

Luangpor Teean's Sati Meditation

## **-- The Uniqueness, Obstacles, and Benefits**

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"Luangpor Teean's Sati Meditation" (hereon referred to as "Sati Meditation" for short; it is also known as "Dynamic Meditation") takes its name from the Pali word "Sati", which means mindfulness. Mindfulness and awareness go hand-in-hand, and both are the emphasis of this form of meditation introduced by Luangpor Teean. Short of mindfulness/awareness, it is no longer Sati Meditation.

In 1992, I was fortunate enough to move to where the Buddhist Association of the United States (BAUS) Chung Yen Monastery is located. It was also the first year BAUS invited a Sati Meditation master from Thailand to teach meditation. By that time, I happened to be experiencing a meditation side effect and was advised to stop the meditation practice for a while. Being preferred to continue with meditation, I was delighted to find a different technique that emphasized on the awareness of movements. I felt this method was a very good alternative to the traditional static method, and would allow me to practice meditation without side effects. I was right, and have been a practitioner ever since.

I respect traditional meditation methods. After all, we all know the Buddha got enlightenment by sitting and meditating under the Bodhi tree. It is also well documented that many meditation masters were enlightened through these methods. However, we should remember the Buddha, in his final words, told us to abide by the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. Luangpor Teean's Sati Meditation is unique because it emphasizes bringing the mindfulness practice to daily life. The traditional meditation also encourages practitioners to be mindful in their daily lives. This is how a person may get enlightened if he/she does not get it sitting on a cushion. It is not easy to do, however. It was difficult enough in the olden days when life was simple, and now even more so. Modern society has far too many distractions -- computers, telephones, TV, newspapers, trains, cars, advertisements, etc., all adding to our heavy interaction with the outside world. It is easy to become greedy/desirous when there are so many news and commercials to entice us. It is easy to get angry/irritated when we have to deal with so many people and situations every day. When greed, anger, and delusion are present, it is difficult to maintain mindfulness/awareness. A person may practice traditional meditation very well while sitting down, but may go back to the old self easily after getting off the cushion. The traditional method emphasizes on concentration, while Sati Meditation emphasizes on awareness. (In here "concentration" has its normal meaning, not referring to Samadhi, which is also important for Sati Meditation.) To deal with daily activities we need to apply awareness instead of concentration. Too much concentration on a certain things will cause non-awareness of others. In the traditional method, although walking meditation is usually a part of the practice, but the walking pace is typically much slower than normal walking and requires concentration. On the other hand, the pace of Sati Meditation walking practice is usually the same as normal walking and applies mindfulness. In fact, other people may not

know the meditation is in process. Therefore, when one is just doing normal walking in daily life, he/she can also practice Sati Meditation. Sati Meditation starts off with the awareness of very coarse movements and eventually gets to the very fine movement of the mind. It is most suitable for practitioners who want to bring the practice to daily life in the modern society.

I will not make the statement that Sati Meditation is the best method for all practitioners. Everybody is different. A certain method may be good for a person, but for others another method may be better. Sati Meditation, however, does possess unique features that make it very universal. In the following, I will list some:

- Most meditation methods require the practitioners to sit quietly on a cushion and remain motionless for a long period of time. This is helpful for the practitioner to develop concentration. However, it may be difficult to do for most people. Sati Meditation does not have strict requirements for the postures. One can sit on a cushion with lotus posture, on a chair with legs stretched, or sit with any postures as long as it is comfortable. One can also apply other postures like standing, lying down, kneeling, walking, etc. It is not necessary to endure leg pain, back pain, or other physical discomfort due to long sitting. Although a practitioner may choose to stay in one posture to overcome discomfort, he/she can also simply change to another posture to relieve unnecessary suffering.
- Specifically designed movements are meditated on for formal practice. As for informal practice, we can apply meditation in our daily activities. Every day we walk, stand, sit, lie down, eat, talk, work, cook, exercise, breathe, bathe, blink, swallow, etc. Aside from these physical movements, we also think constantly. Thoughts are movements in our mind. All of these can be the objects of meditation. Therefore, “no time to practice” is not a viable excuse for Sati Meditation practitioners.
- We can practice Sati Meditation in anywhere at anytime. Traditional meditation usually requires a quiet and secluded place to practice. For Sati Meditation, it is good, especially for the beginners, to join a retreat and practice in a desirable environment. Besides that, we can also practice at home, at work, in a car, a train, an airplane, shopping mall, etc. Instead of getting impatient about the delay of an airplane or a subway train for example, we can simply walk back and forth normally and meditate. Traffic jams or red lights are all good opportunities to meditate. In a public place, we can use any movements that are not noticeable by others.
- The fundamental practice of Sati Meditation utilizes coarse bodily movements. Because these movements tend to attract our attention, it is easier to meditate. The mind movement is very subtle, and hence is difficult to meditate for most people, especially the beginners. Movements like breathing or blinking are easier to follow than thoughts. Moving hands or legs are even easier to follow. Therefore, those who have practiced other forms of meditation previously may, if practice correctly, get results faster than those who do not have previous meditation experience. It should be mentioned that although the practice starts with the awareness of the bodily movements, practitioners are reminded to be aware of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness – body, sensation, mind, and mental objects.

