I’m already laded with fear of death.” “Well, it’s not me who did the prediction. It’s your horoscope which is showing the signs,” replied his friend. U Kyaw Din’s terror of dying grew even worse. He begged, “Dear friend, do take me along everyday to those nightly prayer sessions held in the village.” Just then, another friend U San Tin showed up and U Kyaw Din made the same request to him.

Some days later, on a moonlit night, U San Tin came to visit U Kyaw Din. They talked at leisure while lying down on a mat in the front

portion of the house and soon, both drifted into a slumber. Then, U San Tin muttered wearily,

“How pītiful the sentient beings are!

The Three Calamities are here to stay,

Famine, War, Disease! (*Satthantara Kappa, Dubbhikkhantar Kappa, Rogantara Kappa*).

Sentient beings are lost along the way and are being driven into the abyss.

O, how pītiful!”

U Kyaw Din replied back sleepily, “Yes, I know the sentient beings have lost their way and are falling into an abyss. Wish I could find the right path that could lead them out of this mess!”

“Well, actually it’s not that difficult to find the right path. Just wait at the crossroads. Someone who can show the right direction will appear,” answered U San Tin.

U Kyaw Din asked his friend again as he couldn’t quite make out what he meant but there was no response. U Kyaw Din shook him up and asked him again, but U San

Tin was puzzled and didn't remember what he had said. Looking at his frightened friend, he comforted, "Don't be so afraid. You can take refuge in the Three Jewels ... Buddha, *Dhamma* and *Sanigha* for peace".

But U Kyaw Din's paranoia over death became uncontrollable. Realizing his obsession was becoming unhealthy and destructive, he confided in his friend, "My obsession is getting out of hand. I'm going to set out to treat my paranoid mind in my own way to get some peace of mind. I'll take cues from my dream ... set up a pandal in front of my house, put a Buddha Image inside for paying homage and start prayer sessions. I'm sure this will bring about my happiness." "Okay, go ahead as you wish if that is what you think will cure your affliction," consoled U San Tin. "Do come early in the morning tomorrow. Let's find some bamboo poles for the pandal," U Kyaw Din reminded his friend,

So at dawn the next morning, they went to look for bamboo poles and just like in the dream, erected a traditional pandal with lattice fencings all around right in front of his house which was located at the corner of crossroads. A Buddha Image was placed at an appropriate place for the invited guests to pay devotions when they come for nightly prayer sessions there.

At dusk, the village elders came and soon, everyone was noisily joining in the lively discussion on *Dhamma* (Buddhist Teachings), what Mind (*Citta*) was and what the Mental Concomitants (*Cetasika*) were. Meanwhile, Daw Shwe Yi was happily entertaining guests with cheroots, betels and tea leave salad in the traditional way.

The first two nights passed without any significant incidents and the religious discussions that took place did not have any effect on U Kyaw Din. On the third night however, U Ba San, the chief clerk at Steel Brothers Mills, a weaving factory, came without being invited and started to talk about *Anāpāna - Vipassanā Practice* (out-breathing and in-breathing exercise to cultivate mental concentration for Insight Meditation) as taught by the renowned Venerable *Ledi Sayadaw.

As soon as he heard the word *Anāpāna*, U Kyaw Din, unlike previous nights, was greatly affected. His whole body became stirred with goose-flesh appearing all over. He thought to himself, "What is happening with me? I'm certain that I'm going to get my salvation through this *Anāpāna*. Well, I waited at the intersection of four roads just

* Venerable Ledi Sayadaw : Known to many scholars of many countries, the Venerable Mahathera Ledi Sayadaw (1846-1923) was one of the most outstanding Buddhist figures of his time. He had written many essays, letters, poems and more than 70 manuals in Myanmar, of which many had been translated into English. Among them was *Vipassana Dipani* (Manual of Insight) which was translated into English by his disciple Sayadaw U Nyana,

like in my dream. This man came here without my invitation; he came here out of his own accord and is now talking about meditation. Did he come here for me? I'm sure I'm going to get *Dhamma* out of it." While thinking away happily, second thoughts came in. "But then, I'm quite illiterate. What if I can't learn the Scriptural Texts. What if their meditation requires learning? I'll be in a fix then. Well, can't help it. Perhaps I'll ask him tomorrow."

When U Ba San came the following night, he was waiting anxiously at the pandal's entrance and asked eagerly, "Oh Chief Clerk Sir, does your meditation needs learning?" to which U Ba San replied, "No, no, higher learning is not a prerequisite. Genuine interest with conviction (*Saddha*) and effort (*Viriya*) are the factors that count." "Then, how shall I practice?" inquired U Kyaw Din. "Well, out-breaths and in-breaths which is *Anāpāna*," replied U Ba San and went inside.

Note : U Kyaw Din's house was situated at the intersection of four road in Sunlun village.

U Kyaw Din was much elated and inspired on hearing these words. He didn't even follow the guest but went off immediately to meditate. He stretched out on the gunny deck chair under the canopy at the side of his house and started murmuring to himself, "Hmm, this is in-breath, hmm, this is out-breath. Hmm, in-breath, hmm, out-breath." He kept on this *Anāpāna* exercise earnestly for days, fully convinced that it would become fruitful.

One day, U Shwe Luk, a neighbor, came for a visit and saw him practicing *Anāpāna*. He remarked, "You need to apply awareness as well." U Kyaw Din didn't understand well, so he asked, "How do I apply awareness?" to which his friend replied, "Just know it. Just keep on knowing it."

"What happened if I apply this awareness?"

"Well, you get merits of course."

"In that case, I'll do it."

From then on, U Kyaw Din tried to keep awareness at his work. He practiced awareness while he was chopping dried corn stems for cattle-feed. "Mm... this is great!" he remarked with satisfaction, chopping with more zeal knowing that he was getting merits while at the same time finishing his daily work even more productively this way. This realization further motivates him to develop the awareness coupled with mindfulness ... 'the abrupt sound when the corn stem broke off ... the awareness ... the mindfulness,' all occurring simultaneously.

Mindfulness was now everywhere, at every action he made. While breathing, he was aware of the touch of air at his nostril tip and he put mindfulness on this awareness. While walking, he was aware of the touch of his soles with the ground and he put mindfulness on this awareness. Then on, he put mindfulness of the touch while ploughing, weeding, digging soil, sowing seeds, drawing water, in fact in all the chores he was doing.

He practiced *Anāpāna Sati* with vigorous mindfulness day and night whenever he had the time, whether he was at home or in the paddy fields. He even went into the forest of Maung Yin Por Ravine at nights to practice with full conviction (*Saddha*) and great effort (*Viriya*). The relentless concentration paid off. He started to see multi-colored lights in his practice ... brown, blue, red, gold, white, dark red, etc. He concluded that because of his relentless practice, he was experiencing the opportunity to pay homage to the sublime hues of the Exalted Buddha's Rays, so he tried even harder on his meditation.

Before long, while meditating one day, there appeared in his vision, a little ball whirling round and round near his face. Getting curious, he shifted his attention on the ball and found it went up every time he concentrated on it. He decided to follow it. It went up, up and eventually he found himself on the clouds. "Oh, my effort is progressing marvelously. I'm now on the clouds!" he enthused with amazement and delight.

The next day while meditating, again, a little ball, the size of a firefly, appeared in his vision, this time with shimmering lights radiating from it. Whenever he focused on it, it went up. Just like yesterday, he followed it up. This time, he found various kinds of spired grand celestial mansions (*Pasada*) on the clouds. He figured he was destined to live there after he died. These visions removed his fear of death. In fact, he felt happy and was much motivated to meditate more.

