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**MAHASI SAYADAW MEDITATION PRACTICE
IN THAI SOCIETY**

Mrs. Zar Zar Min Thaw

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts Program in Thai Studies
Faculty of Arts**


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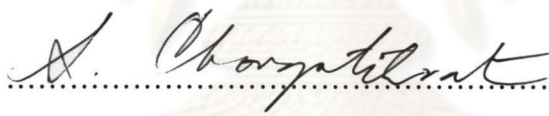
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จุดประสงค์ของการทำวิจัยนี้เพื่อการศึกษาประวัติศาสตร์และการพัฒนาการของการปฏิบัติกรรมฐานตามแนวทางของพระมหาสีสยาดอร์ในสังคมไทย รวมถึงประวัติโดยย่อของสำนักปฏิบัติกรรมฐานและผู้ปฏิบัติกรรมฐานตามแนวทางของพระมหาสีสยาดอร์ในสังคมไทยในปัจจุบัน

วิทยานิพนธ์เล่มนี้เลือกที่จะศึกษาประวัติของสำนักปฏิบัติกรรมฐาน 4 แห่งที่ได้นำการปฏิบัติกรรมฐานตามแนวทางของพระมหาสีสยาดอร์มาใช้ในการเผยแผ่ ได้แก่ วัดมหาธาตุ จังหวัดกรุงเทพมหานคร, วัดเวศกมล จังหวัดชลบุรี, สำนักวิปัสสนาธิมโทยะ จังหวัดนครปฐม, และ ยุวพุทธิกสมาคมแห่งประเทศไทย จังหวัดกรุงเทพมหานคร ข้อมูลในวิทยานิพนธ์เล่มนี้ได้เก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลที่เกี่ยวข้องกับหลักสูตรการปฏิบัติกรรมฐาน, อาจารย์ผู้สอนการปฏิบัติกรรมฐานที่สำนักปฏิบัติกรรมฐานและข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับภูมิหลังของผู้ปฏิบัติกรรมฐาน วิทยานิพนธ์เล่มนี้ได้ใช้แบบสอบถามและการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกกับผู้ปฏิบัติกรรมฐานตามแนวทางของพระมหาสีสยาดอร์ ซึ่งคำถามนั้นได้ถามเกี่ยวกับข้อมูลส่วนตัวและการปฏิบัติกรรมฐานที่ผ่านมาของผู้ปฏิบัติกรรมฐาน รวมถึงเหตุผลที่หันมาปฏิบัติกรรมฐานตามแนวทางของพระมหาสีสยาดอร์, คุณประโยชน์และความคาดหวังของผู้ปฏิบัติกรรมฐานจากการปฏิบัติกรรมฐานตามแนวทางของพระมหาสีสยาดอร์

ผลการวิเคราะห์ภูมิหลังของผู้ปฏิบัติกรรมฐานตามแนวทางของพระมหาสีสยาดอร์ในสำนักปฏิบัติกรรมฐานทั้ง 4 แห่ง สรุปได้ว่า ภูมิหลังของผู้ปฏิบัติกรรมฐานส่วนใหญ่เป็นชนชั้นกลาง มีการศึกษา และ ทำงานในภาคส่วนของธุรกิจ ซึ่งจำนวนผู้ปฏิบัติกรรมฐานเพศหญิงจะมีมากกว่าเพศชาย สำหรับเหตุผลที่ผู้ปฏิบัติกรรมฐานหันมาปฏิบัติกรรมฐานตามแนวทางของพระมหาสีสยาดอร์เป็นเพราะผู้ปฏิบัติกรรมฐานเชื่อว่าวิธีปฏิบัติกรรมฐานแบบนี้จะทำให้พัฒนาจิตใจและนำไปสู่นิพพานได้ นอกจากนี้ ผู้ปฏิบัติกรรมฐานยังคิดว่าจะได้ประโยชน์ต่าง ๆ ในการปฏิบัติกรรมฐาน อาทิเช่น มีสติรู้และสมาธิที่ดีขึ้น รวมถึงทำให้เกิดสติปัญญาในการแก้ไขปัญหาที่เกิดขึ้นในชีวิต นอกจากนี้ประสบการณ์จากการปฏิบัติกรรมฐานตามแนวทางของพระมหาสีสยาดอร์เป็นแรงบันดาลใจให้ผู้ปฏิบัติกรรมฐานศึกษาพระพุทธศาสนาเพิ่มเติม

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ลายมือชื่อ อ.ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์หลัก..... 

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ZAR ZAR MIN THAW: MAHASI SAYADAW MEDITATION PRACTICE IN THAI SOCIETY. THESIS ADVISOR: PROF. SIRAPORN NATHALANG, Ph.D., 127 pp.

The objective of this research is to study the history and development of Mahasi Sayadaw meditation practice in Thailand and present a profile of the meditation centers and practitioners who have adopted Mahasi meditation method in Thailand.

The thesis selects to study the profile of four meditation centers adopting Mahasi meditation method: Wat Mahadhatu in Bangkok, Wat Vivekasom in Chonburi, Dhammodaya Chanmyay Meditation Center in Nakorn Pathom, and the Young Buddhists Association of Thailand (YBAT) in Bangkae, Bangkok. Information concerning meditation courses, meditation masters at the meditation centers and also background information of meditation practitioners was collected. The thesis also uses questionnaires and conducts in-depth interview with practitioners adopting Mahasi Sayadaw method. The questions inquire about personal background and meditation background of the practitioners, reasons for adopting Mahasi meditation method, benefits and expectations of practitioners from practicing Mahasi method.

The analysis of the profile of the meditators practicing Mahasi meditation at the four meditation centers reveals the following aspects. The backgrounds of the majority of the practitioners tend to be educated, middle classed and working in the business sector; female is outnumbered than men. The reasons for adopting Mahasi method are because people believe that this method will provide spiritual development for them and lead them to attain *Nibbana*. People think they gain benefits from this meditation practice by having more awareness, consciousness and concentration and also having intellectual mind in solving problems in life. Experiences from practicing Mahasi meditation inspire them to learn more about Buddhism.

Field of Studies Thai Studies

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Thailand is one of the Theravada Buddhist countries in South East Asia. It has always been recognized as a prominent Buddhist country since the time of its beginning in the 13th century AD. Some common features practiced by Thai Buddhists throughout Thailand are making offering alms food to monks every morning, observing at least the five moral precepts, sponsoring ordination ceremonies and practicing meditation at monasteries or at home. Thus, in the life of Thai Buddhists, the principles and the practice of Buddhism are applied in their daily lives such that one can say that Buddhism is integrated into Thai lives.

With the ultimate goal for the achievement of *Nibbana* and the cessation of rebirth, merit making and meditation are practiced by Buddhists. Meditative attention is an art or an acquired skill which brings clarity and wisdom that sees the “true nature of things”. Thus, meditation is the systematic training of attention. Attention is the deliberate placing of awareness on its object, and awareness is knowing the state of the object.

Meditation is practiced in Thailand on the basis of various methods taught by various meditation masters. Among these various methods of meditation, Mahasi Sayadaw of Myanmar method is a well-known one. In Thailand, it is generally known as the method of “*Yup No Phong No*”, which is the rise and fall of the abdomen since the meditation method of Mahasi Sayadaw focuses on the abdominal movement as the primary meditative object for the insight meditation (*Vipassana*).

The present research is an analytical study of knowledge of the meditation in the context of Mahasi Sayadaw’s insight meditation practice in Thai society. With this objective I intend to understand the history, development and the influence of Mahasi meditation in Thailand.

I would like to explain why I have chosen the meditation method of Mahasi Sayadaw practiced in Thailand as my case study. First of all, the meditation method of Mahasi Sayadaw is one of the most popular meditation methods in Thailand as the case study reveals. It was firstly adopted by Wat Mahadhatu at Sanam Luang in Bangkok and then publicized and adopted by

many other temples in Thailand. The method is also taught in the Buddhist University such as Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.

Secondly, Mahasi meditation method is famous not only in Myanmar where it is originated but also in many countries around the world. It is believed among the Burmese people that Mahasi Sayadaw is one of the *Arahats* (the noble one) in Myanmar, and as such is widely respected. Mahasi Sayadaw is endowed with high qualitative knowledge on Buddhism and Buddhist meditation. His extraordinary canonical erudite knowledge was revealed during the sixth Buddhist council. After getting independence, the Government of Myanmar began to hold the Sixth Buddhist Council (*Sangayana*). For this purpose, the Government dispatched a mission to Thailand and Cambodia, composed of Nyaungyan Sayadaw, Mahasi Sayadaw and two laymen. At this historic Sixth Buddhist Council, inaugurated on 17th May 1954, Mahasi Sayadaw played an eminent role, undertaking the tasks of *Osana* (Final Editor) and *Pucchaka* (Questioner). In the editing of this commentarial literature, Mahasi Sayadaw was responsible for making a critical analysis, sound interpretation and skillful reconciliation of several crucial and divergent passages. He also promoted *Satipatthana* (the four foundation of mindfulness) meditation. Due to this effort, Mahasi Sayadaw is perceived as a very prominent and venerable monk among not only in the Theravada dominant countries but also in other Buddhist countries. During my study period, I listened to the *Dhamma* tape about meditation by Mahasi Sayadaw and let me quote part of his lecture:

“The gift of learning to meditate is the greatest gift you can give yourself in this life. For it is only through meditation that you can undertake the journey to discover your true nature, and so find the stability and confidence you will need to live, and die, well. Meditation is the road to enlightenment.”

In this thesis, I want to explain Mahasi Sayadaw’s meditation method, provide profile of certain meditation centers: Wat Mahadhatu, Wat Vivekasorn, Dhammodaya Chanmyay Meditation Center and the Young Buddhist Association of Thailand (YBAT), and also profiles of the people practicing the Mahasi meditation method. Overall, I intend to study the history, development, influence and role of Mahasi practice in Thai society.

1.1 Objectives

1. To study the history and development of Mahasi Sayadaw meditation practice in Thailand.
2. To present a profile of the Thai temples and practitioners who have adopted Mahasi meditation method in Thailand.

1.2 Research Questions and Hypothesis

Mahasi Sayadaw meditation method is a famous meditation method that originated in Myanmar but has become popular in other countries, particularly in Thailand. This thesis then attempts to answer the questions: (1) What are the features and characteristics of Mahasi meditation method? (2) How is Mahasi meditation method taught and propagated in contemporary Thai meditation temples and centers? and (3) Who are the people who practice this form of meditation, what are their expectations and what have they achieved after practicing this form of meditation?

It appears that the spread and the popularization of Mahasi meditation method is due to the meditation method that emphasizes the rise and fall of the abdomen and the status of Royal temple of Wat Mahadhatu –the first temple to adopt this form of meditation in Thailand before a network of temples and meditation centers expanded all over the country. The laity who adopt this technique of Mahasi meditation are from various occupations, mostly middle class and educated people. Interviews conducted with these practitioners will enable us to learn more about these practitioners in terms of their social background and their expectations.

1.3 Methodology

The methodology applied in this research consists of documentary analysis and data collection from fieldwork by conducting observation, participant observation, interviews and questionnaires. While it may be easy to find Buddhist lectures connected with insight meditation of Mahasi method, but it is challenging to interview monks and meditators practicing meditation.

This study will mainly focus on four meditation centers - Wat Mahadhatu in Bangkok, Wat Vivekasorn in Chonburi, Dhammodaya Chanmyay Meditation Center in Nakorn Pathom, and the Young Buddhists Association of Thailand (YBAT) in Bangkok. Each center is selected with special reasons- Wat Mahadhatu is the central monastery where the practice of Mahasi meditation commenced, while Wat Vivekasorn was established by a disciple of Mahasi Sayadaw, Bhaddanta Asabha, who is a pioneer monk in spreading this method in Thailand. Dhammodaya Chanmyay meditation center's founder, Venerable Chanmyay Sayadaw is the one who practices meditation under the guidance of the Mahasi Sayadaw, and now his refined capability and skills in teaching *vipassana* meditation are very famous among Thai lay people and the Young Buddhist Association of Thailand (YBAT), an association organizing *vipassana* meditation method to numerous Thai people.

1.4 Expected Benefits

1. This thesis will contribute to the body of knowledge concerning the Burmese meditation method in Thailand.
2. It will help us to understand the dynamics of contemporary meditation in Thai society.

1.5 Literature Review

In this section, I would like to describe in brief the existing literature on Buddhist meditation, particularly in Thailand. Nissara Horayangura (2006) in her M.A thesis emphasized that the integration of *Patibat tham* (*dhamma* practice) into daily life can be more clearly understood as a balance of two possible approaches, namely changing how one leads one's life and what makes up one's life. She described the three modules of the Noble Eightfold Path (*sila-samadhi-panna*) as consisting of the Threefold Training (*tri-sikkha*) that contains training in higher morality (*adhisila-sikkha*), training in higher mentality (*adhicitta-sikkha*) and training in higher wisdom (*adhipanna-sikkha*).

Hersh (2005) (who refers to Susan Augenstein, an insight meditation instructor) in his article "Health Matter" said that Meditation could be used at anytime - while sitting on a bus, walking, lying down, standing up, even while brushing your teeth. This kind of regular practice, eventually will lead to become the life a process of meditation and through that process we could have extraordinary insights in ordinary daily experiences. Everybody can practice meditation not only the Buddhists but also the non-Buddhists. For example, the Westerners who have adapted the discipline of Insight Meditation, Augenstein claims that it is not necessary to be a Buddhist to practice this form.

Jeffrey S. Bowers (1995) highlighted the concept of Dhammakaya meditation. Dhammakaya meditation is a complex visualization technique initially involving three types. The first type of meditation is *aloka-kasina* (light device) meditation by concentrating on a bright object. The second one is *Anapana-sati* meditation by concentrating on the motion of the breathing and the last one is *Buddhamussati* meditating with reciting the Mantra "*Samma-Araham.*" The combination of the three methods becomes the initial step in practicing Dhammakaya meditation. Dhammakaya meditation instructors use these three methods to achieve a good degree of concentration and visualization. I get some concept from his paper explaining why laymen are using Mahasi meditation method. Mahasi insight meditation and Dhammakaya methods have a common concept which is the concentration on body movement. However, Mahasi insight meditation uses body movement to develop insight and achieve *Nibbana* whereas Dhammakaya uses some object to calm the mind and as such can be called a tranquil meditation.

The Venerable Phra Dhamma Theerarach Mahamuni (Chodok) (2001) describes the insight meditation as "*ekayana mega*" (the only way). *Patipada Magga* (the path leading to progress) is divided into five kinds: the descending path, the human path, the path to the six classes of Heaven, the path to the abode of *Brahma* and the path to *Nibbana*. The path to *Nibbana* is the highest way of Buddhism and which is the development of Insight (*Vipassana bhavana*). Of these five paths, the fifth path to (*Nibbana*) is the one under consideration and is known as "*ekayana magga*" (the only way). To enter the practice of insight meditation

(*Vipassana*) means the cultivation of such potentialities as perfection and the development of precepts, concentration and wisdom from the lowest to the highest levels.

Spiller (1998), in his book, **The Liberating Practice of Insight Meditation** the importance of the *vipassana* – insight meditation is stressed. In his explanation breathing is placed the most important thing which we do for our health which is not overestimated. For the simple way of practice of Buddhist meditation – the inhalation and exhalation of breath, the practitioners show immense respect. They observe the breath as a simple which is also a profound object on which the mind is concentrated in the course of meditation. In this way, in meditation the breath is observed, and eventually, the meditator understand it as a symbol of the changing nature of life, a concept that is the crucial point in Buddhism. In this observation of the breath, the meditator will feel that breath is coming in and going out and then returning, and because of what, eventually he will recognize that everything follows a similar path as for instance, light follows dark, health follows illness, and happiness follows sadness. In the practice of Buddhist meditation, this sort of insight knowledge is believed leading to enlightenment.

A book **Insight Meditation: the Practice of Freedom** written by Joseph Goldstein (2003), emphasized that practicing insight meditation (known as *vipassana*) shows to the awareness that cause to be freed oneself from greed, hatred, fear, and ignorance. This insight meditation is practiced how our mental phenomena react by being still and giving uninterrupted attention. From this comprehension there arises the awareness that "everything comes and goes by itself." It is a plausible simple practice, as those who have been practicing meditation for a long time will attest, on the other hand, which can also be psychologically challenging. This, however, will lead to conclude that Insight Meditation is the perfect starting point for those beginning to meditate (Goldstien, 2003).

An article, "*Yup No Phong No* (rise and fall) meditation method", written by unknown writer (2008) described the *Yup No Phong No* method as developing insight to gain the analytical knowledge of mind and matter through the understanding of their characteristics, properties, manifestations and proximate causes. The air element is one out of the four elements that make up all physical things. It must be noted that this is not the same mindfulness of the breath. The above mention paper distinguishes *samatha*, tranquil meditation from *vipassana*, insight

meditation by explaining that the meditators must observe only the air element, If they follow his or her breath, it is not insight meditation, but just a methods of tranquil meditation. Venerable Mahasi gives an example to describe the distention and support of the air element. A football has air filled up tightly in it and causes it to expand to remain tight and firm. Similarly, when meditators' breathe they fill their lungs, the air element pushes their abdomen outwards and makes it's tight and firm. Every time when we move the air element functions to support our body. It is because of the air element that we can sit, stand, bend, stretch, etc. The function of the air element is moving. It moves from place to place when it is strong. It is the air element that makes the body bend, stretch, sit, stand, go and come. The explanation of this paper is very useful for my study of Mahasi insight meditation.

Analayo (2003) described *Satipatthana* in his book **The Direct Path to Realization**. The Buddha's path of liberation as discovered by him following the middle path (*majjhima-patipada*) could be achieved through the practice of mindfulness meditation, *Satipatthana*, which is founded on the exposition of the *Satipatthana-sutta* which is recorded in both the *Digha-nikaya* (the Long Discourses of the Buddha) and the *Majjhima-nikaya* (the Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha) of the Theravada canon. The subject-matter of this *sutta* is to explain the four foundations of mindfulness which are the contemplation of the body (*kayanupassana*), contemplation of feelings (*vedanamupassana*), contemplation of the mind (*cittanupassana*) and the contemplation of dhamma (*dhammanupassana*). These four foundations of mindfulness serve as the way to achieve the insight mediation (*vipassana bhavana*) of the Theravada tradition, which is a more or less dependable and convincing authoritative exposition of Theravada. In this *sutta*, the Buddha claims that the practice of mindfulness meditation (*satipatthana*) is the only and the direct way to bring the end of sorrow, lamentation, etc., to purify beings and to realize *Nibbana*.

Bhikkhu Analayo attempted to explain the significance of the practice of mindfulness meditation where he bridged the practical experience and the canonical and philosophical explanation as found in the Buddhist canons. He further explores the subject-matter of the *sutta* as a wide-ranging and multi-faceted source of guidance where the new interpretations and

approaches from the Theravada Buddhist meditation points of view on the basis of the Theravada canons.

Furthermore, Bhikkhu Analayo discussed in this book the basis of the *Satipatthana-sutta* that prescribes a set of contemplations which reveal the subtle aspects of meditative experiences. Such mental factors as 'a balanced and sustained application of effort (*atapi*), the presence of clearly knowing (*sampajanna*), and a balanced state of mind, free from desires (*abhijjha*) and discontentment (*domanssa*), when are exerted and exercised with the application of the constant and unbroken continuity mindfulness (*sati*), being bare and equanimous receptivity combined with an alert, broad and open state of mind, the foundations of mindfulness is established, thus the realization of the *Nibbana* there will be, as the Buddha himself also has asserted at the end of the *sutta*. This modern academic work on the field of mediation with special focus on the *Vipassana* according to the *Mahasatipatthana-sutta* (the Foundation on Mindfulness) will be a very helpful guide in understanding mindfulness meditation (Analayo, 2003).

Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw (1969) relies upon certain works written by the authoritative Buddhist scriptures. The books the author refers to most are: the '**Treatises as to How to Practice Vipassana Meditation**' Vols. I and II. The sayadaw based these books on the Path of Purification (*Visuddhimagga*), the Great Discourse on Foundation of Mindfulness (*Mahasatipatthana Sutta*) and other relevant discourses on insight meditation and tranquility meditation. In addition, he incorporated his meditative personal experience into these books and gave clear explanations on the technical terms 'access concentration' (*upacara Samadhi*), 'absorptive concentration' (*appana Samadhi*) and 'momentary concentration' (*kanika Samadhi*). Therefore, these two treatises can serve meditators as reliable guides.

Walpola Rahula (1958) presented some popular Buddhist concepts such as no-soul (*anatta*), soul (*atta*), suffering (*dukkha*) and meditation (*bhavana*) in an academic way. The writer's approach to Buddhism is very objective and scientific. Therefore, this book draws the attention of many Buddhist scholars as well as some non-Buddhist people too.

Ven. Narada (1996) elaborates four ultimate realities such as consciousness (*citta*), mental factors (*cetasikas*), matter or form (*rupa*) and *Nibbana*. In addition, it includes a brief

explanation of the seven paths of purification (*visuddhimagga*). This book is, therefore, a manual for those who want to study *Abhidhamma* (Buddhist psychology) and meditation practice.



