



**INSIGHT MEDITATION IN MYANMAR AND
THAILAND BASED ON VENERABLE MAHĀSĪ
SAYADAW'S TEACHING**

Venerable UPaññā Sāra

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts
(Buddhist Studies)

Graduate School
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The Graduate School, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, has approved this thesis entitled "Insight Meditation in Myanmar and Thailand Based on Mahasi Sayadaw's Teaching" as a part of education according to its curriculum of the Master of Arts in Buddhist Studies.

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Abstract

This qualitative research has three objectives, namely; 1. to study the concept of insight meditation in Theravāda Buddhism, 2. to learn the teaching of insight meditation in Myanmar and Thailand based on Mahasi Sayadaw and 3. bring out a comparative and contemporary meditation practice in Myanmar and Thailand.

The findings showed that Thailand has greatly influenced by the new meditation technique of Myanmar, though Thailand alone has its long history of meditation tradition for hundreds of years. Myanmar has produced a few historical great figures in Theravāda Buddhist tradition and who played a very important role of fundamental meditational needs for monks and lay followers. Among all those great figures, Mahasi Sayadaw is one of those who had newly introduced the vipassanā technique in Myanmar and immediately obtained high recognition and acceptance by the Buddhist practitioners and scholastic world. This research paper describes the historical background of meditation, mainly Samatha and Vipassanā as practiced by the Buddha himself, its development in different

time periods and contemporary popular meditative traditions in Theravāda Buddhist countries.

Moreover, the four foundations of Vipassanā meditation that which adopted by the Mahasi Sayadaw and “rising and falling of abdomen” as the primary object of concentration has been shown its step by step progress.

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Venerable Paññā Sāra

March 31, 2018

List of Abbreviations

In quoting the Pāli sources, the references are given according to the volume and page number of the Pāli Text Society (PTS) edition.

Pāli Sources:

| | | |
|-----|---|-------------------|
| AN | : | Aṅ guttara Nikāya |
| Bv | : | Buddhavaṃsa |
| Cp | : | Cariyā Piṭ aka |
| DN | : | Dīgha Nikāya |
| Dhp | : | Dhammapada |
| It | : | Itivuttaka |
| Ja | : | Jātaka |
| MN | : | Majjhima Nikāya |
| Pv | : | Peta-vatthu |
| SN | : | Samyutta Nikāya |
| Sn | : | Sutta-Nipāta |
| Ud | : | Udāna |
| Vv | : | Vimānavatthu |
| Vin | : | Vinaya-Piṭ aka |

In quoting Paṭṭali sources, the references are given according to the volume and page number of the Paṭṭali Text Society (PTS) edition. For example, bellows:

- D.II.252: D= Diṅgha Nikaṅya, II= volume, 252= page number
- Bv: B= Buddhavaṃsa, II= volume, 59= page number
- J.IV.499: J= Jaṅtaka, IV= volume, 499= page number
- Dhp.V. v.5: Dhp= Dhammapada, V= chapter 5, v.5= verse 5

Other Abbreviations

- ed. : edited/ editor
Ibid. : ibidem/ in the same book
No. : number
Op.cit : opera citato/as referred
p. : pages
pp. : pages
Skt. : Sanskrit
tr. : Translated/translator
v. : Verse
Vol.(s) : Volume(s)
PED : Pāli English Dictionary

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

1.1 Background and Significance of the Problems

Buddhism begins with the enlightenment of the Buddha under the Bodhi tree at Bodhgaya some 2500 years ago.¹ The Buddha gained enlightenment based on the practice of ethics, meditation and wisdom, which is also the foundation of Buddhist practice. The Buddha has specially emphasized over the practice of meditation and mindfulness in several discourses such as *Anapanasati sutta*, *Maha-satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, *Ananda Sutta*, *Arittha Sutta*, *Kayagata-sati Sutta*, which forms the basis for *Vipassanā* movement in Theravāda countries.²

The Buddha's teaching on meditation can be generally classified as *Samatha* and *Vipassanā* or which has been translated as concentration meditation and Insight meditation. One is the development of mental concentration – *samatha*, of one-pointedness of mind *cittakaggatā*. Meditation is simply concentrated awareness.³ The term “*Vipassanā*” originally came from *Pāli* language. The “*vi*” is an intensifier and the word “*passanā*” means “to see”. It is therefore, seeing with greater intensity or depth. Here, it means seeing the world and its nature in its depth. According to Buddhism, this world or *loka* has three characteristics as impermanence, suffering and non-self. *Vipassanā* meditation is primarily concern in giving rise to the realization of these three realities of

¹ Kathy Zaun, Buddhist Sects, **Holy Places and History: Inside Buddhism**, (Ohio: Milliken Publishing Company, 2003), p. 25.

² Bhikkhu Sujato, **A History of Mindfulness**, (Taipei: TCBEF, 2005), p.3.

³ Piyandana Bhikkhu, **Gems of Buddhist Wisdom**, (Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1993), p. 371.

world, as *Vipassanā* is the primary tool to gain wisdom and attain enlightenment.⁴

Theravāda tradition of Southeast Asia practices the traditional form of meditation practices as found in *pāli* canon, which is either based on *Samatha* or *Vipassanā*.⁵ The practice of *Vipassanā* is more often based on the *satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* as found in *Dighā Nikāya* and *Majjhimā Nikāya*. *Vipassanā* method as it is widely known as the practice of giving rise to Insight into three characteristic of the world.⁶ Although, *Vipassanā* meditation was recommended by the Buddhist tradition since the time of the Buddha but very little attention was paid to the practice of *Vipassanā* until Buddhaghosa's masterpiece work on meditation entitled *Visuddhimagga* during the 5th Century CE.⁷

This new development into the practice of *Vipassanā* meditation and the whole movement started by and large in 19th and 20th century and it was introduced by U Nārādha and popularized by Mahasi Sayadaw. Mahasi Sayadaw's method is known as new Burmese method as against the method taught by teachers preceding him such as Ledi Sayadaw, Mogok Sayadaw, and We Bu Sayadaw.⁸ In recent years practice method of Ledi Sayadaw and Webu Sayadaw popularizes the practice of *Vipassanā* in modern times especially among the western audiences and

⁴ Bodhi, Bhikkhu. **The Noble Eightfold Path**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1984), p. 14.

⁵ Ānālayo, Bhikkhu. **Satipaṭṭhāna: The Direct Path to Realization**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2003), p. 5.

⁶ Goenka, S.N. **Meditation Now: Inner Peace through Inner Wisdom**, (Igatpuri: Vipassanā Research Institute, 2004), p. 11.

⁷ Bhikkhu Ñāṇ amoli (trs.) **The path of Purification; Visuddhimagga** by Buddhaghosa (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2010), p. xxiv.

⁸ Joseph Goldstein & Jack Kornfield. **Seeking the Heart of Wisdom**, (Boston: Shambhala Publication, 2001), p. vii.

shaped the worldwide mindfulness movement.⁹ These teachers used the teaching found in *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and developed further in order to gain insight into the true nature of reality. *Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas* speaks of the awareness of body and its movement, feeling; pleasant, unpleasant and neutral and mind and mental qualities and ultimately awareness of *Dhamma*.¹⁰ Buddha describes in *Sati Sutta*¹¹ of *Anguttara Nikāya* that by practicing mindfulness one comprehends the dhamma clearly, he develops the sense of moral shame and moral dread. He restrains the sense faculties and eventually possesses virtuous behavior that which leads him to right concentration and that right concentration possesses to knowledge and vision of things as they really are.

The significance of this research is to study Mahasi Sayadaw's teaching on *Vipassanā* meditation and its implication in Myanmar and Thailand. Who made a significant influence on the teaching of *Vipassanā* in the Western countries as well as in many of the Southeast Asian countries. His teaching on *Vipassanā* is known as the new Burmese *Vipassanā* method. An important feature of Mahasi Sayadaw's approach is its dispensing with the traditional preliminary practice of fixed concentration or tranquilization, instead, the meditator practices *Vipassanā* exclusively during intensive periods of silent retreat that can last several months.¹² Two key elements in Mahasi Sayadaw's method for developing mindfulness are the careful labeling of one's immediate experience

⁹ Joseph Goldstein & Jack Kornfield, **Seeking the Heart of Wisdom**, (Boston: Shambhala Publication, 2001), p. vii.

¹⁰ Majjhima Nikaya. Vol- I, p. 55.

¹¹ Bodhi, Bhikkhu (trs), **Numerical Discourses of the Buddha**, (*Anguttara Nikāya*), (Boston: Wisdom Publication, 2012), p. 1229.

¹² Phra Thepyanmongkol, **A Study Guide for Samathā Vipassanā Meditation Based on the Five Meditation Techniques**, (Bangkok: The National Coordination Center of Provincial Meditation Institute of Thailand, 2012), pp. 3-6.

together with the cultivation of a high level of sustained concentration known as “momentary concentration.”¹³

Mahasi Sayadaw heavily emphasized on the practice of four basic meditation techniques from *Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, 1), as per instruction newcomer of meditation practitioners have to concentration on the abdomen. The meditator can be realized movements of rising and falling of it. 2) If meditator imagines or thinking something, he or she must be knowing and make a mental note, thinking or imagining or many others unusual not as it is. 3) If meditator intending to lift the hand or leg, make a mental note intending.

This research will examine the existing *Vipassanā* method according to the teaching of Mahasi Sayadaw and its practices in contemporary Thailand and Myanmar based on the material available in English and Burmese as well as the translation of *Pāli* canonical texts. The primary source of information shall remain on the work of Mahasi Sayadaw, his immediate disciples as well as western scholars written on *Vipassanā*.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1.2.1 To study the concept of Insight meditation in Theravāda Buddhism.

1.2.2 To study the teachings of Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw on Insight meditation.

1.2.3 To study the Insight meditation movement in Myanmar and Thailand based on Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw’s teaching.

1.3 Statement of the Problems Desired to Know

1.3.1 What is the concept of Insight Meditation in Theravāda Buddhism?

1.3.2 What is the teaching of Mahasi Sayadaw on Insight meditation?

¹³ Mahāsi Sayadaw, **Practical Insight Meditation: Basic and Progressive Stages**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1991), p. 22.

1.3.3 What is the Insight meditation movement in Myanmar and Thailand based on Mahasi Sayadaw's teaching?

1.4 Scope of the Research

1.4.1 Scope of the sources of Data

The research will focus on the traditional teaching on *Vipassanā* as found in the *Pāli* canonical text and others such as *Visuddhimagga* and other texts, although primary sources would largely be derived from the teachings and writings of Mahasi Sayadaw.

1.4.1.1 *Pāli* Canon

1.4.2.2 Commentaries and Sub-commentaries

1.4.3.3 Interpretation on the *Vipassanā* meditation by Mahasi Sayadaw.

1.4.2 Scope of Content

1.4.2.1 This thesis is to study what are the concept of Insight meditation in Theravada Buddhism and new Myanmar method of Insight meditation according to Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw's teaching, and collected material from Mahasi Sayadaw books as Primary Sources. The other materials are collected from famous scholar's books and articles as the Secondary Sources. This content can be classified into two stages as the follows:

1. To study the concept of Insight meditation in Therāvada Buddhism.

2. To study the new Myanmar method of Insight meditation according to Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw's teaching.

1.5 Definition of the Terms Used in the Research

1.5.1 Insight Meditation means a special kind of mediation base on Mahasi taught by the Buddha in order to give rise to the Insight into the nature of this world.

1.5.2 Concept of Insight Meditation includes type of meditation, the meaning of insight meditation, characteristics of Insight meditation, stages of Insight meditation, and development of Insight meditation.

1.5.3 New Myanmar method of Insight meditation is known as new Burmese method of *Vipassanā* meditation. It is called new because the method of teaching is in accordance with the Buddha's teaching but differs from earlier *Vipassanā* teaching and the practice of meditation.

1.5.4 Insight Meditation Movement refers to the origin and development of Insight meditation starting from the Buddha period to the contemporary Myanmar and Thailand.

1.5.5 Mahasi Sayadaw refers to the most well-known meditation teacher of new Myanmar (New Burmese) method of insight meditation in 20th century Myanmar.

1.6 Review of Related Literature

1.6.1 Anañālayo Bhikhu, *Satipaṭṭhāna: The Direct Path to Realization*, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2003).¹⁴ The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* in discourses and the division in commentarial traditions in connection with actual practice. He also gives a related perspective on the teaching and practice of Insight meditation. The idea of concentration and the tranquilization effect on the insight progress is the focus of his discussion. It provides valuable insight on the role of internal factors in the progress of insight.

1.6.2 Nanaponika Thera, *Heart of Buddhist Meditation: A Handbook of Mental Training Based on the Buddha's way of Mindfulness*, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2005).¹⁵ This book presents the Theravāda teachings on meditation, including an explanation of the *Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. The purpose of this book is to draw attention to the far – and deep – reaching significance of the Buddha's

¹⁴Anañālayo Bhikhu, *Satipattaṇa, The Direct Path to Realization*, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2003), p. 7.

¹⁵Nanaponika Thera. *Heart of Buddhist Meditation: A Handbook of Mental Training Based on the Buddha's way of Mindfulness*, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2005), p. 10.

“Way of Mindfulness” (*Satipaṭ ṭ hāna*), and to give initial guidance to an understanding of these teachings and their practical application. In addition, this book is issued in the deep conviction that the systematic cultivation of Right mindfulness, as taught by the Buddha in his discourse on *Satipaṭ ṭ hāna Sutta* he provides the most simple and direct, the most through and effective, method for training, and developing the mind for its daily tasks and problems as well as for its highest aim: mind’s own unshakable deliverance from greed, hatred, and delusion.

1.6.3 Dr. Silanandābhivamsa and Dr. Nandamālābhavamsa, “**A Practical way of Vipassanā**, (Yangon: Stars Empire Publication, 2011).¹⁶ The present methods of *Vipassanā* insight Meditation, the code of moral practice as contained in the entire scriptures is expounded and presented by Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw, *Aggamahapandita*, *Chatthasan-gitipucchaka*, is the fundamental doctrine of the Buddha revealing the way to solve the mystery of the miserable rounds of life existence (*Samsara*) from which total emancipation can be gained through Insight wisdom by diligently practicing *Vipassanā* on the right lines towards the supreme goal, Nibbāna, the extinction of all sufferings.

1.6.4 Soma Thera, **the Way of Mindfulness**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1990).¹⁷ Soma Thera, in the book, “The Way of Mindfulness” (2010), present the *Satipaṭ ṭ hāna Sutta* and its commentary of the *Majjhima Nikaṃya*, *Satipaṭ ṭ hāna Sutta* by Buddhaghosa Thera; and excerpts from the *Jinatthapakaṃsanî Tikaṃ*, marginal notes, of Dhammapāla Thera on the commentary of the texts of *anapanasati*. This book is useful in examination of *Vipassanā* mediation in general.

1.6.5 Mahasi Sayadaw, **The progress of Insight** (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1994).¹⁸ In this book, Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw has discussed about purification of conduct, in the case of male and female

¹⁶ Dr. Silanandābhivamsa and Dr. Nandamālābhavamsa. “**A Practical way of Vipassanā**”, (Yangon: Stars Empire Publication, 2011), p. 9.

¹⁷ Soma Thera. **The Way of Mindfulness**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1990), p. 15.

¹⁸ Mahasi Sayadaw, **The progress of Insight**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1994), p. 8.

devotees (*upasakā and upasikā*), the acceptance of the precepts, and the proper guarding and protecting of their observance, whether it be the five precepts, the eight *uposatha* precepts or the ten precepts.

1.6.6 Mahasi Sayadaw, **“Sallekha Sutta”**: A Discourse on the Refinement of Character, (Bangkok: Sahadhammika Ltd, 1997).¹⁹ Mahasi Sayadaw, in the book “Sallekha Sutta” (A Discourse on the Refinement of Character), present of a series of talks given by Mahasi Sayadaw during the years 1969-1970. It is an elaboration of an important teaching of the Buddha occurring in the *Majjhima Nikāya*. He says, “The self-training leading to this goal (the expunging of defilements (*kilesa*) forms the subject of the *Sallekha Sutta*, a Sutta that is beneficial to meditators and non- meditators alike, who wish to overcome immoral desires and cultivate wholesome ones.”

1.6.7 Mahasi Sayadaw, **“Culavedalla Sutta”**, Discourse on Various Aspects of Buddha’s Dhamma), (Bangkok: Pimsuay Co., Ltd, 2002).²⁰ Mahasi Sayadaw, in the book “Culavedalla Sutta” (Discourse on Various Aspects of Buddha’s Dhamma), present the exquisite treatment of the Four Noble truths, part by part, the clarification of meaning of “*Sakkāya*”, analytical comment on the features of “*Upadana*” and *Upadānānakkhandha*” the difference aspects of *Nirodhasacca*, the Eightfold *maggangas*, the causes for the development of Samadhi, the manner of absorption in *Nirodhasamapatti*, the method of dispelling various kinds of *vedanas* through *Vipassanā-ñāna*, the nature of *anusayas* and the characteristics of the fore jhanas are the highlights that have been scientifically expounded in this *sutta*.