With successive vigorous meditations, sensations appeared in his body. So he put his mindfulness on the bodily sensations. His *Samādhi* (concentration) grew to great proportions as his practice developed to an advance state. The cognition of 'touch-awareness-mindfulness' was everywhere all day long. When he talked, he now talked only of natural phenomena, i.e., mindfulness of awareness in natural settings. He was not in the same wavelength in conversing with village people, so much so that they begin to say, "U Kyaw Din had gone nuts." U Kyaw Din reflected, "Well, it's good to be seen crazy. Nobody come and talk to me. No one bothers me. And I don't need to speak to anyone at all. How nice! How appropriate for my meditation! I'm now free of social

obligations and can pursue more on my practice without any distraction.” So using this chance of being isolated, he practiced day and night.

With his meditation in advanced progress, he came to notice that people, in fact all beings, were continually in relentless pursuit after sense- objects (*Arammaṇa*) for gratification of sense desires. He was appalled and became fearful of this, so he stayed away from the villagers, rarely talking to them. When he happened to be talking to them, he reminded them to be mindful. He began to acquire supernatural sense of premonition, a by-product of meditation. Out of pity, he would warn some friends of their impending death, “Hey you! Remember to take refuge in Buddha, *Dhamma*, and *Samgha*. You’re going to die in three days,” (or) five days, (or) seven days, etc. People who had been forewarned all met their demise as told.

He told the villagers of his supernatural visions, “I could see other people’s livers, hearts and all their internal organs. When I looked down, I could see Hell (*Niriya*, the Realm of Continuous Suffering) where inhabitants were congested, pushing and pressing like maggots eating away the rotten flesh of a dog’s carcass.” The villagers listened in awe.

Whenever U Kyaw Din foretold something, it happened. So when news of his supernatural power spread, people came to him for advice to trace their lost cattle, or for prescription of herbal medicine and medicinal food for their illnesses and other mundane things. Soon, he realized that it was getting out of hand and that he was fast becoming a shaman. Feeling the need to be alone, he spent most of his time in the forest of Maung Yin Por Ravine to meditate in solitude.

[*Sunlun Sayadaw once commented, “Mundane (supernatural) powers are enormously attractive and appealing. I was so fortunate to have escaped from it and have swum to the other side.”]*

“Touch-awareness-mindfulness’ was applied in continuum at *Anapana* breathing practice. Sensations arise then coming in various forms ... pain, numbness, cold, heat, etc. in his body. He continued putting vigorous mindfulness on these bodily sensations. *Udaya-baya nana* (Insight into the arising and perishing of mind and matter) developed to such an extent that he saw the inside of his body in details, as if looking in the mirror with his body cut open - the heart, the liver, the intestines.

[*Sunlun Sayadaw had made remarks to his disciples on this subject as follows :-*
“The process of ‘arising and perishing phenomena’ (Udaya-baya) of the body can be seen in the liquid form, the solid form or in other various forms. If you kept up the

Vipassanā Practice day and night with mighty conviction (Sadha) and powerful effort (Viriya), you will eventually come to observe and comprehend in striking terms, the phenomena of ‘mind (Citta) - concomitants of mind (Cetasika) - and matter (physical body, Rupa)’ in minute detail ... how the arising (the building up, anabolism) and dissolving (breaking down, catabolism) of the body processes take place. This Insight is known as Udayab-baya ñāna (Knowledge of the arising and perishing of bodily phenomena). The Udaya-baya level of Insight has three categories - the crude, the subtle and the most refined of body-mind processes. You can comprehend these fine matters only if you meditate most diligently.

Note: As it is not appropriate to elaborate more than this on this subject at this stage, further details had not be written _ Author].

(1). After attaining Insight into the arising and dissolving of phenomena, in the year 1920 on the 12th of August, Thursday, (1282 M.E., on the 13th waning day of Waso), around ten o’clock at night, U Kyaw Din attained *Sotāpaññā*, the first Path of Enlightenment.

He continued with his practice but his wife had changed. Instead of being supportive of her husband’s good work, she began to disturb it outright, accusing that it was keeping him from household duties. She would complain furiously and grumble non-stop about it, pushing him off from the bed while he was meditating. Once, she even took off the floor planks one by one until there was none. Nevertheless, U Kyaw Din kept up his practice sitting perfectly still on the beam of the floor.

Seeing she had failed in her effort to prevent her husband from meditating, she put back the planks on to the floor. When U Kyaw Din asked her, “Why did you disturb my meditation so much?” she retorted, “So that you’d beat me up.”

“I would never beat you, dear lady. Do carry on showing me the *Dhamma*” (*meaning to test his patience level*), responded U Kyaw Din.

“You good-for-nothing man! staying numb all the time like Prince **Temiya* (of *Jataka*). Why don’t you go to the monastery and live there as a monk if you want to meditate so much?” she shouted back angrily.

She continued her mumble and grumble, nagging almost daily, but U Kyaw Din knowing he hadn’t reached his goal, kept up his patience like the aged *Bhikkhu Upaka* (who was renowned for his extraordinary forbearance during the Gotama

* Prince *Temiya* : of *Jataka* story (*Mugapakkhajataka, Khuddaka Nikaya, Suttanta Pitaka*), was famous for keeping absolute silence, without uttering a word since very young because he was afraid to become a king.

Buddhā's time). Once, while he was meditating, she purposely let go of the cow which was tethered to the post, then yelled, "Oh, the cow has gone loose. Quick! Go after it. Do go after it." This cow normally had a very bad temper and would aggressively beset anyone who stood in her way. But this time, it just stood there without attacking anyone. Becoming furious, she walked off stamping her feet in disgust, berating noisily and continued doing all kinds of things to infuriate her husband.

U Kyaw Din meanwhile kept on ignoring his wife's incessant naggings and carried on with his meditation practice with unrelenting determination.

[*Sunlun Sayadaw once recounted to his disciples of his past days :-*

"By virtue of keeping vigorously mindful of the sensations during repeated practice, my patience level gradually increased. When somebody yelled abuse at me, the element of displeasure, dislike (Dosa) comes up in my mind. Of course I dislike it. But mindfulness warned me, 'Oh! This is anger.' So, I put a hold on this emotion. I felt happy when I noticed that I could refrain myself, because in the past I would have slapped that person in the face. It meant that I had improved a lot in forbearance and fortitude.

When I see something beautiful, there arise the element of pleasure, desire (Lobha). But then, I thought, 'Well, this enjoyment of pleasure is just an element of Lobha (greed), the eyes just see the visible object. The beauty of the visible object (Ru'pārammaṇa) is mere Perception (Saññā). What have that got to do with me (to be so pleased about)?'

From then on, when I heard something, I reminded myself that this is merely Perception (Saññā) of sound, an audible object. When I touch something, I understood it to be simply a matter of Perception of a tangible object. When I smell something, I apprehended it as Perception of an olfactory object. With deep mindfulness I could cut off my mind not to react to, nor to have judgment, to the sounds, the touch, the smell, and all the sense-objects, and simply taking everything as it is (with equanimity). This way, I came to understand the workings of the mind with regard to the sense-objects."]

One night, U Kyaw Din fell asleep and dreamt that he was at a railway station. He went to buy a ticket but the station master gave him four. He put all four tickets in his pocket and boarded the train as it was about to depart. Then he woke up. Soon afterwards, he had another dream. In it, he was in a paddy field and saw a bull running towards him. He gave chase and caught it by the tail which broke loose. The tail came off right from the root and was left in his hand. He woke up then. He took these dreams to be good omen which he thought indicated that he was going to break loose from this miserable world in the later part of the Buddha's Teachings (*Sasana*). With great conviction he vowed to himself, "I'm going to strive till the end."

(2) He continued to endeavor and exactly a month later, that same year 1920 on the 11th of September, Saturday, (1282 M.E., on the 13th waning day of *Waso*), at around ten pm, he attained *Sakadāgāmi*, the Second Path of Enlightenment.