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CHAPTER II

VARIOUS MEDITATION METHODS IN CONTEMPORARY THAI SOCIETY

Thailand is a Buddhist country where meditation is widely practiced among many Thais. Being the follower of Theravada Buddhism several types of meditation methods have been practiced. This chapter starts, the first part, by briefly describing the various methods of meditation teaching in the various centers or temples in Thailand and, in the second part, explaining in detail Mahasi Sayadaw's meditation method.

2.1 Various Meditation Methods in Contemporary Thailand¹

2.1.1 Forest Meditation

2.1.2 Dynamic Meditation

2.1.3 Dhammakaya Meditation

2.1.4 Buddhadasa Bhikkhu Meditation

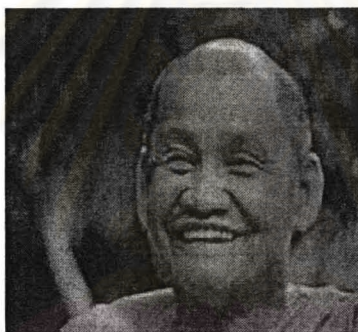
¹ Information under this topic of "Various Meditation Methods in Contemporary Thai Society" was summarized from various sources:

- Kanbawza Myintzu, *A short biography and some accomplishments of Venerable Chanmyay Sayadaw Ashin Janakabhivamsa*, The Young Buddhist Association of Thailand under Royal Patronage, 2008.
- Interview with Phra Pichet (instructor monk) at Wat Mahadhatu, Section 5, on 9th March 2009.
- *A brief guide to Buddhist meditation centers in Thailand*, (Bangkok: A publication of the national identity board, 1988), p.23-88.
- Wat Bhaddanta Asabharam <<http://bhaddanta2.blogspot.com/2005/09/classification.html>> Wat Bhaddanta Asabharam and Sommitre Pranee Vipassana Center. Retrieved on 12th March 2009.
- Christopher. *Insight Meditation*, <http://www.insightmeditation.org/index.php/welcome/eng/links#thailand> Retrieved on 7th June 2009.
- *A Guide to Buddhist Monasteries and Meditation Centers in Thailand*. World Fellowship of Buddhist, Bangkok, Thailand, 1991. From <<http://www.hdammm.de/buddha/mdtctr01.htm>> Retrieved on 12th March 2009.
- Taylor, J.L. *Forest Monks and the Nation-State: An Anthropological and Historical Study in Notheastern Thailand*. Institute of Southeast Asia Studies, Singapore, 1993.
- Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. *The Truth of Nature*. Amarin printing and publishing, Bangkok, 2006.

2.1.1 Forest meditation



Picture 2.1 Ven. Achan Mun²



Picture 2.2 Ven. Achan Chah³

The Forest meditation tradition has long been practiced by Northeastern Thai monks, who travel to reside and meditate in the forest for their spiritual upgrade and as such are often known as forest monks (*aramnavasi*). The Thai forest meditation tradition emphasizes direct experience through the practice of meditation and strict adherence to the monastic rules (*vinaya*) over the academic study of the *Pali Tipitaka*. The adherents of this tradition base their practice

² This photo of Achan Mun Bhuridatta, was taken from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. (Redirected from Ajahn Mun Bhuridatta), < http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ajahn_Mun_Bhuridatta > . Retrieved on 5th September 2009.

³ This photo of Achan Chah is taken from Wikipedia, < http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ajahn_Chah > . Retrieved on 1st October 2009.

and lifestyle or that of the Buddha and the early generation of his disciplines. Achan Man and his lineage, including Achan Chan, have been regarded as one of the strongest meditation traditions among the forest monasteries (*arannavasi*).⁴ The Forest Tradition is usually associated with the attainment of certain supernatural powers (*abhinna*). These forest monks keep the practice of the Buddha who (according to the *Pali* canon) spent a great deal of time dwelling in forests as part of his spiritual endeavors. Forest monks are considered to be specialists in meditation and are widely known among Thai people for their orthodoxy, conservatism, and asceticism. Because of this, it has acquired a great deal of respect and admiration from the Thai people (Wikipedia, 2008).

Some of the monks follow the strict rules of the thirteen ascetic practices known as *dhutanga* which were allowed by the Buddha. The forest monk's practice is mainly based on the technique of mindfulness breathing, called the *anapanassati* meditation (Puja, 1980:33). The recitation like a mantra "Buddho" is recited in the practice of Achan Mun, which is very special for that practice. In practice on inhalation 'Bud' and on exhalation '-dho' is recited for each breathing. This is a way of sustaining concentration, according to this tradition.⁵

Achan⁶ Mun Bhuridatta Thera and Achan Chan were two of the famous meditation masters of this forest tradition. Achan Mun was ordained as a Buddhist monk in 1893, and he spent the remainder of his life wandering through Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos, dwelling for the most part in the forest, engaged in the practice of meditation. He attracted an enormous following of disciples and, together with his teacher, Phra Ajaan Sao Kantasilo Mahathera (1861-1941), established the forest meditation tradition (also known as the *Kammatthana* tradition) that subsequently spread throughout Thailand and to several countries abroad (Bullitt, 2008).

Achan Chan followed the strict Forest Tradition for years, living in forests and receiving alms food as he wandered about on mendicant pilgrimage. He was influenced by Achan Mun.

⁴ Lecture by Tavivat Puntarigivat, Ph. D from Mahidol University. *The Dynamic Practices of Luangpor Teean, A Meditation Master*, 12th January 2009 at Chulalongkorn University, p.14. Unpublished paper.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ The Thai word Achan means "teacher". It is a title for a dhamma teacher as well as an academic teacher.

Achan Chan later became an accomplished meditation teacher in his own right, sharing his realization of the *Dhamma* with those who sought it (Taylor, 1993:4-20).

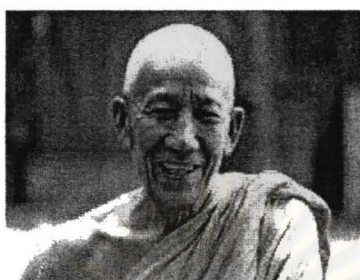
The following temples⁷ are practicing forest meditation method.

- (i) Wat Supatanaaraam (Ubon Ratchathani Province)
- (ii) Wat Siiubon (Ubon Ratchathani Province)
- (iii) Wat Nong Pah Pong (Ubon Ratchathani Province)
- (iv) Wat Pa Nanachat (Ubon Ratchathani Province)
- (v) Wat Suddhavasa (Sakon Nakhorn province)
- (vi) Wat Pah Baan Taad (Udon Thani province)
- (vii) Wat Burapha (Surin)
- (viii) Wat Sri Candaravasa (Khon Kaen)
- (ix) Wat Pa Bahn Tahd (Udon Thani Province)
- (x) Wat Dhammasathit (Rayong province)
- (xi) Wat Hin Mak Peng (Nong Khai Province)

⁷ The source was obtained from following sources:

- *A brief guide to Buddhist meditation centers in Thailand*, (Bangkok: A publication of the national identity board, 1988),p.23-88.
- Interview with Phra Pichet (instructor monk) at Wat Mahadhatu, Section 5, on 9th March 2009.
- *A Guide to Buddhist Monasteries and Meditation Centers in Thailand*. World Fellowship of Buddhist, Bangkok, Thailand, 1991. From < <http://www.hdamm.de/buddha/mdtctr01.htm> > Retrived on 12th March 2009.
- Taylor, J.L: *Forest Monks and Nation-State: An Anthropological and Historical Study in Northeastern Thailand*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1993.

2.1.2 Dynamic meditation



Picture 2.3 Luangpor Teean⁸

Luangpor Teean (1911-1988) was an important meditation teacher in world of Thai Buddhism. He introduced a new technique of meditation that can be said as "dynamic" in contrast to the conventional techniques of "static" meditation. He is believed to have realized dhamma entirely (Khemananda, 1997: 92). In his explanation the goal of Buddhist meditation is unsurpassed vivid and authentic. Because of this practice many people respect him and many people followed this dynamic meditation practice attaining deep result in the practice.

The dynamic meditation is practiced by using rhythmic bodily movement to develop awareness (*sati*) that can encounter thoughts or mental images - the root causes of human suffering. The way of developing awareness is stressed in the teachings of Luangpor Teean, which breaks through the sequence of thoughts. In due course, when awareness becomes the predominating power over thoughts and mental images, it at a same time overcomes attraction, resistance, delusion, and suffering.⁹

The rising of arms or walking, single movement at a time, is involved in Dynamic meditation technique of bodily movement, which will stimulate and develop awareness, and to let awareness "observe" thoughts which are the root causes of human defilements, and to break the process of thoughts. It is, indeed, the nature of knowing (Khemananda, 1997: 98). Watching

⁸ This photo of Luangpor Teean Jittasubho was from *Brief Biography of Luangpor Teean Jittasubhp* from Mahasati Association of America. <<http://www.mahasati.org/dmteean.htm>>. Retrieved on 23rd December 2008.

⁹ Lecture by Tavivat Puntarigivat, Ph. D from Mahidol University. *The Dynamic Practices of Luangpor Teean, A Meditation Master*, 12th January 2009 at Chulalongkorn University. Unpublish paper. Page, 1-4.

the thought is always emphasized in Dynamic meditation. It is not necessary to get into thoughts and to try to stop thoughts but just observe the thoughts. It is let them come and let them go (Khemananda, 1997: 99). This practice of dynamic meditation results in the arising of *nyanapanya* (the knowledge that comes from the accumulation of direct knowing).¹⁰ It is neither a form of concentration, visualization, nor mental recitation but it is a way of developing awareness so that the mind directly can encounter, see, and break through thoughts. Accordingly, once a human being has gone beyond the confines of thought, the mental suffering will come to cease.¹¹

From these basic differences it can be seen that Luangpor Teean's teachings are also unique among the various schools of the contemporary Buddhist world (Khemananda, 1997).

Dynamic Meditation is an active meditation for observing thoughts and letting go psychological suffering. It is a form of meditation that involves bodily movements and thought observation. It can be done both in the formal meditation practice and in one's daily life.

Temples practicing Dynamic meditation method¹² are:

- (i) Wat Doi Dhamma Chedi (Sakol Nakhon Province)
- (ii) Wat Santivanaram (Chiangkhan)
- (iii) Wat Phonchai. (Chiangkhan)
- (iv) Wat Paphutthayan (Loei)
- (v) Wat Mokkhanaram (Khonkaen)

¹⁰ Ibid. page, 10.

¹¹ Ibid. page. 16.

¹² This information was obtained from

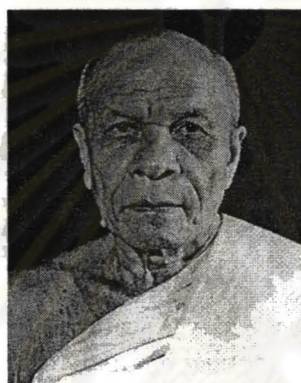
- *A brief guide to Buddhist meditation centers in Thailand*, (Bangkok: A publication of the national identity board, 1988), p.23-88.

- Lecture by Tavivat Puntarigvivat, Ph. D. *The Dynamic Practices of Luangpor Teean, A Meditation Master*, 12th January 2009 at Chulalongkorn University. Unpublished paper.

- Khemananda, K. *Know Not A Thing: Insights into Dynamic Meditation*. White Lotus, Bangkok, Thailand, 1997.

- (vi) Wat Pasukhato (Chaiyabhum)
- (vii) Wat Chonlaprathan (Bangkok)
- (viii) Wat Sanamnai (Bangkok)
- (ix) Wat Santivanaram (Chiangkhan)

2.1.3 Dhammakaya Meditation



Picture 2.4 Luang Phor Sodh¹³

This meditation technique was developed and re-discovered by Luang Phor Sodh. After ten years as a monk, Vhandassaro Bhikku's knowledge of Pali was sufficient to read and understand the *Mahasatipatthana Sutta* (the Foundation on Mindfulness) and then he concentrated his effort on meditation. Vhandassaro Bhikku Dhammakaya meditation is an approach to Buddhist meditation revived in the early 1900s and practiced by several million people all over the world. It was described by its founder Phra Mongkolthepmuni as a *samatha-vipassana* technique (tranquil meditation). It allows lay followers to use the practice traditionally attributed to the forest monks. Dhammakaya reduces the traditional Buddhist cosmology, with its goal of *Nibbana*, to a location within the body.

¹³ This photo is copy from <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phramongkolthepmuni>> Phramongkolthepmuni, from Wikipedia, Retrieved on 5th September 2009.

Dhammakaya meditation is a complex visualization technique initially involving three types of meditation: *aloka-kasina*, meditation by concentrating on a bright object; *anapanassati*, meditation by concentrating on the motion of breathing and a part involving a mantra called *Buddhanussati* where the mantra *samma-araham* is repeated. Unlike many meditation techniques, simplicity is not the key factor in Dhammakaya meditation. The combination of the three methods becomes the initial step in practicing Dhammakaya meditation. The combination of the three methods gives the meditator the ability to focus his/her mind on a bright crystal sphere called the *pathama-magga*, two inches above the naval, which is regarded as the “center” of the body. Once concentration is focused on this *pathama-magga*, mantra recitation and breathing awareness cease. The bright object or crystal ball has become the *pathama-magga*, the starting point to real progress in Dhammakaya meditation. Later on, a practitioner may attempt to visualize a crystal Buddha image. In the final stages, the practitioner may literally see the Buddha and *Nibbana* at the “center” of their own body (Bowers, 1995).

Temples practicing the Dhammakaya meditation method¹⁴ are as follows:

- (i) Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen (Bangkok)
- (ii) Wat Phra Dhammakaya (Pathum Thani Province)
- (iii) Wat Bang Len (Nakhon Pathon)
- (iv) Wat Kao Yai (Kanchana Buri)
- (v) Wat Pho (Bangkok)
- (vi) Wat Rajasiddharam (Bangkok)
- (vii) Wat Chakrawat (Bangkok)

¹⁴ The information was obtained from following sources:

-*A brief guide to Buddhist meditation centers in Thailand*, (Bangkok: A publication of the national identity board, 1988), p.23-88 .

-Interview with Phra Pichet (instructor monk) at Wat Mahadhatu, Section 5, on 9th March 2009.

-Mackenzie, Rory. *New Buddhist Movements in Thailand: Towards an understanding of Wat Phra Dhammakaya and Santi Asoke*. Routledge: London and New York, 2007, p.40-41.

(viii) Wat Luang Por Sodh Dhammakayaram (Rajburi Province) (Jayamangalo, 1991:139).

2.1.4 Buddhadasa Bhikkhu Meditation



Picture 2.5 Achan Buddhadasa ¹⁵

Achan Buddhadasa Bhikkhu is one of the prominent preachers, interpreters of Buddhism, and creative writers of Thai Buddhism. He is remembered and revered for his painstaking work to establish and explain the correct and essential principles of what he called "pristine Buddhism," that is, the original realization of the Lord Buddha before it was buried under commentaries, ritualism, clerical politics, and the like. He established Suan Mokkhabalarama, known as Suan Mokkh in 1932, which was the only forest Dhamma Center and one of the few places dedicated to *Vipassana* meditation in Southern Thailand. This meditation method was based in extensive research of the Pali texts (canon and commentary), especially of the Buddha's Discourses (*sutta-pitaka*), followed by personal experiment and practice with these teachings. This meditation teaches the truth about the *Dukkha* (dissatisfaction, suffering). Achan Buddhada's goal was to produce a complete set of references for present and future research and practice. His approach was always scientific, straight-forward, and practical (Mokkh, 2007). Not

¹⁵ This Picture is taken from *Buddhadasa Bhikkhu – Tributes* , © by comunidade buddhista nalanda. from < <http://buddhadasa.nalanda.org.br/tributes.html>> Retrieved on 26th July 2009.

only did Buddhadasa Bhikkhu seek the essential message in the Buddhist texts, but he was able to bring his own creative, colloquial approach to his talks in order to make Buddhism more alive and more easily understandable to the ordinary laymen. He often employed seemingly harsh terms and rather vulgar pronouns to refer to different states of mind. This use was initially criticized and then praised (Gabaude, 1990).

The meditation instruction of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu focuses on mindfulness of breathing (*Anapanasati*), a system of training used and taught most often by the Buddha. The *Anapanasati-sutta* or Discourse on Mindfulness of Breathing is a discourse (*sutta*) that deals with the Buddha's instruction on using the breath (*anapana*) as the focus for mindfulness (*sati*) meditation. It is in another sense a branch of the four foundations of mindfulness. The *anapanassati* is one of the best ways to penetrate the four noble truths as well. This discourse lists sixteen objects under the category of the contemplation of the body, of feeling, of mind and of mental objects on which one may meditate. The practice bears perfection in the practice of insight and understanding into the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipatthana*), in the perfection of the Seven Factors of Awakening (*Bojjhargas*), in the perfection of Clear-Vision of and Deliverance which is nothing but the realization of *Nibbana* ultimately (Buddhadasa, 1971: 53-72).

One of the main Buddhist concepts that Buddhadasa Bhikkhu emphasized was the *idappaccayata*-the universal natural law that everything happens because of its causes and effects. He explained that this universal law of causality is an important method of thinking that will help anyone understand the inter-relatedness of things. Furthermore, he explained that if we can overcome the 'myself/mine mindset', we can then break out of the cycle of suffering. We can realize enlightenment at any moment in time - every minute, every second of the day - if we approach the world as it is, without any involvement of the self (Khanthong, 2008).

The following temples teach Buddhadasa Bhikku's meditation method¹⁶.

- (i) Wat Suan Moke (Surat Thani)
- (ii) Wat Pang Bua (Surat Thani)
- (iii) Wat Tham Sua (Krabi)
- (iv) Wat Tow Kote (Nakhon Sri Thammarat)
- (v) Wat Chonlaprathan (Nonthaburi)
- (vi) Wat Suan Kaen (Nonthaburi)
- (vii) Wat Asokaram (Paknam in Samut Prakarn)
- (viii) Samui Dharma Healing Centre (Surat Thani)

2.2 Mahasi Meditation Method

The Rising-Falling meditation method is the technique taught by Mahasi Sayadaw. It is mainly focused on the abdominal movement, which rises at the time of breathing in and falls at breathing out which are used as the primary object of meditation. According to the idea of Mahasi Sayadaw, this kind of practice is easy and quick to gain a certain level of concentration from the very beginning.

“Mahasi Sayadaw explains to the practitioner, who is endowed with purification of mind and continuity of noticing, comes to know mind and matter analytically. At

¹⁶This information was obtained from the following sources:

- Kanbawza Myintzu, *A short biography and some accomplishments of Venerable Chanmyay Sayadaw Ashin Janakabhivamsa*, The Young Buddhist Association of Thailand under Royal Patronage, 2008.
- *A brief guide to Buddhist meditation centers in Thailand*, (Bangkok: A publication of the national identity board, 1988),p.23-88.
- Wat Bhaddanta Asabharam <<http://bhaddanta2.blogspot.com/2005/09/classification.html>> Wat Bhaddanta Asabharam and Sommitre Pranee Vipassana Center. Retrieved on 12th March 2009.
- *A Guide to Buddhist Monasteries and Meditation Centers in Thailand*. World Fellowship of Buddhist, Bangkok, Thailand, 1991. From <<http://www.hdam.de/buddha/mdtctr01.htm>> Retrieved on 12th March 2009.

first, the practitioner needs to know how to distinguish each bodily process by knowing the rising of the abdomen as one process and the falling of the abdomen as other; sitting as another; touching as another; etc. Later on, he comes to know how to distinguish each bodily and mental process by realizing that, "the rising movement is one process; the knowing of it is another. The falling movement is one process; the knowing of it is another. All that knowledge comes from simply noticing, not from reasoning. This is the knowledge gained by direct experience by the act of noticing, not knowledge derived from rationalizing" (Mahasi Sayadaw, 1994: 9).

In Mahasi meditation method, *vipassana* (insight meditation) is encouraged from the very beginning but the practice of *samatha* (tranquil meditation) is discouraged and not recommended. It is quite different from the other type of meditation methods as found in other meditation traditions that may emphasize on *samatha*. The reasons are as follows.

First, we may assume that by practicing *samatha* meditation, the practitioner will have to attain deep concentration, resulting in the attainment of *samatha jhana* (tranquil absorption or one of the supermundane paths). The person who tries to practice Mahasi meditation, however, is not trying to get into a hypnotic state or any other supernatural entity. In fact, it is the escape from the *samsaric* cycle of rebirth and death. In Mahasi meditation method, the practitioners after the attainment of deep meditation, then they may achieve *vipassana nyana*. Thus, it may take longer time if one starts with *samatha* and follow by *vipassana* meditation in order to the attainment of *Nibbana* (Mahasi Sayadaw, 1994, 73-76). According to the idea of Mahasi Sayadaw, the rising-falling of the abdominal practice is quicker to gain a certain level concentration from the very beginning rather than being mindful with the breathing. After that, it can achieve the realization of the true nature of things as they appear or disappear on their own. Another reason is that *vipassana* is said to be the direct path to the attainment of *Nibbana* as it aims at the realizing the true nature of things as they appear (Mahasi Sayadaw, 1995). Moreover, *Nibbana* is not to be realized without *vipassana* or the mindfulness meditation. So, because of these reasons, Mahasi Meditation method uses *vipassana* as preferred practice rather than *samatha*.