1.6.8 Mahasi Sayadaw (trs.), **Satipaṭ ṭ hāna Vipassanā**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1990).²¹ This books talks about the specific

¹⁹ Mahasi Sayadaw, “Sallekha Sutta”: A Discourse on the Refinement of Character, (Bangkok: Sahadhammika Ltd, 1997), p. 11.

²⁰ Mahasi-Sayadaw, “Culavedalla Sutta” Discourse on Various Aspects of Buddha’s Dhamma, (Bangkok: Pimsuay Co., Ltd, 2002), p. 14.

²¹ Mahasi Sayadaw (trs.) **Satipaṭ ṭ hāna Vipassanā**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1990), p. 10.

details on Vipassanā practice and its methods given by Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw. ‘The Development of wisdom, seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, thinking, and the beginner’s exercises, walking, sitting, lying down, sleeping, working, washing, and eating,’ summary of the essential points.

1.6.9 K. Sri Dhammananda, **The Dhammapada**, (Malaysia: Sasana Abhiwurdhi Wardhana Society, 1920).²² It is another great translation work of K. Sri Dhammananda, Dhammapada (The word of truth) consists of 423 versus the gems of truth embodied in these texts aptly illustrate the moral and philosophical teachings of the Buddha.

1.7 Research Methodology

The research is primarily based on textual study of *Pāli* Canon and other scholarly work on Insight meditation. The research will be accomplished through the methods of an analysis, criticism and discussion and evaluation of the information collected from the primary and secondary sources.

1.7.1 Collecting data from the commentaries text, and sub commentaries.

1.7.2 Collecting data and analyze them from the secondary sources specially from the writings and talks given by Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw, including academic research, dissertations focused on the following topic.

1.7.3 Conclusion and suggestions.

1.8 Advantage Expected to Obtain from the Research

1.8.1 Bringing out comprehensive understanding about the Buddha’s teaching on Insight meditation.

1.8.2 Having lucid and clear understanding on the New Myanmar method of *Vipassanā* practice according to Ven. Mahāsi Sayadaw methods.

²² K. Sri Dhammananda, **The Dhammapada**, (Malaysia: Sasana Abhiwurdhi Wardhana Society, 1920), p. 9.

1.8.3 Having clear understanding on the movement of *Vipassanā* in Myanmar and Thailand based on Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw teachings.

CHAPTER II

The Concept of Insight Meditation in Theravāda Buddhism

2.1 Introduction: The Concept and Origin of Vipassanā

Vipassanā is the form of meditation practice that leads to the realization of the ultimate truth. It is the practice that helps us to overcome the mental defilements which leads to suffering in life. Although, there are variations in interpretation and the emphasis on the development of Insight meditation practice, but most of the *Vipassanā* teacher and the teaching focuses on the four foundations of mindfulness as found in *Satipaṭṭhāna sutta*.²³ However, the practice that is the most famous due to the teaching of Mahasi Sayadaw known as new Burmese method lies in the fact that it uses the rising and following movement of the abdomen as one breathe as the main object for beginner. However, in advance stages other objects are also used. There are teachers or the system employed while practicing *Vipassanā* meditation. These variations arise from the experience of one or the other teacher.

Satipaṭṭhāna sutta uses the four foundation of mindfulness and says that it is the best way for the purification of mind. Furthermore, the *sutta* also goes into various other meditation objects classified into many groups.

2.1.1 The Meaning of Vipassanā

The term '*Vipassanā*' is made up of two prefix 'Vi' which is an intensifier and gives greater quality or higher degree whenever used, '*Passanā*' on the other hand means seeing, vision, observing, therefore, the meaning of *Vipassanā* is seeing deeply or having perfect vision.²⁴ It is

²³ Pali Text Society. *Satipaṭṭhāna: The Direct Path to Realization*, M. I. p. 55.

²⁴ AN. III. 20.

usually translated as insight, here it means insight into the real nature of things. It means see the three marks of condition existence; *aniccā* or impermanence, *annatā* or non-self and *dukkhā* or suffering.²⁵ These three characteristics of phenomena must be thoroughly realized. In addition to referring to the methodology used to look inwards, *vipassanā* also means the change of heart that comes with the realization of freedom, of inner spaciousness. This insight is the most important piece. In the *sutta pīṭaka* the term "*vipassanā*" is hardly mentioned, while they frequently mention *jhana* as the meditative practice to be undertaken.²⁶

The definition of "*vipassanā*" has been found in many *suttas*, *gathas* as saying; (*vipassanā* is seeing things as they are: *ye nibbutā loke yathābhūtaṃ vipassisuṇ*, aor.); Th 1, 471; 2, 271 (*vipassi* for *passasi*); Sn 1115; J iii.183 (*pabbajitvā vipassitvā arahattaṃ pāpuṇ* *in*su).²⁷

Vipassanā is an insight into the nature of things; *Vipassanā* is seeing things as they are. The path that leads to this insight or realization is awareness or mindfulness. The method to develop mindfulness is based on a famous discourse given by the Buddha. In this discourse, the Buddha explained how to develop and cultivate the mind. *Vipassanā* is insight, which is meaning to "see the things as they are".

2.1.2 The Characteristics of Vipassanā

Vipassanā Meditation has its own unique features that sets which is apart from the other kind of meditation including *Samatha* or tranquility meditation. One of the most stricken features of the *Vipassanā*

²⁵ Gunaratana, Henepola, **Mindfulness in plain English**, (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2011), p. 21.

²⁶ Bhikkhu, Thanissaro, **One Tool Among Many. The Place of Vipassanā in Buddhist Practice**, accessed 12 March 2017 <<http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/onetool.html>>.

²⁷ **The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary**, (London- Pali Text Society, 1921), p. 627.

meditation is that it is aimed at the development of insight into the nature of the mundane existence and the development of the ultimate reality.²⁸

A cultured mind is subtle and soft. It is malleable, so that one can direct it at a desired object according to one's wishes. These praiseworthy qualities are taken as natural characteristics of a cultured mind that is advanced in meditation. Therefore, restraint of faculties can be perfected only through meditation.

2.1.3 The Unique Characteristic of Vipassanā

Insight Meditation gives rise to Insight Wisdom which fully and completely realizes the ultimate reality as it arises in the present moment. Its ultimate goal is to eradicate all negative emotions which are the cause of suffering in life and attain the ultimate peace of *Nibāna*.

If one realizes the Insight Wisdom, that person will be free from the wrong views of the world and act wisely, all his actions will stem from the positive state of mind and not from greed, hatred or delusion. The insight wisdom can also arise out of the dharma study in its many forms, it can arise out of listening *dhamma* talks, reading books, discussion and so on. However, such wisdom is the result of *Sutamaya panna* or wisdom through hearing *dhamma*, which is a first step toward the realization of truth and cultivation of the real insight wisdom, however, such an insight does not lead to deeper insight or *bhāvanāmayi panna* or insight through *Vipassanā* meditation. Insight meditation can also not arise on the basis of the conventional modes or methods. It is only the insight wisdom that leads to the ultimate realization of the truth or *nibāna*.²⁹

2.1.4 The Uniqueness of Vipassanā Samadhi

²⁸ Bhikkhu Nanamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi (trs.), **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha-Majjhima Nikāya**, (Buddhist Publication Society, 1995), pp. 96-97.

²⁹ Vājiranāna, P.M., **Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice**, (Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Missionary Society, 1987), p. 81.

There are many factors that distinguish from other form of *Vipassanā* and *samadhi*. Most type of *samadhi* comes under the category of concentration based in tranquility. These *samadhi* brings peace and power of concentration; they are very useful but do not lead to realization of the ultimate truth. *Vipassanā Samadhi* is unique in a sense because it is not easy to develop such a concentration as the object of meditation keeps changing. When one looks at the mind and body and the changes that undergoes, it will bring some uneasiness and discomfort, this too makes it difficult to stay focus on the object of meditation and there are a lot of emotional reactions that pushes the meditator back from the topic of *samadhi* in *Vipassanā*.³⁰ The main objective of the *Vipassanā* meditation is to give rise to the deeper understanding on the nature of self, impermanence and the deep seated tendency to look at things with deluded mind. All these become an obstacle while trying to develop a concentration in *Vipassanā* meditation.³¹

The uniqueness of *Vipassanā* is, it can lead someone to the cessation of suffering which is the Enlightenment. Practitioner of *Vipassanā* can develop the mindfulness on enlightenment factor, which is supported by seclusion, dispassion and cessation, and ripens in relinquishment.³²

2.1.5 Objects of Vipassanā Meditation

The ultimate reality of life once realized by the help of insight wisdom it helps to relieve the suffering of this world and overcome the defilement of the mind, such a realization will prevent person from ever acting from the mind of ignorance which leads to suffering this world. The realization of ultimate truth is seeing the real nature of *nāma* and *rūpa*, here *nāma* means the mental constituent of *Cetasikā*. In the *Vipassanā*

³⁰ Vājiranāna, P.M., **Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice**, (Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Missionary Society, 1987), p. 83.

³¹ Ibid., p. 83.

³² Bhikkhu Nanamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi (trs.). **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha-Majjhima Nikāya**, (Buddhist Publication Society, 1995), p. 948.

meditation many types of *nāma* can be used as an object of meditation, such as physical pain, mental suffering, mental wandering, sleepiness, mind with or without craving, mind with or without anger, with hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting and bodily sensations, which all are types of mental object. All these mental factors arise in everyday life very frequently but generally, people do not realize that such a mental state can be used as an object to achieve the liberation from suffering through *Vipassanā* meditation.³³

Rūpa is anything other than mental factors or mental constituent or changes due to the cold or heat. The insight meditation can also be taken with an object which can be called *rūpa* such as visible objects, an audible object, an odorous object, a taste object, a bodily contact as well as different bodily posture such as walking, standing, sitting and lying down. Alike, *nāma* and *rūpa* also arise in everyday life and can be used as the object of *Vipassanā* meditation.³⁴

2.1.6 Development of Vipassanā Movement

According to some scholars the development of *Vipassanā* took place in early Buddhism with some modification in doctrinal teaching, according to this, *prajñā* was considered as an alternative method for gaining *Nibbāna*. There are some *suttas* which contains some traces of debate between Mahayana and Theravada schools with regard to the interpretation of the teaching and development of *Vipassanā*. However, in the *Sutta pitaka*, there is hardly any mention of the term '*Vipassanā*'. Although, the term *jhana* is the most frequently found throughout the *Pāli* canon.³⁵ Vetter and Bronkhorst suggest that *jhāna* itself constitutes the original liberating practice. Vetter further says that the eightfold path was the means of preparation of the practice of *jhāna*, another Buddhist scholar Norman also suggests that "the Buddha's way of release... was by means

³³ Winston, L. K., **Theravada Meditation: The Buddhist Transformation of Yoga**, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1992), p. 122.

³⁴ Winston, L. K., op. cit., pp. 122-125.

³⁵ Vājiranāna, P.M.. **Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice**, (Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Missionary Society, 1987), p. xiv.

of meditative practices.”³⁶ Many of the early schools of Buddhism mentions the practice of insight practice. *Sthaviravāda* school emphasized on sudden insight, “In the *Sthaviravāda* progress in understanding comes all at once, insight does not come gradually.”

Vipassanā meditation movement as it is known today throughout the Southeast Asia as well as the West is a recent meditation movement which original began at Myanmar, Thailand and other South Asian countries and even outside the traditional environment of this form of Buddhism.³⁷ At present, there are *Vipassanā* centers and teachers all across the globe. Most of the Insight Meditation found today is largely based on the Burmese Insight meditation, even among them, only one or two branches of Burmese Insight meditation systems. The writing on insight meditation is largely based on the Burmese Insight meditation movement as well as 5th century CE Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga* or mixture of these two.³⁸

There are several schools of meditation, especially in Myanmar and Thailand that is associated with *Vipassanā* movement such as Thai Forest Tradition and the ‘New Burmese Method’ which gives emphasis on developing the insight into three marks of condition existence as means to gain wisdom.³⁹ *Vipassanā* movement started with some of the remarkable meditation teachers largely in Burma and Thailand such as Ledi Sayadaw, Mogok Sayadaw, Mahasi Sahadaw, Ajahn Chah and Dipa Ma as well as his disciples who popularize the practice furthermore such as S.N.

³⁶ Tilmann Vetter, **The Ideas and Meditative Practices of Early Buddhism**, (New York: E.J. Brill, 1988), p. xxxiii.

³⁷ McMahan, David L., **The Making of Buddhist Modernism**, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.11.

³⁸ Tadeusz Skorupski, (ed.), **The Origin of Insight Meditation**, L.S. Cousins *The Buddhist Forum*, Vol. IV, 1994-96 (London: University of London), p. 36.

³⁹ Nyanaponika, **The Heart of Buddhist Meditation**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1998), pp. 107-109.

Goenka⁴⁰ in India and in the West people like Joseph Goldstein, Tara Brach, Gil Fronsdal, Sharon Salzberg and Jack Kornfield.⁴¹

The most important discourse ever given by the Buddha on mental development meditation is called the *satipaṭṭhāna – sutta*, the setting –up of mindfulness.⁴² The greater part of emphasis in the *Vipassanā* movement is on the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna sutta* and the use of mindfulness to gain Insight into the three marks of condition existence.

Mindfulness of breathing is described throughout the practice. *Satipaṭṭhāna sutta* describes finding a suitable place like forest and watching breath and notice various qualities of breath, if its long or short, subtle or gross, etc. one practices the observations of the of the bodily sensation and their nature as it comes and goes.

The benefits of *Vipassanā* meditation can be seen in the *satipaṭṭhāna sutta*. The Buddha clearly point out that meditation is the only way for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for destruction of suffering and grief for entry into the Noble path and for the realization of *nibbāna*. The development of *Vipassanā* is based on the *satipaṭṭhāna sutta*, the four foundations of mindfulness: the first is mindfulness of the body – *kāya*, the second is mindfulness of the feelings – *vedanā*, third is mindfulness of the mind – *citta*, and fourth is mindfulness of the mind-objects – *dhamma*.⁴³ *Satipaṭṭhāna* offers the most simple, direct, and effective method for training the mind to meet daily tasks and problems and to achieve the highest aim through liberation.

⁴⁰ McMahan, David L., **The Making of Buddhist Modernism**, (Oxford: Oxford University Press,2004), pp. 11-13.

⁴¹ King, Winston L., **Theravada Meditation: The Buddhist Transformation of Yoga**, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1992), pp. 132-137.

⁴² Walpola Rahula, **What the Buddha Taught**, (Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1978), p. 69.

⁴³ Walpola Rahula, **What the Buddha Taught**, (Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1978), p. 69.

2.2 Insight Meditation vs. Samatha Meditation

There is much confusion about meditation in general, and especially about *Samatha* and *Vipassanā* meditation. Many people have the wrong notion that *Samatha* and *Vipassanā* meditation is the same thing, some again believe that *Samatha* meditation automatically gives rise to wisdom. In reality, *Samatha* meditation can give rise to certain level of wisdom, however, it cannot be compared with insight meditation which gives rise to insight knowledge and the realization of the ultimate truth. There shall be an examination of the difference of between *Samatha* and the *Vipassanā* meditation in the following areas; different meditation objects, different level of concentration, different types of wisdom and different effects. There are two way to develop insight meditation; 1, *Samatha yānika* way: - one whose vehicle is calmness and 2, *Vipassanā yānika* way: - one who practices only insight.

2.2.1 Differences between Vipassanā and Samatha Meditation

Insight Meditation or *Vipassanā Kamaṭ ṭ hāna* is the form of meditation involves the cultivation and development of wisdom. *Vipassanā* meditation leads to freedom from suffering and the attainment of greatest degree of happiness in life. This is the most profound form of meditation either in theory or in practice and it is only found within Buddhist tradition, therefore, insight meditation is considered unique meditation which is only found in *Pāli* canon.⁴⁴

Insight meditation does not require higher or stronger concentration power which is required in *Samatha* Meditation in order to subdue the mental suffering as it arises. This is due to the nature of *Samatha* meditation which only replaces the mental suffering due to the power of concentration temporarily. *Samatha* meditation deals with the suffering

⁴⁴ Nyanaponika, **The Heart of Buddhist Meditation**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1998), p. 39.

indirectly that is to say it only allows to subdue the cause of suffering during meditation experiences.⁴⁵

In order to experience the benefits of the *Samatha* meditation one has to engage in the meditation regularly or else its effect diminishes once the meditation is stopped. The various object and methodology used for the practice of *Samatha* meditation is based on the conventional mode of reality and therefore, does not lead to insight or wisdom in its full sense of the term. However, Insight knowledge or *Vipassanā ñāṇā* is not dependent on any conventional reality for gaining the insight to the nature of things as they really are, instead *Vipassanā* leads to direct and full realization of the ultimate truth or reality. In short, *Samatha* meditation is not capable of realizing the full and complete realization of ultimate truth, which can be only achieved by *Vipassanā ñāṇā* or Insight Knowledge. Insight meditation subtly and wisely eliminates mental suffering by direct awareness as physical and mental phenomena as they really are at the present moment without relying on thoughts and imaginations. As a result, full awareness and realization of the reality of life is achieved.⁴⁶

For instance, when anger or any other negative emotions arises in the mind, if one is able to follow those feelings and becomes fully aware of those feeling and their true nature, one will not get angry as that emotion undergoes the transformation through development of wisdom and insight meditation. Furthermore, the insight meditation is not limited to the removing of negative emotions including anger but it also gives rise to more skillful and positive emotions, it gives rise to for example the *mettā* or loving kindness for all living beings, which further serves the purpose of creating condition wherein person may have greater satisfaction and happiness in life.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Tadeusz Skorupski, (ed.), **The Origin of Insight Meditation**, L.S. Cousins The Buddhist Forum, Vol. IV, 1994-96 (London: University of London), p. 36.