[*Later, Sunlun Sayadaw reminisced that attainment of the Second Path was not that much significant. He said it was experienced just as a matter of the inner sensations as he had already treaded and known the track of Supramundane Insight while attaining the First Path.]*

After attaining the first and second Path of *Supramundane Dhamma*, U Kyaw Din's behavior changed as was his understanding of the world. He began to discuss and comment on the laws of nature in a deep and serious philosophical manner. Moreover, when people informed him of someone in the village getting ill, if he said, "Oh, he's going to die," that person certainly died. If he said "No, he won't die," then that person recovered. When his predictions always got right, villagers became afraid to talk to him. He ignored them and got on with his meditation with much more vigor.

(3) One month later, that same year 1920 on the 10th of October, Sunday (1282 M.E., on the 13th waning day of *Taw tha-lin*), at around ten at night, he encountered an excruciatingly painful sensation during his meditation, as if all the nerves in his body were being cut off. He overcame that with intense mindfulness coupled with incredible patience, finally reaching *Anāgāmi*, the Third Path of Enlightenment.

[*Sunlun Sayadaw had once commented,*
"Celibacy becomes absolute and permanent on attaining the Third Path of Enlightenment. The robe of the concerned bhikkhu, or sarong of the concerned man, would have to be washed off. (Complete and absolute expulsion of all semen in the body occurred at reaching Anāgāmi representing absolute uprooting and permanent abolishment of sex and sexual interest). When it was getting nearer to attaining Supramundane Knowledge of the Third Path, both the inner and outer plexus were forcefully shaken and pulled out. You need to struggle vigorously to overcome this severe onslaught of painful sensation. At this point, if you couldn't conquer this, you would fall off. I can appreciate and say 'Sādhu' (Well done!) only if you could prevail over this."

The next day, a thunderbolt struck right in front of him. But he was not shaken at all; in fact he was calm and collected. He found that fear had left him. By and by, after meditating for many a time, he saw acutely the living beings' continual focus and attention on sense objects (*Arammaṇa*). When he saw their avid preoccupation with

sensual things and continual pursuit for gratification of senses with relentless effort, he developed aversion and dread to live among people. The desire to become a *bhikkhu*, to live in seclusion, became intense.

Sunlun Sayadaw reminisced,

“I searched for the enemy within and discovered they were elements of Greed (Lobha), Hatred (Dosa), Delusion (Moha), Conceit (Māna) and the like. On analyzing further, I found that Greed is the prime source among them which gives me the most suffering (Dukkha), so I decided to kill the main foe. And if you ask me how, it is like this:

When you touch something, you are aware of it. Guard this awareness with mindfulness. If you keep on being mindful of the touch, the practice of ‘Touch-Awareness-Mindfulness,’ elements of Greed will gradually decrease in both frequency and intensity. It becomes lesser and lesser, weaker and weaker.

When I sought further to see whether there are any remaining enemies still left behind, I discovered they are the ones closest to me – my wife, my children and my possessions.

*Searching for the cause from the effect (effect/resultants means his wife, children and possessions), I found out that the cause is that I had not settled debts with them all along the whole *Samsāra* (rounds of rebirth). No wonder they kept on giving me trouble. I decided to settle debts with my wife so I called her to ask for forgiveness. I told her like this, “Because of past affinity and karma, you and I happen to meet this life to become husband and wife. From now on, please don’t give me back the debts you owed me. And for my part, I would also like to stop paying back any debts that I might have owed you. Let us break our marital contract in mutual agreement. I will regard you as my own sister and you also look upon me as your own brother. And furthermore, do permit me to become a *bhikkhu*.”*

And do you know how my wife replied back? She said,

“Oh please, you don’t need to settle any debts that you might have owed me. And you don’t need to go anywhere nor become a monk. Do stay at home in a revered room all by yourself and let me look after you well as my elder brother. Like the saying, ‘A head looks graceful only with a chignon on it, so is a woman with a husband.’ One wouldn’t look respectable or graceful without the other. In our society, a woman needs a husband as a protector and guardian. Otherwise, people would take advantage of her. Without a husband at her side, she wouldn’t be taken seriously but is liable to be hassled and harassed.”

And thus Daw Shwe Yi used her feminine wiles to tie down her husband even further. U Kyaw Din was very naive at that time. Lacking general knowledge, he

thought a man could not enter into the Order of *Samgha* without the wife's consent. He was intensely miserable as his wife would not let him become a *bhikkhu*. In despair he wondered, "How can I find a job that is entirely free of defilements for my livelihood? People around me working for their livelihood are involved in some kind of unwholesome deed in one way or the other. As I see it, there are only two ways of faultless living. You either enter *bhikkhu*-hood or live like a crazy man."

He continued thinking of ways, "I can use a gunny bag to dress myself like a mad man. If I cut off two corners for the arms, and make a hole in the middle for the head, it will be perfect for my needs. I will just lie down on it if I want to sleep. For food, I can go begging with a bowl at houses along the street. I'm sure people will take pity on an insane man and give away generously. That way, nobody will give me any trouble and there won't be any hassle for clothing or for food. What a great idea to spend a blameless life!"

Days passed without any solution. Feeling very unhappy, he lost his appetite and became very weak. He thought in despair, "My nature and way of thinking has become vastly different from that of other people. How can I function among them and survive for long? I will eventually die if I have to continue staying like this amongst these people." He tried once more pleading for his wife's consent to let him be a *bhikkhu*, but in vain.

The neighbors, taking great pity on his pathetic state, implored his wife to give in, "Look Daw Shwe Yi, let him do as he pleases. He couldn't eat or sleep. Look how he's gotten so thin that he is all bones and skin now. He will certainly die if he goes on like this." She was still very stubborn. She wouldn't give in. She even retorted like this, "Oh, it's better to let him die than being separated. If he dies, I'll suffer only once. If I give him permission, having to see him as a monk right under my very own eyes and stay as a total stranger will make me unhappy all the time."

More days went by but she was still extremely obdurate, causing great unhappiness to her hapless husband. Seeing him in a skeletal state, more villagers joined in to give repeated pressure on Daw Shwe Yi to let him go. At last she yielded, "Alright, go and be a monk for a couple of weeks." With much elation, U Kyaw Din replied, "Oh dear, sure, sure. If I'm not happy as a *bhikkhu*, I won't wait for a fortnight. I'll come back immediately. But if my **Pāramī* calls for, please let me be a *bhikkhu* for as long as I wish."

* *Parami* : Past perfection; the cumulation of virtues developed and brought to maturity.

Even at the last moment as he was about to leave for the monastery, his wife insisted, “Oh, before you leave, do go and sow the peas in the fields as the land is already been ploughed and ready for sowing.” Figuring it wouldn’t take a long time for this task, he obliged. For the last time, on the 1st of November, 1920 (the 5th waning day of *Thadin-gyut* in 1920 M.E.), he went off to the fields with a pair of oxen. There, he mounted the plough and shouted at the two oxen to start moving. But the oxen did not move. Instead, they kept looking back at him, as if to say something.

U Kyaw Din pondered, “These two oxen had never given me trouble before. They always started moving energetically competing with each other whenever I mounted the plough. I never have to prod at them. Well, even the oxen are forcing me to leave. If I couldn’t be firm and decide for my resolution on my own this time, what a useless fool would I be!”

Reproaching himself thus, he compelled himself to get off the plough, unclasped the harness, took off the yoke and put the plough up leaning against a tree. He then unleashed the two oxen to release them saying, “Well, I’m letting you two off from servitude for good. Go wherever you want. We will depart and never ever meet again, in life or in death.” After setting the oxen free for good, he headed off to U Kyauk Monastery. On the way, he met a friend, Daw Tin, who asked him where he was going. He replied, “I’m going to the monastery to become a *Samanera* (novice).” “In that case, I have a worn-out *Ekacciya* (upper robe of a *bhikkhu*’s attire, also called *Uttara-sanga*). Take it, but don’t let your wife know about it.”