At one time, Mahasi Sayadaw was severely criticized in certain quarters for his advocacy of the allegedly unorthodox method of noting the rising and falling of the abdomen in *vipassana* meditation. It was mistakenly assumed that this method was an innovation of the Sayadaw's, whereas the truth is that it had been approved several years before Mahasi Sayadaw adopted it, by no less an authority than the *mula* (original) Mingun Jetavan Sayadaw, and that it is in no way contrary to the Buddha's teaching on the subject (Nyanaponika, 1962: 86; cf. Sharf, 2005:255-299). The reason for Mahasi Sayadaw's preference for this method is that the average meditator finds it easier to note this manifestation of the element of motion (*vayodhatu*) (Sharf, 2005: 275). It is not, however, imposed on all who come to practice at any of the Mahasi meditation centres. One may, if one likes, practice the mindfulness on In-and Out-breathing (*anapanasati*). Mahasi Sayadaw himself refrained from joining issue with his critics on this point, but two learned Sayadaw brought out a book each in defense of the Sayadaw's method, thus enabling those who are interested in the controversy to judge for themselves.

By aiming at the realization of the true nature of every conditioned phenomena of the mind, from the beginning point of this practice, the meditator tries to see the nature of every conditioned mental and material thing under three characteristics – impermanence, suffering and non-self. Every activity is done with mindfulness which is the key to open the door of *vipassana* (Bussabana, 2007). And, this *vipassana* is the four foundation of mindfulness (*satipatthana*), which is the real way to attain the *Nibbana* (Mahathera, 1975: 33-34).

The characteristic of the Mahasi meditation is directly noting on the objects which are coming each and every moment. In this practice, when the mind becomes distracted and wanders during *vipassana* meditation, meditators do not bring it back to the primary object but instead follow and observe the mind. Meditators observe it as long as it exists. Only after the wandering mind disappears and mindfully aware of the state, the mind will return to the abdominal movement, which is primary object of meditation in the case of Mahasi Sayadaw method. People practicing this method need to look for the present state of the mind (Mahasi Sayadaw, 2005: 25-26). In *vipassana* meditation, what really matters is to know the present state of the mind. If one shifts or changes one's posture or position too often because one cannot be patient with the sensation of stiffness or heat that arises, good concentration cannot develop, resulting in no attainment of the path *magga* that leads to *Nibbana* (Mahasi Sayadaw, 2005: 28-30).

Thus, practically, in Mahasi Meditation, effort is made by the meditator to understand correctly the nature of the psycho-physical phenomena taking place in his/her own body. Physical phenomena are the things or objects which one clearly perceives when meditating. One has to perceive the material qualities (*rupa*) and the mental qualities (*nama*). This *nama-rupa* is to be clearly perceived whenever they are seen, heard, smelled, tasted, touched or thought of. The meditator must be aware of these six senses by observing, noticing and realizing that everything is not permanent (Bussabana, 2007: 1).

As stated earlier, the Mahasi meditation method focuses on the breathing of the abdominal movements. Its main characteristics can be described under the following four categories of activities (1) meditation on the movement of the rising and falling of the abdomen, (2) noting (3) slow-movement and (4) walking meditation (Mahasi Sayadaw, 1996:23).

2.2.1 Meditation on the movement of the rising and falling of the abdomen

Meditators observe breathing, or rather the sensations caused by breathing, in order to bring the mind to the moment of concentration. It calms the mind because it is a neutral object. There are various places where people can feel these sensations of breathing. Some feel the breathing at the nostrils or upper lip, others, the rising and falling of the chest and others, of the abdomen. All these places are valid in terms of *vipassana* meditation. Mahasi, however, favored the abdomen. When the meditator breathes in, he observes his abdomen as rising and when he breathes out, observes it as falling. Observing means simply noticing it and noting one's mind. The noting of rising and falling is to be done at the same time as one's abdomen rises and falls (Mahasi Sayadaw, 2002: 27).

2.2.2 Noting

The second technique, which is specific to the Mahasi Method, is "noting" which could also be called "being aware of". Mind and matter are impermanent things and the practitioners have to meditate on them to see them as they really are, as impermanent. Things are to be seen as suffering and that in them, there is no personality, no soul and no self. Paradoxically this is a technique to take a meditator beyond thinking (Mahasi Sayadaw, 1996: 23).

According to the Buddha's teaching; there are two stages of concentrated thought before full concentration is established. The first is a simple noting or naming of the object. This represents the third foundation of mindfulness. If a sensation or feeling arises in the body, the first note is recognition and the second note and all consequent notes are acknowledgements. One has to recognize and acknowledge that 'This is what is really happening now.' But although there is careful noting, the attention is always placed not on the word, but on the experience - the feeling of a sensation, the feeling of an emotion. The practitioners are simply told to note ideas as "thinking", "imagining", "pondering", whenever they arise. Continuity of noting is needed to carry the awareness forward from one moment to the next. It is the nature of the mind to wander. It is as though the perceptive intelligence sees through the word and experiences the presenting object directly. In this way, the intellectual faculty is brought into the service of that perceptive intelligence, rather than the perceptive intelligence being fogged by conceptual thinking (Mahasi Sayadaw, 2002: 29).

"Noting" is a technique whereby we can begin to train the attention to remain still on the present object and more importantly force the intellect into coming to a full-stop. For all of these phenomena, are needs to "know" it is as "that is the nature of it" until it ceases and disappears of itself. This noting practice can lead to the finding of the true nature of the mind and body process (Chanmyay Sayadaw, 1989:10).

2.2.3 Slow Movements

Slow movements such as going slow, doing things slowly etc. refers to all those areas of activity the Buddha talks of in the Discourse on how to establish mindfulness in the section on doing things mindfully (*sampajanakari hoti*), whether looking, dressing, toiletry, eating and so on. When we perform these actions very slowly and deliberately, it sharpens our attentiveness and makes 'the way things are' easier to perceive. The more the movements are slowed down, the more clearly one would perceive how the body, heart and mind inter-react. One can better perceive and acknowledge in the conscious mind when the daily activities are done slowly. The experience, and the effects, of that slowing- down practice will, however, prove wholesome and useful in many ways (Mahasi Sayadaw, 2008).

2.2.4 Walking Meditation

Walking meditation is another posture in Mahasi meditation method. This aspect of the Mahasi meditation will help to serve to balance the factors of concentration and energy and overcome sleepiness. During this walking exercise, the attention is focused on the movement of the feet and legs. Meditators should note step by step as the right foot begins to rise from the ground, (lifting); as it moves forward, (moving); and as it places again on the ground (touching). Similarly, meditators should know when the left foot starts from lifting to touching the ground, and so on. To turn back, one may choose to turn to the left or right as one pleases, but one must prepare and note the volitional activity 'wanting to turn' first, then, observe one's feet as one is turning and note 'turning' at the same time as one makes the turn. At other times, when walking too slowly is inconvenient, such as outside of their meditation surroundings, the practitioners simply knows left, right, left, right, which will suffice for these cases. During walking meditation, if one looks at an object, one should simultaneously make a mental note, two or three times, as 'seeing' (Jandamit, 1990: 37-42).

The famous meditation centers that I describe below are practicing Mahasi meditation method¹⁷.

- (i) Wat Mahadhatu (Bangkok)
- (ii) Wat Ta-Ma-O (Lampang)
- (iii) Wat Vivekasorn (Chonburi Province)
- (iv) Wat Amphur Muang (Phuket)

¹⁷ The information was obtained from the following sources:

- Kanbawza Myintzu, *A short biography and some accomplishments of Venerable Chanmyay Sayadaw Ashin Janakabhivamsa*, The Young Buddhist Association of Thailand under Royal Patronage, 2008.
- Interview with Phra Pichet (instructor monk) at Wat Mahadhatu, Section 5, on 9th March 2009.
- *A brief guide to Buddhist meditation centers in Thailand*, (Bangkok: A publication of the national identity board, 1988), p.23-88.
- Unknown Writer. *Yup No Phon No (rise and fall) Meditation Method*. Unpublished paper, Bangkok.2008
- *A Guide to Buddhist Monasteries and Meditation Centers in Thailand*. World Fellowship of Buddhist, Bangkok, Thailand, 1991. From < <http://www.hdamm.de/buddha/mdtctr01.htm> > Retrived on 12th March 2009.

- (v) Khun Mae Siri Karinchai (Nakorn Ratchasima)
- (vi) Wat Cholapraton (Nonthaburi Province)
- (vii) Wat Tapodaram or Wat Ram Poeng (Chiang Mai)
- (viii) Wat Muang Muang (Chiang Mai)
- (ix) Wat Tham Tong (Chiang Mai)
- (x) Dhammodaya Chanmyay Meditation Center (Nakorn Pathom)
- (xi) Wat Bhaddantaasbharam (Chonburi)
- (xii) Chalermprakiat Patinissaggo Mind Development Center (Phuket)
- (xiii) Chiangmai Vipassana Center (Chiang Mai)
- (xiv) Wat Phra That Sri Chom Thong (Chiang Mai)
- (xv) Wat Somana Worawiharn (Bangkok)
- (xvi) Wat U Mong (Chiang Mai)
- (xvii) The Young Buddhists Association of Thailand (Bangkok)

2.2.5 The General Benefit of Mahasi *Vipassana* Meditation

The general benefits of meditation are knowing the nature of things as they are and removal of worry, woe, anxiety, grief, lamentation, distraction, despair, disappointment, agitation, impatience, anger, jealousy, drowsiness, attachment of sensuous object and achievement of calmness, peace, tranquility, concentration, and insight into the nature of all things; both animate and inanimate. It is said in the *Satipattha Sutta* that, “*this is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of pain and grief, for the attainment of the true way, for the realization of Nibbana namely, the four establishments of mindfulness*” (Bodhi, 1995: 145).

According to the *Mahasatipatthana-Sutta*, there are several benefits of mindfulness (*vipassana*) meditation which are:

- (1) To purify the mind.
- (2) To the abandonment of grief and lamentation.
- (3) To the extinction of physical and mental suffering.
- (4) To understand the truth of life.
- (5) To extinguish suffering and attain the *Nibbana* (Punyanubhap, 1986: 94).

Herein, as the Mahasi meditation practice includes the three-fold training (*Tisikkha*), namely, training of morality, training of concentration and training of wisdom, a meditator who applies himself to this technique will surely enjoy the benefits accrued from these three types of training (Nyanaponika, 1986).

Morality is behavior that is suitable for all. In addition, it is a generally accepted standards and causes no distress for both other people and oneself. Morality has different kinds of precepts such as five moral precepts, eight and ten for layperson, two hundred and twenty seven precepts for Monks and so on. It is kept by way of body and speech to achieve peace, convenience and freedom from undesirable effects at the basic level. It is concerned with the members of a social group and the different kinds of necessities essential to living (Nyanaponika, 1986).

Concentration (*Samadhi*) means restricting the mind to keep the condition most conducive to success and to achieve their desires. To be mindful for concentration involves developing the ability to control the mind and to make it to be clear as possible as we can. Morality is good behavior to conduct body and speech whereas concentration controls the mind to attain the peacefulness from mental training and restraint. The concentrated mind keeps away from all bad thought and does not let go of the object. It is necessary for a layperson in ordinary situation to keep concentration in a healthy condition to do its jobs. As a result, it achieves a great powers, attributes and special abilities if the mind has been controlled. Only if a person achieves these advantages from concentration can he or she move up a step to see the true nature of all conditioned phenomena (Mon, 2004).

Training in insight (*Panna*) is the third phase which is the practice and drill for right knowledge and understanding of the true nature of all things. The right knowledge also call the higher wisdom knows about suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering and also knowing the way leading to the cessation of suffering. In general, we do not accept knowing anything at all in its true nature. We are usually attached to our own ideas or accept popular opinion so that what we see is not the truth at all. Buddhist practice contains this training in insight, which is designed to give rise to fully realize the truth of all conditioned phenomena (Nyanaponika and Bodhi, 1997:70).

With regard to the benefits of morality, the Buddha in the *Mahaparinibbana Sutta*, his last discourse, explained that observance of morality could ensure the practitioner great wealth due to non negligence and diligence, wide-spread good reputation, confidence to enter an assembly of princes or Brahmins or house-holders or ascetics without fear or hesitation, death with a clear mind, taking a wholesome object and a happy destiny in a heavenly or celestial world, after death (Walshe, 1996: 236-7).

Pertaining to those who accomplish the training of morality (*Silasikkha*), the Buddha continued to preach in the *Akankheyya Sutta* (the Discourse on desire) that training of morality can bring about in the practitioner the respect and adoration of co-residents, abundance of the four requisites (robes, almsfood, resting place and medicine)- and wealth. Further, the Buddha continued to preach the ability to endure and resist idleness and sense pleasure and to overcome fear and dreadful objects and to attain the four *jhanas* (absorption) that constitute the higher mind, the destruction of three fetters, and the potential to become a stream-enterer by becoming a *Ariya* (noble one) and to attain supernatural power and great benefit to their donors and their relatives of departed ones (Nanamoli and Bodhi, 1995: 115-117).

According to the Path of Purification (*Visuddhimagga*), the meditator, if he is a lay-man, must observe the five precepts before meditation. The benefits accrued from the observance of the five precepts are explicated in the Teaching of the Buddha (Basic Level) (1) that avoidance of killing others causes freedom from physical deformities and disfigurement, ugliness, weakness, stupidity, inactiveness, fright when confronted with danger, being killed by others, death in youth (untimely death), suffering from diseases, separation from beloved ones and

having a few friends, (2) that avoidance of stealing causes freedom from poverty, bodily and mental sufferings, hunger, unfulfilled wishes, unstable future and possession of properties which can be destroyed by the Five Enemies¹⁸, (3) that avoidance of sexual misconducts causes freedom from being disgusted by others, rebirth as a woman or as a sexual pervert, loss of wealth, prosperity and happiness, rebirth in the inferior lineage, disgrace, physical deformities, separation from beloved ones, (4) that avoidance of telling lies causes freedom from poor pronunciation, uneven teeth, foul breath, unhealthy complexion, poor eye-sight, poor hearing, defective appearance, lack of influence on others, harshness of speech and restlessness of the mind and (5) that avoidance of intoxicants causes great intelligence, industry, mindfulness, gratefulness and freedom from insanity and tendency to commit all evil things (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 1997:140-144).

Development of concentration (*Samadhi*) also brings about some benefits and that higher concentration can train, culture and develop the mind, suppress the five hindrances (*nivaranas*) such as ill-will (*byapada*), sensual lust (*kamacchenda*), sloth and torpor (*thina* and *midda*), restlessness (*udacca*), worry (*kukkucca*) and doubt (*vicikaccha*), tend to perform great meritorious deeds and can accumulate great moral actions (*kusala kamma*), result in physical and mental well beings and calmness, peace and power to the mind and penetrative insight into the body (*rupa*) and the mind (*nama*) (Nyanaponika and Bodhi, 1997: 142-145).

The venerable Mahasi sayadaw, with reference to the benefits of wisdom (*panna*), explains that a meditator who is endowed with wisdom achieves the Ten Insight Knowledges (*dasa-vipassana nanas*), which can totally extinguish all mental defilements. When the meditator becomes a stream-winner (*sotapanna*), erroneous views (*sakkaya-ditthi*) doubt in the Triple Gem¹⁹ (*vicikiccha*) and clinging to mere rites and rituals outside the *Ariya* Path (Noble ones) of Eight Constituents (*silabbala-paramasa*) are eradicated, resulting in freedom from rebirth in four woeful states. At the level of the once-returner (*sakadagami*), other defilements are not removed

¹⁸ The Five Enemies are (1) floods, (2) conflagrations, (3) bad rulers, (4) thieves and robbers and (5) bad sons, and daughters who are unworthy heirs. These five are called enemies because they can sometimes cause a great danger to unfortunate human beings.

See: Ministry of Religious Affairs. *The Teaching of the Buddha (Basic Level)*. (Yangon: Ministry of Religious Affairs, 1997), p. 124.

¹⁹ The Triple Gem means the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha.

but the meditator is free from coarse sensuous cravings (*kamaraga*) and ill-will (*byapada*), causing rebirth once in the sensuous spheres. At the level of the non-returner (*anagami*) sensuous craving (*kamaraga*) and ill-will (*byapada*) are annihilated totally, resulting in liberation from rebirth in the Human abode and the Deva World or sensuous spheres but in the Brahma world only. At the level of the *arahat*, all types of defilements are eradicated once and for all and the eternal bliss of *Nibbana* and freedom from the endless round of rebirths are brought about (Mahasi Sayadaw, 1996:45-46). These are the benefits offered by *vipassana* practice adopted by the Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw.

In brief, there are at least fourfold advantages, first, the removal of the various defilements; second, experience of the taste of the noble fruit; third, the ability to attain the attainment of cessation; and last the achievement of worthiness to receive gifts.

2.2.6 The Distinctive Characteristics of Mahasi meditation

The distinctive method of the Mahasi meditation is to focus directly on the objects that are coming each and every moment by being undisturbed and mindful. In order to comprehend the true nature of every conditioned phenomenon, this meditation practice encourages the meditator to see the objects with three aspects: impermanence, suffering and non-self. And, it does not ask or require to practice *samatha* meditation in any way (Mahasi Sayadaw, 1996:15).

In the beginning, meditators may find it difficult to make a note of every moment of one's movement. Another characteristic is that in its practice the focusing point from the very beginning is on the abdominal movements – the rising and falling movements of the abdomen, which movements are always regarded as the element of motion (*vayodhatu*). If the movement is not evident by just noting it mentally, keep touching the abdomen with the palm of his hand. Then the meditators must breathe steadily and note the rising and falling of the abdominal movements, that is note them mentally, not verbally. While they are noting the abdominal movements, the mind may wander elsewhere or focus on feelings. At that time, the meditators are instructed to note this wandering mind until it stops wandering and focusing on the feeling when the meditators continue with this unremittingly, without any resting interval between acts of noting whatever phenomena arises. The meditators come to achieve momentary concentration

(*khanika Samadhi*) and see how materiality and mentality works. This is called the knowledge of the distinguishment of the mind and matter (*nama-rupa-paricchedanana*). Then the three characteristics of impermanent, suffering and non-self will manifest themselves in them and finally they will achieve path- knowledge and fruition- knowledge (*magga* and *phalananas*) (Mahasi Sayadaw, 1983: 26-64) .

Taking advantage of the moment to moment concentration, one would try to see the nature of physicality (*rupa*) and mentality (*nama*) in terms of the three characteristics (*Tilakkhanas*), i.e., impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and egolessness (*anatta*) and to achieve path- knowledge (*magganana*) and fruition knowledge (*phalanana*) (Mahasi Sayadaw, 1994).

Among the different types of approaches of meditation methods, there is a common feature amongst them, that is the focusing on the breathing (*anapanassati*) as the primary object to concentrate on. This sort of meditation methods is instructed and practiced in all these meditation centers with the exception of the Dynamic meditation which mainly focuses on the bodily movement in order to develop awareness and the Dhammakaya meditation method which trains the mind with the tranquil meditation (*samatha*).

The meditation masters of all these meditation methods are very well known and famous among the Thai people as these methods are widely practiced in contemporary Thai Buddhist society across Thailand. An assumption can be drawn in this regard that the influences of the method is dependable on the zone or area where the meditation master commenced his teachings. It is not only because of the area or the region but because of the master's ability or competence in knowledge of Buddhism regarding meditation, the method eventually spreads in all directions not limiting to a limited region. As a result of this, the method of Dhammakaya, Buddhadasa, Achan Chah or Achan Mun are spread and propagated not only in a limited region but also beyond it, to abroad – both Eastern and Western region of the world. These meditation methods are promoted every possible way to any parts of the world with a noble aim to teach the causes and conditions of every mental and material phenomenon and the way to cease all the conditioned phenomena by achieving a state of without suffering, worries remorse etc. in order to have a better understanding of the human life.

However, given all the meditation methods reviewed in this chapter, it can be drawn that the majority of Thais are the followers of Buddhist religious traditions as they intend towards the achievement of *Nibbana* which is the end of suffering, and because of this inclined tendency most of them keep the knowledge that meditation is the only way to lead to the *Nibbana*. All the aforementioned five meditation methods are aiming at the attainment of *Nibbana* although the paths of practice are different and various from one to another but ultimately all methods are for the same goal – the extinction of suffering, to the realization of *Nibbana*.



ศูนย์วิทยพัทยากร
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

CHAPTER III

HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF MAHASI MEDITATION PRACTICE AND THE PROFILE OF MAHASI MEDITATION CENTERS IN THAILAND

This chapter will first, provide the history and development of Mahasi meditation in Thailand and later, the profile of meditation centers in Thailand adopting Mahasi meditation method will be examined.

3.1 History and Transmission of Mahasi Meditation Method in Thailand

On 1st January B.E. 2491, Phra Phimoladham joined the Sangha ceremony at Royal Field (Sanam Luang) and he met U Hla Maung then the Burmese Ambassador to Thailand. After the ceremony, he talked about Buddhism both in Thailand and Myanmar with Ambassador U Hla Maung. Luang Por Phra Phimoladham emphasized two matters in his conversation which are very significant (Thanajariya, 1983: 3-4). Those two matters are the following:

Firstly, Phra Phimoladham thought that Burmese monks in Thailand were very old and did not have necessary qualities to impart the *Dhamma* and could not get along with Thai People because of language problem and different customs. In fact, there are many good qualified monks who know Tipitaka and can preach the *Dhamma* [in Burmese language] in Myanmar. [He thought that] those monks should come to Thailand and teach the *Dhamma* to Thai people. He wanted to support those monks as much as possible in order to propagate Buddhism together [in Thailand].