⁴⁶ Gunaratana, Henepola, **Mindfulness in plain English**, (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2011), p. 21.

⁴⁷ Archan Vinai Ussivakul, op. cit., p. 87.

Despite the obvious differences between *Samatha* and *Vipassanā* form of meditation, they are not really opposing each other, instead, they are complementary and supplementary to each other and therefore, they both should be used to cultivate wisdom. Each of these meditations has its own use and therefore, they should be used according to the needs of a meditator. When one requires a general wholesome happiness, contentment, development of memory or the power of concentration *Samatha* meditation is more useful. However, one needs to remember that *Samatha* meditation cannot effectively lead one from the mental suffering, therein, Insight meditation is the ideal practice.⁴⁸

Thus, the insight meditation has its own deepness than the tranquil meditation (*Samatha*). In order to achieve the final liberation (*nibbāna*), one has to practice *Vipassanā*, whereas *Samatha* cannot lead to achieve it. *Samatha* is only for calming down the body and mind, it is a preparatory stage of meditation to make ready for practicing *Vipassanā*.

2.2.2 Different Mediation Objects in Samatha and Vipassanā

There are two types of truth, one is called conventional truth and ultimate truth or in *Pāli sammuti sacca* and *paramattha sacca*.⁴⁹ Conventional truth is based on the conventional symbols such as traffic signal or word in this page which signifies some sort of factual truth and meaning.⁵⁰ Whereas, the Ultimate truth is one that exists by its own nature independent of any symbol, for instance various kinds of feeling such as anger, frustration, etc. Therefore, everything that we come across in our everyday life are either conventional or ultimate objects, the conventional symbols or objects are used for the practice of *samatha bhavana* or

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 89.

⁴⁹ Narada, T. **A Manual of Abhidhamma**. (Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Missionary Society, 1979), p. 25.

⁵⁰ Maung Tha Noe, (tr.) **Fundamentals of Vipassanā Meditation**, (Rangoon: Buddhasasana Nuggaha Organization, 1992), p. 89.

development of concentration whereas ultimate truth is used for the development of *Vipassanā bhavana* or Insight development.⁵¹

These objects of mind are mental in most part and can be wholesome or unwholesome. The unwholesome mental state which leads to being blindly attached to conventional object of mind, if one is being praised either out of ill will or with other unwholesome intentions, most people would enjoy such a praise without the awareness of real intention. People also become blindly displeased without knowing the truth of the matter, as well as people get blindly attached ultimate object of mind or become blindly get displeased with ultimate object of mind. Such a blindness and unawareness of the mental object will hinder the real development of the wisdom and further increase one's unwholesome state of mind.

On the other hand, if one is aware one can turn such an object of mind as object of meditation and develop insight instead of giving rise to unwholesome state of mind. The true work in meditation lies into purification of the mind from such defilements of the mind. One also needs to remember that there can be no meditation without the mental object or there can be no purification of the mind without presence of any degree of unwholesome mental object in the mind.⁵²

Samatha practice focuses on the suitable conventional meditation object. The ultimate object of mind cannot be the subject of *Samatha* meditation, as such object of meditation is free from three characteristic of condition existence such as impermanence of *Anicca*, devoid of self or *Anatta* and suffering or *dukkha*.⁵³ Furthermore, the time should be reasonable while practicing the *Samatha* meditation, since it has not the same basic characteristic as the ultimate mental object. Furthermore, the *Samatha* meditation requires the stable object on which

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 91-92.

⁵² Emily Degyansky, **Samatha and Vipassanā Meditation: Buddhism in Practice**, (Christian Theological Seminary, 2009), p. 78.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 78-81.

the mind can focus for given amount of time in order to develop and progress on the path to *Samatha* meditation. The object of meditation also needs to be stable in order to cultivate the concentration, if the object of meditation is not stable and improper, there can be no arising of *Samatha* meditation.⁵⁴

While practicing Insight meditation, the object of meditation must be of ultimate reality and not the conventional objects, this is due to the fact that the aim of the *Vipassanā* meditation is to give rise to ultimate reality therefore the object also must be ultimate object.

2.2.3 Different Levels of Concentration in Samatha and Vipassanā

There are three levels of concentration based on its length, they are *Khaṇika samadhi* - momentary concentration, *Upacārasamdahi* - access concentration and *Appanā samadhi* - fixed concentration.⁵⁵ *Khaṇikā* simply means momentary therefore, *Khaṇika samadhi* is momentary concentration on an object of mind. *Upacāra Samadhi*, at this meditation stage one is able to prevent only five senses from arising which are as follows; seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching. The only sense that is open is the mind door. This means that meditator cannot be disturbed through the five senses. This level of concentration is very high and is almost up to the highest level of concentration. Furthermore, in *Appanā samadhi* mind remains steady and focus with the object of meditation to the point that it can concentrate on the object continuously for days on end. This is the highest kind of concentration.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Sole-Leris, A. **Tranquility and Insight. An Introduction to the Oldest Form of Buddhist Meditation**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1986), p. 39.

⁵⁵ Bhikkhu, Nanamoli (trs.), **Visuddhimagga: The Path of Purification**, (Buddhist Publication Society, 2010), p. 82.

⁵⁶ Sole-Leris, A. **Tranquility and Insight. An Introduction to the Oldest Form of Buddhist Meditation**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1986), pp. 41-43.

During the meditation the mind begins the momentary concentration or *khaṇ ikā samadhi* with the aim of achieving the *upacāra* and *appanā samadhi* respectively. In case of the insight meditation, all that requires is the momentary concentration of *khaṇ ika samadhi*. There is no need for further levels of concentration beyond *khaṇ ika* or momentary concentration.⁵⁷ This is due to the nature of reality which also rises and falls away rapidly. Another condition is that meditation object should be in the present moment not in the past or in the future. If there is higher level of concentration, it becomes impossible for insight wisdom to follow the present arising of ultimate reality. This is due to the fact if the concentration is too strong than ultimate wisdom cannot take place as it arises and falls away many times.⁵⁸

2.2.4 Different Types of Wisdom in Samathā and Vipassanā

The *Samatha* meditation leads to concentration on the subject of meditation for certain period of time in order to remove the mental wondering and five hindrances or other negative emotions. However, the practice of *samatha* meditation cannot lead to full realization of the wisdom. The practice of *vipassanā* meditation on the other hand leads one to the higher levels of wisdom, it does not deal with the temporary suppression of the hindrance or negative emotions. Instead, it deals with removing those negative emotions from ever arising by means of cultivating wisdom.⁵⁹ Wisdom

⁵⁷ Sole-Leris, A. **Tranquility and Insight. An Introduction to the Oldest Form of Buddhist Meditation**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1986), p. 4.

⁵⁸ Archan Vinai Ussivakul, op. cit., pp. 89-90.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 93.

leads to understanding of getting to know the path and the not-path thus, “This is the path, this is not the path”.⁶⁰

2.2.5 Different Effects of Samatha and Vipassanā Meditation

Samatha meditation creates calm and happiness in the mind by subduing the various defilements of mind, however, this method can only suppress the defilement and has no capacity to remove it. It is effective as long as the power of concentration is in effect. On the other hand, *Vipassanā* meditation aims at cultivating the higher levels of wisdom, which gives rise to the nature of reality and the four noble truth, therefore, it is effective in removing the defilement once and for all.⁶¹

While practicing *samatha*, mind becomes more calm and tranquil and while practicing *vipassanā* or four foundations of mindfulness then great fruit and its benefit of liberation is gradually attained, thus stated by Buddha in *Ānāpānasati Sutta of Majjhima Nikāya*.

When mindfulness of breathing is developed and cultivated, it is of great fruit and great benefit. When mindfulness of breathing is developed and cultivated, it fulfills the four foundations of mindfulness. When the four foundations of mindfulness are developed and cultivated, they fulfill the seven enlightenment factors. When the seven enlightenment factors are developed and cultivated, they fulfill true knowledge and deliverance.⁶²

2.3 Four Foundation of Mindfulness: A Key Concept of Vipassanā

The whole *Vipassanā* meditation movement derives its main teaching from the *satipaṭṭhāna sutta* which contains for the four

⁶⁰ Bhikkhu, Nanamoli (trs.), **Visuddhimagga: The Path of Purification**, (Buddhist Publication Society, 2010), p. 631.

⁶¹ Nyānaponika Thera, **The Heart of Buddhist Meditation**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2005), p. 95.

⁶² Bhikkhu Nanamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi (trs.), **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha-Majjhima Nikāya**, (Buddhist Publication Society, 1995), p. 943.

foundation of mindfulness which is used to give rise to insight.⁶³ This is because the *sutta* itself does talk about the four foundation of mindfulness as the direct path to enlightenment, further the *sutta* says that it is the only way to purification of beings and the overcoming of the suffering and attainment of the enlightenment. This is how the *sutta* describes the importance of four foundation of mindfulness: “This is the only way, monks, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destruction of suffering and grief, for reaching the right path, for the attainment of *nibānna*, namely, the four foundations of mindfulness.”⁶⁴

Furthermore, the *sutta* explicitly points out these four foundations of mindfulness which are body, feelings, consciousness and *dhammas* or mental objects. The Buddha also emphasizes the fact that this is contemplation together with mindfulness when he says contemplating the body, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful. In order for the four foundations to work, there needs to be the quality of mindfulness as well as ardent desire and contemplation. This is how the *sutta* puts this teaching in the following words;

“Herein a monk lives contemplating the body in the body, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having overcome, in this world, covetousness and grief; he lives contemplating feelings in feelings, he lives contemplating consciousness in consciousness, he lives contemplating mental objects in mental objects.”⁶⁵

It is obvious if one reflects that why the Buddha chose these four items as the object of contemplation that leads to the liberation of mind, and in that particular sequence. If one reflects little more deeply, one will realize that these four objects are all within one’s reach at all time, it is not one’s outside, that is the first thing to notice about the four foundation of

⁶³ Ānālayo, Bhikkhu. **Satipaṭṭhana: The Direct Path to Realization**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2003), p. 76.

⁶⁴ M. I. 55.

⁶⁵ M. I. 55.

mindfulness. Another thought that comes in mind that they are chosen in progressive order from body to mental objects, body is as the first foundation as it is the most visible and concrete among all the four foundations of mindfulness.⁶⁶

Second comes the feeling, which logically follows from the body, as body contains the six senses which is the six doors from which we experience everything inside and outside our selves. It is due to the unawareness of the feeling that lot of negative emotion and mental defilement arises in the mind.⁶⁷

Thirdly, it is the consciousness, which logically comes after the feeling on the basis of which the mental activity starts and it also is much harder to observe therefore, it comes at the third place.

Finally, comes the contemplation of the *dhamma* or mental objects which are largely shows the real nature of things, once one has enough mindfulness of body, feeling and consciousness and mental factor than one is ready to contemplate on the reality of things, this factor is the real reason for giving of the purification of the mind and realization of the ultimate truth.

2.3.1 First Foundation of Mindfulness: Contemplation of the Body

Contemplation of the body is the first of the four foundation of the mindfulness. As explained earlier, it is because of its physical and more tangible nature that it comes as the first foundation for the mindfulness practice. The Buddha this *sutta* goes the mindfulness of the body and instructs the various ways to engage with the breath. The Buddha describes the following the ways of looking at the body and contemplation such as breath, various body postures. In the *Kāyagatāsati sutta* (Mindfulness of the Body) of *Majjhima Nikāya*, the Buddha explains how a practitioner can practice the right mindfulness on body;

“Ever mindful, he breathes in, mindful he breathes out. Breathing in a long breath, he knows, "I am breathing in a long breath"; breathing out

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 39.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

a long breath, he knows, "I am breathing out a long breath"; breathing in a short breath, he knows, "I am breathing in a short breath"; breathing out a short breath, he knows, "I am breathing out a short breath."⁶⁸

Furthermore, the Buddha also gives the series of contemplation once the meditator has created enough power of concentration. He goes on to explain the reflection on the body impurities, four elements within the body such as earth, water, fire and air, as well as the contemplation of corpses at different stages of decay.

And further, monks, a monk reflects on this very body. "There are in this body the element of earth, the element of water, the element of fire, the element of wind."⁶⁹

And further, O Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu reflects on just this body hemmed by the skin and full of manifold impurity' There are in this body hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, fibrous threads saliva, mucus, synodic fluid, urine.⁷⁰

2.3.2 Second Foundation of Mindfulness: The Contemplation of Feeling

After the contemplation on the body comes the contemplation of the feeling. Feeling is subtler than body, therefore, it comes as the second foundation for the mindfulness. It comes after the body contemplation because the feeling arises out of the bodily contact through six sense with inside and the outside world. There are basically, three kinds of feelings pleasant, painful and neither painful nor pleasant, again it is divided into two classes the mundane and spiritual. This is how the *sutta* puts it.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Bhikkhu Nanamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi (trs.), **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha-Majjhima Nikāya**, (Buddhist Publication Society, 1995), p. 950.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 951.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Bhikkhu Nanamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi (trs.), **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha-Majjhima Nikāya**, (Buddhist Publication Society, 1995), p. 67.

“Herein, monks, a monk when experiencing a pleasant feeling knows, "I experience a pleasant feeling"; when experiencing a painful feeling, he knows, "I experience a painful feeling";"I experience a neither-pleasant-nor-painful worldly feeling"; when experiencing a neither-pleasant-nor-painful spiritual feeling, he knows, "I experience a neither-pleasant-nor-painful spiritual feeling.”⁷²

2.3.3 Third Foundation of Mindfulness: The Contemplation of Consciousness

Next comes the contemplation on the consciousness. This comes as the third place in the four foundation for a reason, one has to have greater amount of concentration and mindfulness over the body awareness and the awareness of the feeling, lot of our thoughts and mental state are the result of our feelings, all the mental states are tainted with negative or positive emotions which are in turn arise out of the three kinds of feelings pleasant, painful and neutral.⁷³

The consciousness which can be the objects of mindfulness are:

1. Consciousness with lust or consciousness freed from lust,
2. Consciousness with anger or consciousness freed from anger,
3. Consciousness with delusion or consciousness freed from delusion,
4. Consciousness that is shrunken or consciousness that is distracted,
5. Consciousness that has grown great/expanded or consciousness that has not grown,
6. Consciousness which has some other mental state superior to it or consciousness which has no other mental state superior to it,
7. Consciousness which is quiet/tranquil or consciousness which is not quiet/tranquil,

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ M., I. 55.

8. Consciousness which is freed or consciousness which is not freed.⁷⁴

2.3.4 Fourth Foundation of Mindfulness: The Contemplation of Dhamma

Furthermore, this is what the Buddha says about the contemplation of the consciousness;

“Herein, monks, a monk knows the consciousness with lust, as with lust; the consciousness without lust, as without lust; the consciousness with hate, as with hate; the consciousness without hate, as without hate; the consciousness with ignorance, as with ignorance; the concentrated state of consciousness, as the concentrated state; the concentrated state of consciousness, as the concentrated state; the freed state of consciousness, as the freed state and the unfree state of consciousness as the unfree state.”⁷⁵

The above passage very well explains the contemplation of the consciousness, whatever mental state that arise with or without defilement one is aware of such state of mind, one knows and experience and is aware of mind with negative emotions or the absence of such a emotions as well as the presence of the positive states of mind. Basically, at this stage the Buddha ask his disciples to contemplate on the five hindrances, five aggregates of clinging, six external and internal sense-bases, the seven factors of enlightenment and the Four Noble truths.⁷⁶

These four foundations (body, feeling, mind, and physical and mental processes) are also called four frames of reference or four establishments of awareness. These four arenas for mindfulness are frequently applied in conjunction with breath meditation, and any experience of the breath includes all four foundations.

For each foundation, there are three general modes of practice:

⁷⁴ Op. cit., pp. 67-69.

⁷⁵ M, I. 55.

⁷⁶ Bhikkhu, Thanissaro, **One Tool Among Many. The Place of Vipassana in Buddhist Practice**, (Legacy edition: Access to Insight,2011), p. 9.

1. Remaining focused “internally on the body (feeling, mind, physical and mental processes) in and of itself, or externally on the body in and of itself, or both internally and externally on the body in and of itself.”

2. Remaining focused on “the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body (feeling, mind, physical and mental processes), on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination and passing away with regard to the body.”

3. Maintaining mindfulness “that there is a body (feeling, mind, physical and mental processes) to the extent of knowledge and recollection.”

Developing the four foundations removes conceptual constructs until the meditator sees things as they actually are, namely, impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self.