When he reached the monastery, Abbot U Kyauk, also called U Viriya, gave him *Thin-pine* (lower garment of a *bhikkhu*’s robe, also called *Antara-vasaka*) and initiated him into the Order of *Bhikkhu* as a *Samanera* by the name of *Shin Kawi.

Because he became a revered *bhikkhu* (addressed as *Ko Daw in Myanmar*) after leaning (which is termed ‘*daung*’ in Myanmar) the plough (called *Tun*) against a tree, he was also known as ‘*Tun Daung Ko Daw*,’ meaning ‘Revered *Bhikkhu* who left the plough leaning against a tree.

U Kyaw Din made the wish to become a *bhikkhu* in 1919 on 8th October (the full-moon day of *Tha-din Gyut* 1281 M.E.) at the village pagoda after offering lights and he entered into the Order of *Samgha* in 1920 on 1st November (1282 M.E., on the 5th waning day of *Tha-din gyut*). So it took him only a year to have his wish fulfilled.

* **Shin** is used as a prefix for novice and *bhikkhus* alike, like Mr.

As soon as he became a novice, he went to Maung-Yin Por Ravine at the south of Sunlun Village to resume his practice alone. Five days after entering the Order, his friend U Shwe Luk joined him as a novice (*Samanera*) taking the name Shin Vizaya and went to stay with Shin Kawi.

One day, Shin Kawi found a big mushroom near the monastery. When he pulled it off, the big mushroom together with a whole group of many satellite small buds were uprooted from the ground. He interpreted it as a good omen, a token that he would certainly be fully liberated and uprooted from the woeful rounds of birth, the *Samsāra*. He pursued his meditation with relentless vigor vowing with resounding will and determination to seek his goal even if he had to pay for it with his life.

(4) In 1920, on the 9th of November, Tuesday, (1281 M.E., 13th waning day of *Tha-din gyut*), at around 10 p.m., he saw a regal silvery covered walkway (as those in pagodas) during his meditation. Then, he saw a flying chariot making a buzzing sound coming down straight towards him at a high speed from above the sky. He ignored it, focusing his mind only on the mediation process. Suddenly he felt his body becoming very light as if it was being lifted up. He found himself on the chariot. When he looked around, he saw the four Great *Celestial Guardians of the world at the four corners and **Sakka*, the King of the Celestial World himself, on his right side.

He concluded that these high Celestial *Devas* had come to protect him because he was about to attain higher Supramundane Insight. So he did not shift his lotus position but remained firmly focused on the meditation process. At last, he attained the fourth and the highest of the Enlightened Paths and thus became an *Arahat*.

He wound up his meditation and looked around. The Celestial King, the four Celestial Guardians and the chariot had disappeared. After his final attainment of the fourth Path Knowledge, he came to possess the power of supernatural eye. He could see right through the Universe, from the uppermost *Brahma* Realm above to the lowest Realm of Hell (*Avici*). Then, he saw the Celestial King (*Sakka*) and the four Guardian Celestials returning back to the Celestial World calling out to their subjects in

* Four Great Celestial Guardians of the World (*Catu-lokapala Devas*) : They are Dhatarattha, Virupakkha, Virulhaka and Kuvera. They reside in the realm of Catu-maharajika and guard the world.

* *Sakka* : The 'King of Celestials (*Devas*).' He is the lord of the Celestial Realm of *Tavatimsa*.

resounding voices extolling and urging, “An *Arahat* has now arisen in the human world! Do go and pay homage!”

He saw in his vision many beings closest to him. Then he saw spirits of the earth, spirits of trees and many resplendent Celestials (*Devas*) from different realms, from the lowly spirits to the Highest *Brahmas* in groups by groups in endless array, coming to pay him homage.

Watching all these beings, he was able to observe and comprehend in full detail the existence of the three External World (external *Loka*) and the three Internal World (internal *Loka*).

- He came to understand the three **External** mundane World (external *Loka*) as :-
- The Animate World (*Satta Loka*) ... the world of all living beings.
 - Then, the Conditioned World (*Saṅkhāra Loka*) ... the World of Karmic Formations/Forces (volitional activities) that is conditioning the living beings.
 - And thirdly, the Inanimate World (*Okāsa Loka*), which forms the habitat, the base of all living beings.

And he found and comprehended in minute detail the three **Internal** World (internal *Loka*).

- The Animate World, (*Satta Loka*) as the phenomena of ‘Mind - Concomitants of Mind - and Matter’ in a continual flux of arising and perishing.
- Then, the Conditioned World (*Saṅkhāra Loka*) as the conditioning factors (volitional activities, the karmic formations or forces) responsible for the arising and passing away of ‘Mind - Concomitants of Mind - and Matter.’
- And the Inanimate World (*Okāsa Loka*) which forms the base of all these phenomena.

Then he came to understand and appreciate deeply the (nine) noble *attributes of the Buddha, the (six) attributes of *Dhamma* (The Teachings) and (nine) attributes of *Samgha* (The Order). He looked back and analyzed his own Paths in stages. Upon nearing *Sottapana*, the first Path of Enlightenment, this was how he experienced the Path-Knowledge:

‘This is Matter (*Rupa*).

This is Mind (*Nāma*).

This is Consciousness (*Citta*).

* See glossary - Buddha, *Dhamma* and *Samgha* for their attributes.

These are Concomitants of Mind (*Cetasika*).

This is the Truth of Suffering (*Dukkha Sacca*).

This is the Truth of Origin of Suffering (*Samudaya Sacca*).

This is the Truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering (*Magga Sacca*).

This is the Truth of Cessation of Suffering (*Nirodha Sacca*).

So, this experiencing and discerning these four Noble (*Ariya*) Truths is called *Sottāpaññā Magga*, the Path-Knowledge of the Stream Winner, the first Path of Enlightenment, *Sottāpaññā Phala*, the Fruition of the Stream Winner Knowledge.

For the second time,

This is Matter (*Rupa*).

This is Mind (*Nāma*).

This is Consciousness (*Citta*).

These are Concomitants of Mind (*Cetasika*).

This is the Truth of Suffering (*Dukkha Sacca*).

This is the Truth of Origin of Suffering (*Samudaya Sacca*).

This is the Truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering (*Magga Sacca*).

This is the Truth of Cessation of Suffering (*Nirodha Sacca*).

So, this experiencing and discerning these four Noble (*Ariya*) Truths is called *Sakadāgāmi Magga*, the Path Knowledge of the Once-Returner, the second Path of Enlightenment, and *Sakadāgāmi Phala*, the Fruition of the Once-Returner Knowledge.

For the third time,

This is Matter (*Rupa*).

This is Mind (*Nāma*).

This is Consciousness (*Citta*).

These are Concomitants of Mind (*Cetasika*).

This is the Truth of Suffering (*Dukkha Sacca*).

This is the Truth of Origin of Suffering (*Samudaya Sacca*).

This is the Truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering (*Magga Sacca*).

This is the Truth of Cessation of Suffering (*Nirodha Sacca*).

So, this experiencing and discerning these four Noble (*Ariya*) Truths is the attainment of *Anāgāmi Magga*, the Path Knowledge of the Non-Returner, the third Path of Enlightenment, and *Anāgāmi Phala*, the Fruition of the Non-Returner Knowledge.

For the fourth time,

‘This is Matter (*Rupa*).

This is Mind (*Nāma*).
This is Consciousness (*Citta*).
These are Concomitants of Mind (*Cetasika*).