Secondly, the Pali Tipitaka together with its commentaries in the Burmese version are very complete, it would be better if Myanmar gave that version to Thailand.

The Burmese Ambassador U Hla Maung, in B.E. 2492, (1949) the Burmese Buddhist Center sent the most well-known monks in Myanmar according to Phra Phimoladham's request. Those monks were Bhikkhu Saddhammajotika, Dhammacariya and Bhikkhu Tejinda,

Dhammacariya Dhammakathika. At first when they come to live in Thailand, they could not understand the Thai language. Then, Phra Phimoladham let them stay at Wat Prokpama Temple temporarily in order to become familiar with the Thai language and as well as Thai customs. After that, Bhikkhu Saddhammajotika moved to Wat Rakang Temple with the intention to set up an Abhidhamma School where he stayed until his passing away in B.E. 2509. In the same way, Bhikkhu Tejinda came to teach the *Dhamma* at Wat Mahadhatu until his return to Myanmar.

In B.E. 2493, the Burmese Buddhist Center sent a Buddhist missionary group together with the Pali Tipitaka in the Burmese version according to Phra Phimoladham's request. The leader of the missionary group was Yanika Thera, the abbot of Ambavanarama Temple in Yangon. This was supported by Sir U Thwin, president of the Mahasi Sasana Yeiktha Buddha Sasana Nuggaha Organisation (1947-1963).



Picture 3.1 Sir U Thwin²⁰

The missionary group offered one set of the Tipitaka to Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, located at Wat Mahadhatu Temple and another set of the Tipitaka to Mahamukut Buddhist University, located at Borvonnivej Vihara Temple, and the other set of the Tipitaka to Abhidhamma School of Rakang Temple.

²⁰ This photo is copy from *Mahasi Meditation Center: Buddha Sasana Nuggaha Organisation*, <<http://web.ukonline.co.uk/buddhism/mahasi.htm>> . Retrieved on 17th February 2009.

In B.E. 2494, the Thai Bhikkhu group sent a Thai Buddhist Missionary with the Tipitaka in the Thai version to offer to Myanmar. The leader of the missionary group was Phra Sasanasobhon Attadhayi and Phra Pimoladham of Wat Mahadhatu as vice leader including Phra Srivisuthiyana and Mr. Sanya Dhammasak.

In B.E. 2495, Somdej Phra Buddhachariya of Thailand (formerly Phra Phimoladham), together with Field Marshal Pibulsongram, Prime Minister of Thailand, made an official request to the Government of Myanmar to send Burmese Buddhist Missionary Monks to Thailand who were specialized in *vipassana* meditation. Phra Pimoladham sent his three disciples from Wat Mahadhatu to study Buddhism both in *Ganthadura* (scripture learning) and *Vipassanadura* (insight meditation learning) in Myanmar. They were Phramaha Chodok Yanasitthi who studied *vipassana*, Phramaha Bampen and Samanera Savai who studied *Ganthadura*. Phramaha Chodok stayed at the Vipassana Kammathana Sasanayeikthar under the guidance of Mahasi Sayadaw, the head meditation master of that Vipassana Center. Phramaha Bampen and Samanera Savai stayed at Ambavanarama Temple, under the guidance of Bikkhu Yanika Thera who was the abbot of that temple.

Phramaha Chodok studied *Vipassanadura* for one year and then he returned to Thailand in B.E. 2496. Upon the request of Phra Phimoladham some *vipassana* teachers from Myanmar were invited to Thailand and as a result of this, Mahasi Sayadaw personally chose Achan Bhaddanta Asabha Mahathera to take on the responsibility of the mission to Thailand, and the Burmese Buddhist Center sent two *vipassana* teachers, Bikkhu Asabha Mahathera and Indavamsa, Dhammajariya, to Thailand. Both of them stayed at Wat Mahadhatu to help *vipassana* teaching together with Phramaha Chodok from B.E. 2496. And, since then, the *vipassana* according to the method of Mahasi Sayadaw has been taught at Wat Mahadhatu until now (Thanajariya, 1983: 4-5).

In 1962 Sayadaw U Asabha became the head meditation master at Wat Vivekasorm and is now famous as Dr. Asabha of Wat Vivekasorm in Chonburi, about fifty miles from Bangkok. Due to the untiring efforts of Ven Asabha, the practice of the Mahasi meditation method has now spread throughout Thailand (Kyin, 2009).

Another pioneer monk is Venerable Chodok who traveled to Myanmar and studied meditation for one year with Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw at Mahasi Sasanayeiktha in Yangon. In succeeding this noble task, with the joint efforts of Venerable Chodok Yanasith, with the great support from Thai Sangha, incorporated with Sangha-raja Somdej Phra Phimoladham, the abbot of Wat Mahadhatuyuvarajrangsarij, also the founder of Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University and Somdet Phra Phuthachan, the practice of *vipassana* according to the method of Mahasi Sayadaw, became popular and influenced on the Thai Buddhist religious society (unknown, 2008:4-5). Thanks to their efforts, Mahasi Sayadaw's method gained wide acceptance in Thailand.

By 1960, many meditation centers had been established and the number of Mahasi meditators exceeded a hundred thousand. The effectiveness of the teaching of Mahasi meditation started at Wat Mahadhatu, Bangkok and continued to Wat Vivekasorn and Wat Bhaddanta Asabharam, Chonburi Province and continues expanding ceaselessly. The "Wats" or monasteries practicing Mahasi Meditation in Thailand include Wat Mahadhatu and Buddhist meditation is fundamentally concerned with two themes: transforming the mind and using it to explore it and other phenomena. "*There are 207 places in 53 provinces using the Four Foundation of Mindfulness (Vipassana) meditation method*" (Bantaokul, 2007: v).

When Somdet Phra Phimoladham sent Phra Thamthiraratmahamuni (Chodok) to study meditation in Yangon, Myanmar, he specifically asked Venerable Chodok to learn meditation techniques that were unique to the Burmese and different from the ones already popular in Thailand. From their travels in Myanmar, of all the techniques prevalent there at the time, both Phra Phimoladham and Achan Chodok found the method taught by Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw to be the most interesting and unique, but what appealed to them the most was that this method follows very closely the guidelines in the *Mahasatipatthana Sutta* and the stages of the path outlined in the *Visuddhimagga* and the fact that Mahasi Sayadaw was also a well-known Pali scholar. This method must have impressed them as orthodox being based on Theravada scriptures and taught by a well-known practitioner and scholar, so they brought it back to Thailand and propagated it at Wat Mahadhatu (Unknown, 2008:28).

Moreover, people who are afraid of the danger of *samatha* meditation that it can lead one to become attached to the happiness attained from *jhana*, be distracted and deluded by the

supernatural powers and knowledge attained from it, and not wishing to escape from suffering may like this meditation as it does not practise any form of *samatha*.

3.2 Biography of the founder and the Masters

The founder of Mahasi meditation method is Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw. "Mahasi" means "Big drum". This name was driven from the unusually large size of drum which is placed at the Sayardaw's residence monastery. In this section, the biographies of the founder, Achan Chodok and Achan Asabha, are also mention below.

3.2.1 Biography of Mahasi Sayadaw



Picture 3.2 Ven.Mahasi Sayadaw U Sobhana Mahathera²¹

Mahasi Sayadaw was born in 1904 in Seikkhun village in Upper Myanmar. He became a novice at the age of twelve and ordained at the age of twenty with the name "U-Sobhana". Over the course of decades of study, he passed the rigorous series of government examinations in the Theravada Buddhist texts, gaining the newly-introduced *Dhammacariya* (Dhamma teacher) degree in 1941.

In 1931, U Sobhana took leave from teaching scriptural studies in Moulmein, South Myanmar, and went to nearby Thaton to practice intensive *vipassana* meditation under the

²¹ This picture is taken from Mahasi Sayadaw , *Insight Meditation* ©2008 mahasiusa.org America Burma Buddhist Association, New York, U.S.A , www.mahasiusa.org/meditation.html [Retrieved date. 16th October, 2009]

Mingun Jetawun Sayadaw. This teacher had done his practice in the remote Sagaing Hills of Upper Myanmar, under the guidance of the Aletawya Sayadaw, a student of the renowned forest meditation master Thelon Sayadaw. U Sobhana first taught *vipassana* meditation in his home village in 1938, at a monastery named for its massive drum 'Mahasi'. He became well-known in the region as the Mahasi Sayadaw. In 1947, the then Prime Minister of Myanmar, U Nu, invited Mahasi Sayadaw to be a resident teacher at a newly established meditation center in Yangon, which came to be called the Mahasi Sasana Yeiktha (Bantaokul,2005: 150).

On 4th December 1949, Mahasi Sayadaw personally inducted the very first batch of 25 *yogis* (practitioners) into the practice of *vipassana* meditation. As the *yogis* grew in numbers, it became too strenuous for the Sayadaw himself to give the whole initiation talk. Therefore, from July 1951, the talk was recorded on tape and played back to each new batch of *yogis*.

Mahasi Sayadaw's reputation soon spread. In 1948 he was invited to Yangon to be the spiritual patron of the Buddhasasana Nuggaha Association and the abbot and teacher of the association's head temple, the Sasana Yeiktha. Both of these had recently been created especially for him. His meditation techniques and courses rapidly became popular and his reputation spread throughout Asia. He undertook several trips abroad. The first two of his tours were in preparation for the Sixth Buddhist Council, but were likewise used for preaching and teaching. His travels are as follow:

“Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam (1952), India and Sri Lanka (1953, 1959), Japan (1957), Indonesia(1959), America, Hawaii, England, Continental Europe (1979), England, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand(1980), Nepal, India (1981) (Mahasi Sayadaw, 1995: Introduction).”

In the midst of all these manifold and strenuous activities, he never neglected his own meditative life which had enabled him to give wise guidance to those instructed by him. His outstanding vigour of body and mind and his deep dedication to the *Dhamma* sustained him through a life of 78 years.

Mahasi Sayadaw passed away on the 14th of August 1982, shortly after returning from another tour of India and Thailand. He was succeeded by many dedicated students. Mahasi Sayadaw's international reputation and standing in the field of Buddhist meditation has attracted

numerous visitors and *yogis* from abroad, some seeking enlightenment for their religious problems and perplexities and others intent on practicing *Satipatthana vipassana* meditation under the Sayadaw's personal guidance and instructions (Mahasi Sayadaw, 2005:1-22).

In 1952, Venerable Mahasi received from the Prime Minister the most prestigious title of the Exalted One (*Aggamahapandita*) in recognition of his spiritual attainment and his scholarship. Regarding his scholarship, Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw has written 60 books expounding not just insight meditation but many areas of Buddhist doctrine. He also acted as the Final Editor and Questioner at the Sixth Buddhist Council in 1954 in Myanmar (Bussabana, 2007).

3.2.2 Biography of Phra Achan Asabha



Picture 3.3 Ven. Bhaddanta Asabha Mahathera

(Source: Taken by the author at Wat Vivekasorn on Aug 2009)

The Venerable Bhaddanta Asabha Mahathera, Dhammacariya, was born on the 2nd July B.E 2454 at Juanlayien village of Yesajo, Pakukkoo town, Myanmar. At the age of fifteen, he became a *samanera* (novice) under the guidance of his teacher Bhaddantanana Mahathera, the abbot of Zawtikarama. When he reached the age of 20 years, he received the higher ordination at Juanlayien village. After that, he continued to study at Manavisutarama ecclesiastical university

with untiring effort. He finished the highest level of *Dhammacariya*²² at the age 27. The Venerable Bhaddanta Asabha, Mahathera Dhammacariya at the age of 30 returned to Mahavisutarama ecclesiastical university again as the position of “*kanavacaka Sayadaw*” the highest rank of *pariyatti*²³.

In B.E 2495, Sangha-raja Somdej Phra Phimoladhamma of Thailand, the abbot of Wat Mahadhatuyuvarajrangsarij sent Phramahajodakananasiddhi to Sasana Yeikta Meditation Center at Yangon to practice *vipassana* meditation, and the Venerable Bhaddanta Asabha, Mahathera was his *Kammatthanaccariya*²⁴. At the same time, Sangha-raja Somdej Phra Phimoladhamma of Thailand informed the Buddhist Council of Myanmar and requested one *Kammatthanacariya* to Thailand, Mahasi Sayadaw selected the venerable Bhaddanta Asabha.

In 1953, he arrived in Thailand and began teaching *vipassana* meditation together with his disciple Phra Maha Chodok at Wat Mahadhatu. In 1962 Achan Bhaddanta Asabha moved to Wat Vivekasorn and became the head meditation master. He taught *vipassana* meditation for 37 years. Then in 1999 he became President of Wat Bhaddanta Asabharam. On the 9 th January in 1987, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, offered him the Honorary Doctorate Degree in Buddhist Studies. In the year 2005, Achan Bhaddanta Asabha resides at Wat Mahadhatu, section 7 for his health condition. Though the general condition of his health is not as good as before, he can still preach and teach (Wat Bhaddanta Asobharam, 2008).

²² Meaning is 'the teacher of dhamma', and is a degree conferred for the students of Buddhism, mostly to the monks, mostly to the monastics.

²³ *Pariyatti* is the 'Learning the Doctrine', the 'Wording of the Doctrine'. In the progress of the disciple, 3 stages may be distinguished: Theory, Practice, Realization, i.e (1) Learning the Wording of the Doctrine (*pariyatti*), (2) Practicing it (*patipatti*), (3) Penetrating (*pativedha*) it and realizing its goal.

²⁴ The meaning of *Kammatthanaccariya* is meditation master or instructor of Buddhist literature.

3.2.3 Biography of Phra Dhamma Thiraraj Mahamuni (Chodok Yanasith)



Picture 3.4 Venerable Chodok Yanasith with King' mother at Wat Mahadhatu

(Source: Taken by the author at Sanamluang on July 2009)



Picture 3.5 Venerable Chodok Yanasith and Phra. Phimoladhamma

(Source: Taken by the author at Sanamluang on July 2009)

Venerable Chodok Yanasith was born in 1918 at Khonkaen province, Thailand. He was ordained as a novice in 1932 at Wat Phoklang in Khonkaen. Since Venerable Chodok was gifted at learning Pali, he passed the highest ninth grade Pali examination in 1951. Venerable Chodok was a learned scholar and a high ranking Buddhist monk who took an interest in insight meditation.

Venerable Chodok's travel to Myanmar and the establishment of *Yup No Phong No* meditation at Wat Mahadhatu would not have been possible without the support of Somdet Phra Phuthachan (Phra Phimoladham), who was a learned scholar and a high ranking Buddhist monk who took an interest in insight meditation. He became the Ecclesiastical Minister of Administration and later the President of Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University. In 1952, Phra Phimoladham, who was overseeing education at Wat Mahadhatu at the time, saw the need to set up a course in meditation at Wat Mahadhatu, so he sent Venerable Chodok to study meditation with the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw at Sasana Yeiktha in Yangon, Myanmar, for one year.

When Venerable Chodok returned from Myanmar, he invited two Burmese monks, Venerable Asabhamahathera Aggamahakamma Dhanacariya, who also taught and examined Venerable Chodok and Venerable Indavasa, to teach this meditation method at the temple and distribute Mahasi meditation method in Thailand.

In 1964, Venerable Chodok was appointed as the head of the Dhamma Ambassador to England and Germany. He helped to establish and raise funds for the construction of Wat Phutthaprathip in Wimbledon, London. He became the first abbot at that temple, taught and ordained western monks there. In addition, he taught meditation at Cambridge University in England, in Scotland and Germany (สำนักงานกลางกองการวิปัสสนาธุระ: 2549).

After that, Venerable Chodok taught this meditation method at Wat Mahadhatu throughout his life. He became the deputy abbot and the Chairman of the Sangha Committee in charge of administering the temple. His other duties include teaching at Mahachulalongkorn University, acting as a committee member for the Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University edition of the commentary to the Dhammapada and a committee member for the revision of the Pali scripture on the occasion of His Majesty the King's 5th cycle. He also helped to establish the Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University Press in Bangkok. He established a school for lay people and a hospital for monks in his home province of Khonkaen (Prathet Thai, 2008).

He had numerous students, one of whom became a famous meditation master of this school, namely, Phrakhru Phawanawisit, the abbot of Wat Daen Sa-ngop Asapharam, Nakhon Ratchasima Province who studied with Venerable Chodok at Wat Mahadhatu for six years. Other meditation masters who were students of Venerable Chodok include Phra Thamsinghaburachan

or Luang Pho Jaran, the abbot of Wat Amphawan, Singburi Province, and Khun Mae Siri Karinchai who is based in Bangkok. Venerable Chodok also gave meditation lessons to Her Royal Highness the Princess Mother, the mother of His Majesty King Bhumibhol Adulyadej of Thailand. Venerable Chodok passed away in 1988 at age 70 (Unknown, 2008: 5).

3.3 Profile of Meditation Centers in Thailand Adopting Mahasi Meditation Method

This part aims to demonstrate the movement and the branches of the teaching of Mahasi meditation method in Thailand. In this thesis, four meditation centers are selected to exemplify Mahasi teaching method, i.e., Wat Mahadhatu, Wat Vivekasorn, Dhammodaya Chanmyay Meditation Center and the Young Buddhist Association of Thailand (YBAT).

3.3.1 Wat Mahadhatu²⁵

After spending frequent times at Wat Mahadhatu, located around the area of the Grand Palace in Bangkok, I have talked to many monks, nuns and yogis about their practices and found out much important data and history of this temple. That was when I realized the fact that there is a strong influence of Mahasi meditation among the Thai Buddhist society.

Wat Mahadhatu was built in the Ayutthaya period, and was originally named Wat Salak. Soon after Bangkok was established as the capital of Siam, the temple became strategically situated in between the newly-built Grand Palace and Front Palace (residence of the vice-king). As a result, the temple was used for royal ceremonies and funerals. It was renovated in 1783 by Prince Surasinghanart, younger brother of King Rama I, and renamed Wat Nipphanaram [Nibbanarama], another name was Wat Phra Srisanpech.

King Rama IV added the name “Yuwarajarangsarit” in honor of Prince Vachirunnahis. Thus, its full name is Wat Mahadhatu Yuwarratrangsarit Rajaworamahavihara, or in short

²⁵ The following informations for the history of Wat Mahadhatu and its Section 5 are adopted from the “A Study of the *Satipatthana Bhavana: Wat Mahadhatu*”, by Ven. Tran Duy Hieu, Rev. Ratan Jyoti Barua and Dipankar Chakma, which was originally submitted as a class assignment to the International Master of Arts Programme (IMAP), Mahachulalongkornrajavidyala University in 2007.

popularly known as Wat Mahathat [in *Pali* Wat Mahadhatu]. It became the Wat Mahadhatu of Bangkok in 1803 and was given its current name in 1996.

Now, the temple is the center of the Mahanikai school of Buddhism, and as such is a center of monastic learning for members of the sect from throughout Southeast Asia. Although the temple is rather large, its grounds are crammed full of schools, offices and other buildings, as well as a large *Kuti* (monks' residences) section. The temple is one of several in Bangkok offering classes in meditation. Wat Mahadhatu is an important centre for the study of Buddhism and meditation. Although most programmes are in Thai, there are some in English and the temple has become a popular place to learn the *vipassana* meditation method. At Wat Mahadhatu, there are two *vipassana* meditation centers which practice Mahasi meditation method.i.e, Section (5) and Center Meditation Study and Retreat Center.

1) Wat Mahadhatu, Section (5)

In 2495 B.E, Phradhammathirarajamahamuni (Venerable ChodokYanasith) brought that Mahasi meditation method to Thailand. He had finished *vipassana* study course in Myanmar and returned to Thailand together with other Burmese monks, Sayadaw U Asabha and Sayadaw U Indavamsa. He established a Meditation Center at Section (5) at Wat Mahadhatu where he was meditation master until his last breath. At that time Venerable Phra Phimoladhamma, the abbot of Wat Mahadhatu had invited these two Burmese monks as the chief instructors in order to teach *Sattipatthana Vipassana* at Wat Mahadhatu.

Venerable Chodok taught this meditation method at Wat Mahadhatu throughout his life. He was the deputy abbot and the Chairman of Sangha Committee in charge of administering the temple. At present, in Wat Mahadhatu, there are 2 sections where meditation classes are taking place regularly _ Section (5) and the Center Meditation Study and Retreat Center. The former teaches meditation to lay people whereas the latter one is for the monks to practice *vipassana* meditation in accordance with the Mahasi method.

(a) Meditation Courses: In section 5 of Wat Mahadhatu, the daily insight meditation practice program for a good life is offered. Everyone, who wants to practice meditation, will be

able to gain benefit of the practice: a clearer mind, peace and wisdom. The duration of the time are at the practitioner's own free will and not have a limit time. These are mixed. At any given session there will be beginners and advanced meditators, monks and laymen, locals and tourists. English-speaking instruction is available every day. Meals and accommodation are provided in the compounds free of charge. Meditators should bring enough personal items and an offering of flowers, a candle and nine sticks of incense for the opening ceremony. Donations are accepted but not solicited.