· This meditation is a very soft form of practice because the emphasis is awareness/mindfulness, not concentration. It is much less likely to get into meditation side effects. Therefore, it is possible for those not suited to practice other forms of meditation to apply this method successfully.

· Sati Meditation develops awareness/mindfulness, which is the foundation of all kinds of practice. An experienced Sati Meditation practitioner can incorporate it in other daily practice routines. Once the awareness/mindfulness gets better, improvement can be expected no matter what is the undertaking. It can therefore help people to deepen understanding and realization of their own religion, whether it is Christianity, Buddhism, Muslim, Judaism or others. Also, people can improve their skills in sports, jobs, Tai-Chi Chuan, Kungfu, Karate, or other activities.

The major obstacles for the meditation practice are the five hindrances. This is well expounded in the Satipattana Sutra and will not be discussed here. Aside from that, although Sati Meditation has many unique features, people may not readily accept it. The following are the possible reasons:

· The fundamental practice of Sati Meditation is to pay attention to rhythmic movements. While sitting, we keep eyes open and continuously move our hands rhythmically. This is very different from the conventional meditation, which usually requires the practitioner to sit quietly without movements and with eyes fully or partially closed.

Since Sati Meditation is “unconventional”, it may be considered weird rather than elegant, and subsequently not accepted.

· Throughout the practice, Sati Meditation emphasizes on awareness/mindfulness instead of concentration (not to be confused with Samadhi, which is also important for Sati Meditation). This is different from the conventional method. Whether counting the breath, following the breath, reciting mantra, visualization, reciting Buddha’s name, etc., the traditional method always emphasizes, at least initially, on concentration. Sati Meditation, on the other hand, discourages the practitioner from concentrating. Too much concentration tends to limit the awareness. Traditional method starts off with the emphasis on concentration and then shifts to mindfulness. As for sati Meditation, the emphasis is always on awareness/mindfulness. People may not accept this idea and prefer to stay with the method they can enjoy or are used to.

· Although Sati Meditation is an expedient method, like other forms of meditation practice, it takes time to practice. It is like adding water drop-by-drop into a bucket. If we practice diligently and correctly, sooner or later the bucket will be full. Some people may come to practice with too much expectation in mind. When the expectation is not met, they may feel disappointed and stop the practice. Everybody will learn something after a seven-day retreat, wherein we should feel grateful and satisfied. However, I know some people who, during a retreat, encountered very good experiences. Unfortunately, for one reason or another, they chose not to continue. If stay fast with the practice, they certainly will be very successful.

If one practices Sati Meditation diligently and correctly, the results can be guaranteed. During his time, Luangpor

Teean often challenged and guaranteed the practitioners. He would tell them to take time out from their job and practice with him. He would guarantee them with results, and if they didn't get them he would pay the salary they would have earned during the time they practiced with him. In addition to the uniqueness mentioned above, the following are some benefits that can be expected:

- Happier / Less suffering

Greed, anger, and delusion are the source of suffering. Each time we are over-powered by these kinds of thoughts we start to suffer. When awareness/mindfulness gets stronger, it will automatically stop or cut short any thoughts that may induce suffering, e.g., hate, jealousy, impatience, etc. Thereby the person can improve the relationship with members of the family, friends, relatives, etc. He/she will suffer less, become more relaxed, and enjoy life better. The results can be expected not too long after one starts the practice. As the awareness/mindfulness gets better, so will be his/her life.

- More efficient

Ordinary people waste a lot of time because they have many wandering thoughts in their mind. They may be working on something, but their mind is thinking of something else. It is less of a problem if what they are working on does not require much awareness/mindfulness. If it does however, then time is wasted when the mind wanders. Sati Meditation develops awareness/mindfulness to cut short the thoughts, and thus improve efficiency.

- Self-realization and self-improvement

We are under the control of our subconscious mind most of the time. To acquire self-improvement, many people study hard to understand themselves, even consult psychiatrists. Once we can recognize the root of the problems residing in our subconscious, we can deal with the issues and improve ourselves more effectively. Sati Meditation allows us to understand ourselves better because we can peek (not by thinking, but by seeing) into our subconscious mind. We naturally become our own psychiatrist. Sati Meditation also helps us to let go and not controlled by our thoughts. An experienced Sati Meditation practitioner knows the best way to improve oneself is to see thoughts each time they arise. This naturally decreases the intensity and the frequency of the undesirable thoughts.

- Tread on the path

If we practice diligently and correctly, the results will come naturally and gradually level-by-level. Eventually we may reach the end of the practice, which is the end of arising and extinction, the end of suffering, Nirvana. Some people may wonder how moving our body will lead to enlightenment. Actually, it is the development of mindfulness/awareness that, goes against the stream of thought, makes the breakthrough. The original teaching comes from the Buddha, and people of any religion can practice it. He told us to abide on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness all the time. He also told us that we would get the results if we maintain awareness/mindfulness a few days, a few months, or a few years. Luangpor Teean reached the end of arising and extinction himself, and if we

tread his path, we may also reach the end of the practice.

In conclusion, I feel Luangpor Teean's Sati Meditation is a very unique method. It has many advantages, and is very suitable for our society. It may not be an attractive method for some people. However, those who can come to understand and accept this technique are the lucky ones, and will get invaluable benefits.