2.4 Concluding Remarks

Vipassanā meditation practice in Theravada tradition is the most popular form of meditation practice in Southeast Asia as well as the western world. The aim of Insight meditation is to give rise to three characteristics of condition existence; impermanence, non-self and suffering. Although, *Vipassanā* movement recently developed in Southeast Asia, especially in Burma and Thailand, the concept of Insight meditation goes back to the *satipaṭṭhāna sutta* in *Pāli* canon and extra canonical literature which describes the four foundations of mindfulness. *Vipassanā* movement differs in many ways from *Samatha* or tranquility meditation which only enables to reach the higher level of concentration whereas the practice of *Vipassanā* is aimed at the realization of the ultimate truth and the cultivation of wisdom.

CHAPTER III

Insight Meditation as Taught by Mahasi Sayadaw

Insight Meditation as taught by Mahasi Sayadaw has uniqueness, though it is largely based on *satipaṭṭhāna* and the seven stage of purification or *satta-visuddhi* based on the *Visuddhimagga* or path of purifications of Achariya Buddhaghosa.

3.1 Uniqueness of Vipassanā Meditation as Taught by Mahasi Sayadaw

This uniqueness of *Vipassanā* is mainly on observation of the abdomen as an object of concentration, mental noting technique, mindfulness and slowdown of activities. Mental noting is an important technique that used for the development of *Vipassanā* in Mahasi Sayadaw meditation technique.

3.1.1 Observation of the Abdomen as an Object of Concentration

Although, traditionally, the prescribed object of meditation for calming the mind has primarily remained the breath or rather observation of the sensation of breath. Observation of the breath naturally brings calmness in mind and the breath as an object of meditation is very natural and easily available. There are number of places in which the people feel the sensation of breath more acutely such as at the nostril or upper lip or at the rising and falling of the chest, and in the abdomen, any of these places mentioned are valid object of meditation. However, Mahasi Sayadaw prefers the observation of abdomen.

Furthermore, the observation of the abdomen is similar to that of slow walking, as we can observe the foot rising and falling, it is possible to also experience abdomen rising and falling. Mahasi Sayadaw does not recommend the placing of attention on the breath or at the nostrils as it leads to the tendency of losing contact with body. Therefore, observation of the breath at the nostrils is popular and effective way of achieving higher state of absorptions or *jhāna*. If the concentration is focused on the single object, it effectively suppresses everything else, including the purification of emotions. But when you emerge from the

concentration you know that during the absorption the mind was very clear and it was all the time one with the object of concentration, the circle of light.⁷⁷

However, it is also true that without certain level of concentration one will not be able to engage in the sustained contemplation of the insight meditation. Therefore, such as concentration is useful. Although, Mahasi does give preferences to observation of abdomen, he does not discourage anyone from taking up breath and sensation of breath at nostril as means of achieving concentration.

3.1.2 Mental Noting Technique

The second distinguishing feature of the style of *Vipassanā* Meditation as taught by Mahasi Sayadaw is the Noting Technique or making a mental note in meditation. This may seem like an obstacle in itself rather than a tool to help a meditator to focus. Paradoxically, taking mental notes takes meditator beyond thinking. According to Buddha's teaching, there are two types of concentrated thoughts that arise before the complete concentration is achieved, first one is the simple noting or naming or labeling the object. This is also known as *Vitakka*, traditionally a simile is given of bee flying toward a flower.

The normal kind of thinking that happens in everyday life is different state of mind from *Vittakka*, there in one is engaged in the proliferation of thoughts and day dreaming, planning and so on which results in inability to focus on a single object of concentration. *Vittaka* helps us via taking mental notes to suppress such mental proliferations and mental distraction. This technique helps meditator to recondition one's mind to stay in the present moment with the object of meditation. This is what Mahasi says about mental noting.

While noting its movement your mind may wander. You may think about this and that, or you may imagine things. Note this thinking or imagining. You may feel tired note this tiredness. You may feel hot or painful as you exert note the arising and passing away of these sensations. Note the phenomenon of seeing as you see, or hearing as you hear. When you experience pleasurable

⁷⁷ Venerable Sujiva , Essentials of Insight Meditation Practice, (Malaysia: Buddhist Wisdom Centre, 2000), p. 165.

sensations, note them also.⁷⁸ There are very common noting words that mindfully noted in practice are given in following:

The Mental Noting Technique

| | Action | Noting Words |
|---|---------|--------------|
| 1 | Think | Thinking |
| 2 | Plan | Planning |
| 3 | Imagine | Imagining |
| 4 | Reflect | Reflecting |
| 5 | Feel | Feeling |
| 6 | Pain | Paining |
| 7 | Touch | Touching |

During the mental noting of the object, it has to be done with precise efforts. It needs to be the acknowledgment of the bodily, mental and emotional states. In the first step of noting one notes if one is lost in planning, lusting, fantasy, and so on, on the second step is acknowledgment of the things which are obsessions of our mind. Although, this is mental noting of the hindrance, one is not pay attention at the word rather on the experience, feeling and thoughts in mind, it comes more as intuitive intelligences that see through the word and experience.

3.1.3 Mindfulness and Slowdown of Activities

In the *sutta* Buddha talks about the establishment of mindfulness and doing all things with mindfulness. Therefore, Mahasi also emphasizes carrying out all the activities of body and mind at slower phase. *Satipaṭṭhāna sutta* mentions the activities such as looking around, dressing up, eating, going to toilet,

⁷⁸ U Htin Fatt (trs), **On the Nature of Nibbāna by The Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw of Burma** (First printed and published in the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma, 1981), p. 6.

etc. when one engages in the activity with deliberate slowness one is more mindful and attentive at things. This is what the Mahasi says about slowing down of activities and mindfulness.

Slow down all kind of activities, give more time to be mindful with every object practitioners encounter with. Activities like, walking, eating, sleeping, touching, lifting or any other kind should be noted mindfully and whenever mindfulness is present then activity slowdown. According to Mahasi Sayadaw, meditation can be done while walking, or standing, or sitting, or lying down, which are the four usual posture.⁷⁹

3.2 Vipassanā Meditation as Taught by Mahasi Sayadaw

It has been over two and half thousand years now since the Buddha first expounded the teachings. As time passes, the teaching becomes dulled. But there are always reformation movements throughout the history of Buddhism, some large and some small which revitalize the teachings, the *Dhamma*. And the Mahasi Sayadaw must be accredited as one of the key teachers in revitalizing the practice of *Vipassanā* in Theravada Buddhist countries. Mahasi Sayadaw adopted his unique meditation technic based on *Visuddhimagga* of Achariya Buddhaghosa. In this sub-chapter I will discuss about its introduction, meditation preparation and basic exercises.

3.2.1 Introduction of Vipassanā Meditation

The framework of Mahasi Sayadaw's teaching on *Vipassanā* meditation is largely based on *satiṭṭa hāna* and the seven stage of purification or *satta-visuddhi* based on the *Visuddhimagga* or path of purifications of Acariya Buddhaghosa. Working on this stages of purification gradually gives rise to insight knowledge or *Vipassanā ñāṇa* finally leading to ultimate liberations. Mahasi Sayadaw adopts the approach of 'bare insight' *Sukkha-Vipassanā* in which the one have direct observation of one's physical and mental processes, one learns to see with increasing clarity the three characteristic of condition existence which are impermanence, non-self and suffering.

The practice begins with the contemplation of the body which remains till then end of all stages. Through practice as the strength of mindfulness increases it also deepened the insight knowledge ultimately culminating in the

⁷⁹ Sayadaw, Mahasi. **Brahmavihara Dhamma**, (Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma, 1985), p. 24.

liberation. This practice gives rise to the insight into three *lakhana* without the development of the full range of *jhanas* or absorptions, therefore, it is also known as bare insight. However, the higher level of concentration is mandatory for the practice of *Vipassanā*.

Furthermore, as the teaching of Mahasi Sayadaw is based on *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna* it focuses on the four foundations of mindfulness as means to alleviate the suffering of mind and overcome mental defilement. This is how the *sutta* describes it. If one wants to be born into the realms of men, devas, and brahmas, and ultimately to reach the Path and attain *nibbāna*, one must practice charity, morality, and mental development. One who aspires to the Path and its Fruition, and ultimately *nibbāna*, must practice insight meditation.⁸⁰

“This is the sole way for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destroying of pain and grief, for reaching the right path, for the realization of *nibbāna*, namely, the four foundations of mindfulness. The four foundations of mindfulness are: (1) contemplation of the body; (2) the contemplation of feelings; (3) the contemplation of mind; and (4) the contemplation of mind objects”⁸¹ Further, the Mahasi Sayadaw also reinforces the ideas and focuses the need of teacher for the development on the path.

3.2.2 Preparation for Meditation

Mahasi Sayadaw follows the four foundations of mindfulness to understand of things as they really are. They are as following: –

1. *Kāyanupassanā Satipaṭṭhāna*
2. *Vedanānupassanā Satipaṭṭhāna*
3. *Cittanupassanā Satipaṭṭhāna*
4. *Dhammanupassanā Satipaṭṭhāna*

Purification of the conduction is mandatory as first preparatory steps toward committing oneself for the practice and realization of *Vipassanā*, ethical life is indispensable for the practice of meditation and gaining of insight. They

⁸⁰ U Htin Fatt (trs), **On the Nature of Nibbāna by The Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw of Burma** (First printed and published in the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma, 1981), p. 28.

⁸¹ M. Kāyagatāsati Sutta, p. 119.

lay people during the meditation practice are instructed to practice the eight precepts that are observed on *uposatha* day which Buddhist lay devotees observe on Buddhist Holiday. One is also encouraged to make confession and regular contact with the meditation teacher or instructor. The practitioner is also encouraged to take up the reflection on four protective reflections which are Buddha, Loving kindness, the loathsome aspects of the body and death. Firstly, one reflects on the nine qualities of the Buddha.

“Truly, The Buddha is holy, fully enlightened, perfect in knowledge and conduct, a welfare, world-knower, the incomparable leader of men to be tamed, teacher of gods and mankind, the Awakened and Exalted One.”⁸²

Secondly, one does the *mettā bhavana* or universal loving kindness, one embraces all being and wishes them long life, good health, happiness and freedom from all dangers in following manners. “May I be free from enmity, disease and grief. As I am, so also may my parents, preceptors, teachers, and intimate, indifferent, and inimical beings be free from enmity, disease and grief. May they be released from suffering.”⁸³

Thirdly, reflection on the repulsive nature of the body to assist one in diminishing the unwholesome attachment to the body. Mahasi Sayadaw asks us to follow the traditional method of reflection on impurities of the body such as stomach, intestines, phlegm, pus, blood.⁸⁴

Fourthly, reflection on the death. It gradually dawns on us that the life is precious and the death is inevitable, one needs to engage in things that are giving meaning to life.

It has been clearly instructed by Mahasi Sayadaw⁸⁵ to complete and note by way of assuming the four usual postures not only in respect of *mettā bhāvanā*, but also in regard to practicing *satipaṭ ṭ hāna vipassanā* relating to which it has been preached as *gacchanto vā gacchāmīti pajānāti*”, etc.

⁸² Mahasi Sayadaw. **Practical Vipassanā Meditation Exercises**, (Published by Online Insight Meditation, 2007) p. 2.

⁸³ Mahasi Sayadaw, **Practical Insight Meditation: Basic and Progress Stages**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1971), p. 2.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁸⁵ Mahasi Sayadaw. **Brahmavihara** (Socialist Union of Myanmar -1985), p. 24.

3.2.3 Basic Exercise I: Rising and Falling

A simpler and easier form of the exercise for a beginner is this:⁸⁶ With every breath there occurs in the abdomen a rising-falling movement. A beginner should start with the exercise of noting this movement. This rising-falling movement is easy to observe because it is coarse and therefore more suitable for the beginner. As in schools where simple lessons are easy to learn, so also is the practice of *vipassanā* meditation. A beginner will find it easier to develop concentration and knowledge with a simple and easy exercise.

One begins the practice of meditation by drawing one's attention to abdomen and observing the rising and falling of abdomen. In case, this movement is not perceptible, one is advised to place one's hand on the abdomen to feel the rising and falling of the movements, after one is able to see the rising and falling of the abdomen, one learns to make the mental note of rising and falling as it happens. One is advised to look at the bodily sensation of the abdomen and not at the abdomen itself. This practice is effective way to increase one's attention, concentration of mind and later on the development of insight. one need to restrained from verbalizing this mental note of raising and falling instead it should happen mentally while it actually occurs. For, while noting the rising and falling of the abdomen, the rising and falling disappear, and the meditator becomes aware only of the fact that he or she is perceiving the rising and falling. Concentrating on this, mind, matter, and mental formations cease. This awareness of cessation is *nibbāna*.⁸⁷

3.2.4 Basic Exercise II: Mentally Noting

Following the observation of rising and falling of the abdomen, one begins to see the nature of mind, one cannot entirely discard the wondering thoughts that keeps coming as one tries to focus the mind on rising and falling abdomen, one is advised to observe this wondering thought and take a mental

⁸⁶ Mahasi Sayadaw. **Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā**. Access to Insight (Legacy Edition), accessed 10 January 2017, <<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/mahasi/wheel370.html>>.

⁸⁷ U Htin Fatt (trs), **On the Nature of Nibbāna by The Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw of Burma** (First printed and published in the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma, 1981), p. 52.

note of everything. This is what Mahasi Sayadaw says about practicing mindfulness.

“If you imagine something, you must know that you have done so and make a mental note, imagining. If you simply think of something, mentally note, thinking. If you reflect, reflecting. If you intend to do something, intending. When the mind wanders from the object of meditation which is the rising and falling of the abdomen, mentally note, wandering. Should you imagine you are going to a certain place, note going. If you hold it long enough, you will go into concentration. It is very simple. The important thing is to build up stable concentration as a continuous flow and momentum of mindful noting. Once you have gone through it, you can recollect how you got into concentration.⁸⁸ Whatever comes to your mind let it come, notice and let it go and mentally note their coming and going without indulging in them.

3.2.5 Basic Exercise III: Mindfulness of Body and Its Movement

As you progress in the practice of meditation you continue the practice of observing rising and falling as well as the practice of mental noting of thing happening in meditation, from this stage onward Mahasi Sayadaw suggests to further strengthen once practice of mindfulness and take it further in daily life and activities, here is the example of going to drink the water and practicing mindfulness.

Mindfulness, with *vipassanā* meditation is the opening of mind. You no longer concentrate on just one point, but you observe insightfully and reflect on the conditions that come and go, and on the silence of the empty mind. To do this involves letting go an object; you're not holding on to any particular object, but observing that whatever arises passes away. This is insight meditation, or *vipassanā*.⁸⁹

As it progress in mindfulness you may experience sensations of intense pain: stifling or choking sensations, such as pain from the slash of a knife, the thrust of a sharp-pointed instrument, unpleasant sensations of being pricked by sharp needles, or of small insects crawling over the body. It might experience

⁸⁸ Venerable Sujiva, **Essentials of Insight Meditation Practice**, (Malaysia: Buddhist Wisdom Centre, 2000), p. 157.

⁸⁹ Ajahn Sumedho, **Mindfulness the Path to the Deathless**, (Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1994), p. 49.

sensations of itching, biting, intense cold. As soon as you discontinue the contemplation you may also feel that these painful sensations cease. When you resume contemplation you will have them again as soon as you gain in mindfulness. These painful sensations are not to be considered as something wrong. They are not manifestations of disease but are common factors always present in the body and are usually obscured when the mind is normally occupied with more conspicuous objects. When the mental faculties become keener you are more aware of these sensations. With the continued development of contemplation, the time will come when you can overcome them and they will cease altogether.

According to Mahasi Sayadaw these painful feelings are always present but one is not aware of them but during the intense meditation practice one begins to see these painful feelings of discomfort and uneasiness. One is advised to observe them, make a mental note and continue to practice and they will cease to exist after sometime.

3.2.6 Basic Exercise IV: Mindfulness of Mental States

As the practice grows stronger, Mahasi Sayadaw asks the meditator to observe whatever arises in the mind, it is possible that after undergoing the practice of meditation many question and doubts may arise in the mind. This is how Mahasi Sayadaw puts it. Craving likes what is pleasant, and makes happiness and prosperity the main goal for humankind. It motivates the *kammic* consciousness, which leads to other mental states.⁹⁰

Mahasi Sayadaw keeps coming back to the same point of observing what happens within our mind. It is possible that after some time one may have feeling of doubts, laziness, regrets, feeling of happiness, no matter what comes in your mind, just keep observing it and take a mental note of it, do not let it affect your meditation by simply letting them come and go at their own accord and focus on the rising and falling of abdomen continuously and practicing mindfulness all throughout the day.

3.3 The stages of Vipassanā or Progress of Insight

⁹⁰ U Aye Maung (trs.) **A Discourse on Dependent Origination By Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw**, (Bangkok: The Buddhadhamma Foundation, 1999), p. 42.

The Progress of Insight⁹¹ of Mahasi Sayadaw explains the corresponding stages of purification. This book shows the benefit of meditators who have obtained distinctive results in their practice, so that they may more easily understand their experience. It is meant for those who, in their practice of insight, have taken up as their main subject either the tactile bodily process of motion, evident in the rising and falling movement of the abdomen, or the tactile bodily process based on three of the primary elements of matter evident in the sensation of touch (bodily impact).