The objectives of the meditation program are as follows: to lead one's life correctly according to the Buddha's teaching; to cultivate the mind (mindfulness); to be the device for problem solving in daily life; to be familiar with roles of Thai Buddhist monks in the society; to lead one's life to the cessation of suffering (*Nibbana*).

Everyone who wants to practice meditation must be taking the five precepts or eight precepts. The Retreat timetables are as follow;

- Morning : From 7.00 - 10.00 a.m (Chanting, Meditation instruction and practice)
 Afternoon : From 1.00 - 4.00 p.m (Chanting, Meditation instruction and practice)
 Evening : From 6.00 – 8.00 p.m (Chanting, Meditation instruction and practice)
 From 8.00 – 9.00 p.m (Dhamma Talk)

(b) The Meditation Masters of Section (5): The first pioneer head master of Section 5 of Wat Mahadhatu was Venerable Phra ChodokYanasith, who brought the *vipassana* technique of Mahasi Sayadaw back to Thailand after a certain period of training in Myanmar. After his passing away, Phra Kru Vimondhammarangsi succeeded him after serving a successful period of time as the second and the current head master. Besides the present head meditation master there are some other meditation instructor monks and their names are given below according to their serial ranks as in the year of 2009: Ven. Phra Kru Vimondhammarangsi, Ven. Phra Kru Mongkol Silawatra, Ven. Phra Ajarn Doctor Somphan, Ven. Phra Vthai and Ven. Phra Taleang.

These above mentioned monks are special teachers for teaching Thai lay people who come to practice at Wat Mahadhatu. Wat Mahadhatu has not only gained a name and fame for

teaching *vipassana* meditation to Thai local people but also to foreigners (English speaking people) from all over the world. There are instructors for foreigner who are teaching and conducting the meditation retreats in English. Their names are as follows: Ven. Phra Suputh Kosalo, Ven. Phra Narong Papassaro and Ms. Siwanpanroy Wayupak.

(c) The Background of the Practitioners at Wat Mahadhatu, Section (5): The Wat Mahadhatu is located in the down town area of Bangkok and is very conveniently located for all people to come and practice *vipassana* meditation. For this reason, we can find all classes of people who come and practice meditation there. Followers are primarily Bangkok resident people with different backgrounds but mostly they are middle class people. According to the register books of Wat Mahadhatu, Section 5 an analysis can be made of the practitioners by means of their education, occupation and social background. A visit to the temple for everyday meditation courses reveals that the practitioners who are coming to practice are from a wide range of society, young and old, rich and poor. Although, the active participants in the temple's growth and fund raising activities are the wealthier who have better connected followers. However, this does not mean that only the upwardly mobile members of Thai society are given privileges at the temple.

In Wat Mahadhatu, Section 5 there is no fixed date for meditation courses. Everyone is eligible for insight meditation practice with no limitation of time and place which is being broadcast on radio and television announcement and publicized in brochures. Practitioners can stay and practice as they like. This is also another reason why Thai people are attracted to it. It is because of this reason many people come and practice *vipassana* meditation when they have free time, especially during the weekends.

According to the register books and interviews conducted with the monks in charge, the number of people attending the meditation sessions is different every day. The number is usually higher on the weekends and Buddhist holidays. The records below further show that the number gets higher and higher each year as the monk in charge explained while he was being interviewed. Around 200 to 250 people come and practice at this temple. So we can imagine that at least more than 2000 people come and practice every year.

Table 1 gives an illustration of the practitioners who come and practice *vipassana* meditation on a regular basis at Wat Mahadhatu Section 5. The table shows the exact number of followers who came and practiced Mahasi *vipassana* meditation in 2006. Based on this table, we can assume how Thai people practice and accept this Mahasi meditation method in Thai Buddhist society.

Table 3.1 The number of the meditators practicing *vipassana* meditation at Wat Mahadhatu, Section (5) in 2006.

Months	Male	Female	Monk	Students	Total
January	20	94		32	146
February	10	85		34	129
March	8	76		46	130
April	24	139	3	40	206
May	19	118	13	28	178
June	28	117		20	160
July	11	104		13	129
August	27	58		39	124
September	21	68		29	118
October	15	75		13	103
November	19	69		24	206
December	21	161		24	206
Total	218	1151	16	343	1742

According to the above Table 1 it is observed that the female practitioners are outnumbered than male practitioners and the total number of the people is nearly 2000 in the year 2006.

According to Section 5's registration books, information about the practitioner's social background especially in the year 2007 and 2008 are shown in the following tables regarding their occupations, education and ages.

Table 3.2 Distribution of ages of meditators practicing Mahasi meditation at Wat Mahadhatu, section 5 in January, 2009.

Ages	Number of People
10-20	14
21-30	22
31-40	24
41-50	18
51-60	10
61-70	7

According to Table 2, there are three significant numbers are seen on the basis of the age of the practitioners. The number of practitioners between 31 to 40 years old is the highest compared to the rest which falls in the age category between 21 to 30 years and 41 to 50 years old.

Table 3.3 Occupation of the practitioners in November and December, 2007 in Wat Mahadhatu , Section (5)

Occupation	Number of People
Government Official	25
Business Owner	33

Company Staff	62
Labour	35
Technical Employee	3
Student	68
House Wife	32
Others	22
Total	280

The above Table 3 demonstrates that most of the practitioners are from business sector (company staff, labourers and businessmen) and the second most are students.

Table 3.4 Educational status of the practitioners in November and December in 2007 in Wat Mahadhatu, Section 5.

Education	Number of People
Primary School	23
Secondary School	35
High School	44
Bachelor's Degree	123
Higher than Bachelor's Degree (MA, PhD)	34

Table 4 indicates that the practitioners at Wat Mahadhatu, Section 5 are educated person, mostly having Bachelor's degree.

(d) Other Branches of Wat Mahadhatu, Section (5): In the year of B.E 2496, the Mahasi meditation teaching commenced at Wat Mahadhatu, Section 5, with its chief meditation instructor as Ven. Chodok, who was by then one of the high ranking monks in Thailand. He was invited to several places across the country to conduct meditation retreat. As a result of this, many meditators were taught in accordance with the method of Mahasi Sayadaw, and after gaining a good knowledge of *vipassana* meditation, and they were sent throughout the country with the aim of the propagation of the *vipassana* method in significant provinces.

In this way, some new branches are established in many provinces of the country which follow the method of the Mahasi Sayadaw, as taught at Wat Mahadhatu, Section 5. The followings could be mentioned:

The Branches of Wat Mahadhatu, Section 5 are Wat Vivekasorn (Chonburi), the Young Buddhist Association of Thailand (Bangkhae) and 2 temples in Pathumthani Province, Thailand.²⁶

In addition to this, the Mahasi meditation method is also taught widely in the country in many provinces as the following information reveals: 3 centers in Thonburi, 2 centers in Chiangmai, 3 centers in Chonburi and 3 centers in South Thailand.²⁷

2) Center Meditation Study and Retreat Center

Center meditation center is located at Wat Mahadhatu and started to open at 1st December, 2008. It has been arrived if entered continuously to inside after continue from road of located Wat Mahadhatu, Section (5). There are many people who come and practice meditation at this center especially on Buddhist's Great days of Great time, lent season and special Buddhist holly days. The center's condition is wide and eases after peace and silent also as forming structure of room. In this center, Mahasi insight meditation practice sessions are being offered on a regular basis. The center opens from 6:30 am to 9:30 pm all year round. Anyone who wants to

²⁶ Interview with Ven. Phra Kru Mongkol Silawatra, a meditation teacher at Wat Mahadhatu, Section 5, on 16th July, 2009.

²⁷ This is adopted from the "A Study of the *Satipatthana Bhavana*: Wat Mahadhatu", by Ven. Tran Duy Hieu, Rev. Ratan Jyoti Barua and Dipankar Chakma, which was originally submitted as a class assignment to the International Master of Arts Programme (IMAP), Mahachulalongkornrajavidyala University in 2007.

practice meditation is always welcome at anytime. The center mention that who need supervision are encouraged to join at the hours scheduled. This meditation practice is opened to public without charges but donation is accepted to help defraying operating costs of the center.

(a) Meditation Courses: All are welcome to practice at the center anytime of the day at any of the four different programs: (1) the regular daily schedule, (2) the intensive program, (3) special appointment program and (4) retreat meditation course for Buddhist lent season (rain retreat).

There have always regular intensive meditation program which is held the first week of each month from the 1st to the 7th as regular training. Practitioners can stay at meditative centre to practice as long as they like, or they can practice at the center and return home to sleep after the evening meditation and return in the morning to start the practice again. Some practitioners come and practice at their convenience, which is a bit more irregular.

Other practitioners come to the practice during leisure time and holidays. A special group retreat may be arranged 2-3 weeks prior to the scheduled date. A request could also be made to open a specific meditation retreat for a big group of fifteen persons or more.

Apart from these regular activities, from 2009 the Center runs a special intensive meditation course for the monks and the novices who are ordained and residing at Mahadhatu during the three months of Buddhist lent (rains retreat) (*vassavasa*) for a period of 10 days. Before this, all the monks who are residing at Wat Mahadhatu and also the newly ordained monks and novices had to go elsewhere to practice meditation for a certain period. During this three-month period monks are required to study the teachings of the Buddha.²⁸ The number of the followers of this meditation center is almost same as the numbers of Section 5.

²⁸ Interview with Mr. Manit Vichit Chot, a committee member of the office of Center Meditation Center, on 12th July 2009 at Center Meditation Center, Wat Mahadhatu.

The Program Objectives:²⁹ to help one lead peaceful life according to the teaching of Buddha, to cultivate the mind, to be a tool for solving problems in every-day life, to display a duty of Buddhist monks in society and to lead to the cessation of suffering and realization of *Nibbana*.

3.3.2 Wat VivekasormM



Picture 3.6 Wat Vivekasorm (Chonburi)

(Source: Taken by the author at Wat Vivekasorm on August 2009)



Picture 3.7 Meditation Hall at Wat Vivekasorm

(Source: Taken by the author at Wat Vivekasorm on August 2009)

²⁹This information was obtained from a free distributed brochure from Center Meditation Study and Retreat Center at Wat Mahadhatu.

Wat Vivekasorm is another place where Mahasi *vipassana* meditation method is open for any individuals or groups who are interested. Wat Vivekasorm is situated at Tambon Ban Suan, Amphoe Mueang, Chonburi and is well-shaded and quiet. The cottages are close together suitable for both laymen and laywomen and for long-term stays. Wat Vivekasorm was named and established according to Achan Bhaddanta Asabha who is *vipassana* meditation master and who was chosen by Mahasi Sayadaw in 1952 to take on the responsibility to promote the practice of *satipatthana vipassana* meditation in Thailand.³⁰

Venerable Bhaddanta Asabha was a *vipassana* meditation master who devoted all his efforts to teach *vipassana* meditation to interested people at Wat Mahadhatu, Bangkok, for 10 years. Until Mr. Thammanoon Singkanvanich, who was a meditation student of Venerable Bhaddanta Asabha, had the aim to praise Buddhism and *vipassana* meditation. Thus he started to establish new *vipassana* Meditation School at Chonburi, Thailand. And then he invited Venerable Bhaddanta Asabha to stay and teach *vipassana* meditation at there.

Moreover, Venerable Bhaddanta Asabha had taught all meditation students personally himself. Plus all the guidelines and procedures were exactly the same as Sasanayeiktha Vipassana meditation school, Yangon, Myanmar which was an original affiliated school of his. There were two people who looked after this meditation school, Venerable Dearn Neungchamngong and Mr. Thammanoon Singkanvanich. In 1962, Mr. Sanya Thammasak, Ex-Prime minister of Thailand, visited Venerable Bhaddanta Asabha and knew that this meditation school was not yet named, so he named it "*Vivek-Asom Vipassana Meditation School*".

In 1962 to 1999, Achan Asabha became the Head Meditation Master at Vivek Asom Meditation Center (Chonburi, Thailand), where he taught *vipassana* meditation for 37 years. During that period, Achan Somsak Sorado, a disciple of Achan Asabha, has been teaching *vipassana* meditation at Vivek Asom Meditation Center for over 5 years.

Though, in the beginning, there were only four monks who stayed and taught *vipassana* meditation at Vivek-Asom Vipassana meditation school as follows:

³⁰ This information was obtained from following sources:

- *A Brief guide to Buddhist meditation centers in Thailand*. The National Identity Board, Bangkok, 1988, p.33.
- *A Guide to Buddhist Monasteries and Meditation Centers in Thailand*. World Fellowship of Buddhists, Thailand, 1991, from <<http://www.hdamd.de/buddha/mdtctr01.htm>> Retrieved on 27th July 2009.

1. Venerable Bhaddanta Asabha as a *vipassana* meditation master,
2. Venerable Mahavilasyarnvaro as a *vipassana* meditation student,
3. Venerable Pun Manatakamo as a *vipassana* meditation student,
4. Venerable Dearn Neungchamng as a servant

Nevertheless, there was an important meditation student named Venerable Mahavilasyarnvaro who was promoted to be Venerable Prommoli in 1994. He composed many Buddhist literary masterpieces about *vipassana* meditation and Solodyarn i.e. *Karmadipani* (the treatise on karma).

Furthermore, Venerable Bhaddanta Asabha was the one who teaches *vipassana* meditation courses all by himself. There was nobody from the Thai clergy helping and supporting him.

It had been around 39 years that he taught at Vivek-Asom Vipassana meditation school. Local monks and people came to study *vipassana*, including people from abroad too. This meditation school could produce many meditation masters to propagate Buddhism very well. And it had become acceptable and well-known among Buddhists. Wat Vivekasorm was established out of gratitude for Venerable Bhaddanta Asabha of which the objectives are as the following: to be a memorial and an acknowledgement of Achan Bhaddanta Asabha, to publicize and carry on his *vipassana* meditation teaching, to be a center of *vipassana* meditation of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, to provide services and be a meditation center for the public, to be a human resource training center of *vipassana* meditation.

Nowadays, the Vivek-Asom Vipassana meditation school had been teaching *vipassana* practice to everyone who was interested. The prominent point of *vipassana* meditation masters of this meditation school were the best in *vipassana* teaching which was rarely found. More importantly, they were famous, acceptable, and well-known in the global world (Bantaokul, 2007: 80-88).

With the efforts of Achan Bhaddanta Asabha, there are the numbers of monks and *yogis* (practitioners) who succeed in establishing mindfulness and Mahasi meditation method gained influence throughout Thailand.

(a) Meditation coures: On my visit to Wat Vivekasorm, I saw many buildings in that temple area. These buildings were built by individual donor who occassionally come and

practice when that donor has free time staying in that donated building for that donor's privacy. For the general public it is possible to stay there at the meditation center for *vipassana* meditation retreats. Meditators are encouraged to practice 20 hours a day, in Meditation Halls or in their own individual cottages.

Based on the interview with the monk in charge of this temple, people come to practice *vipassana* meditation for a certain period of time for 3/5/7/15 days depending on the free times and willingness of the practitioners. However, a 3-month long practice is also conducted in this temple, which is the longest period to practice. A special meditation retreat courses are held 2 or 3 times a year and each session lasts 9 days. These retreat courses are organized by well-known and active meditation instructors with about 40 or 50 practitioners. Then these leaders arrange and coordinate with the time and date to fix a convenient time for a special meditation retreat course. Wat Vivekasorm only helps to conduct these retreat courses for those who need to use the temple. It does not conduct courses on its own. This meditation center is open all times for lay people to come and make merit or meditate. Special meditation retreat courses are significantly attended by larger practitioners, as large as about 100, during the New Year period, the last week of December.

(b) Meditation Master of Wat Vivekasorm: There are 16 residential monks in the temple with one meditation master who teaches *Yup No Phong No* meditation method in current year 2009. He is also the abbot of this temple. When this *vipassana* center started to open retreats, meditation masters were usually invited to come and instruct at this temple, although some masters preferred to stay at Wat Vivekasorm. Some of the meditation masters stayed in this temple for three years whereas and others for seven years. It is also worthy of mention that most of the meditation masters are disciples of Ven. Dr. Asabha. The list of meditation masters who are the current instructor monks in the year of 2009 are Venerable Satja Susatjo, Phra Somsak, Venerable Charlee Charuwanano, Venerable Dern Thanuttaro and Laywoman Pornpen Nerngchamnong.

(c) The Background of the Practitioners at Wat Vivekasorm: There are a lot of practitioners who are coming at Wat Vivekasorm from various parts of Thailand in order to practice *vipassana*. Most of the people are from Bangkok, Chonburi, Yayang, Sataki, Yasothong, Phathanthani, Yasong, Chiang Mai and Nonthaburi. People from all walk of life from high ranking government officials, company business organization and firms, to students, come to the center for meditation retreats. However, according to the report of the monk in charge, a big number of practitioners are coming from Isan - from the North-East of Thailand.³¹

(d) Other Branches of Wat Vivekasorm: Wat Bhaddanta Asabharam at Baan Nong Pru, Nong Pai Kaiw, Baan Bung in Chonburi is the branch of Wat Vivekasorm. It is also a famous meditation center. Both of the current abbots Achan Somsak Sorado from Wat Bhaddanta and Achan Satja Susatjo from Wat Vivekasorm are disciples of Achan Bhaddanta Asabha, founder of Wat Vivekasorm. The two temples are linked in many ways especially in conducting meditation courses.

3.3.3 Dhammodaya Chanmyay Meditation CenterM



Picture 3.8 Dhammodaya Chanmyay Meditation Center

(Source: Taken by the author at Dhammodaya Chanmyay Meditation Center on August 2009)

³¹ Interview with Ms.Sovemon, a supervisor at Wat Vivekasorm on 10 th August 2009 at Wat Vivekasorm.

Dhammodaya Chanmyay meditation Center is dedicated to Ven. Chanmyay Sayadaw, a descendent of Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw from Myanmar. This meditation center has a very interesting history, according the interviews with the daughter of the founder. Nun Kanchaporn Noipodjana was the founder of the Dhammodaya meditation center and because of her great gratitude and loving-kindness, so many laity peacefully practice *vipassana* meditation under the guidance line of a noble monk, Chanmyay Sayadaw. She was born on February 24, 1965. Even at a young age, Nun Kanchaporn had an interest in *vipassana* meditation but unfortunately she did not have a chance to practice it due to not meeting any competent meditation master who would really teach her clearly about meditation.

When she turned 30, she started to study meditation and ordained as a nun on February 24, 1980, at Section 5, Wat Mahadhatu, Bangkok, under Venerable Thepsittimuni (Achan Chodok), the *vipassana* meditation headmaster of Section 5. She stayed there and had a chance to serve Ven. Thepsittimuni. Then she was assigned to look after and give preliminary instruction to meditators for more than ten years.

Then for some reason, Nun Kanchaporn had to leave the Buddhist nun hood and worked for two years. In 1987, she ordained a second time as a nun under the same previous master at the same temple. A few years later, after the passing away of her master Ven. Thepsittimuni (Achan Chodok), she decided to practice meditation at many different places. As a result of her practice, she had a chance to join and practice *vipassana* meditation under the guidance of Venerable Sayadaw U Janaka, at Chonburi, Thailand. In 1990, she was invited by Ven. Sayadaw U Janaka to come and practice meditation, at Chanmyay Meditation Center, Yangon, Myanmar where she practiced meditation for six years until 1999.

After her practice in Yangon, in 1999, she returned to Thailand with the noble aim to impart *dhamma* and the method of meditation as taught by her master Ven. Sayadaw U Janaka in order to teach and propagate this practice in Thailand. Thereby, upon the agreement of Ven. Sayadaw U Janaka a meditation center was established under the title of the Dhammodaya Meditation Center in Thailand which is located in Nakhonpathom Province. It is a place for practicing *vipassana* meditation taught by Nun Kanjaporn Noipodjana. She taught practitioners how to relieve suffering and how to find peace of mind. It will, indeed, make the practitioners to find the serenity no only from the nature but also from the way to appreciate *dhamma*.

From the interview it is known that in 1997, the actual idea for the establishment of this Center originated with Mr. Charlie, a Dhamma-fellow of hers, where meditation would be taught under the guidance of Sayadaw U Janaka. A meditation hall and other necessary buildings were built in Nakhompathom Province, the place which was chosen by Ven. Sayadaw U Janaka. He said that Nakhonpathom is the first place where Buddhism first arrived in Thailand. Finally, in 1999, on the 30th November, Dhammodaya Chanmyay Meditation Center commenced retreat courses for practitioners and has continued to do so up to present.

The meditation center is surrounded by many trees and pools so that practitioners can live in tune with nature. This nice environment helps the practitioners to calm their emotions. Also, there is a place for walking meditation where they can walk on stones paths which is useful for better blood circulation. It is also believed that this place and the practitioners are protected by guardian deities.

The objectives of the center are: to teach *vipassana* meditation and promote Buddhism, to propagate the way of practicing *vipassana* meditation under the format of Ven. Sayadaw, U Janaka, disciple of Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw, to be the *vipassana* meditation support center for monks, novices, youth and the general public, to apply *Satipatthana-Vipassana* meditation for developing the quality of life and society and to offer good merit.³²

(a) Meditation Courses: There are no yearly fixed meditations courses conducted in this meditation center. A few meditation retreats are given in a year and not like other meditation centers such as YBAT and Wat Mahadhatu section (5). So I would like to reveal how this center let the people to know when there is a retreat course. Upon the interview with the daughter of the founder, Khun Neh, the information was revealed that the information concerning with the courses. There are the name lists of the practitioners who came to practice at Dhammodaya Chanmyay meditation center, which are kept in the center. The probable datas of the lectures / Dhamma talks or the meditation courses conducted by Chanmyay Sayadaw are advertised earlier in the pamphlets, which are distributed to Wat Mahadhatu Section (5) and also to YBAT for

³² Interview with Ms. Rapanun Vipatayoti (Khun Neh), daughter of the founder of Dhammodaya Chanmyay meditation center, on 22nd July 2009 at Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University.

public information. Apart from this the information or news also posted on the internet at www.dhammanet.com which is accessible through on line.