This is the Truth of Suffering (*Dukkha Sacca*).
This is the Truth of Origin of Suffering (*Samudaya Sacca*).
This is the Truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering (*Magga Sacca*)
This is the Truth of Cessation of Suffering (*Nirodha Sacca*).

So, this experiencing and discerning these four Noble (*Ariya*) Truths is the attainment of *Arahatta Magga*, the Path Knowledge of the *Arahat*, the forth and final Path of Enlightenment, and *Arahatta Phala*, the Fruition of the *Arahatta* Knowledge

That was how Shin Kawi made a detailed retrospection (*Paccavekkhaṇā*) of each of the Paths he had attained after which he remained in a state of bliss, a kind which only *Ariyas* could experience.

Shin Kawi looked back at his previous lives in the light of ‘Cause and Effect (Resultant)’ principle. He found that in most existences, he had been born into animal world. The number as human existence were very few in fact. As the lives of his past existences were so numerous and endless, he wanted to know why in this life he came to attain the highest of the Path-Knowledge, so he expressed a solemn resolution made on asseveration of truth (*Adhiṭṭhāna*) to know the cause of this effect. He found it was the resultant of the wish he had made after offering fruits to the *Kassapa* Buddha, the third Buddha of this earth (*Badda kappa*), as a parrot.

About three months after Shin Kawi became a novice, Ye Lei Sayadaw of Meik-tila town had a dream one night. In it, he saw two white elephants entering the monastery from flying up in the sky. Soon after, U Pyo Tha from Myingyan and U Ba San, the chief clerk of the Steel Brothers’ Company paid a visit to Ye Lei Sayadaw. They informed him that two very extraordinary novices had appeared near Sunlun village, at Maung Yin Paw Chauk Ravine and that they had become *Ariya* (noble ones), but that they did not seem to be learned. Ye Lei Sayadaw remarked that if those two *Sameras* are *Ariyas*, they would surely know the facts of *Paññatti* (Conventional Truth), the *Paramattha* (Ultimate Truth), and the Law of Nature. He asked them to invite the two novices.

When Shin Kawi and Shin Vizaya arrived at the monastery, he inquired and questioned in detail about the meditative processes they had gone through. Finally, he was convinced and concluded that Shin Kawi had indeed accomplished the ‘Task as

Bhikkhu’, i.e. becoming an *Arahat*, the final goal of a *bhikkhu*. He then went on to ask as follows :-

***Abbreviated notes on the Questions by Ye Lei Sayadaw and
Answers by Shin Kawi***

- Q. In the three spheres of existences, who is the builder of the house?
A. Craving (*Taṇhā*) is the builder, Venerable Sir.
- Q. What is the seed-germ of the Volitional Activities (*Saṅkhāra*) of these three spheres?
A. Ignorance (*Avijjā*) is the seed-germ, Venerable Sir.
- Q. Is it due to meritorious deeds (*Kusala*), or demeritorious deeds (*Akusala*), that a being become a human?
A. It is due to both meritorious deeds (*Kusala*) and demeritorious deeds (*Akusala*) that a being become a human.
- Q. Would you say (take) meritorious deeds (*Kusala*) (as) pleasantness/happiness (*Sukha*) or (as) unpleasantness/suffering (*Dukkha*)?
A. Meritorious deeds are said to be pleasantness/happiness (*Sukha*), but in actual truth they are unpleasantness/suffering (*Dukkha*) (*because they also contribute to the rounds of birth, Saṃsāra, leading to suffering*).
- Q. Are there Human happiness (*Sukha*) and Celestial happiness (*Sukha*) in true terms?
A. In mundane conditioned world (*Saṅkhata*), there are Human happiness (*Sukha*) and Celestial happiness (*Sukha*). In terms of Ultimate Nature (*Paramattha*), there aren’t.
- Q. Are there who suffer in Hell (*Niraya* realms) and who enjoy in Heaven (*Deva* realms)?
A. In terms of Ultimate Reality (*Paramattha*), there aren’t.
- Q. In the mundane conditioned world (*Loka*), there are two kinds of sentient beings - those who suffer (pain) and those who enjoy (pleasures). Which kind would you say is truly in existence?
A. Both of them are truly in existence, Venerable Sir.
- Q. What would you call these two kinds?

A. Both are called Mind (*Nāma*), and Matter (*Rupa*).

Q. In the mundane conditioned world (*Loka*), are there killers and the killed?

A. Yes, there are, Venerable Sir.

Q. In what way would you say they are?

A. They are in fact Mind (*Nāma*), and Matter (*Rupa*)?

Q. Is it true that those who kill go to Hell (*Niriya*)?

A. Yes it's true, Venerable Sir.

Q. If it is true, in what sense do you mean by that?

A. Mind (*Nāma*), and Matter (*Rupa*). These two make one go to Hell (*Niriya*). And also, these two keep one from going to Hell, as well as strive to reach *Nibbāna*.

Q. In the world, there is a belief in which there are killers and the killed. And another belief in which there are no killers and none that is killed. Which one is the right view (*Samma-ditthi*) and which is the wrong view (*Micchā-diṭṭhi*)?

A. Apart from belief in Mind and Matter (*Nāma and Rupa*), both are of wrong views, Venerable Sir.

Q. What would you believe in to have the right view (*Sammā-diṭṭhi*)?

A. To acknowledge and accept the existence of Mind and Matter (*Nāma and Rūpa*) is to have the right view, Venerable Sir.

Q. Can someone who doesn't understand the nature of Ultimate Reality (*Paramattha*) fulfill the ten Perfections (*Pārami*)?

A. No he cannot, Venerable Sir.

Q. There are two kinds of Truth - Conventional Truth (*Paññatti*) and Ultimate Truth (*Paramattha*). If one only knows Conventional Truth (*Paññatti*), can he obtain Supramundane Path Knowledge (*Magga ñāṇa*)?

A. No he cannot, Venerable Sir.

Q. Which would you call is the real Truth - Conventional Truth (*Paññatti*) or Ultimate Truth (*Paramattha*)?

A. Only Ultimate Truth (*Paramattha*) can be called the real Truth.

Q. Of the two views, *Micchā-diṭṭhi* (wrong view) and *Sammā-diṭṭhi* (right view), when will you say that one has the right view (*Sammā-diṭṭhi*)?

- A. From the time you discard **diṭṭhi* (wrong views) and **Vicikiccha* (skeptical doubts), you come to hold the right view (**Sammā-diṭṭhi*).

Ye Lei Sayadaw acknowledged Shin Kawi's answers praising him, "Well said! very good indeed. Knowledge of Reality of this nature is highly profound. They are extremely deep and difficult to understand and yet you had answered well to my satisfaction. From now on, we would like to practice the method you had discovered. Moreover, we would like you to introduce it to our lay devotees so as the door to *Apāya*, the four Nether Worlds, would be forever closed for them (if and when they attain *Sotapanna*, the first Path of Enlightenment). Do stay with us at our monastery for Rains Retreat Period (**Vassa-vasa*) of this year." Shin Kawi accepted with joy, "Very well, Venerable Sir. I'm so glad of your invitation as I'm looking for a mentor for proper guidance to study the Buddhist Scriptures."

Shin Kawi's Contemplation on the ten **Kasiṇas*

Ye Lei Sayadaw advised Shin Kawi to practice meditation on the ten *Kasiṇas* (objects of meditation). Shin Kawi asked the Sayadaw about the procedures. Under the Sayadaw's specific guidance, Shin Kawi followed the instructions meticulously on each and every *Kasiṇa*. He practiced the ten *Kasiṇas* one by one, related his experience and findings to Ye Lei Sayadaw who then checked them out. In just one day, Shin Kawi had mastered all ten.