It is meant for those who, by attending to these exercises, have gained progressive insight as well into the whole body-and-mind process arising at the six sense doors, and have finally come to see the *Dhamma*, to attain to the *Dhamma*, to understand the *Dhamma*, to penetrate the *Dhamma*, who have passed beyond doubt, freed themselves from uncertainty, obtained assurance, and achieved independence of others in the Master's dispensation.

3.3.1 Knowledge of Body and Mind and Reflection on Conditionality

The gradual and steady practice of *Vipassanā* meditation leads to the various stages of insight into the nature of truth, it leads to the knowledge of body and mind as they are. *Vipassanā* meditation focuses on the realization of the impermanence of all things. The practice of meditation gradually leads to progress in the practice and the stages of insight. This is how Mahasi sayadaw explains the arising of knowledge of body and mind through deepening of practice.

“When as mentioned above, by dint of diligent practice, mindfulness and concentration have improved, the meditator will notice the pairwise occurrence of an object and the knowing of it, such as the rising and awareness of it, the falling and awareness of it, through concentration attention (mindfulness) he knows how to distinguish each bodily and mental process: At this stage, knowledge regarding the true nature of phenomena through analysis of the aggregates into mind and matter, which means analytical knowledge of body and mind (*nāmarūpapariccheda ñāṇa*) has been developed. Once this knowledge becomes mature, purification of view (*diṭṭhi visuddhi*) is

⁹¹ Mahasi Sayadaw. **The Progress of Insight (Visuddhinana-katha): A Modern Treatise on Buddhist Satipaṭṭhāna Meditation**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1995), p. 5.

achieved.⁹² Furthermore, Mahasi Sayadaw explains the deepening of the realization of body and mind, he says that the knowledge of the process of body and mind brings reflection and realization that there is nothing beside this processes, there is no separate identity of man or women. This is how he puts it.

As one continues on the path of practice and goes through various stages of *Vipassanā* meditation, there comes a time when one begins to reflect and notices that there is no separate entity as such, there is only body and mind. As one reflects on this fact and sees it, one begins to clearly notice the nature of material process as object and mental process of knowing it. This is how Mahasi Sayadaw puts this fact into his own word.

“It is true that there are only body and mind. Besides them there none such entities as man or woman. While contemplating one notices a material process as object and a mental process of knowing it; and it is to that pair alone that the terms of conventional usage ‘being’, ‘person’ or ‘soul’, ‘man’ or ‘woman’ refer. But apart from that dual process there is no separate person or being, I or another, man or woman”. When such reflections occur, the meditator must note “reflecting, reflecting” and go on observing the rising of the abdomen, and its falling”⁹³

Furthermore, in the practice of meditation and mindfulness, one begins to see the six senses and its contact with the its object This is how Mahasi Sayadaw speaks of it. “In noticing seeing, hearing, to the meditator comes to know clearly that seeing arises from to the contact of eye and visual object and hearing arises from to the contact of ear and sound.”⁹⁴ As one progresses in meditation, one becomes mindful of all the processes including how we react to the outside world when we interact with it with six sense door which gives us contact with the external experiences and gives rise to mental processes.

⁹² U Htin Fatt (trs), **On the Nature of Nibbāna by The Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw of Burma** (First printed and published in the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma, 1981), p. 6.

⁹³ Mahsi Sayadaw, **Practical Vipassanā Exercises**, (Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1993), p. 21.

⁹⁴ Mahsi Sayadaw, **Practical Vipassanā Exercises**, (Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1993), p. 22.

As one progress in the practice of meditation and continues to reflect and observe the phenomena he begins to see the conditionality and the cause and effect according to one's *kamma*, which becomes the basis of our experience. This is how Mahasi Sayadaw speaks of it. Knowledge of the conditionality and cause-effect relationship that denies a soul or self is enough for the practice of insight. It is not necessary to know thoroughly the twelve links, or the twenty main points of the doctrine.⁹⁵

3.3.2 Experiences and Knowledge of Comprehension of Comprehension in Meditation

Mahasi Sayadaw asks the meditator to stay focus despite all the mental distraction. It is possible that due to the intendance concentration mind will give rise to various kinds of experience in meditation. This is what Mahasi writes; “Again, the meditator sometimes sees images of all kinds as if seeing them with his own eyes; for example, the Buddha comes into the scene in glorious radiance; a procession of monks in the sky, pagodas (*dagobas*) and images of the Buddha; meeting with beloved ones; trees or woods, hills or mountains, gardens, buildings; finding oneself face to face with bloated dead bodies or skeleton. These are nothing but creatures of one's imagination sharpened by intense concentration.”⁹⁶

In the course of insight meditation, thoughts may arise concerning past (memories) from time to time. The mind could note these thoughts in retrospect, going back and recollecting what has been seen, heard, felt, perceived or known at the time, may be yesterday, last month or last year and then allow for thoughts to proliferate along these memories. The same could occur with one's experiences in meditation, recollecting it as either pleasant or unpleasant. One tends to ponder about the past and judging what had occurred.

As the meditator further deepens his or her practice, he begins to see the manifestation of the three *Lakhanna* or characteristic of condition existence, in the below passage Mahasi Sayadaw explains the experience and reflection on impermanence of all phenomena. “At this stage, when the meditator becomes

⁹⁵ U Aye Maung (trs.) **A Discourse on Dependent Origination By Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw**, (Bangkok: The Buddhadhamma Foundation, 1999), p. 81.

⁹⁶ Mahsi Sayadaw, **Practical Vipassanā Exercises**, (Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1993), p. 35.

more practiced, he perceives in every act of noticing that an object appears suddenly and disappears instantly. His perception is so clear that he reflects thus: "All comes to an end; all disappears. Nothing is permanent; it is truly impermanent." He reflects further: "It is through ignorance that we enjoy life. But in truth there is nothing to enjoy. There is a continuous arising and disappearance by which we are harassed over and over. This is dreadful indeed. At any moment we may die and everything is sure to come to an end. This universal impermanence is truly frightful and terrible."⁹⁷

The meditator further undergoes the reflection in meditation in similar fashion about suffering as the fact of life and part of life. One cannot avoid it. Mahasi Sayadaw says this stage of knowledge investigates the aggregates as composites; and the result of such investigation will invariably be the revelation that what appears and disappears is impermanent (*anicca*), unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anatta*). This is called knowledge of comprehension (*sammasana ñāṇa*).⁹⁸ In the course of meditation, the practitioner begins to see the truth of suffering, that it is inevitable part of human life.

3.3.3 Tranquility in Meditation and Maturing of Insight

Tranquility meditation – *Samatha-bhāvanā*, *Samatha* means concentration, calmness, tranquility. Therefore, *Samatha bhāvanā* means the development of concentration, of one-pointedness of mind, of deep concentration such as the access concentration, *upacāra samadhi* or absorption in the object of meditation, *appaṇā samadhi*.⁹⁹ After certain period of time due to the intense practice, the mind becomes more malleable and is able to rest and stay focus on the object of meditation with ease, one is even able to absorb the flashes of insight that appears in meditation.

The power of meditation brings flashes of insight, one feels very light in meditation, there arises in meditation a rapture and joy, there may be falling of

⁹⁷ Mahsi Sayadaw, **Practical Vipassanā Exercises**, (Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1993), pp. 21-22.

⁹⁸ U Htin Fatt (trs), **On the Nature of Nibbāna by The Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw of Burma** (First printed and published in the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma, 1981), p. 19.

⁹⁹ U Ko Lay, **Manual of Vipassanā Meditation**, (India: Vipassanā Research Institute, 2002), p. 51.

tears out of joy, tremor in limbs, this is all due to release of positive energy due to intense concentration. Mind becomes steady at this stage one is able to mold it and put into practice with ease, one is able to be mindful while walking, sitting, lying or standing. Let me put this in the words of Mahasi Sayadaw. “Both body and mind are functioning swiftly; they are pliant in being able to attend to any object desired; they are wieldy in being able to attend to an object for any length of time desired. One is free from stiffness, heat, or pain. Insight penetrates objects with ease. Mind becomes sound and straight, and one wishes to avoid all evil. Through firm faith, mind is very bright.”¹⁰⁰

As the practice becomes more steady and one become more mature in the practice of *Vipassanā*, one comes to the stage where in one is able to see the phenomena of arising of the objects no longer apparent, one notices only their ceasing things arising quickly and one seeing them ceasing to exist. For example while noticing the abdomen the movement vanishes in him in no time as well as the mental process of knowing it.

Meditator further reflects on the fact of life, the process of body and mind are impermanent and is unsatisfactory, it was not a good thing to have been born or continue this painful existence in future life. Here is how Mahasi Sayadaw puts this fact of life that comes as reflection in meditation. “This body-and-mind process, being impermanent, is unsatisfactory. It was not a good thing to have been born. It is not good either to continue in existence, it is disappointing to see the appearance of seemingly definite features and forms of objects while in fact they are not realities. It is in vain that one makes efforts to seek well-being and happiness. Birth is not desirable. Dreadful are old age, death, lamentation, pain, grief and despair.”¹⁰¹

3.3.4 Fruition of Knowledge

The practice of *Vipassanā* meditation leads the fruition of the knowledge that one has attained certain degree of knowledge of one’s liberation from the samsara and realization of the one of the four states of attainment

¹⁰⁰ Mahsi Sayadaw, **Practical Vipassanā Exercises**, (Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1993), pp. 24-26.

¹⁰¹ Mahsi Sayadaw, **Practical Vipassanā Exercises**, (Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1993), p. 30.

sotapanna stream entry, *sakuddagami* once-returner, *anagami* non-returner, *arahatship* or full and complete realization.

“He must direct his mind towards that goal and again attend to noticing mindfully the bodily and mental processes. In the course of insight meditation, it is only natural that analytical knowledge of body and mind appears first to a wording (*puthujjana*) and knowledge of arising and passing away appears first to a noble person (*ariya*). Therefore, a meditator at this stage, conscious of the bodily and mental processes, will immediately achieve knowledge of arising and passing away, followed soon by the other progressive stages of insight, up to knowledge of equanimity about formations. When this (knowledge matures, the cessation of formations. *Nibbāna*, is reached with the resultant knowledge of fruition.”¹⁰²

3.4 Concluding Remarks

The Insight Meditation of Mahasi Sayadaw which also has become famous as the New Burmese Method has made significant impact in Asia as well as in the west in the field of meditation and the practice of Buddhism in everyday life. However, there are things that are unique to the Mahasi Sayadaw’s teaching and practice of *Vipassanā* meditation, his special emphasis on observing the rising and falling of abdomen is perhaps the most well-known distinctive features which sets his method apart from traditional one, which focuses on the breath. Furthermore, the practice that is taught by Mahasi Sayadaw is in accordance with the traditional *sattipaṭṭhāna sutta* and the later commentarial works on meditation.

¹⁰² Mahsi Sayadaw, **Practical Vipassana Exercises**, (Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1993), pp. 38-39.

CHAPTER IV

The Insight Meditation Movement in Myanmar and Thailand Based on Mahasi Sayadaw's Teaching

This chapter covers up the Origin and Development of Insight Meditation Movement and Insight Meditation Movement in Contemporary Myanmar. There was a famous and popular movement on *vipassanā* meditation in Myanmar in late twenty century, among them followed by Mahasi Sayadaw, other popular masters are Ledi Sayadaw, Venerable Pak Auk Sayadaw and Mogok Sayadaw. But Mahasi Sayadaw introduced a totally new technic which is considered as the New Burmese Method of *Vipassanā*. This chapter also describes the origin of Mahasi Sayadaw's teaching on *Vipassanā*, his works on abroad and works of his disciples.

4.1 Origin and Development of Insight Meditation Movement

The origin and development of Insight Meditation movement originated from Myanmar or Burma as the origin place for its practice. The demand of Insight Meditation was very significant which encouraged being a successful movement of practice. The pioneer meditative masters came out with very impressive but effective method of fundamental meditation techniques.

4.1.1 Insight Meditation Movement

Vipassanā movement also known as Insight Meditation movement refers to the number of modern Theravada Buddhism which stress on cultivation of insight into three marks of conditioned existence as the main way of attaining insight or becoming stream entrant.¹⁰³ The origin of this movement lies in the modernist influence of the traditions of Burma, Laos, Thailand and Sri Lanka.¹⁰⁴

It is particularly true of the Burma which is the main source of the *Vipassanā* Movement. There are number of teachers who made *Vipassanā* Movement popular such as Mahasi Sayadaw who introduced 'New Burmese

¹⁰³ Arinna Weisman, Jean Smith, **The Beginners Guide to Insight Meditation**, (Boston: Wisdom Publication, 2009), p. 11.

¹⁰⁴ McMahan, David, **The Making of Buddhist Modernism**, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 22.

Method', Ledi Sayadaw who started Ledi Lineage, Anagarika Munindra, Pak Auk Sayadaw made their contribution, not to mention the other well-known non-sectarian teachings of late S.N. Goenka who studied with the teacher Sayagyi U Ba Khin.¹⁰⁵ At present, the *Vipassanā* has spread all across the globe. At present contemporary western teachers also made significant contribution for the development of the movement in the USA in particularly, they are Joseph Goldstein, Tara Brach, Gil Fronsdal, Sharon Salzberg, Ruth Denison and Jack Kornfield.¹⁰⁶

The main concern of the meditation in the *Vipassanā* Movement is the giving rise to the insight into the three marks of existence as means of attaining wisdom and eventually full enlightenment.¹⁰⁷ The main source of the inspiration for the *Vipassanā* movement comes from the commentaries of Buddhaghosa. The work *Visuddhimagga* plays an integral part for the guidance of the meditation in the *Vipassanā* movement in many traditions.¹⁰⁸

The *Vipassanā* method employed in various schools within the *Vipassanā* Movement varies based on the teacher, however that variation is not great there is so much similarity among all the major traditions, the various only are slight alteration in achieving stages of meditation. The meditation techniques are far more similar based on the traditional form of meditation as found in *Pāli* canon, there are many *Vipassanā* teachers who make a use of insight knowledge, the stages of insight that is part of the meditational experience as one progresses in the practice of meditation. The foundation of such is based on the meditation that gives rise to the realization of the true nature of all phenomena, all things are impermanent it is the nature of things that there are no permanent things, nothing has everlasting satisfactory things in this world or there is no such thing is self that does not change.

¹⁰⁵ Lance Cousins, **Origin of Insight Meditation, The Buddhist Forum**, Vol. IV, 1994-96, p. 36.

¹⁰⁶ Arinna Weisman, Jean Smith, Op. Cit., p.12.

¹⁰⁷ Eric Bruan, **The Birth of Insight: Meditation, Modern Buddhism & the Burmese Monk Ledi Sayadaw**, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 6.

¹⁰⁸ Lance Cousins, Op. cit., p.38.

4.1.2 Vipassanā Manuals

The earliest known modern writer of *Vipassanā* manuals was a Burmese monk known as Medawi who lived during 18th Century, he was one of the first person to excite interest in Meditation among Burmese people. Till the arrival of Venerable Medawi Burmese Sangha held the view that enlightenment was not possible in our time, however, After the Venerable Medawi meditation become widely known practice, it is especially true of the monks living in the Sagaing region.¹⁰⁹

It was not until the 19th century that meditation practice and Buddhism in general started rejuvenated in response to the western Colonialism in the countries like Burma, Thailand and Sri Lanka. It was during this period that Buddhism in general and meditation practices were popularized as one of the rallying point against the western colonial powers.¹¹⁰ Many of these newly developed traditions found their way to Pal Scripture to legitimize these reforms, ironically, it was not until this time that *Pāli* scriptures were made widely accessible due to the western influence.¹¹¹

It was during this period that the *Pāli* canon was firstly introduced in English translation by the labor of love by *Pāli* text society and also made available among the intellectual class of the traditional Asian Buddhist communities. Theosophical society also played a significant, the society sought spiritual quest into the eastern wisdom found in Buddhist tradition, the rise of interest in Buddhism by western audience gave confidence and raised awareness among the traditional Buddhist communities, inspired by the work of Theosophical Society lay Buddhist organizations started in Sri Lanka which were independent from the conventional temples and monasteries.¹¹²

There was keen interest in meditation among these people as compared to conventional practice of recitation of *Pāli suttas*, whereas the mainstream

¹⁰⁹ Arinna Weisman, Jean Smith, Op. Cit., p.13.

¹¹⁰ Sharf, Robert H., **Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience**, Vol. 42, (Singapore: Brill Publishers, 1995), p.12.

¹¹¹ Joseph Goldstein, **Insight Meditation: A Psychology of Freedom**, (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2003), p. 21.

¹¹² Sharf, Robert H., Op. cit., p. 253.

practices among the monastic community was the recitation of the texts. There was much interest in the “New Burmese Method” of *Vipassanā* practice as introduced by U Narada and later popularized by Mahasi Sayadaw.¹¹³ Gradually, this method has become more widely available and spread in South and Southeast Asia and also reached to Europe and America, in many cases, this method has become synonymous with *Vipassanā*.

4.1.3 Insight Meditation Movement in Contemporary Myanmar

The Ledi Sayadaw Lineage is one of the contemporary *Vipassanā* movements in Myanmar. This lineage has great influence in the time. There are also Pak Auk Sayadaw movement, Mogok Sayadaw, Mahasi Sayadaw “New Burmese” Method, and their origin and development have been discussed in this sub-chapter.