Normally, the retreat depends on the meditation master. Intensive retreat courses depend on the free time of the Head Meditation Master, because he arranges and chooses the time-table. The circulation of the center is under the scope of Ven. Chanmyay Sayadaw. Some other retreats depend on the organizer together with the invited monks. The appointment is made first and is fixed schedule timetable when both of them have free time. Every weekend there is a workshop where laity comes and discusses *dhamma* and practice *vipassana* meditation. During the workshop period, the meditation masters teach *vipassana* and loving-kindness meditation (*mettabhavana*). The important practice of this meditation center is the practice of loving-kindness meditation technique (*metta*) which is taught first, followed by concentration focused on *vipassana* meditation.

In the course of practice of *vipassana*, especially for the beginners, the practice of loving-kindness (*mettabhavana*) is also advised. Why are beginners advised to practice *mettabhavana* in the course of *vipassana*? The daughter of the founder, Khun Neh says that the beginners of *vipassana* have many thoughts in the mind which cause them to waste their time, and for which reason they do not get enough concentration for *vipassana*. As a result of this, no progress is made during the practice. In order to eliminate such unreasonable thoughts, the Sayadaw advises beginners to practice *mettabhavana* first.

Most of the 10-day retreat meditation courses at this Center normally start on Friday to the following Sunday. No fees are charged but donations are accepted. According to the Head Meditation Master, Ven. Chanmyay Sayadaw, the meditators are taught to note every movement very carefully and further, they are instructed to walk and eat very slowly in order to have mindfulness at all times. During the retreat course, the Center provides vegetarian food for all laity.

(b) The Meditation Masters of Dhammodaya Chanmyay Meditation Center: There are many *vipassana* masters to teach at Dhammodaya Meditation Center by recruiting of the headmaster, Ven. Sayadaw U Janaka. Firstly, Ven. Sayadaw U Janaka sent two meditation masters from Yangon. They are U Uttama and U Sukyatra who have returned to Yangon now.

Nowadays, there are two *vipassana* masters as Ven. U Nandavamsa (Burmese monk) and Ven. U Vamsarakkhita (Canadian monk).

Ven. U Nandavamsa visited Thailand first time in 2003, as an assistant meditation master, with his headmaster Ven. Sayadaw U Janaka. He was also invited to teach *vipassana* meditation by the Young Buddhists Association of Thailand (YBAT). Moreover, he was responsible to look after the hermit in *vipassana* meditation seminar project in Chiangmai and Chonburi.

In 2004, his headmaster assigned him to be a *vipassana* meditation master at Dhammodaya Meditation Center, Nakhonpathom, where he is the head meditation master till now.

Sometimes, they have invited some *vipassana* masters in order to educate to other interested people such as Venerable Pannyavaro. The Meditation masters in 2009 are Ven. Sayadaw U Janaka, U Zawbita, assistance of headmaster, U Yaywata, U Nyanaramsri (Malaysia), U Nandavamsa, U Vamsarakkhita and Mr. Jeffery Oliver.

(c) The Practitioners of Dhammodaya Chanmyay Meditation Center: From the record of the registration books of the Dhammodaya Chanmyay Meditation Center, it is found that the followers of this Center who come and practice are from various age group and different backgrounds. It is very carefully recorded about the number of the practitioners mentioning clearly about the number of males and females including their occupations. Based on this provided information, I can demonstrate details of the followers.

Table 3. 5 Gender of the people practicing Dhammodaya Meditation Chanmyay Centers for year 1999 to 2009.

Gender	1999-2001	2002	2003	2005	2006	2007	2009
Male	57	89	156	9	14	18	8
Female	120	184	125	61	80	69	30

According to the Table 5, it can be seen that there are a lot of people who come and practice this *vipassana* meditation method, of which the female practitioners are obviously higher than male practitioners, when the retreat courses are conducted.

Table 3.6 Educational status of the practitioners at Dhammodaya Chanmyay Meditation Center.

Educational status	1999-2001	2002	2003	2005	2006	2007	2009
Primary school	5	8	8	5	3	1	2
Secondary school	5	3	1		1	2	1
High school	20	30	64	4	6	10	
Bachelor's degree	68	110	100	28	47	36	20
MA and PhD	39	31	38	11	14	17	6

Table 6 shows that the most of the people are educated holding from the degree of Bachelor, Master's degree to PhD degree.

Table 3.7 Occupations of practitioners at Dhammodaya Chanmyay Meditation Center in year 1999 to 2009.

Occupation	1999-2001	2002	2003	2005	2006	2007	2009
Government Official	33	41	63	23	33	29	9
Own Business	22	12	8	8	9	14	5
Labour	24	26	14	16	5	6	5
House Wife	7	28	15	1	9	8	8
Company Staff	18	26	16	9	4	9	
Student	8	7	43	6	7	6	
Monk	27	32	95			2	4
Nun	1	1	4			2	1
Nurse	12	1		1			2
Private Language Teacher	7	51					
Others	3	1			7	3	

According to the Table 6, most of the practitioners are government officials, monks and labourers.

(d) Other Branches: This Center has no branches, but it has a relationship with other meditation centers such as Wat Mahadhatu, Section (5), Young Buddhist Association of Thailand (YBAT), and Wat Vivekasorn. All these meditation centers practice the same method of Mahasi Sayadaw, and, therefore they depend on each other. But the Centers are run by themselves which is not under any one' guidance.

3.3.4 The Young Buddhist Association of Thailand

The Young Buddhists Association of Thailand under Royal Patronage is a very popular meditation center among Thai Buddhists and was founded by a group of religious young men

and women who wanted to learn more about Buddhism and to disseminate Buddhism in Thai society. The movement was founded with the aim for the meditation practice and *vipassana* meditation method is taught according to the teaching of Mahasi Sayadaw, and, thus the practice is popularly referred to Achan Chodok at Wat Mahadhatu. The association runs a center where once can learn and practice *vipassana* meditation but there will also be sessions on *Metta* (Loving Kindness) practice. Emphasis will be placed on the integration of the spiritual dimensions of being with those of the physical and mental in everyday life. Meditators keep eight precepts while on the retreat the YBAT also holds a regular weekend meditation retreat together with the house of *Dhamma* (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2009). Young Buddhist Association of Thailand is located at 58/8 Petchkasem 54, Parsi-Charoen, Bangkok. The current president is Mr. Anurut Vongvanij and the Vice President, International is Mr. Pongpun Saovaphudhasuvej. The meditation teachers are Dr. Siri Karinchai and her team (Thailand-Dharmaweb, 2008).

According to the pamphlet distributed by the Center, we can see the history of this Meditation Center was established after the World War II was end, there were a group of people who faithful in Buddhism, consisted of three important persons as Mr. Sathira Bodhinunta, Dr. Boonyong Vongvanij and Mr. Supoj Saengsomboon.

On January 15, 1949, they established a “Yuwabuddhiga” or “Group of Youth Buddhists” which means “Young Buddhists who respect in Lord Buddha’s teaching”. After registration to be the association officially in 1950, which was emerged the first “Young Buddhists Association of Thailand” and had a temporary office at Wat Kanmatuyaram, Bangkok. They, at the beginning, arranged “Q&A” activity, *dhamma* practice, and meditation practice on Sunday.

On 14th June 1950, the group obtained its association status and become known as the Young Buddhist Association of Thailand. At this stage, the association had increased its founding members to eleven. Additionally, the King Bhumibol Adulyadej, Rama IX of Thailand, had accepted the Young Buddhists Association of Thailand under Royal Patronage on March 19, 1960.

He had given his royal guidance to the Young Buddhists Association of Thailand which was “The objective of every religion in the world, especially Buddhism, was to educate people to consider the principle and idea of Lord Buddha’s teaching. And let it be a restraint and practice it by yourself in order to live your lives effectively which caused the purity and getting free from suffers which were the ultimate benefit.”

The Young Buddhists Association of Thailand is a Buddhism organization where has manage effectively. It is the leader in propagating Buddhism to the youth and interesting people who want to study and practice in accordance with *Tripitaka* (doctrine) by emphasizing on the meditation principles which cause to develop faith and intellect to apply in daily life.³³

(a) Meditation Courses: The Young Buddhist Association of Thailand is specially trained in the *vipassana* meditation for all kinds of people and it is a huge team. This center is very famous throughout Thailand and offers a lot of retreat programs. The retreat is open to both beginners and experienced meditators. During the retreat, all meditators are expected to keep silence at all times except when giving meditation reports. Center (1) located at Bangkok is especially for youth while the Center (2) situated at Pathumthani Province is for all ages. There are three main general courses for people:

Basic Course – the worth of practicing meditation is like the superb medicine that can eliminate ignorance and desires. Thus, the association has arranged meditation i.e. “Development Intellectual Mind and Peace Course” by Nun Siri Karinchai. It is a course for meditators who are interested in *vipassana* meditation which could reduce all the defilements and generate peace. This course offered walking meditation, doing concentration, as well as listening to *dhamma* about *vipassana* practice and the doctrine in Buddhism.

Intensive Course – the course for religious students to develop themselves in order to progress in practicing *dhamma* for monks as well as laymen who have full knowledge, virtue, and willingness to propagate how to practice *dhamma* correctly. It is a course for meditators who

³³ The information was got from interview with Ms. Parnus Trisukonthavong, officer at the Young Buddhist Association of Thailand on 12 July 2009 at YBAT Center (1).

have practiced meditation for a while and who have good abilities to control themselves. Meditators could choose from many interesting *vipassana* courses the course which was the most suitable for them.

Mind and Wisdom Development Center – creates new courses for executives in order to apply Buddhism in self-management and organization-management.

All meditators must keep the eight training precepts. YBAT activities can be grouped into five categories as follows: (i) meditation, (ii) *dhamma* study, (iii) youth, (iv) education and (v) social welfare.

(i) Meditation: being the primary activity, YBAT runs monthly *vipassana* meditation courses that offer to members and public the opportunity to benefit from the effective and highly regarded *Mahsatipatthana* meditation method. According to this, the following several courses are provided:

a. Practicing the Present Determination Course: This course aims to satisfy the wants and needs of the meditators who were trained in Intellectual Mind and Peace Development Course at least one time. It also provides the opportunity to those who want to learn more about the technique of determination of each manner. This course is suite for all ages of people. In 2008, this course was held 3 times and the total numbers of practitioners were 344.

b. Mind Praying Course: It is a short-course for *dhamma* practice, 2 nights 3 days, for executives who do not have too much time to attend long-course practice. Further, they would have to be trained in Intellectual Mind and Peace Development Course at least one time in order to understand the principles of *vipassana* meditation and could apply in daily live. In 2008, this course was held 4 times and the total numbers of attendances were 297.

c. International Vipassana Course: This course is in conjunction with the Young Buddhists Association of Thailand and the International Buddhist Meditation Center (IBMC) for Thais and foreigners who were interested in *vipassana* practice. This course was held two times in 2008, and the total numbers of practitioners were 37.

(ii) Dhamma Study: YBAT organizes regular Sunday activities such as *Abhidhamma* (Buddhist psychology) Study Courses, *Tripitaka* (the three basket)³⁴ Lectures and *Pali* Classes conducted by qualified instructors.

(iii) Youth: It is to introduce young people to the principles of Buddhism and their applications, various courses and activities have been organized, such as elementary meditation practice courses for teenagers and university students, summer vacation novice ordination, Buddha's child new life camp and mind and wisdom development courses for youths. According to this, the following several courses are provided:

a. **Intellectual Mind and Peace Development Course:** It is the course for people, aged 15 years and older and under the guidance of Nun Siri Karinchai. It takes six days to practice *dhamma* and complete this course which include meditation and walking meditation, and listening to *dhamma* everyday. In 2008, this course was held 16 times and the total numbers of attendances were 4,977.

b. **The Project of Integration Mind Development for Youth:** It is the course for mind development of youth, aged 10-25 years old. By practicing *vipassana* strictly in order to develop faith, consciousness, intellectual mind, endurance, and discipline which could be applied in their studies as well as devote themselves to the society. The project was divided into various levels for different applicants. In 2008, the total numbers of attendances were 1,300.

c. **Integration of Mind Development Project:** This course is to develop the minds of youth aged between 10-25 years old. There is basic level to self-development by doing meditation strictly which depending on youth's age as well as ordaining to be novices and monks who strictly observe religious precepts which cause faith, diligence, consciousness, concentration, and knowledge which can be applied in their studies and to be a good member of society.

³⁴ It is the name for the 3 main divisions of the Pali Canon: the basket of Discipline (*Vinaya Pitaka*), the basket of Discourses (*Sutta Pitaka*) and the basket of Philosophy (*Abhidhamma Pitaka*).

d. **Meditation Course for Youth:** This is the summer course for fostering and training youth, aged between 7-25 years old. Its aim is to make them be good people for the nation in the future by doing basic meditation which can be applied in their daily lives.

e. **Youth Promotion Activity:** “YBAT Club 25” was established by a group of youth leaders to arrange *dharmma* activities for youth, especially, for applying *dharmma* in their daily lives in forms of “A Training Camp for Developing an Intellectual Mind”.

f. **Buddhism Course for Chulalongkorn University Student:** It was especially for Chulalongkorn University Students and held during their university mid-term break. This course was held 2 times a year, and the total numbers of attendances in 2008 were 344.

(iv) Education: In this program is YBAT has been trying to instill proper knowledge and understanding of Buddhism to teachers who are responsible for teaching Buddhism to their students. Related to this the following course is offered:

Training Course for Buddhism Teachers: This course aims to increase the knowledge in Buddhism and the efficiency in knowledge management to meditation teachers in the meditation school. This course was held 2 times in 2008, and the total numbers of practitioners were 251.

(v) Social Welfare: In the humanitarian areas, YBAT has rendered a helping hand to the Thai society for long-term projects such as supports for monks and temples in deprived area, aid to natural disaster victims.

(b) The Meditation Masters of the Young Buddhist Association of Thailand: The meditation masters of the Young Buddhist Association of Thailand are as follows: Ven. Chamyā Sayadaw, Ven. Pasanno, Ven. Mitsuo Questco, Ven. Rachasittimuni (Wi), Ven. Prajark Siriwanno, Ven. Sawng Tikkhaveera, Ven. Kasemthammatath, Ven. Kantasarapiwongwong, Ven. Thammatornveeranon Veeranunto, Ven. Lek Jantasilosilo, Ven. Uthane Panyaparitath, Ven. Thongman Suthajitto, Ven. Manop Upasamo, Ven. Kurkrit Prasodthipalolo, Nun Siri Karinchai, Associate Professor Chamnian Chuangchot, Prathamkosajarn and Pramahavuthichai.

(c) The Background of the Practitioners at the Young Buddhist Association of Thailand: According to the registration books from YBAT, the following official graphs and tables show the numbers of people who came and practiced *vipassana* meditation at YBAT. After interviewing Ms. Parnus Trisukonthavong, a committee member of YBAT, the practitioners are all kinds of people with diverse backgrounds including lower class to higher class. Most are young people and educated people.

Graph 3.1 Practitioners attendance for *vipassana* meditation courses in the year 2005-2008.

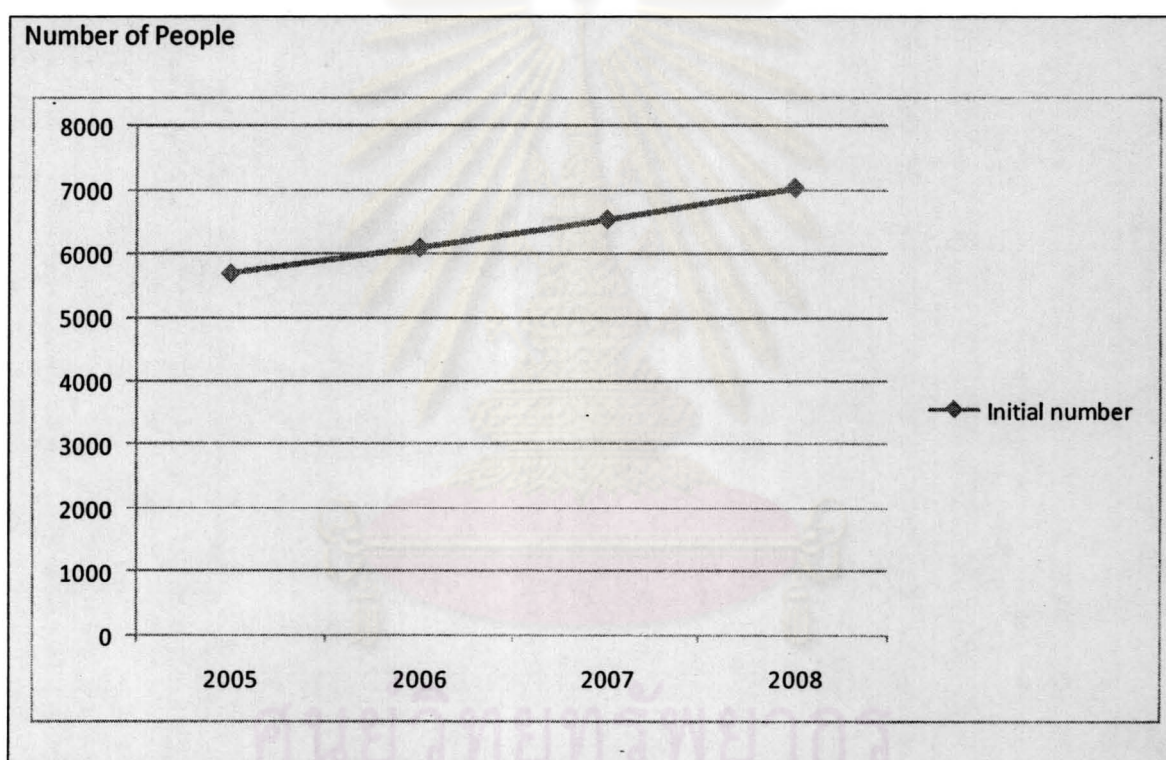
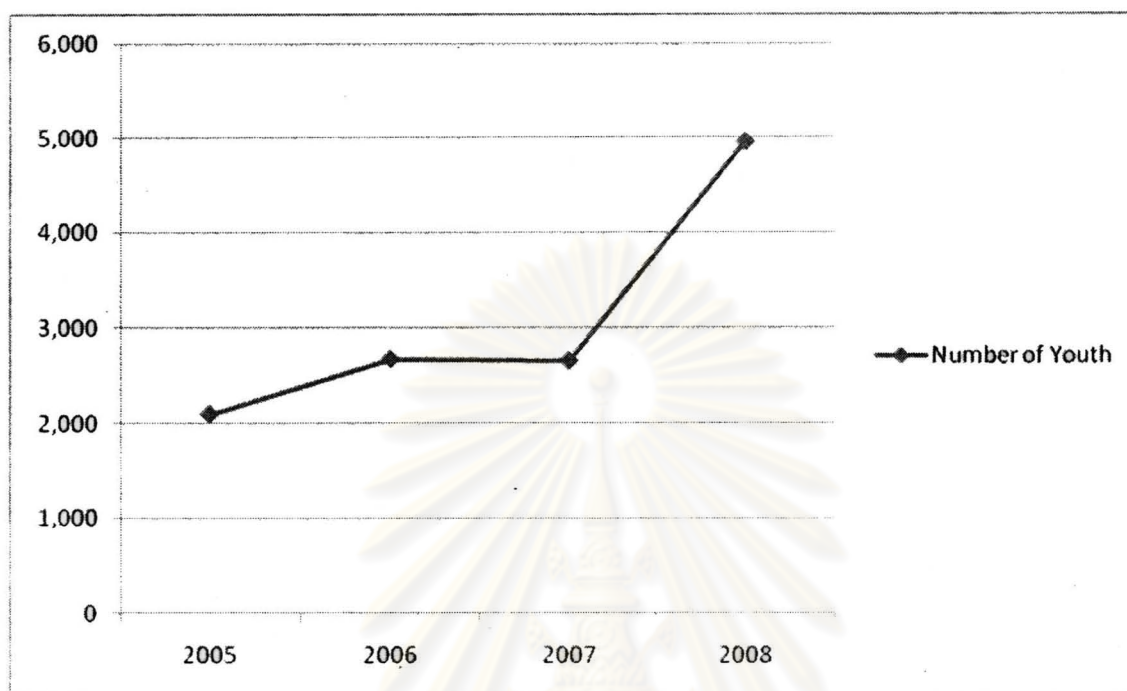


Table 3.8 The number of practitioners in year 2005-2008.

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008
Initial number	5,682	6,094	6,541	7,030

Graph 1 and Table 8 show the steady increasing in the number of practitioners from around 6000 in 2005 to just above 7000 in 2008. It is obvious that the number increases each year. According to this information, there are at least 6000 to 8000 people coming to practice at YBAT every year.