The following night, Shin Kawi heard a voice from the spiritual world asking a question in Pāḷi, "*Ñāṇa-dassanamī vividhamī*." Shin Kawi answered, "*Ñāṇa* means knowledge, and *vividhamī* is various, diverse or many." The spirit acknowledged his answer saying, "Well done, well done! (*sadhu, sadhu!*)" and disappeared. In the morning,

* *Diṭṭhi* : See Glossary for details.

* *Vicikiccha* : Sceptical doubt; uncertainty. Being skeptical and uncertain as to whether the Buddha is really enlightened, whether the *Dhamma* is really the Truth, and whether the *Samgha* are truly noble. One overcomes *Vicikiccha* on becoming a *Sotapanna* (*Stream-winner*).

* *Sammā-diṭṭhi* : the right view, the right understanding, the firm belief in karma, *kamma*, (i.e., one's actions and the result thereof). It also means comprehending the four noble *Ariya* Truths.

* *Vassa-vasa* : Rains Retreat Period. Observing the Rains Retreat Period; Confining oneself to a specific monastic dwelling for the three month rainy period (season).

* *Kasiṇa* : Meditation device to produce and develop concentration of mind and attain mental absorptions (*Jhāna*).

Shin Kawi related the incident to Ye Lei Sayadaw. “You answered right, Shin Kawi,” remarked the Sayadaw.

Some nights later, Shin Kawi heard a voice in Pāli saying, “Renounce your life!” which in effect meant urging him to die (Renounce *Āyu Sañ Khāra!*). Shin Kawi replied firmly, “No, I will not!” The voice disappeared then. The next morning, he related the occurrence to Ye Lei Sayadaw who asked, “Did you say yes to what they requested?” “No, Venerable Sir, I didn’t,” replied Shin Kawi. “Don’t accept or agree to what they say. They won’t back off yet. *Maras* (evil spirits) will come back again. Do be careful,” warned Ye Lei Sayadaw.

Within a few nights, a spiritual being appeared in person requesting Shin Kawi, “Please do not teach the Four Noble (*Ariya*) Truths.” “Yes, I will!” replied Shin Kawi. “Aren’t you listening to what I’m saying?” insisted the spirit to pay heed to his demand. Sensing the spirit’s anger, Shin Kawi decided to send *Odissa metta* (loving kindness that is directed to a specific person). When Shin Kawi asked, “Don’t you receive my loving kindness?” he replied, “Yes, I do, Venerable Sir,” and retreated into the darkness moaning sadly, “Alas! many beings are going to gain emancipation by *Dhamma!*”

The next morning, upon hearing the episode, Ye Lei Sayadaw told him to follow the tracks of the spirit. He contemplated and found the spirit who had asked him to renounce his life and who then implored him not to preach the Four Noble Truths. Shin Kawi related his findings to Ye Lei Sayadaw, “I found the spirit was only a minion of the *Mara*. *Mara* himself had become a good person now.” A few days later, two spirits in the form of young damsels wearing red flowers in their hair came to see Shin Kawi in the deep of the night. They left the monastery only when Shin Kawi rebuked, “What task have you got to do here?”

Wanting to test Shin Kawi’s mental powers, Ye Lei Sayadaw asked him whether there would be any patron in future who would repair the old Shwe Myin Tin Pagoda (later gilded with gold) situated on the east bank of Meik ti-lar Lake. At that time, the colonial British military stationed at Meik ti-lar town, had used the upper part of the Pagoda as a signaling post with mirrors, lights, radio signals, etc. and hence the deterioration. Shin Kawi used his contemplative powers and said, “Yes, a forthcoming patron will repair the pagoda.” Ye Lei Sayadaw inquired further, “Will that person be a *bhikkhu* or a layman?” Shin Kawi again used his supernormal mental powers and answered that it would be a layman, describing his house in detail, even to the design of the clothes he was wearing at that moment while walking in front of his house. Ye Lei Sayadaw sent someone to check out the man and his particulars including his name

and made a record. Some years later, he found that man was the person who happened to be the patron taking the lead in the renovation of the Pagoda.

Note : The patron was U Kyaw Zaw and his wife Daw Htay of Meik ti-lar.

Answers to Questions by Ye Lei Sayadaw on the Prophetic Riddles current in those days

The following are the conversations in which Ye Lei Sayadaw asked Shin Kawi of the prophetic riddles current in those days.

Ye Lei Sayadaw asked, : “Do you see that Great Meik ti-lar Lake over there?”

U Kawi replied, : “Yes I do, Venerable Sir.”

Ye Lei Sayadaw continued, : “Four reservoirs have now formed from that Great Lake.

And there is a prophetic riddle going around town. It goes like this -

‘In the vicinity of Meik ti-lar,

Four reservoirs have formed from the Great Lake.

*Eighty thousand and more of Alchemists (*Vijja) will surface.*

Anybody who wish to have a gain,

Work on your furnace (pho).’

How do you interpret this prophetic riddle?”

U Kawi asked back, : “How would you make out the ‘Alchemist’ (*Vijja*) and how would you interpret the ‘furnace?’

Ye Lei Sayadaw answered, : “Well, Alchemists (*Vijja*) are of course those striving for perfection in occult matters on medicine, magical talisman, mercury, mantras, etc. And ‘*pho*’ is meant by those furnace and *crucibles they use in their working ground.”

U Kawi offered his own revelation : “Venerable Sir, by *Vijja*, it means *Ariya Vijja*, one who had attained Path Knowledge. ‘*Pho*’ (the furnace) is meant for *Ānāpāna* (in-breath and out-breath), the working ground to acquire *Vijja* (Supramundane Path Knowledge.”

* *Vijja* : It has two meanings -

1. Alchemist (those chiefly concerned with occult efforts to transmute base metals, like lead, into gold).

2. Supramundane (*Vipassana*, Insight) Knowledge; understanding the Truth).

* crucibles : a heat-resistant container in which material can be subjected to great heat.

Ye Li Sayadaw acknowledged U Kawi's interpretation, : "Yes, yes, you are right U Kawi, you are right. We are a bit off track on this aspect."

From that day on, after admitting his waywardness, he abandoned his amulets for occult use, furnace and all things connected with alchemy for good, and started to practice *Anāpāna*, the mindfulness on the touch of out-breath and in-breath.

Ye Lei Sayadaw discussed further with U Kawi on more prophetic riddles circulating in town -

Ye Lei Sayadaw said, : *'Time is now over 2000 years,
Like the market about to close.
Hurry and buy for yourself,
If not, there won't be any left,
When time reaches 5000.'*

How would you interpret this riddle?

U Kawi explained his own interpretation, : "The time of *Sāsana* (Buddha's Teachings) has now passed 2000 years. It is like a market about to close. Time has now come into the **Vimutti* era, the era for Emancipation (*Nibbana*) through *Vipassana* Practice. That is why, if people strive for Insight Development, they would have the opportunity to achieve higher Insight Wisdom (*Panna*) in accordance with their *Parami** (past perfections, the cumulation of virtues developed and brought to maturity).

Ye Lei Sayadaw continued, : "There is also another prophetic riddle going around. How would you make out on this? It goes like this :-

'From Inn-Khan to Nget-Kya,

* The period in which Sasana (Buddha's Teachings) would prevail is 5000 years after Buddha passed into *Nibbana* (as foretold by the Buddha). There are 4 eras during the 2500 years followed by another 4. Each era roughly lasts around 500 years. They are in this order:

1. *Vimutti* era (era when practice of *Vipassana*, Insight Meditation is prevalent)
2. *Samatha* era(era when practice of *Samatha*, mind concentration for *Jhana,absorption* is prevalent)
3. *Sīla* era (era when practice of Morality is prevalent)
4. *Sutta* era (era when learning of *Pali* Scriptures is prevalent)
5. *Dana* era (era when practice of charity is prevalent).