4.1.4 The Ledi Sayadaw Lineage’s Pak Auk Sayadaw and Mogok Sayadaw

Perhaps, the researcher should mention the other language beside Mahasi Sayadaw to illustrate the development of the *Vipassanā* Movement in Asia and its spread across the world. It will also give some reference for comparing the Mahasi Sayadaw’s method with other available and popular types of *Vipassanā* methods. The Ledi Lineage started with Ledi Sayadaw who lived between 1846-1923, his student Saya Thetgyi and S.N. Goenka are more well-known teachers in the Ledi Lineage.¹¹⁴

S.N. Goenka is perhaps the most well-known among the two and did much to promote and popularize *Vipassanā* in the world. S.N. Goenka teaches *Vipassanā* as essentially non-sectarian way of life and the art of living. He presents *Vipassanā* in a way that is accessible and approachable universally to people of all belief and religion. Due to his approach a large number of people across the world has responded very favorably. S.N. Goenka spend most of his active life in India, therefore, there is huge presence of *Vipassanā* retreat centers in India due to his hard work. Beside India, there are retreat S.N. Goenka method *Vipassanā* centers in all the continents including Europe, North and South America, Africa, Australia and Asia.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 255.

¹¹⁴ Eric Bruan, Op. cit., p. 12.

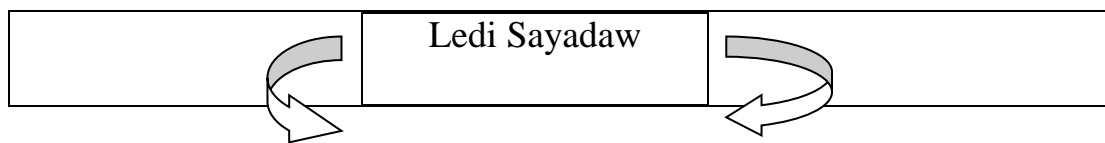
¹¹⁵ Goenka. S.N., **Meditation Now: Inner Peace through Inner Wisdom**, (Onalaska: Vipassanā Research Publications, 2002), p. 4.

The Goenka focuses on the interaction between mind and body, which one is able to experience with one's direct attention to the physical sensations or *Vedanā* which makes up the experiences based on body, which affects the mind. The *Vipassanā* retreat under this method usually involves ten days' retreat with complete silence with majority of the day goes in practice of meditation. first three to four days are given for the practice of mindfulness of breathing or *Anapanasati* in order to help the mind calm, the remaining days are focused on the practice of *Kayanusati* or awareness of the body, in which the meditator goes through various parts of the body paying attention to various sensations arising and passing away without any reaction to it.¹¹⁶ Bhikkhu Analayo in praise of this form of *Vipassanā* says "this form of meditation has by now become what probably is the most widely taught form of insight meditation world-wide."¹¹⁷

The method used by Pak Auk Sayadaw is rooted into the *Visuddhimagga* which a classical Theravada manual on meditation. Venerable Pak Auk Sayadaw emphasizes on the development of the four *jhanas* which are stages of absorption. The practice of insight meditation consists of surveying the body by observing the four elements which are earth, water, fire, and wind, one does that by using the sensations of hardness, heaviness, warmth and motion.¹¹⁸

Mogok Sayadaw teaches the importance of practicing of the awareness of the arising and passing away of one's experience as one of the means of gaining insight. Mogok Sayadaw emphasizes the importance of the theory of the Dependent Origination or *Paticcasamutpāda* while practicing the *Vipassanā*. He also emphasizes on the mediation on feelings or *Vedanānnupassanā* as well as the mindfulness of mental state or *Cittanupassanā*.

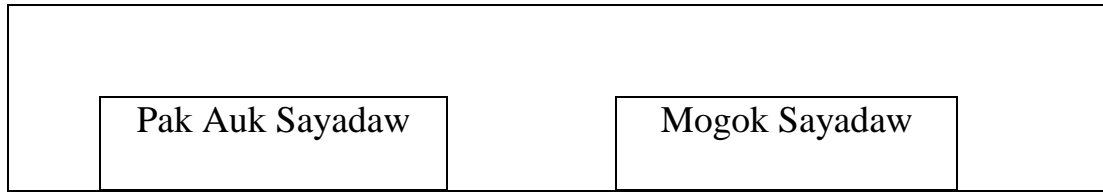
The Lineage of Vipassanā Sayadaw in Myanmar



¹¹⁶ Analayo Bhikkhu, **The Dynamics of Theravāda Insight Meditation**, Fuyan Buddhist Studies, No. 6, (Taiwan: University of Hamburg Dharma Drum Buddhist College, 2011), p. 153.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 154.

¹¹⁸ Anālayo Bhikkhu, **Satipaṭ ṭ hāna: Direct Path to Enlightenment**, (London: Wind Horse Publications, 2003), p. 28.



4.1.5 The Mahasi Sayadaw "New Burmese" Method of Vipassanā and Origin of Mahasi Sayadaw Teaching on Vipassanā

The “New Burmese Method” was originally introduced and developed by Venerable U Nārada and later on it was being popularized by his disciple Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw. Venerable Nyañaponika Thera also did much to popularize this new movement among the English speaking audience. Many American teachers such as Joseph Goldstein, Jack Kornfield and Sharon Salzberg studied with Mahasi Sayadaw and his disciple U Pandita.¹¹⁹

One of the key feature of this new method is that it dispenses with traditional stage of *Samatha* focusing on the concentration and instead focuses exclusively on the practice of *Vipassanā* practices. One goes through the rigorous practice of meditation for months on end, with some meditation teacher designing schedule that demands most of the day starting from 3am to 11pm in silence and in meditation practice.

Mahasi Sayadaw focuses on the development of mindfulness with the careful labeling of one’s experience together with high level of sustained concentration or *Khanika Samadhi*.¹²⁰ Robert H says that Buddhist practices are aimed the attainment of “correct view, no just bare attention.”¹²¹ Although, Mahasi Sayadaw was a great *Pāli* scholar and was very familiar with the *Abhidhamma* teaching, however, in the practice of *Vipassanā* that he popularized does not require the knowledge of the philosophical teachings such as found in *Abhidharma* or for that matter the strict observance of the *Vinaya* or monastic

¹¹⁹ Charles S. Prebish and Kenneth K. Tanaka, **The Faces of Buddhism in America**, (California: University of California Press, 1998), p. 163.

¹²⁰ Charles S. Prebish and Kenneth K. Tanaka, *Op. cit.*, p. 165.

¹²¹ Robert Sherf, *Op. cit.*, p. 89.

disciplines. ¹²²The method as introduced by Mahasi Sayadaw also promised a quick result. This was made possible due to the interpretation of the sati as the “bare awareness” or the unmediated, non-judgmental perception of things as they really are. The interpretation of sati slightly varies from the traditional Buddhist explanation of the term. The traditional Buddhist practices are geared toward cultivating the “right views”.

Mahasi Sayadaw lived a Village of *Seikkhun* in Upper Burma, at a very early age he received monastic education under U Adicca and got ordain as Novice monk and later become fully ordained monk during 1923. ¹²³ He was also a remarkable student and passed all the three *Pāli* scripture examinations. Later on in his life he became deeply interested in the study of *Maha-satipaṭ ṭ hāna Sutta*. it was due to his interest in the *Maha-satipaṭ ṭ hāna sutta* and the *Vipassanā* practiced based on it that he decided to go to Thaton and practice *Vipassanā* under Mingun Jetavan Sayadaw. It was under him that Venerable *Sohbhana* as he was named at the time of his ordination took his first serious practice of *Vipassanā*. He practice it very diligently for four months before he started teaching to his first three disciples at his village in Seikkhun during 1938. ¹²⁴

Unfortunately, his teacher Taik Kyaung Sayadaw passed away and the responsibility came on his shoulders to continue teaching and practicing meditation at Thaton. In the meanwhile, he also set for an examination of *Dhammacariya* or teacher of *dhamma* and passed it with distinction during 1941 ¹²⁵. Due to the Japanese invasion of Burma, Venerable Sobhana had to leave Thaton for his village at Seikkhun. He started teaching and practicing *Vipassanā* there to local community. Since then he became popular as Mahasi and the

¹²² Ibid., p. 91.

¹²³ Mahasi Sayadaw, **The Progress of Insight**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1994), p. 47.

¹²⁴ Jack Kornfield, **Modern Buddhist Masters: Living Buddhist Masters**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication society, 1977), p. 53.

¹²⁵ U Nyi Nyi, **Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw: A Biographical Sketch**, (Yangon: Myanmar Buddhasasana Nuggaha, 1978), p. 3.

monastery, he started teaching as Mahasi Monastery at Seikkhun.¹²⁶ It was also during this period that he started writing his first “Manual of *Vipassanā* Meditation” which became an authoritative and comprehensive guide to the *Vipassanā* meditation exploring both doctrinal aspect as well as practical side of the *Satipaṭṭhāna* meditation.

4.1.6 Development of Meditation Movement by Mahasi Sayadaw and His Mission Abroad

Mahasi Sayadaw has gained a fame meditation teacher in the upper Burma which brought him the attention to a wealthy Buddhist named Sir U Thwin who wished to make the Buddha dharma and the practice of meditation more widely available to more people. After attending one of the discourse by Mahasi Sayadaw he made up his mind that Mahasi Sayadaw was the right kind of teacher for teaching meditation. He set up the Buddhadasana Nuggaha Association at Rangoon and donated five acres of land to the association in Rangoon for the establishing the meditation center.¹²⁷ By the end of 1978, the meditation center had acquired 19.6-acre land with vast complex of buildings to support the need of meditator. It was not until 1949 after the independence of Burma that Prime minister of Burma requested Mahasi Sayadaw to take of the teaching of *Vipassanā* at *Sasana Yeiktha* at Rangoon as it came to know.¹²⁸

There are numerous other meditation centers were opened in many parts of Burma under the guidance of Mahasi Sayadaw by his trained disciples. Due to the popularity of the Mahasi Sayadaw large number of people turned up for meditation and it became too difficult for Mahasi Sayadaw to personally give initiations talks to all the meditators, therefore, the meditation center started playing a recorded tape of Mahasi Sayadaw for all the meditators in year 1951.¹²⁹

Mahasi Sayadaw also started training the sangha members as teacher to teach in Burma. The meditation movement started by Mahasi Sayadaw became so popular that neighboring Theravada countries such as Thailand, Sri Lanka and Cambodia started the similar meditation centers under the guidance of Mahasi

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

¹²⁷ Jack Kornfield., Op. cit., p. 54.

¹²⁸ Ibid., pp. 55-56.

¹²⁹ U Nyi Nyi, Op. cit., p. 6.

Sayadaw and his senior disciples. According to some estimate in 1972, about 700 thousand people were trained under Mahasi Sayadaw guidance in Burma and abroad. Mahasi Sayadaw was honored by the Prime Minister of Burma for his service and scholarship with “*Aggamahapandita*” or the Exalted Wise One. He also played an important role in Sixth Buddhist Council or *Sangayana* as an editor and questioner.¹³⁰

At the request of the Government of Sri Lanka a special mission was formed during 1955 to teach *Satipaṭṭhāna* meditation in Sri Lanka under the guidance of Mahasi Sayadaw. The mission opened up 12 permanent and 17 temporary meditation centers in Sri Lanka. Mahasi also ordained an Indonesian man called Mr. Bung as Venerable *Jinakakkhitta* and initiated him into progress of insight. Mahasi Sayadaw also sent a mission to Indonesia at his request to start meditation center there. Together with 13 other monks, Mahasi Sayadaw ordain many fully ordained monks and novice disciples and gave number discoursed and taught meditation on *Vipassanā* meditation.¹³¹

At the request of the Thai Minister for *Sangha* Affairs, Mahasi Sayadaw sent a mission to Thailand consisting of his senior disciple U Asabha and U Indavamsa to teach meditation and promote the practice of *Vipassanā* during 1952.¹³² It was due to their effort that *Vipassanā* meditation has become widely known and popular among Thai people. There were numerous meditation centers opened and many teachers were more than 100,000 people benefited in Thailand in Mahasi Sayadaw method during the first 10 years in 1962. Despite his ill health, Mahasi Sayadaw undertook five more missionary visits to Britain, Europe, America, India and Nepal.

At the request of Masoeyein Sayadaw who then presided over as *Sanghanayaka* of the executive Board at Sixth Buddhist Council, Mahasi Sayadaw taught two commentaries on Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga Atthakatha* and Venerable Dhammapala’s *Visuddhimagga Mahatika* which are mostly concerns with Buddhist meditation in theory as well as practice. Mahasi Sayadaw also translated *Visuddhimaga Mahatika*, altogether Mahasi Sayadaw

¹³⁰ Jack Kornfield., Op. cit., p. 59.

¹³¹ U Nyi Nyi, Op. cit., p. 7.

¹³² U Nyi Nyi, Op. cit., pp. 7-8.

produced some 67 volumes of Burmese Buddhist literature most of which is on *Vipassanā* meditation and related topic as well as *sutta* studies.¹³³

Mahasi Sayadaw attracted many visitors interested in meditation and seeking enlightenment. One of the first disciple who came to practice under Mahasi Sayadaw was British Rear-Admiral E.H. Shattock who came to Sasana Yeikta in 1952. He also published a book called “An Experiment in Mindfulness” after his return to England. Mr. Robert Duva a French born American man came to practice meditation at his center and later also ordained as monk. He also published a book in French about his experience in *Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā* method.¹³⁴

A well-known teacher from India called Anagarika Shri Munidnra came from Bodh Gaya to learn and practice meditation under Mahasi Sayadaw and became a very close disciple and spent several year learning and practicing *Vipassanā*. Joseph Goldstein another American also came to practice meditation and later wrote a book on insight meditation called “The Experience of Insight: A natural unfolding”, following these early works many more people came to practice and later on wrote about *Vipassanā* meditation.¹³⁵

4.1.7 Criticism of Mahasi Sayadaw’s Method of Vipassanā Meditation

Mahasi Sayadaw, despite his popularity also received criticism from certain quarters for his unorthodox method of noting the rising and falling of the abdomen in *Vipassanā* meditation. it is more often assumed that such a practice was an innovation of the Sayadaw himself and had no canonical ground for it, but the truth is it has been adopted before Mahasi Sayadaw by Mingun Jetavan Sayadaw and is no contrary to the Buddha’s teaching on the subject of meditation.¹³⁶

Mahasi Sayadaw adopted this method because the beginners find this easier to note the manifestation of the element of motions or *Vayudhatu* or air element. However, Mahasi Sayadaw does not impose this method people who

¹³³ Ibid., p. 8.

¹³⁴ Jack Kornfield., Op. cit., p. 61.

¹³⁵ Ibid., pp. 61-62.

¹³⁶ U Nyi Nyi, Op. cit., pp. 8-9.

come to practice meditation at his centers. if one prefers the practice of *Anapanasati* and observing breathing instead of the rise and fall of abdomen. Mahasi Sayadaw did not engage in such criticism. Later on two his disciples gave some explanation for this method for critics to examine and see the merit if they wished so.¹³⁷

The controversies of this nature arose among the member of the Sri Lankan Sangha and criticism of Mahasi Sayadaw's method were published in English Newspaper and Journal, since such a controversies were written in English the audience far larger and the necessity to address such misunderstanding became necessary, and therefore Sayadaw U Nanuttara of World Peace Pagoda responded to the criticism in Sri Lankan Buddhist periodical called 'World Buddhism'.

4.2 The System Insight Meditation in Thailand

There are many schools of *Vipassanā* meditation exist, however, there are also great deal of concentration oriented meditation. There are systems of meditation exist in Thailand which emphasizes the development and the practice of *Vipassanā* meditation. There are various traditions, some playing more attention at the beginning while others directly emphasizing on the practice of *Vipassanā* from the start.

There are meditation systems that vary in its emphasis on the *Vipassanā* meditation in Thailand. The Samadhi tradition of Northeast Thailand is famous for its approach of meditation that focuses on the practice of *samadhi* or concentration. This approach is also referred as Forest tradition, *Thammayuta Nikaya* does pay greater emphasis on this system of meditation.¹³⁸ This system involves the development of some stage of *samadhi* but also bring some element of insight meditation at early stage of its meditation system. This method also employs the practice of Mantra Buddha with mindfulness of breathing together with the meditation on the 32 parts of the body.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ U Nyi Nyi, Op. cit., p. 11.

¹³⁸ Cousins L.S., **The Origin of Insight Meditation**, The Buddhist Forum, Vol. IV, 1994-96, (London: University of London), p. 9.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 11.

This approach can be considered a more conservative and reformist at the same it, this approach can also equate to that of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's tendency toward ultimatums. Wat Paknam's approach to meditation is more traditional and involves concentration on various centers of the body, in particular one slightly above the navel and the recitation of the mantra *samma araham*. *Dhammakaya* is an offshoot of this kind of meditation with similar kind of meditation practice with strong tendency toward modernizing the practice, it is rather in presentation and not so much in its essential principles and ideas.