Graph 3.2: Increase in Youth Attendance at YBAT 2005 to 2008.**Table 3.9 Youth practitioners course attendance in year 2005-2008.**

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008
Number of Youth	2,092	2,671	2,653	4,956

The above Graph 2 and Table 9 indicate the number of practitioners who attended the course during the year 2005-2008. The chart reveals that in 2005, the number was 2092, at the beginning which increased dramatically in 2008 up to 4,956, although, in between these years in 2006, and 2007 the number remains almost the stable.

During summer session, the Young Buddhists Association of Thailand held *vipassana* practice course of *Satipatthana-Vipassana* meditation for youth. And the total numbers of attendances were 2,581 as follows.

Table 3.10 Youth practitioners summer session *vipassana* meditation attendance.

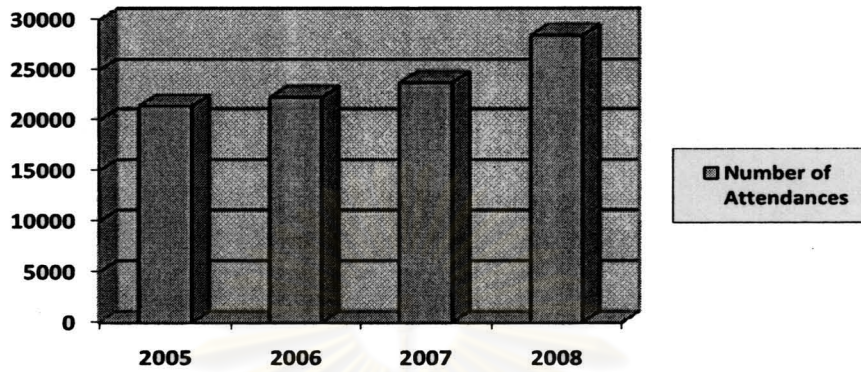
Courses	Qualification	Days	Time(s)	Attendances
Mind Development Youth Buddhists	Aged between 7-10 years old	4	4	929
Youth Buddhists (Yuwabuddhabut)	Aged between 11-13 years old	4	2	546
(Yuwanaekakam)	Aged between 14-16 years old	5	1	102
(Naekakambarame)	For youth, aged between 17-25 years old	8	2	288
	For Technical Medicine Student	8	1	187
	For Siriraj Nurse Student	8	1	266
	For Rama University Student	8	1	263

According to Table 10, most of the attendees are aged between 7-13 years old. The least are 14-16 years old and other age groups seem to be more similar.

With regards to the practitioners at YBAT, these following tables and graphs show the number of meditators who attended *dhmma* practice for each course during 2005-2008.

Table 3.11 The numbers of practitioners who attended *dhmma* practicing of each course during 2005-2008.

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008
Numbers of Attendances	21,407	22,291	23,760	28,530
Numbers of Times	231	228	231	273

Graph 3.3. Dhamma practice attendance in year 2005-2008

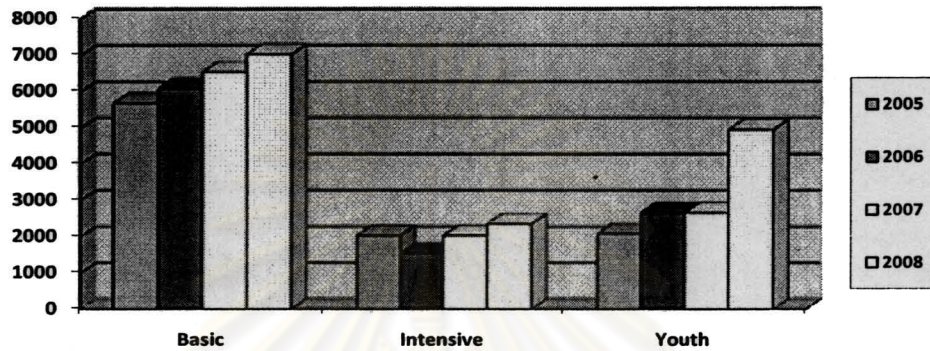
According to the above Table 11 and Graph 3, we can obviously see that the amounts of the practitioners are increasing year by year.

Table 3.12 Practitioners attendance according to course level in year 2005-2008

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008
Basic	5,682	6,094	6,541	7,031
Intensive	2,031	1,543	2,031	2,353
Youth	2,092	2,671	2,653	4,956

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

Graph 3.4 Comparison of the practitioners' attendance according to the course level in year 2005-2008



According to the above Table 12 and Graph 4, the practitioners who attended the basic course are higher than intensive course and youth.

(d) Other Branches: There, at the present year 2009, are five meditation centers which belong to the Young Buddhists Association of Thailand as follows.

1. The Young Buddhists Association of Thailand (Head office), Bangkok (center 1)
2. The Young Buddhists Association (Glorify center), Pathumthani (center 2)
3. The Young Buddhists Association (Prapaitham Garden), Chumphon (center 3)
4. The Young Buddhists Association (Khemmarangsi), Ayutthaya (center 4)

CHAPTER IV

PROFILE AND PERCEPTION OF MAHASI MEDITATION PRACTITIONERS

In this chapter, the first part will provide the profile of the practitioners who practice Mahasi meditation at the four meditation centers i.e.; Section (5) of Wat Mahadhatu, Wat Vivekasorn, Dhammodaya Chanmyay Meditation Center and the Young Buddhists Association of Thailand (YBAT). The profile will be analyzed from the 100 questionnaires distributed at these four meditation centers. The second part of this chapter will provide data from in-depth interviews concerning the Mahasi method of meditation.

4.1 Profile of Mahasi Meditation Practitioners: Data Analysis from Questionnaires

Based on the questionnaires,³⁵ I analyzed the answers and categorized the information about the practitioners who come to practice meditation at these four centers into four topics: (4.1.1) personal background of practitioners, (4.1.2) meditation background before adopting *Yup No Phong No* meditation method, (4.1.3) reason for adopting the Mahasi meditation method and (4.1.4) other aspect related to respondents.

4.1.1 Personal Background of Practitioners

The questionnaires were distributed at the four meditation centers which practice the Mahasi meditation method. Out of 100 questionnaires, I obtained 44 respondents from Wat Mahadhatu, Section (5), 30 respondents who have well knowledge of *dhamma* and meditation and also have meditated several times are from the Young Buddhist Association of Thailand, 10 respondents from Wat Vivekasorn and 9 respondents from Dhammodaya Chanmyay Meditation Center. Thus, altogether, there are 93 respondents.

³⁵ See the questionnaires in the Appendix B.

Table 4.1 Gender of the practitioners.

Gender	Number of People	Percentage out of 93 respondents
Male	24	26%
Female	69	74%

According to Table 1, it can be seen that the number of female practitioners are more than the male practitioners.

Table 4.2 Distribution of occupations of the practitioners.

Occupation	Number of people	Percentage
Government Official	14	15%
Business Owner	16	17%
Labour	19	20%
Company Staff	8	9%
House Wife	11	12%
Student	5	5%
Monk	11	12%
Nun	1	1%
Others	6	6%
Total	91	100%

Given Table 2, it can be drawn that the majority of the practitioner's occupations are, in the business sector if we combine together the category of businessmen, company staff and labourers which will make up to 46%. The second highest is government officials 15%.

Table 4.3 Educational status of the practitioners.

Education	Number of People	Percentage
Primary School	14	15%
Secondary School	7	7%
High School	14	15%
Bachelor's Degree	43	46%
Higher than Bachelor's Degree	10	11%

The above Table 3 indicates the educational status of the practitioners, that the majority of the practitioners are educated person with at least bachelor's degree. And there are 2 respondents (2%) with diploma. Three of the respondents did not answer the question.

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Table 4.4 Range of the ages of the practitioners.

Ages	Number of people	Percentage of people
10-20 years	1	1%
21-30 years	9	10%
31-40 years	22	24%
41-50 years	26	28%
51-60 years	21	22%
61-70 years	11	12%
70 years above	3	3%

Given Table 4, we can see that most of the practitioners practicing this meditation method fall into the range between 31 to 60 years of age.

Tables 4.5 Marital status of the practitioners.

Single	43	46%
Married	33	35%
Widowed	8	9%
Divorced	7	7%

Table 4.6 Monthly incomes of the practitioners.

Monthly Income (or) Salary	Number of people	percentage
Less than 10,000 baht	28	30%
10,000- 20,000 baht	27	29%
20,000- 30,000 baht	15	16%
More than 30,000 baht	11	12%

It should be noticed that 30% of the practitioners earn their monthly income less than 10,000 baht while we can see that 70% earn higher than 10,000 baht. Thus we can say that the practitioners tend to be well-to-do middle class people.

The overall profile the practitioners refers that most of the practitioners are female, middle class and educated. Concerning their occupation, businessmen, company staff and labourers are the highest number. Regarding the age range, they are between 30 to 60 years.

4.1.2 Meditation Background before Adopting *Yup No Phong No* Meditation Method

Although I distributed the questionnaires at the meditation centers teaching the Mahasi meditation method, I want to know the practitioners' meditation background since I assume that some may have meditated by using other methods before adopting *Yup No Phong No*, so, I asked, "Where did you start to learn to practice meditation?" and "How were you instructed to concentrate on meditation: Buddho-Buddho, Sama-Araham, Breathing in-out or *Yup No Phong No*?" A total of 67 respondents (72%) out of 93 said that they only practiced *Yup No Phong No* from the very beginning. 18 respondents (19%) who are now using *Yup No Phong No* said that they first started to practice meditation using "Buddho Buddho" before changing to *Yup No Pong No*. Eight respondents (9%) said that they first used Samma-araham for their meditation technique before using *Yup No Pong No*, and 17 respondents (18%) used the "Breathing in-out"

technique before adopting *Yup No Phong No*. One interesting data is that according to the questionnaires, some people chose not just one meditation method at the beginning but chose 2 or 3 or more meditation methods which they used at the same time.

The answer to the questions investigated where the respondents first started to learn how to practice meditation, vary: the places where the respondents started to meditate are: the Youth Buddhist Association of Thailand (YBAT), Wat Mahadhatu, Wat Amphawan, Wat Udommongkol, Vongvanij Meditation School, Wat Intraviharn, Wat Mahaeyong, Wat Dharmakai, Wat Sangkathan, Wat Suanmoke, Wat Paknam, Mahachulalongkorn Rajavithayalai, Wat Luangphorsod, Wat Thamamongkol, Pasanusorn Meditation School, Wat Cholpratanrangsarit, Wat Don, Wat Klang, Wat Saphan, Wat Siripong, Wat Paknam, Wat Thammapiimook, Wat Poh, Wat Pratheeppleepol, Wat Vivekasorm, Wat Rampoeng, Wat Phantong, Wat Kaosomphoch, and Dhammodaya Chanmyay Meditation Center.

According to the answers given, 67 respondents started to learn *Yup No Phong No* meditation method at the following *Yup No Pong No* meditation centers: the Young Buddhist Association of Thailand, Bankrinchai at Nakhonratchasima, Wat Mahadhatu at Bangkok, Wat Amphawan at Singhaburi, Wat Siripong, a Meditation school at Koh Lanta and Krabi, Wat Thammapiimook, Wat Poh, Wat Pratheeppleepol, Wat Vivekasorm at Chonburi, Wat Rampoeng, Wat Intraviharn at Bangkok, Wat Kaosomphoch at Lopburi, Dhammodaya Chanmyay Meditation Center at Nakhonpathom, and Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University.

The practitioners who started meditation practice using Buddho-Buddho started their practice at meditation centers, such as Vongvanij Meditation School, Wat Sangkathan, Wat Thamamongkol at Bangkok, Wat Saphan, Wat Siripong, Wat Rat-Upatam, Wat Phantong at Chiang Mai, and Wat Klang at Suphanburi.

The practitioners who started meditation using the Breathing in-out technique learned that technique at Wat Udommongkol at Kanchanaburi, Wat Cholpratanrangsari, Wat Don, Wat Siripong, Phangnga, and Wat Mahaeyong.

However, not all of the respondents went to a meditation center to learn how to meditate. One of the respondents started to practice meditation at Wat Luang Por Sodh Dhammakayam. Some respondents started to practice meditation at their school and at nearby temples. Some

learned how to meditate by themselves first at home and later, at their office, without any instruction by a meditation master. These respondents said that they started to practice by concentrating on breathing in and out first. These respondents further said that they learned about this technique by reading Buddhist meditation books about Mahasi meditation technique or from their schools' meditation class taught by monks.

1) The Length of Practice of the Practitioners [or The Time-period of Practice of the Practitioners]

After asking the previous meditation background, then I put another question; "when do you start to meditate by focusing on *Yup No Phong No* meditation method?" The answers reveal that different respondents started to meditate by focusing on Mahasi (*Yup No Phong No*) meditation method ranging from 1 month to 40 years ago. It depends on their age and their maturity. In this part of question, I also considered their experiences of practicing meditation according to their age. The practitioners who are between 21-30 years of age mentioned their beginning to meditate, varying from since last week, since 2 months ago, 4 months ago, or since 2004 or since 2007 respectively.

The practitioners of between 31-40 years old found the beginnings of their practice are either last month, or some months ago for instance since 2 months ago, 6 months ago and the earliest time of the practitioner is since, 1993. The others are 1999, 2000, 2005, 2007, 2008 respectively.

The people around 41-50 years old reveal their period of practicing meditation _ since 2 months ago, 3 months ago, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2004, 2006, 2008, while some others say since 2 years ago.

Practitioners whose ages are around 51-60 express their experience about their first meditation practice - since 1985, 1992, 1993, 1997, 2002, 2005, about 15 years ago, 10 years ago, and one of the respondents said since she was 25-26 years old. But only one said he started to practice _ since 2 weeks ago. A 59 year-old respondent revealed that she started to practice *Yup No Phong No* since she was 51 years old.

For those who are over 60 years they started to practice *Yup No Phong No* since 1969, 1983, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2002, 2006, and the longest term is since 20 years of age of that respondent. The shortest one is from 2 months ago.

The analysis from these responses reflects that the length of the experience of the practicing of meditation does not depend on age. Some of the practitioners started to practice at a young age while some of the old aged persons started to practice very recently just only 2 months ago. So it is clear that this method depends on interest and convenience of time during the life of the practitioners.

2) Reasons Why the Practitioners change to Mahasi Meditation Method

Although many respondents practice the Mahasi meditation method since the beginning, some respondents used to practice other methods of meditation before - Samma-araham, Breathing in-out, and Buddho- Buddho meditation methods. According to the answers, there are many reasons why people changed to focus on *Yup No Phong No*. For instance, some people mentioned that there was no progress in practicing Breathing in-out meditation method. While some people mentioned that they used to practice Buddho- Buddho meditation method, they did not continuously meditate so they quit and then they found new meditation method to practice and the answer was Mahasi meditation method.

The Mahasi meditation method has become popular, well-known, and acceptable among Buddhists. This is because people strongly believe that Mahasi meditation method is much trendier and easy and which gives them a clear picture of practice. It is easy and clear to understand, concrete and they felt comfortable to practice.

Further, people believe that this meditation method would make them more calm and cool, also, make them gain more awareness, consciousness and concentration. More interestingly, people believe that it is the moderate practice of meditation and is assumed to be natural and that it is the right method in accordance with Lord Buddha's teaching. Therefore, this method would make them be aware of themselves and be mindful of the arising and falling away

of conditioned phenomena. Moreover, certain practitioners mention that it is the right *dhamma* practice and they could observe *dhamma* development for themselves.

However, some respondents think that Breathing in-out and Buddho- Buddho meditation methods are not that different from the Mahasi meditation method. In addition, certain people mention that they just would like to try other methods of meditation as well.

Additionally, it is believed by many respondents that it is a moderate practice but is the path to attain *Nibbana*. Moreover, people believe that this was the way that Lord Buddha used in order to achieve *Nibbana*. That is why they want to follow this method since the Lord Buddha had practiced it himself to attain enlightenment in order to extinguish suffering.

3) How Mahasi Meditation Method was known to the practitioners

The questionnaires were distributed at the four meditation centers, so practitioners were asked how they knew about this *Yup No Phong No* method. I will present the practitioners' answers from each of the center.

At YBAT, 4 respondents came to know about this method from their parents and relatives, 6 respondents got the information from their friends, 1 respondent knew about it from reading books, another one from the Internet and other advertising and the rest 15 respondents got the information from their self-interests in the practice of this method.

The result of the questionnaires from the Wat Mahadhatu is 5 respondents choose this method because-of their parents and relatives. Information from friends and by reading books was the response given by 20 respondents comprising 10 for the information from 'friend' and 10 for 'reading books'. While, 6 respondents chose for their knowledge about this method is either from internet or other advertising. The rest 22 respondents expressed that they knew from their own interest in the practice of this method.

From Wat Vivekasorn: 5 respondents chose for 'My Parents and relatives, 4 respondents chose 'My friends', 1 respondent chose , 'By reading books', 1 respondents chose 'Internet and other advertising' and final 4 respondents chose, 'My interest in the practice of this method'.

From Dhammodaya Chanmyay meditation center: 3 respondents for 'My Parents and relatives', 2 for 'My friends', 2 for 'By reading books', 2 for 'Internet and other advertising' and 3 for 'My interest in the practice of this method'.

To sum up all their answers, how the practitioners knew about *Yup No Phong No* method, 17 respondents (18%) chose 'My parents and relatives', 22 respondents (24%) chose 'My Friends', 14 respondents (15%) chose 'By reading books', 10 respondents (11%) chose 'Internet and other advertising' and 44 respondents (47%) choose 'My interest in the practice of this method'.

Table 4.7 Sources of how practitioners know about *Yup No Phong No* method.

Cause of knowing method	Number of people	percentage
My parents and relatives	17	18%
My friends	22	24%
By reading books	14	15%
From internet and other advertising	10	11%
My interest in the practice of this method	44	47%

From the above presented percentages, it is assumed that most of the people (47%) are very attentive in Mahasi Meditation method and they searched for this meditation method out of their own interest. The second highest percentage of (24%) shows that they knew this method from their friends. The third most (18%) is knowledge got from their parents and relatives. But, compared to the above percentages, the percentage of getting information from reading books, the internet and other advertising is lower than other categories. In conclusion, the practitioners did not choose this Yup No Phong No method without their own interest.

4.1.3 Reason for Adopting Mahasi Meditation Method

When being asked where the practitioners learn this kind of meditation method, how this method helps them when they have problem in their lives and what benefit people get from this method, the answer are the following.

Concerning the question of where people learn about this method, different respondents learned this kind of meditation practice from different places i.e. at the Youth Buddhist Association of Thailand (YBAT), Bankrinchai, Wat Mahadhatu, Wat Amphawan, Vongvanij Meditation School, Wat Nongprau, Wat Intraviharn, Wat Bhaddanta Asabharam, Wat Thama-O, Mahachulalongkorn Rajavithayalai, Wat Poh, Wat Pratheeppleepol, Wat Vivekasorn, and Dhammodaya Chanmyay Vipassana Meditation Center.

Furthermore, they knew those places from different sources such as from their friends, colleagues, and family. And, some of them knew from temple's announcement as well as reading books.

Another question I asked is 'Why do they think this *Yup No Phong No* meditation method is well known or popular in Thailand? People of different social background have different opinions for this question. To answer this question, the following alternatives are given (more than one can be chosen).

- 1) it is systematically taught
- 2) it is the right practice as you think for your spiritual development
- 3) it is easy to practice and concentrate
- 4) it is supported by general public
- 5) it is supported by high ranking monk like Somdej
- 6) it is the way leading to *Nibbana*

According to the total sum up of the respondents' opinions toward Mahasi meditation method, it can be seen that the highest chosen answer (56%) why this meditation method was

well-known and popular in Thailand is because it is the right practice as they think for their spiritual development. Interestingly, the second highest answer (47%) was that this method was the way leading to *Nibbana*. In my questionnaires, I allow the people to choose the answer more than one. Thus, many respondents choose more than one and 34 people and 9 monks and 1 nun chose that this method is the way leading to *Nibbana*.

Table 4.8 Reasons for adopting Mahasi meditation method.

Reasons for adopting Mahasi meditation method	Number of people	Percentage
It is systematically taught	32	34%
It is the right practice as you think for your spiritual development	52	56%
It is easy to practice and concentrate	38	41%
It is supported by general public	5	6%
It is supported by high ranking monk like <i>Somdej</i>	5	5%
It is the way leading to <i>Nibbana</i>	44	47%

In addition, some respondents mentioned that it was well-known and popular because Wat Mahadhatu was a reputable temple which propagated Mahasi meditation method so this made Mahasi meditation become well-known and popular among Thais.

4.1.4 Benefits Getting from Practicing Mahasi Meditation Method

In this section, focus will be given on the discussion of the respondents' answer about the opinions about the benefit of Mahasi meditation method. According to the respondents' questionnaires, I think they get benefits in many ways from the Mahasi meditation method discussed below.

Firstly, answers reveal that this method has a positive effect on their minds. Practitioners explain that when they practice, they feel good, cool, and calm. They could be with the present moment since they have more awareness, consciousness, and mindfulness so they could control their emotions and behaviors very well before making decisions about doing anything even when they were angry. In addition, they can reduce unwholesome behavior, greed, anger, and infatuation and also have been able to develop a wisdom mind and peace. Some respondents said that they have peace of mind, feel healthier, relieve mental suffering and observe religious precepts. Thus they were likely to have more self-confidence and be more reasonable persons which make it possible for them to live happier in society. Another thing is that they definitely know how to practice correctly and be compassionate to others.