From *Nget-Kya* to *Ledi*,

From *Ledi* to *Tun-Sin*.’

[It roughly translated like this:--

When the reservoir dries up, the birds come.

When the birds come, the fields are settled.

When the fields are settled, one comes down from the plough.]

U Kawi elucidated his version, : “First there appeared *Inn-Khan* Sayadaw (*Inn-Khan* means ‘reservoir *drying up*’) who became very well known. Then he was followed by *Nget-Twin* Sayadaw (*Nget-Kya* means ‘*birds come*’) who was also widely known. Then came the famous (world renowned) *Ledi* Sayadaw (*Ledi* means ‘*fields are settled*’). The last one, *Tun-Sin* is meant for me. *Tun* (plough), *Sin* (coming down) ... meaning ‘coming down from the plough.’

I had entered the Order of *Samgha* immediately after coming down from the plough, so some people called me *Tun-Taung* monk, or *Tun-Tone* monk, attaching me to the plough (*Tun*). Well, you can call me whatever name you like and make out whatever you may. Coming down from the plough (*Tun-Sin*) would definitely clear away the dirt (meaning for people to clear away defilements and obtain Enlightenment).

Ye Li Sayadaw remarked in appreciation, : “Yes, yes, that is very sensible and natural.”

Shin Kawi then made a request to Ye Lei Sayadaw, “Venerable Sir, I don’t want to practice the *Kasiṇas* anymore (as it is for power of mind through concentration of mind). Otherwise, if people start coming to seek my advice for their lost cattle, lost person and the like, I would soon become a shaman.”

Ye Lei Sayadaw had made a pact with his friend Nyaung Lunt Sayadaw (U May Dawi), that whoever happened to attain the higher stages of *Dhamma* (Supramundane Insight) would inform the other. Ye Lei Sayadaw wrote a letter to his good friend who lived in Naung Lunt village, Yeme-thin township, that although he himself had not obtained Supramundane Knowledge, he had discovered a highly unique novice (*Samanera*) who had attained it, and to come quickly to see for himself at his monastery in Meik ti-lar.

Upon his arrival at Ye Lei monastery, Nyaung Lunt Sayadaw took a look at Shin Kawi. He was not impressed and said so to his friend referring a saying in Myanmar, ‘When **sulei* shrubs arrive, the clearing for thrashing gets destroyed.

* *sulei* : is a kind of very small shrub with seeds having 3 or 4 thorns each. They grow very close to the ground. Because of their many thorns, the cleared ground for thrashing rice grains becomes destroyed.

When a *bhikkhu* who's been married arrives, the monastery gets destroyed.'

But Ye Lei Sayadaw replied, "Oh, do reserve your criticism before investigating Shin Kawi."

When Nyaung Lunt Sayadaw was about to ask questions, Shin Kawi made a request, "Please Venerable Sir, I would like to say something before you ask me. There are two different matters. One is *Lokiya* - those concerned with Mundane and the other is *Lokuttara* - those concerned with Supramundane, the Nibbāna. If you are asking on Mundane matters (*Lokiya*), please confine your questions within Mundane boundary and not cross over to Supramundane. Likewise, when asking on Supramundane (*Lokuttara*), please don't cross over to *Lokiya*. I have no inclination to answer if you ask with the two subject matters mixed up."

Nyaung Lunt Sayadaw thought Shin Kawi's statement was arrogant. He then proceeded to ask him solely on Supramundane (*Lokuttara*) matters the first day, and Mundane (*Lokiya*) matters only on the second day.

Brief Account on Questions by Nyaung Lunt Sayadaw and Answers by Shin Kawi

Q. Shin Kawi, tell me the five constituents of Mundane **Jhāna*.

* *Jhāna* : *Jhana* is a state of willful concentration or absorption on an object. Absorption is the ability of the mind to be concentrated on a single mental or physical object. *Nivarana* (hindrances to development of mind) and other demeritorious actions are destroyed through mental absorption.

The words *Samatha*, *Samādhi* and *Jhāna* are mostly used synonymously. They all mean Concentration of Mind. *Jhāna* is both a system of mental training and a process of transcending the lower states of consciousness to higher states of consciousness.

The five constituents of *Jhāna* (factors which give rise to mental absorption) are:-

1. *Vitakka* : initial application of the mind that directs it towards the object.
2. *Vicara* : sustained application of the mind that examines the object again and again.
3. *Piti* : delightful satisfaction, joy or pleasurable interest in the object.
4. *Suka* : bliss.
5. *Ekaggata* : one-pointedness of the mind.

Vitakka, *Vicara*, *Piti*, *Suka*, *Ekaggata* are *Cetasikas* (concomitants of mind) that can influence the mind to be fixed on an object. They can be developed and strengthened by *Samatha-bhavana* (*tranquility-meditation*) which is actually a form of mental training.

It should be noted that the five *Rupa-jhanas* differ from one another in the number of Jhana-factors (constituents), whereas the four *Arupa-jhanas* differ from one another in the objects of meditation.

A. Venerable Sayadaw, I wouldn't know how to describe the constituents of *Jhāna* that you mentioned. Please let me tell the way I know it.

“Very well then, you may say as you deem fit,” approved Nyaung Lunt Sayadaw, so Shin Kawi continued his answer thus,

“Venerable Sir, what you meant to say is about the *Kasiṇa* (object of meditation). First, you put your attention on the object of meditation.

Then you contemplate on it.

Tingling of skin like goose-pimples appear on the body and you tremble.

Then, there is bliss.

Then, you felt deep calmness.

Q. What, what, what did you say? Say it again.

A. Say, here is the *Kasiṇa* (object of meditation).

You focus your mind on the object of meditation.

Then you contemplate on it.

Creeping of skin like goose-flesh form on your body and you tremble.

Then, there is bliss.

This is followed by deep calmness.

That is all. You may name them or call them whatever you wish.

Q. Yes, that's right. Let me see -

- Fixing the mind on to the *Kasiṇa* is *Vitakka*.

(Vitakka is initiation of thought; the function of directing the mind towards the object of thought, here kasina disc).

- Concentrating and contemplating is *Vicarā*.

(Vicarā is sustained application of the mind to reproduce the kasina disc image in the mind and retaining it - Retention of image).

- Creeping of skin like goose-flesh appearing on the body followed by trembling is *Pīti*.

(Pīti is delightful satisfaction, pleasurable interest in the object of thought, zest. The thrill of joy that causes the flesh to creep).

- Occurrence of bliss is *Sukha*.

(Sukha is deep tranquility with great joy).

- The one-pointedness of mind which follows is *Ekaggata*.

(Sukha is replaced and purified by equanimity, known as Upekkha, and mindfulness.)

Nyaung Lunt Sayadaw said, “Alright, alright. I agree with you. Now continue with the subject on *Jhāna*.”

So, Shin Kawi continued his description of *Jhāna* one by one till the fifth *Jhāna*.

Q. Wait a minute, in ***Ākāsānañcā-yatana Jhāna*** (the *Jhāna* of Infinite Space), what do you contemplate on? Is it on Conventional Truth (*Paññatti*, Concept) or on Ultimate Reality (*Paramattha*)?

A. You contemplate on Conventional Truth (*Paññatti*, Concept) as its object of meditation.

[***Ākāsānañcā-yatana Jhāna*** (the *Jhāna* of the Infinity of Space), *is the first of the four Immaterial Jhāna (Arūpa Jhāna) and to develop it, one has to contemplate on the Infinite Space (which is a conventional truth, Paññatti, Concept) as the object of meditation after coming out from the fifth Rupa Jhana.]*

Q. What about in ***Viññāṇañcā-yatana Jhāna*** (the *Jhāna* of Infinite Consciousness)? Do you contemplate on Conventional Truth (*Paññatti*, Concept) or Ultimate Reality (*Paramattha*)?