There are principle kinds of meditation systems that are present in Thailand. They are as follows 1) The Triple Gem Meditation, 2) Mindfulness of Breathing, 3) Rising and Falling, 4) Mind-Body, and 5) *Dhammakaya* Meditation. These types of meditation system present in Thailand covers both *Samatha* and *Vipassanā* form of meditation or the combination of both. Let us briefly examine them in turn.¹⁴⁰

4.3.1 Mindfulness of Breathing Method

Mindfulness of breathing or Mindfulness with breathing as Buddhadasa explains is perhaps the most well-known practice within the Buddhist tradition. Buddhadasa explain the mindfulness of breathing practice following the *Pāli* canon and the teaching on the four foundation of mindfulness in *Anapanasatti sutta* or *Maha-sathipaṭ ṭ hāna sutta*. This practice involves the close examination of body and its posture, three kinds of feelings alongside other feelings that arises in meditation which involves pleasant, painful and neutral, thirdly, observation of the mind with positive or negative mental states, finally comes the mindfulness of the *dharmas* or the reality or truth. This stage focuses on the realization of the impermanence of things.¹⁴¹

4.3.2 The Method of Rising and Falling

The practice of *Vipassanā* in Thailand comes from Mahasi Sayadaw's system of meditation in most part apart from few other sources within Burma.

¹⁴⁰ Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakaram, **A Study Guide for Samatha Vipassana Meditation Based On the Five Meditation Techniques**, (Rajchaburi: The National Coordination Center of Provincial Meditation Institute of Thailand,2012), pp. 6-11.

¹⁴¹ Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, **Mindfulness with Breathing: A Manual for Serious Beginners** (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1988), p. 11.

Therefore, it would not make sense to go over the same material as gone before while explaining the Mahasi Sayadaw's practice of meditation. However, I would recount the few essential points followed within Thai tradition of *Vipassanā* meditation. Four foundation of mindfulness of *satipaṭṭhāna* is an integral part of the practice. The practice of concentration or Samadhi is also encouraged within this meditation system. Beside the practice of sitting meditation, walking meditation is also given its due importance.¹⁴²

4.3.3 Mind Body or Nama-Rupā System of Meditation

This meditation system focuses on *Vipassanā* through the contemplation of mind and body. The practice involves the observation of the five aggregates or the five *khandhas* as they are known in Buddhist tradition. These five aggregates are *rūpa* or form, *Vedana* or feeling or sensations, *Sanna* or perception, *Sankhara* or mental formation and *Vijñāna* or consciousness. This five aggregate makes up our existence and the contemplation and observation of these five aggregate makes up this form of meditation. The practice also involves in the six senses and its object which are eye and seeing, tongue or taste, skin and touch, nose and smell, and so on.¹⁴³

4.3.4 Thai Forest Tradition

Thai Forest Tradition is largely a monastic meditation movement, that being said, it also has impacted lay meditation movement immensely, the development of the Thai forest monastic community was in response to the growing perception that Buddhism was in state of decline. The practitioners in this tradition lives in remote areas which are mostly forest dwellings or remote wilderness and training ground for the practice of meditation and monastic life in general. The monastic community is widely known of its austerity and strictness in practicing *Vinaya* or monastic discipline.¹⁴⁴

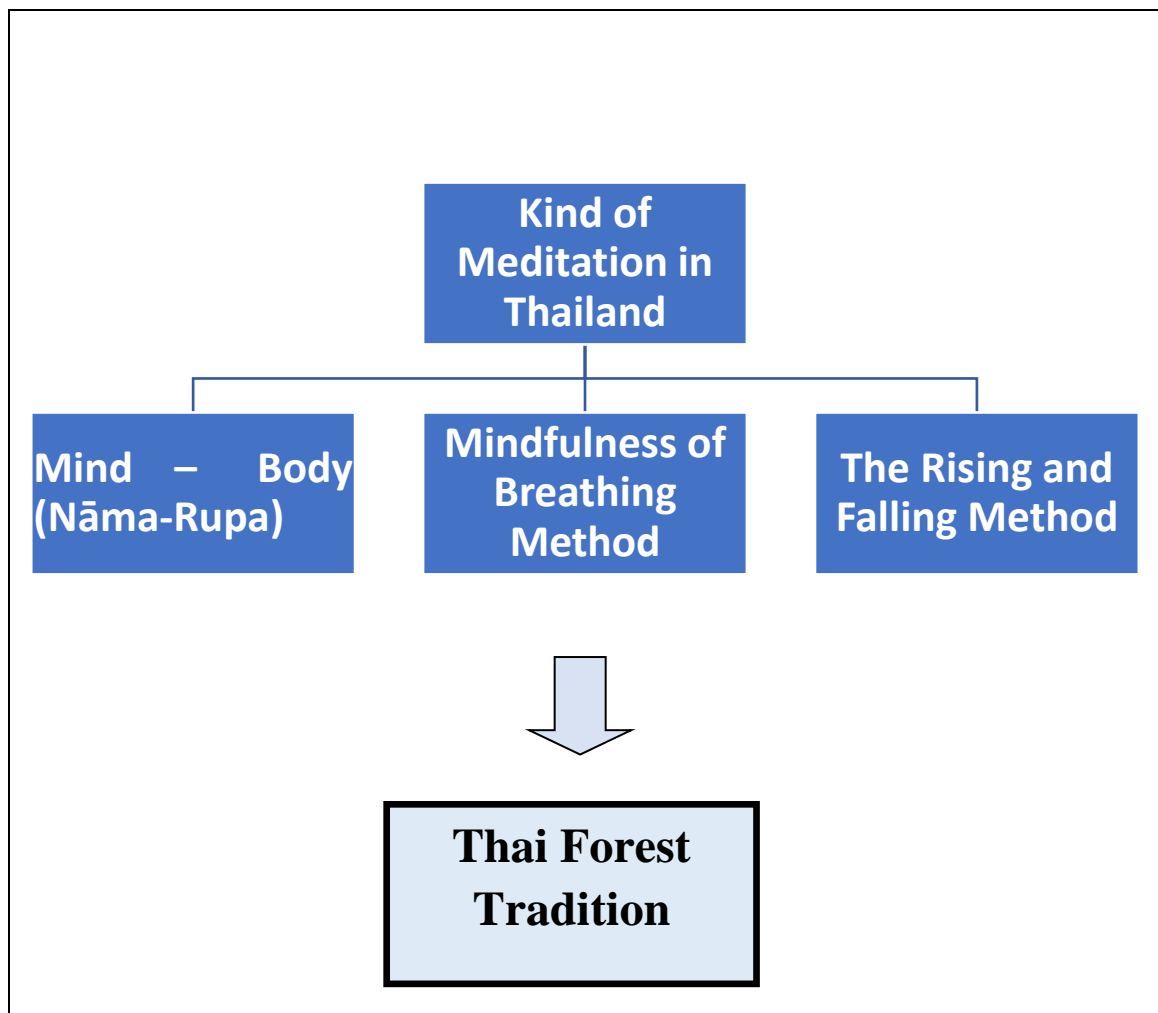
¹⁴² Mahasi Sayadaw, **Practical Insight Meditation: Basic and Progressive Stages**, (Kandy : Buddhist Publication Society, 1971), p. 16.

¹⁴³ Upasika Nab Mahaniranon, **Insight Meditation: The Practice Based On Mind and Body**, (Rajchaburi: The National Coordination Center of Provincial Meditation Institute of Thailand,2012), p. 36.

¹⁴⁴ Ajahn Chah, **Being Dharma: The Essence of the Buddha's Teachings**, (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2001), pp. 2-5.

Ajahn Chah is perhaps the most well-known figure in Thai Forest Tradition, today *Vipassanā* meditation has taken roots in the western countries, especially in the United States. Jack Kornfield, who is one of the foremost meditation teacher was trained under Thai forest tradition with Ajahn Chah. Another famous figure is that Ajahn Sumedho who is the senior Western representative of the Thai forest tradition. He was the abbot of the Amaravati Buddhist Monastery, Thanissaro Bhikkhu, the abbot of *Metta* Forest Monastery in San Diego County also was trained in Thai Forest Tradition. Western followers of the tradition teach meditation the monasteries as well as the lay meditation centers to teach meditation.¹⁴⁵

The Development of Thai Forest Meditation Tradition



¹⁴⁵ Jack Kornfield, Op. cit., p. 35.

4.4 Analysis on the Similarities and Differences of Insight Meditation in Thailand and Myanmar

Vipassanā meditation as we know it today has in most part derived from one or the other tradition from Southeast Asia and especially from Burma in majority of the cases. That being said, within Southeast Asia there are many Buddhist countries with their own distinctive features when it comes to meditation method and its practice. Among all the countries in Southeast Asia, Myanmar is perhaps the most important center for the development of the *Vipassanā* meditation. Alike Myanmar Thailand too has a long history of Buddhism but it was not until the modern period that meditation began to be popular. Despite the fact the Myanmar had influenced Thailand when it comes to *Vipassanā* meditation and it is particularly true of the Mahasi Sayadaw system of meditation, which is generally well recognized and widely practice among the *moni sayadawastic* community as well as the lay community.

Besides Mahasi, there are many more famous meditation teachers and meditation technique both in Thailand and in Myanmar. That is not all, not all of those meditation methods emphasis on the *Vipassanā* like Mahasi Sayadaw, some of them focuses on the practice of *samatha* practice or tranquility or calming the mind. In some cases, some teachers focus on the *samatha* and *Vipassanā* practices together and again some other teachers focus on the practice that exclusively does not focus on the *Vipassanā* and are less well known such as the meditation on the three jewel or the meditation on six elements. However, more often than not a lot of the meditation teacher focuses on the practice of mindfulness of breathing which again forms as the foundational step for the *Vipassanā* practice in many traditions.

4.4.1 The Similar Philosophical Foundation of Insight Meditation

Vipassanā meditation has its origin starting from 19th century during the end of colonial period as movement against the colonial powers and as revival of the Buddhist roots. The practice of meditation till this period was hardly unheard among the Buddhist communities of Thailand of Myanmar. However, starting from 19th Century interest in meditation practice grew in much larger scale. The practice that evolved were largely based on the *Pāli* canon and the extra canonical texts such as *Visudhimagga*. This is especially true of the *Maha-*

satipaṭṭhāna sutta and *Anapanasati sutta* which has become the foundation for most of the *Vipassanā* meditation practices in general.¹⁴⁶

However, in this context, there will be an examination of the *Mahasi Sayadaw's* method of *Vipassanā* or New Burmese Method in Myanmar with that of the famous *Vipassanā* meditation systems found in Thailand, to be more precise the one that derives from the Mahasi Sayadaw and his disciples in particular.

Both Mahasi Sayadaw as well as the Buddhadasa Bhikkhu takes the *Maha-satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* as an ultimate training manual of mind for the full and complete liberation or *nibbanā* within this lifetime. The Buddha in the *Maha-satipaṭṭhāna sutta* says that "Now, if anyone would develop these four frames of reference in this way for seven years, one of two fruits can be expected for him: either gnosis right here & now, or if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance. If anyone would develop these four frames of reference in this way for seven days, one of two fruits can be expected for him: either gnosis right here & now, or if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance non-return. This is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, for the disappearance of pain & distress, for the attainment of the right method, & for the realization of Unbinding."¹⁴⁷

This *sutta* forms the philosophical foundation for the practice of meditation as well as acts as the practical meditation manual. According to this passage the attainment of enlightenment is sure for those practice the four foundation of mindfulness diligently spanning from the period of seven years to seven days. This statement of the Buddha makes this *sutta* a central importance in Buddha's teaching. That is not all later on *sutta* also goes into the systematic training and the many forms of reflection in the *dhamma* or reality section of the *sutta*.

It is beyond any doubt that the four foundation of mindfulness forms the central teaching of the Mahasi Sayadaw and many other teachers within Thai or Burmese meditation tradition. The work of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa stresses on the 16 steps of *Anapanasati* which are nothing but the elaboration or the different stages of the four foundation of mindfulness which are body, feelings, mind and

¹⁴⁶ Mahasi Sayadaw, Op. cit., p. 11.

¹⁴⁷ D. II., 290.

dharma or reality. The same goes for the teaching of the Mahasi Sayadaw on the practice of the four foundation of mindfulness. As far as practical instruction concerns *Maha-satipaṭ ṭ hāna sutta* acts as the manual for most of the teachers in Burma or in Thailand.

Most meditation teachers in Thailand and Myanmar both equally emphasize on the importance of the practices and condition that are conducive to meditation. Most meditation teacher recognizes the importance of suitable place which is away from the world and avoids the activities that leads to distraction and away from the focus and concentration. Therefore, most of the teachers also ask the meditators to leave behind all the worries and connection with outside world for the time being. The meditation centers are located in more remote and peaceful places in the midst of nature and away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. The practice of the observance of silences is equally stressed by most meditation teachers as it leads to dissipating of the mental energy.¹⁴⁸

All the paths the basic, the preliminary, and the Noble Path form the eightfold path leading to *nibbāna*. In particular, one must recognize the Noble Path as the *dhamma* that is to be sought after, cultivated, and revered. Such an attitude is a prerequisite for strenuous effort in meditation. One must fully appreciate the value of insight meditation and know how to practice it.¹⁴⁹

One may also recall the practice of mindfulness in everyday activity as an integral part of the practice meditation and as well indispensable preparatory stage in the practice of *Vipassanā*. The practice of general mindfulness is emphasizing by majority of the teachers either in Myanmar or Thailand. Such an emphasis arises out of the *Maha-satipaṭ ṭ hāna sutta*, this is what the Buddha says about awareness of the body.

Furthermore, when walking, the monk discerns, 'I am walking.' When standing, he discerns, 'I am standing.' When sitting, he discerns, 'I am sitting.' When lying down, he discerns, 'I am lying down.' Or however his body is disposed, that is how he discerns it. "In this way he remains focused internally

¹⁴⁸ Mahasi Sayadaw, Op. cit., p. 23.

¹⁴⁹ U Aye Maung (trs.) **A Discourse on Dependent Origination By Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw**, (Bangkok: The Buddhadhamma Foundation, 1999), p. 9.

on the body in & of itself, or focused externally... unstained by anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.¹⁵⁰

This passage very well illustrates the importance of the general mindfulness with regard to the body and the advice is taken seriously by major Buddhist teachers of meditation as mandatory preparation for the further development of *Vipassanā* or *samatha* for that matter.

4.4.2 Distinctive Features, the Method of Meditation Emphasis on the Walking Meditation

As far as the basic philosophical teaching is concern there is not much of difference between the Mahasi Sayadaw's teaching on Mahasi Sayadaw or for that matter many of the other teachers in either Thailand or in Myanmar. However, the difference arises when the practice and the method of *Vipassanā* meditation is concern, there are differences in the practices of meditation as well as the subtle difference when it comes to the application of the instruction given by the *maha-satipaṭ ṭ hāna sutta*.

Although Mahasi Sayadaw follows the *Maha-satipaṭ ṭ hāna* as far as doctrinal and practical guidance goes for the practice of meditation. However, he introduced some variation in practice which by many teacher is not regarded as canonical as such. To begin with, instead on following the breath and its various stages such as prescribed in the *Maha-satipaṭ ṭ hāna sutta*, Mahasi Sayadaw recommends to watch the rising and falling of the abdomen instead of in and out breathe. However, Mahasi Sayadaw does not discourage others to follow the breath as the object of meditation in the first stage of observing the body and its movement.¹⁵¹

Furthermore, Mahasi Sayadaw explains that it is much easier to observe the rising and falling of abdomen as compare to breath as breath is a very subtle object and as the concentration progresses it gets refine and much harder to follow it whereas the rising and falling of abdomen is much easier to follow as it is easily detectable in one's experience. This point certainly has its merit, rising and falling of abdomen is the physical movement which is no doubt much easier to see as compared to breath, on the other hand rising and falling of abdomen is closely associated with breath. The nature of breath and its movement has the similar

¹⁵⁰ M., I., 55.

¹⁵¹ Mahasi Sayadaw, Op. cit., p.43.

corresponding impact on the abdomen. If breath gets shallow and short the rising of the abdomen also gets smaller and if breathing is longer you can equally see that in the greater rising of the abdomen and so on with other quality of the breath.

As you are observing the rising and falling of the abdomen in conformity with the method of meditation practice, your mind may wander, and you will start thinking this and that. Note what you are thinking about. At times, as you meditate, you may feel tired, hot or painful. Note these sensations too. As you feel tired, you may improve your posture. Note every movement that you make as you seek comfort. As you are meditating you may hear sounds, which must also be noted as they arise. In brief, you must note your own behavior, both physical and mental, together with sensations that you feel. When there is nothing in particular to note, concentrate your mind on your abdomen as in the beginning.¹⁵²

The practice of walking meditation is an integral part of the practice of meditation by Mahasi Sayadaw. The walking meditation is often recommended as supporting practice which takes places before or after the sitting meditation either to enhance the quality of meditation before engaging into more subtle object while sitting or to release the physical stiffness after sitting for hour or so. Mahasi Sayadaw and his disciple's teachers who are trained under him equally focuses and recommends the practice of walking meditation as starting point for getting deeper in sitting practice of meditation. This is indeed very helpful when one has had a meal which induces a sleep or when one gets physically tired after long hours in sitting meditation. The walking meditation is also a good step toward taking the sitting meditation energy and carrying it on into everyday life.