A. You contemplate on Ultimate Reality (*Paramattha*) as its object of meditation.

[***Viññāṇañcā-yatana Jhāna*** *is the second of the four Immaterial Jhāna (Arūpa Jhāna) and to develop it, one has to contemplate on Infinite Consciousness, Ākāsānañcā-yatana Kusala Citta (which is an Ultimate Reality, Paramattha) as the object of meditation, after one’s subtle clinging (nikanti) for the first Arupa Jhana disappears.]*

Q. Then in ***Ākiñcaṇ-ñāyatana Jhāna*** (the *Jhāna* of Nothingness), what do you contemplate on - Conventional Truth (*Paññatti*) or Ultimate Reality (*Paramattha*)?

A. You contemplate on Conventional Truth (*Paññatti*, Concept) as its object of meditation.

[***Ākiñcaṇ-ñāyatana Jhāna*** *is the third of the four Immaterial Jhāna (Arūpa Jhāna) and to develop it, one has to contemplate on Nothingness, the object of meditation, (i.e. on the non-existence of Ākāsānañcā-yatana Kusala Citta. Nothingness is a conventional truth, Paññatti, Concept). You meditate thus after transcending from the second Arupa Jhana.]*

Q. How about the ***Neva-saññā-nāsaññā-yatana Jhāna***? On what do you contemplate - Concept (*Paññatti*) or Ultimate Reality (*Paramattha*)?

A. You contemplate on Ultimate Reality (*Paramattha*) as its object of meditation.

[***Neva-saññā-nāsaññā-yatana Jhāna*** (the *Jhāna* of neither perception nor non-perception) *is the fourth of the four Immaterial Jhāna (Arūpa Jhāna) and to attain it, one has to contemplate on the third Arūpa Jhāna Consciousness, the object of meditation, i.e. on ‘Ākiñcaṇ-ñāyatana Kusala Citta’. In Neva-saññā-nāsaññā-yatana Jhana, Consciousness is so subtle and refined that one cannot definitely say whether*

there is a Consciousness (perception) or not. Consciousness is no longer noticeable at the stage of this Jhana.]

Q. When you are transcending from ***Ākāśānañcāyatana Jhāna to Viññāṇañcāyatana Jhāna*** do you contemplate on the lower *Jhana* or higher *Jhana* as the object of meditation?

[i.e. transcending from the first (*Jhāna of Infinite Space*) to the second (*Jhāna of Infinite Consciousness*) of the four Immaterial *Jhāna*].

A. You contemplate on the lower *Jhana* to transcend to the higher *Jhana*.

?? [***Viññāṇañcāyatana Jhāna*** is the second of the four Immaterial *Jhāna* (*Arūpa Jhāna*) and to develop it, one has to contemplate on Infinite Consciousness, *Ākāśānañcāyatana Kusala Citta* (which is an Ultimate Reality, *Paramattha*) as the object of meditation, after one's subtle clinging (*nikanti*) for the first *Arupa Jhana* disappears.]

Q. Oh no, how could it be? How could you contemplate below to transcend higher?

A. Yes Sir, you have to contemplate below. Please let me give you an example. Let's say, there is a pit of excrements over there which you don't want to fall into. Being anxious of not falling into it, you watch it and climb upwards to get away from it.

Only then, Nyaung Lunt Sayadaw was satisfied.

Sunlun Sayadaw later recounted,

"The Sayadaws did not question further on that subject. Had they done so, I was ready to clarify on certain points. In the Pali Text, it was stated that in Arūpa Sphere (the Non-material Existence), 'No Concept (Paññatti) is there (Natthibo).' And it also stated that you contemplate on Concept (Paññatti) in the Arūpa Jhānas.

If they were to ask, "How are you going to contemplate on any Concepts (Paññatti) where there is nothing?

I would have answered, "You can contemplate on the Concept (as the object of meditation) which is not there.'

And should they ask, "How?"

I would have replied, showing them an object, "Look, here is an object. You see it right?" Then, I would hide it and ask them again, "Is there any object now? No, there isn't. Though there isn't any object now, you can think of that object you have seen, and can reflect and contemplate on it. Try it and you find you can contemplate on it, right? That is how you contemplate on thought-object, Concept (Paññatti) which is absent?"

For two whole days, Nyaung Lunt Sayadaw (U May Dawi) conducted his questioning and checked back Shin Kawi's answers on subjects relating to both *Lokiya* (Mundane matters) and *Lokuttara* (Supramundane matters). Ye Lei Sayadaw then told Nyaung Lunt Sayadaw, "Well, it was because of my previous promise to you that I had sent for you and arranged this meeting. If you are satisfied with the answers you may accept them, and if not, you may disregard them." He also added that if he had finished his questioning to Shin Kawi, he could return to his own monastery.

Sayadaw U May Dawi did not make anything but went back to his own monastery at Naung Lunt on the third day. Once he got there, he looked up various *Pāḷi* Texts for three whole days and found Shin Kawi's answers to be in accordance with them. He then sounded the hollow trunk hung at the monastery (a traditional practice of monasteries for signaling) to summon all the *bhikkhus* studying at the monastery. Relating to them of what he had learned about the *Dhamma* from Shin Kawi, he urged them to take up the meditation method as discovered by Shin Kawi.

Meanwhile, Ye Lei Sayadaw advised Shin Kawi to get ordained into the rank of full-fledged bhikkhu-hood (*Upasampadā*), as the latter was still a novice then. But Shin Kawi declined saying, "Venerable Sir, I'm not a learned monk, I couldn't learn the Buddhist Scriptures and have no inclination to do so. Furthermore, I don't know the *Vinaya* Disciplinary Rules (*which in fact is a very big subject on its own*). I prefer to contemplate and practice *Dhamma* (meditation) which I have discovered."

But Ye Lei Sayadaw insisted, "There is no need to learn the *Vinaya* Disciplinary Rules. You just listen and follow what we instruct you. If a novice of your stature were to be ordained to become a full fledged monk (*bikkhu*), that would have a profound impact on *Sāsana* even by carrying out simple service like officiating in ordination for a new *bhikkhu* into the Order (*Upasampada*) or in the Demarcation of a *Sīmā* (*Ordination Hall*).

Due to Ye Lei Sayadaw's persuasion, Shin Kawi acceded and on the 4th April 1921 (12th waning day of *Ta-baung*, 1282 M.E), Monday at 4:09 p.m., the *Ordination Ceremony was carried out for Shin Kawi and Shin Vizaya in *Khaṇḍa* Sima (Ordination Hall) of Ye Lei Monastery in Meik ti-lar town.

At the Ordination Ceremony, Hin Yan-kan Sayadaw acted as *Upajjhāya-cariya* (Preceptor Superior or Chairman of the Assembly). Ye Lei Sayadaw, Nyaung Lunt

* When *bhikkhus* are ordained, the date and exact period of time of the Ordination Ceremony are noted down officially.

Sayadaw and over ten other *bhikkhus* participated as **Kammavācā* Readers. U Paw, a broker from Meik ti-lar, and his wife Daw Kyee Nyo were the lay sponsors of U Kawi.

[*Shin Kawi together with his friend Shin Vizaya were at last ordained into the Order of Saṅgha. Shin Kawi from then on became known as Sayadaw U Kawi.]*

* *Kammavācā* : Mandatory reading of sacred *Pali* Texts in Ordination Ceremony (*Upasampada*) for validation; authorized words of ritual from the prescribed book of Compendium written on palm leaves, or on lacquered papers, usually enclosed within beautifully ornamented silk wrappers and gilded covers.