This is not to say that other teachers of *Vipassanā* does not recognize the practice of walking meditation, it is simply means that the emphasis on walking meditation in Mahasi Sayadaw's practice has received a special attention and greater emphasis which makes it a unique in the practice of *Vipassanā* meditation.¹⁵³

¹⁵² U Htin Fatt (trs), **On the Nature of Nibbāna by The Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw of Burma** (First printed and published in the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma, 1981), p. 59.

¹⁵³ Jack Kornfield, **Op. cit.**, p.41.

Similarities and Differences of Insight Meditation between Thailand and Myanmar

| Similarities | Differences |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Insight Meditation is the same based of Buddha’s teaching that practices in Thailand and Myanmar. ii. Insight Meditation practice in Thailand is a formed of meditation taught in Myanmar. iii. Both countries refer to <i>Achriya Buddhaghosa’s Visuddhimagga</i> as the primary manual of Insight meditation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Insight Meditation developed in Myanmar in twenty century taking the key object is “abdomen”. While “Buddho” is a basic object of Thailand meditation technique. ii. Dhammakaya introduced totally new form of meditation technique in Thailand which differs from Myanmar. |

4.5 Concluding Remarks

Although on the surface it seems that there are variety of meditation techniques with very different impact and results, however, despite many of the differences between the *Mahasi Sayadaw’s* teaching on Insight Meditation and other teachers who teaches Calm meditation or Insight Meditation, there are lot more similarities than differences. It is due to the philosophical and traditional underpinning in the *Pāli* canon and the extra canonical works such as *Visudhimagga* which forms the basis of the many of the Insight Meditation in Burma and Thailand.

CHAPTER V

Conclusion and Suggestion

5.1 Conclusion and Suggestions

This chapter concludes all the topics, sub-topics and explanations of this paper about Insight Meditation in general, Mahasi Sayadaw's technique in particular. Suggestions are also given in this chapter. Insight Meditation Movement in Myanmar and Thailand Based on Mahasi Sayadaw's teaching has concluding opinion. After this research, limitations have been found, therefore, suggestions for further studies and research are recommended in this chapter.

5.1.1 Concept of Insight Meditation in Theravada Buddhism

The Insight meditation is the kind of meditation that leads to the arising of Insight and is a direct path to enlightenment as taught by the Buddha in *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna sutta*. Although, the *Vipassanā* movement became popular starting from 19th century but its origin goes far back in the Buddha's time. However, the term *Vipassanā* is not mentioned in *Pāli* canon but later on it came to be prominence. The *Vipassanā* movement as it is popularly known has its origin in recent times in Burma, there are several schools of *Vipassanā* that evolved within Burma and now has become worldwide famous practice including Southeast Asia. The practices of *Vipassana* are largely derived from *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna* and the teaching on meditation contained in *Vissudhimagga* the text written by Buddhaghosa.

Vipassanā meditation greatly differs from the *Samatha* or calm meditation which aims at appeasing the mind or calming the mind, whereas the object of *Vipassanā* meditation is no less than attaining the *Nibbana* or liberation from suffering. The object of *Samatha* meditations leads to *jhana* or higher meditative states whereas object of *Vipassanā* meditation leads to Insight and freedom from suffering. Insight Meditation does not require the higher concentration power whereas as the *Samatha* meditation depends of the attainment of *jhanas*. One needs go regularly engage in the practice of *samatha* to continue the power of concentration whereas in the Insight meditation helps meditators to see things as they really are and does not required sustained power of concentration. Insight meditation does not temporarily suppress the negative

emotions such as *Samatha* meditation, apart from eliminating the negative emotions Insight Meditation gives rise to positive and skilful mental states. *Samatha* meditation relies on the conventional truth as for its object of meditation whereas Insight Meditation relies on the Ultimate truth as the object of meditation.

The Uniqueness of Insight Meditation lies in its ability to give rise to the Insight into the condition existence and see things as they really are; impermanent, devoid of self, and suffering. It helps to rid of wrong views and gives rise to Insight. The practitioner undergoes several stages before he or she fully gains liberation from suffering, firstly, he or she goes through the struggling stage in which the practitioner has to struggle a lot to stay with meditation, after a while he experiences sailing state in which the meditation gets easier and finally take off stage in which the meditator really begins see the energy flow quite natural in meditation and he also experiences peace and calm, mind becomes more joyful.

Four Foundation of Mindfulness is the central teaching for the Insight Meditation. The four foundation of Mindfulness are Body, feelings, mind and reality as taught by the Buddha in the *Maha-satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the *sutta* also considers the practice of four foundation of mindfulness as the direct path to *Nibbāna* and freedom from suffering.

5.1.2 Insight Meditation as Taught by Mahasi Sayadaw

Mahasi Sayadaw is perhaps the most well-known among all the *Vipassanā* teachers in Burma, his teaching on Insight meditation is known as the “New Burmese Method” due to his innovative creative style of teaching *Vipassanā* which differs in some respect from his predecessors. Mahasi Sayadaw was born in peasant family and got ordain as Novice monk very early in his life and higher ordination later on, he also received distinguished honors in his studies of *Pāli*, *Tipitaka* and *Abhidhamma*, however, it was of his interest in *Maha-satipaṭṭhāna* that led him to his teacher Mingun Jetavan Sayadaw, he mastered the practice in very short period and started teaching himself, his fame rouse so high that a wealthy supporter helped him to build Meditation Center in Yangon which become widely known and give inspiration to many more region in Myanmar and neighboring countries to establish the *Vipassanā* Centers such as in Thailand, Sri Lanka and other Southeast Asian countries and received many western disciples too. Today, he is the most well-known teacher of *Vipassanā* in

Asia as well as in the West with many active centers with many trained teachers to continue the work that Mahasi Sayadaw started.

One of the unique feature of Insight Meditation as taught by Mahasi Sayadaw is the observations of the “rising and falling” of abdomen instead of observing the breath as the object of meditation as preferred by most of the teachers following the instructions in *Maha-satipaṭṭhāna sutta*. Mahasi Sayadaw argues that it is much easier to observe the rising and falling of abdomen as compare to breath which can get subtle and difficult to observe whereas the rising and falling is more concrete and easy to notice for the practioner.

Mahasi Sayadaw also pays much attention to the noting technique in which practioner makes a mental note of anything that arises in mind, doing so one becomes consciously aware of the wondering thoughts or any other emotions arising in the mind which otherwise would lead meditator away from meditation. Mahasi also emphasizes on the practice of everyday mindfulness and instructs the practioner to do things everything in slower phase than usual, this is perhaps is one of the most useful way of strengthening and cultivating and maintaining mindfulness outside the meditation practice in everyday life.

Mahasi Sayadaw’s teaching is based on the *Maha-satipaṭṭhāna sutta* in which one contemplate and observers the body, feeling, mind and reality. He also derives inspiration and guidance from the *Vissudhimagga* a text written by Acariya Buddhadasa. Mahasi Sayadaw pays much attention to the preparation of meditation, he emphasizes on the practice of *sila* to begin with a way of preparation. One is also encouraged to reflect on the Buddha’s quality or cultivate *metta* for all beings. The reflection on the repulsiveness of the body is also encouraged to help meditator get over attachment and greed to oneself and others.

5.1.3 Insight Meditation Movement in Myanmar and Thailand Based on Mahasi Sayadaw’s Teaching

Although, Insight Meditation arose in Southeast Asia to be more precise in Burma in most part but also in Thailand and Laos to some extent, today it is worldwide phenomena. Among all the major schools of traditions of Insight Meditation tradition it would not be far fetch to say that “New Burmese Method” has gain prominence among all, it began with U Narada who originated the practice and developed and later on Mahasi Sayadaw popularized it and widely propagated it. Apart from Mahasi Sayadaw, there are also other well-known teachers of *Vipassanā* such as Ledi Sayadaw one of the prominent figure in Ledi lineage of *Vipassanā*, perhaps S.N. Goenka is the most well-known teacher of

this tradition. Then there is Venerable Pa Auk Sayadaw whose teaching is based on the *Vissudhimagga*. He emphasizes in the development of the four *jhanas* before going on to practice the four element meditation that is to say the earth, water, fire and air element that makes up our body. Another well-known teacher Mogok Sayadaw emphasizes on the practice of Insight meditation with especial emphasis on conditionality as well as the awareness of the feeling and mental states.

Insight Meditation in Thailand has more similarities than difference, although, one cannot ignore many unique features of the Insight Meditation as developed in Thailand. There are five well known practices found in Thailand. The most well-known is that of *Mahasi Sayadaw's* "New Burmese Method" which is entirely derived from *Mahasi Sayadaw* and his disciples from Burma, on the other hand there is forest Tradition which is largely based on the *Pāli* canon and on *Maha-satipatthana Sutta* and other texts from the *Pāli* canon, here one can also include the *Anapanasati* Practice of *Buddhadasa Bhikkhu*, There are also other meditation systems which are little less known outside Thailand such as Buddha the mantra recitation of Buddha together with meditation is highly recommended. There is also Meditation system that focuses on the mind-body practice and that of Reflection on the Three Jewels of Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha.

5.2 Suggestions for Further Researcher

Due to the limitation of the scope and the objectives one cannot dwell on many of the study topics that otherwise requires great deal of attention. Here are few of the topics that may be worth further research.

1. A Comparative study of "New Burmese Method" and the other Insight Meditation Practices.

2. A Comparative study of Mahasi Sayadaw's teaching on *Vipassanā* and Mogok Sayadaw's teaching on Insight Meditation.

3. A Critical study of Insight Meditation Movement in Thailand.

4. The Impact of Insight Meditation on the Mind and Body: A Psychophysical perspective on Insight Meditation.

5. A Critical study of *Samatha* Meditation Verses *Vipassanā* Meditation.

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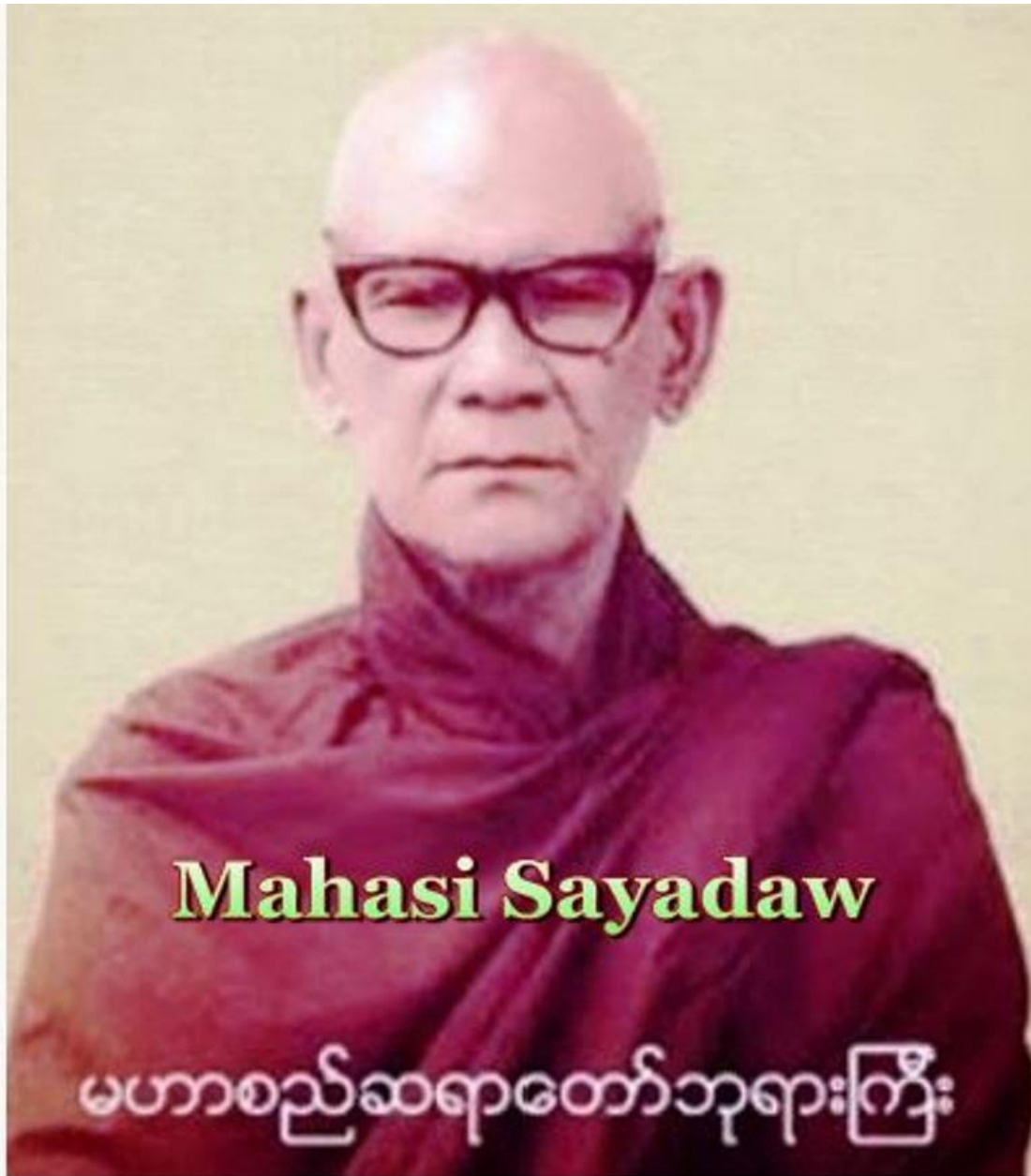
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Appendix Biography of Ven. Mahāsī Sayadaw



Venarable Mahasi Sayadaw was born at Seikkhun Village during the year 1904 in upper Burma, he was born in the peasant family. Following the Burmese tradition, he was sent to receive his early monastic education at the age of 6 under the guidance of U Adicca at Pyinmana Monastery at Saeikkhun. Later he received a novice ordination at the age of 12 under the same teacher and was given the name Shin Sobhana which means auspicious one. He was bright student and did make remarkable progress in his scriptural studies. He received full

ordination as Bhikkhu on 26th November 1923, after his ordination, he also passed all three grades of Pāli scriptural examination conducted by government in 4-year time.

Venerable Sobhana left for city of Manadalay for further scriptural studies. However, just over a year later he was invited to Moulmein to assist the head of the Taik-Kyaung Monastery in Taugwainggale. He was deeply interested in the Mahasatipatthan sutta and wanted to gain greater insight into the teaching contain in it by practice of meditation. Therefore, he went to neighboring Thaton to practice Vipassanā meditation under the guidance of well known meditation teacher called Mingun Jetavan Sayadaw. He practiced very deeply under the guidance of his teacher and became very familiar with the practice and started teaching after four months of practice.

While he was on his visit to Seikkhun village, he started teaching it to his first three disciples during 1938. In the meanwhile, he also gave and passed a Dhammachariya or teacher of dhama examination in June 1941. During the Japanese invasion of Burma, Ven. Sobhana had to return to his native village, he used this opportunity to further deepen his practice of Vipassanā meditation and teach it to growing number of disciples. Later on, he received the more popular name of Mahasi Sayadaw following the name of the Monastery called Mahasi Monastery at Seikhun where he started his career as meditation teacher. He became gradually famous as meditation teacher in the region of Shwebo-Sagaing.

One of his wealthy disciple named Sir U Thwin became devoted follower of Mahasi Sayadaw and decided to build a big Vipassanā meditation center in Rangoon, after the completion of the Center, Mahasi Sayadaw was invited to preside over the meditation center as teacher by the prime minister of Burma, Starting from 4th December 1949.

Mahasi Sayadaw started instructing the first batch of twenty five meditators in the practice of Vipassanā, as the meditation center grew more popular, it became difficult for Mahasi Sayadaw to instruct entire initiation talks and therefore, the recorded tapes were played for new batch of meditators starting from 1951. Not long after this period, number of similar meditation centers were established all over Myanmar, Mahasi Sayadaw also trained many members of the sangha as meditation teachers. Gradually, the Vipassanā centers were also established in neighboring countries like Thailand, Cambodia and Sri Lanka.

Recognizing the great contribution made by the Mahasi Sayadaw, Then Prime Minister of the Union of Burma honored him with prestigious title of Aggamahapandita or the Exalted Wise One. After the Independence of Burma, government planned to hold a Sixth Buddhist council or Chattasangayana in Burma together with four other Buddhist countries which includes Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos who also took part in this gathering. Mahasi Sayadaw played an important part in this ceremony which took place on 17th May 1954. He was one of the final editor (Osana) and Questioner (Pucchaka).

Mahasi sayadaw played an important role in other prominent writing about books on satipathana meditation and other scholarly works by Buddhaghosa a famous pāli commentator. He wrote number of books, gave hundreds of talks on Meditation and texts from the pali canon that are helpful on the path to the realization of Insight.

He also played an important part in making Vipassanā meditation practice widely available through many of the centers that sprang through his effort and the efforts of his disciples primarily in Thailand but also in Sri Lanka and Indonesia. Furthermore, he also visited USA to teach meditation to newly founded meditation center known as Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts, USA. Since then, many westerners from all over the world came to practice meditation at Center in Yangon under his guidance. He passed way at on 14th August 1982 due to heart attack.

Biography of the Researcher

| | |
|------------------------|---|
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