Secondly, this method has a positive effect on their daily lives. The practitioners mentioned that this meditation method made them understand the meaning of “human being” more clearly because it taught what the path of life is. And also they understand *dhamma* teaching of the Buddha, since it helped them to know the cause and the consequence of every action they do, i.e. walking, eating, drinking, standing, and speaking. For instance, they could apply this method in their studies and work because when they had awareness, consciousness, and mindfulness, they could consider the information they receive and correct the mistakes that occur.

Lastly, this method inspires the practitioners to learn more about the history of Buddhism. Additionally, Buddhism teaches them to have endurance, strength, empathy, tolerance, and compassion and to know their own desire – love, greed, anger, and infatuation with clinging to the object. The meditation makes them concentrate on the present and not cling to the past or worry about the future. Thus, overall, the practitioners see various benefits of Mahasi meditation practice in their lives.

Furthermore, another question asks how Mahasi meditation can help the respondents when they have problems or crises in their lives.

The practitioners said that they were likely to have more awareness, consciousness and could generate an intellectual mind to solve problems. Meditation helps them control their

emotion and it helps them to ignore other problems by being concentrated on one thing. When problems occurred, they would not be panic because of their capability to control their emotions. Therefore, they were likely to handle and solve problems as well as to reduce mistakes. Thus they were aware of the situation and just let things “be”. Some practitioners said that they were likely to have increased patience and tolerance in order to restrain themselves from making mistakes. Also the meditation made taught them how to think with mindfulness before taking any action. They felt that they could more easily forgive other people because they better understood the nature all conditioned phenomena.

Moreover, *Satipatthana-Vipassana* makes them understand themselves - the truth of life - and others better. It helps them realize the causes and effects which were the factors of suffering and also makes them understand better the impermanent nature of conditioned phenomena.

As a consequence, meditators become more interested in Buddhism than before, and they put more effort into observing religious precepts, concentrating, and practicing meditation which enabled them to reduce stress and anger and relieve mental suffering.

More importantly, they were more likely to be kinder and more forgiving because their idea of “self” has been more or less reduced depending on results of practice which could help them have better lives. Meditators also believe that practicing meditation will help them gain merit and this make them feel good about themselves and about their lives.

Another question further explored the meditators’ opinion about whether they would continue to practice this meditation technique again in the future. Eighty-seven respondents (94%) said “Yes” and explained the reason why they would like to practice meditation again. They stated that in the future they would continue practicing this meditation method because it was similar to the right practice followed the Buddha’s teaching which could provide them with strength and perseverance.

Practitioners also perceived that the Mahasi meditation is the best and easiest method that has a positive effect on their minds. It enabled them to develop high consciousness, concentration, and compassion and thus, provided better lives for them. Therefore, practitioners are confident that they received good benefits and earned merits. Lastly, this method of meditation also teaches them to prepare themselves for the moment of dying.

In answering this question, only 6% of the respondents said that they would not continue to practice this meditation technique because there were many other techniques available to practice. One of the respondents preferred to practice another method which she felt more comfortable with which is the Buddho-Buddho meditation method. One interesting answer from a respondent from YBAT said that she has already achieved the high level of *dhamma* so she would reconsider whether she would continue practicing this method or not.

One of the objectives in doing this research was to find out whether Thai people know that *Yup No Phong No* Meditation method is derived from Mahasi Saydaw, Myanmar. Fifty – nine respondents (63%) knew that this kind of meditation is originally derived from Mahasi Sayadaw, Myanmar, but, 29 respondents (31%) did not know the origin of *Yup No Phong No* method and they think that this method is one of the traditional Thai meditation methods. The last 5 respondents did not answer and did not give any comments.

4.1.5 The Practitioners' Expectations

In the questionnaires, I also investigated the practitioners' expectations from practicing this meditation method. The kinds of expectations are the following.

Certain people said that when they practiced this meditation, they expected to see in themselves a positive change. They expected to have more awareness, concentration, and intelligence in daily life in order to make them feel calm, cool and have a peaceful mind without unnecessary confusion. This could make them more aware of their emotions and thoughts, so that they could only do the right thing and avoid doing all unwholesome things which would cause sorrow since they want to eliminate all desires. In addition, respondents said they would like to find true happiness and peace. Most of the respondents want to reduce stress, cure pain and relieve mental suffering.

Other practitioners thought that practicing meditation is the way to follow the teaching of the Buddha. This would mean to lead one's life following the Buddha's path. Another thing is that people want to deeply learn and understand Buddhism as much as possible. Moreover, they

believe that when they meditate they would get great merit, good deeds and charisma. Also they want to be compassionate to others, and they want to transfer a portion of their merit to others.

However, certain practitioners said they did not expect anything from the practice of this meditation because they just wanted to practice in order to know if they could live their lives without suffering.

Lastly, it is very interesting to learn that they know exactly how to practice *vipassana* meditation and this will make them reach *vipassana* perception. Forty-one respondents (44%) nearly 50 % of the respondents aimed to the achievement of this ultimate goal.

4.1.6 Other Aspects Related to Meditation Practices

Most Thai people have to struggle in their daily life and rarely have leisure for their own. If they want to practice meditation at the temple at a special retreat course, they have to make great effort. Many Thai people come and practice meditation during Buddhist Lent period (for 3 months), on special Buddhist holidays and on weekends. In my findings I tried to find out that how they practiced in their everyday lives. A question relating to this was asked as to whether they practiced meditation at home.

According to their answers, most respondents spent time practicing meditation at home. 71 respondents (76%) meditate at home, but most of them are not able to meditate every day. They meditate sometimes or try to meditate as much as time permit. Interestingly, 8 respondents (9%) practice meditation every day after praying. Some meditated irregularly after waking up and before going to bed, but some didn't because of laziness. In addition, they also practiced concentration and did walking meditation in order to gain more awareness which would help them know what they were doing.

Relative to the question asked in the above paragraph, I asked them when they usually go to practice meditation at the temple or meditation centers. The respondents said they came to practice meditation at the temples or meditation centers for various reasons. Most of them 60 respondents (65%) quoted that they would come when they are free. The second largest group 33 respondents (35%) expressed that when they wanted to make merit or transfer merit to other

people. A further 32 respondents (34%) said they came to practice when they knew meditation courses or retreats were being offered. Another 28 respondents (30%) cited that they would come on weekends. Another 17 respondents (18%) said that when they had problems in their lives such as suffering, stress, and unhappiness, they would come to practice meditation at the temples or meditation centers. Lastly, a few respondents like 9 (10%) mentioned that when they were available and wanted to escape from work.

After studying the answers from the 93 respondents, I noticed that most of the Thai people have the desire for making merit and transferring merit to others because most of the people chose not only choice 1 but also choices 2, 3 up to all choices listed with this question. Additionally, I can strongly prove from the very beginning of this subject that mostly they come and practice meditation when they have free time. However, knowing that meditation courses are being offered and wanting to do merit making are also other regular reason which is again almost nearly the same number of people as those who come to practice during their free time.

The related question that I focused on is for what reasons they come to practice meditation at temple. There are four major meditation centers as already mentioned above, so my question is related to only those temples where they often go. After analyzing their answers, there were three major reasons such as;

- 1) because of the fame of the meditation master
- 2) because of the convenience of the place
- 3) because they thinking this place teaches the right way of meditation.

According to the respondents' answers, they did not choose only one answer and mostly chose more than one. Sixty-five respondents (70%) come to practice meditation at these temples firstly _ it is the place where meditation is taught the right way; secondly, 56 respondents (60%) chose the reason of the convenience of the place, and lastly, 26 respondents (28 %) chose one of the temples because of the fame of the meditation master.

The analysis which can be made here at this conjunction is that most of the people from four different meditation temples and centers have almost the same reason: that place teaches the right way of meditation and because of the convenience place that they live nearby.

According to the percentage level, comparatively few go to meditate there for fame of the meditation master.

4.2 Perception of Mahasi Meditation Method: Data Analysis from In - Depth Interview

In this part, I will present my in- depth interviews conducted with certain Thai monks and scholars who practice Mahasi meditation method regarding their understanding of Mahasi meditation method. The five interviewees are the following:

1. Phra Rajasiddhimuni, the Deputy Abbot of Wat Mahadhatu, Section (3).
2. Phra Dipankaro, M.A, Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University. Now studying Ph.D programme at Mahidol University, Thailand.
3. Phra Suphat Siribhaddo, Assistant of the Deputy Abbot of Wat Mahadhatu , Section (3).
4. Dr. Sudarat Bantaokul, Lecturer at Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University, Thailand.
5. Ms. Rapanun Vipatayotin, Daughter of the Founder of Dhammodaya Chanmyay Meditation Center, M.A, Mahidol University, now studying for a Ph.D. Degree at Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University, Thailand.

The main questions in conducting the in- depth interview are:

1. There are so many meditation methods in Thailand. Why do Thai people choose this Mahasi meditation method which originally came from Myanmar and why do they accept this method?
2. What is the purpose of this meditation method?
3. How was this meditation method spread and how has its influence spread throughout Thailand?
4. What benefit will a practitioner gain from this Mahasi meditation method?
5. When do Thai people come and practice this method?

6. Why is Mahasi meditation method popular in Thailand?
7. What benefit do you personally get after practicing this Mahasi meditation method?
8. For what reason did you come to practice meditation?
9. What is unique about this Maharsi meditation method?
10. What kind of people does this method appeal to?
11. What is the importance of this meditation in your life?
12. What are your expectations from the practice of this meditation?

To analyze and synthesize the answer from all the five interviewees³⁶, let me discuss their answers question by question.

In response to the question concerning why Thai people accepted this Myanmar method, the answers of the interviewees are quite similar. Everyone mentioned that Mahasi meditation method is in conformity with the *Pali* canon and commentaries of *Theravada* tradition. In their opinion, this meditation method has accuracy in practice according to the Buddhist canonical texts. It is also a true method to enlightenment or the realization of *Nibbana*.

Moreover, because Mahasi meditation is in conformity with the *Theravada Pali* canon and post-canonical literature, not only Thai people but also any knowledgeable Buddhists will accept this tradition as a way to attain the Buddhist path of deliverance as is shown in the *Pali* canon by the Buddha and in the commentaries by the commentators.

Furthermore, Mahasi meditation method is practiced following the *Tipitaka* directly, that is *Mahasatipatthana Sutta* (the Foundation on Mindfulness) and due to an accurate interpretation of its canonical and post-canonical *Pali* literary.

Phra Rajsiddhimuni and Ms. Rapanun Vipatayoyin similarly viewed that Achan Chodok, Venerable Achan Phimoladham, royal supports, and also Venerable Asabha Mahathera of Myanmar are important figures for the popularization of Mahasi meditation method in Thailand.

³⁶ See the in-depth interviews of the five interviewees in Appendix C.

Accordingly, because of this kind of interpretation and practice, the acceptance and support by the high ranking monks in the Thai *Sangha*, this helped Mahasi meditation gain in popularity among the laity in Thailand after its arrival. The popularity of this practice among the laity also happened due to the propagation and the promotion led by Phra Phimoladham, a high ranking monk of Wat Mahadhatu.

Therefore, we can conclude that the technique is easy to understand and easy to meditate and gain results quite quickly. In addition, the place convenient for coming to practice is Wat Mahadhatu.

Regarding the purpose or objectives of this Mahasi meditation method, the answers of the interviewees also tend to be similar. That is, the purpose of Mahasi meditation method is firstly to calm the mind, and then when we practice more, we will get the insight knowledge as the result.

More interestingly, all the interviewees viewed that the purpose of this method is to get rid of suffering and the realization of *Nibbana* in this very life. In fact, it is the escape from the *samsaric* cycle of rebirth and death. It is the aim in life of the Thais. Due to the realization that this technique can lead them to enlightenment and also they can attain the *Vipassana Nyana* or *Nana*, Thai people adopt this method.

In explaining how Mahasi meditation was spread throughout Thailand, it is observed that most of the interviewees expressed that firstly, it is because of the meditation masters, for instance, Phra Phimoladham from Wat Mahadhatu, played a crucial role and helped in many ways to spread and to popularize this method throughout the country. He let his disciples, Achan Chodok go to Myanmar to practice meditation under the direct guidance of Mahasi Sayadaw. Ven. Asabha returned with Achan Chodok and is now abbot of Wat Bhaddanata Asabharam in Chonburi, Thailand together they promoted this Mahasi meditation method and had many disciples who are now famous in Thailand.

Ven. Asabha Mahathera himself is expert and well-versed in the *pariyatti* – (learning the teachings of the Buddha), the *patipatti* – (the practice of meditation as gained from the learning) and also in the *pativedha* – (the realization after practicing, which has been accrued from the practice). Because of this, he could propagate and promote the meditation method of Mahasi

Sayadaw, which would later have influence on Thai Buddhist society, both monks and laity alike.

The interviewees also agree that the rising-falling technique is easy to note and suitable for the beginners who want to practice. Obviously, the immediate effect is that they start to realize how their minds work by starting to observe what is happening inside the mind and body. And then they start to realize that there are causes and effects of almost everything. They start to feel and catch their emotions quickly. And sometimes they start to gain peace and calm which normally you always get when you go for a meditation retreat. And so, of course, they gain peaceful and calm mind and also they are ever to see emotions faster.

Additionally, Ms. Rapanun Vipatayoyin mentions that Thai people probably like the technique because of its achievement in the successive knowledge, the *Nyana* or *Nana*. The attainments of the successive knowledge or the *Nyanas* are described in details in the *Visuddhimagga* (the Path of Purification) and which is attained or achieved by the practitioners when they gain the insight knowledge through the *Nyana*.

The answers of the interviewees to the question on the benefit gained from Mahasi meditation method is the acquiring of the peaceful mind. Furthermore, they will gain some sort of concentration in their minds which pacifies their minds, thoughts, and so on. They will be somewhat different from those who earlier practiced there at least to some extent. And then if they practice more and more, developing *Samatha* to *Vipassana*, they will gain the result of *Vipassana* (insight knowledge) that is the cessation of suffering.

Finally, a serious practitioner will succeed and accomplish the goal—attaining the goal that they want and cherish, the knowledge of *Vipassana*, and eventually *Nibbana*.

In response to the question why Thai people come to practice this method, most of the interviewees agree that Thai people come and practice Mahasi meditation method since the time Mahasi Sayadaw has gained world fame. The starting point of this method is when Phra Phimonladham and Achan Chodok brought Mahasi meditation method from Myanmar to Thailand.

In addition, Ms. Rapanun Vipatayoyin says that there are many temples teaching this technique so that is why it has become well-known. And also, all meditation masters have full knowledge about *vipassana* meditation.

The response regarding the popularity of this method in Thailand, every interviewee agrees that Mahasi meditation method become well-known and popular in Thailand because of its simplicity in practice, its conformity with the teaching of the Buddha, the attainment of inner peace and happiness. Moreover, it is due to propagation and support from Phra Phimonladham and Achan Chodok who are the meditation masters of Wat Mahadhatu. It is concerned with great history. And the president of the council of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Somdej Phra Phimoladhamma (Putthachan); contacted the Myanmar Government and he asked for some meditation masters (monks) to come and teach the method of rising and falling (movement of the abdomen) and to be teacher in Thailand. Since then Bhaddanta Asabha came to Thailand in 1953. This technique was spread by introducing it first at Wat Mahadhatu, Section 5.

Concerning the opinion toward the benefit of Mahasi meditation method, it is interesting to note that most interviewees shared some different understandings. Ms. Rapanun Vipatayoyin said that, to her, it is the method which links one's own connection between the *Nama* (mental) and *Rupa* (physical) together, and enables the detection of the one's own emotions faster which helped her to be able to react to society easier. And since she has meditated, she has started to realize that life seems to function through the process of mind and body. Furthermore, she added that one thing that definitely helped her is the acceptance of feeling allows her to become detached from these feelings as "her".

In addition, Phra Suphat mentions that generally most Thai people are Buddhist, and the aim of Buddhism is overcoming suffering (*Nibbana*). Thai people are taught to observe the five precepts and practice meditation leading to *Nibbana*.

On the contrary, Dr. Sudaret does not hope for any benefit. She just practices for the attainment of *Nibbana*.

In response to the question about the uniqueness of this Maharsi meditation method, most of the interviewees mentioned that the main uniqueness of Mahasi meditation method is reaching the cessation of suffering and having happiness inside.

In addition, Phra Rajsiddhimuni says that the method of Mahasi Sayadaw meditation is a blank mind (which aimed for the realization of the ultimate nature of the phenomena – *paramattha* (conventional truth), the object is concept or *pammatti* (prescribe). Moreover, he also says that the basic factor of the Mahasi meditation method is noting the abdominal movement which is rising and falling. It is called the concept of or the appearance of form on a physical basis.

Concerning the importance of this meditation in life, the interviewees mentioned that they tried to find out the real meaning of the human being's life. It helped to find the way to end thinking about the real nature of a human being. It helped them very much in daily life. When they faced difficulties such as thoughts of unpleasant feelings, this helped them to know and understand how to stop it. All the interviewees similarly say that they will continue to practice Mahasi technique in the future.

In overall conclusion of the analysis of the in-depth interviews, first, this technique spread by first introducing it at Wat Mahadhatu, Section 5 in 1953. Since then most of the Buddhist temples in Thailand provide instruction in this technique. Thai people choose Mahasi meditation method because it is not a new meditation method that Mahasi Sayadaw taught and which was explored beyond the interpretation of the traditional Tharavada Buddhaist meditation and which is in conformity with the Pali canon. In addition, the support of high ranking monks and the royal family played a significant role. Phra Phimoladham, Achan Chodok and Achan Asabha were good at teaching and have many disciples who have now become famous meditation teachers in their own right and therefore this Mahasi meditation spread to monks to laypeople which will have more influence generation by generation.

Second, the purpose is to attain Nibbana, enlightenment, because Thai Buddhist people firmly believe that meditation is good merit making and the stages of insight called the sixteen nyana became quite well known to Thai people due to these techniques the meditation teachers themselves always explain them at the end of each vipassana session. That was why the Thai

people like this meditation method. On the other hand, the practitioners gain a peaceful mind during and after meditation and have Buddhist experiential knowledge. It is worth noting that, as the experiential stages of knowledge proceed with a relative intensity of emotion, practitioners encounter the arising and passing of joys, fears, disgust, all kinds of distressful emotions, and, in the end, equanimity. In any case, after practicing Mahasi meditation method well, this helps one to face and to control mental emotions better during the activities of ordinary daily life. For the above reasons, many Thai people choose and practice the Mahasi meditation method.

Finally, one thing that definitely helps is the acceptance of feelings as just feeling and not self which will lead to less attachment and clinging to them. That is the aim of the Buddha, Arahats and Ariyas (Noble ones) and thus, it is crucially beneficial for human beings. Most people expect to get a better life in their daily life and in their future life and ultimately hope for the realization of Nibbana release from the cycle of birth and death (samsara).



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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

5.1 Conclusion

The objective of the thesis is to study the history and development of Mahasi Sayadaw meditation practice in Thailand and to present the profile of the meditation centers and the practitioners adopting Mahasi meditation method in Thailand.

The characteristics of Mahasi meditation, claimed as derived from the *Satipatthana-Sutta*, known as the meditation on the observation of the abdominal movements of the rising - falling of the abdomen while breathing, upon arriving in Thailand, was given the name '*Yup No Phong No*', which has become one of the most practiced meditation techniques in Thai society and many temples teach this form of meditation. In the beginning of this thesis, brief explanations of various meditation methods in Thailand were explained and a detailed explanation of Mahasi meditation was also provided.

Concerning the history and the dissemination of Mahasi meditation method in Thailand, it was recorded and reported that Phra Phimoladham who have had an impact on the popularity of Mahasi meditation method and Achan Chodok from Wat Mahadhatu were the very important masters. Also, Achan Bhaddanta Asabha Mahathera, a Burmese monk, is an important figure for the popularization of Mahasi meditation method in Thailand. He is an expert and well-versed in the *pariyatti* (learning the teachings of the Buddha), the *patipatti* (the practice of meditation as gained from the learning) and also in the *pativedha* (the realization after practicing, which has been accrued from the practice), which caused the propagation, promotion and influence the meditation method of Mahasi Sayadaw on Thai Buddhist society.

These above mentioned monks played a crucial role and helped in many ways to spread Mahasi meditation and to popularize it throughout Thailand where many meditation centers have

since come into existence. By about the year 1960, the number of trained *yogis* (practitioners) had exceeded a hundred thousand marks. Wat Mahadhatu, as a royal temple, is a reputable temple which propagated Mahasi meditation method so this made Mahasi method become well-known and popular among Thais.

The distinctive characteristics of Mahasi meditation is to focus directly on the objects that are arising and passing at each and every moment with tranquil and undisturbed mindfulness. In order to comprehend the true nature of every conditioned phenomenon, this meditation practice enables the practitioner to see the objects with three characteristics of all conditioned phenomena: impermanence, suffering and non-self. After that one can easily achieve the realization of the true nature of the conditions as they arise and fall away on their own and finally is the realization of the *vipassana* (mindfulness) to the attainment of *Nibbana*. It is believed that by the practice of *vipassana* from time immemorial, the Buddha, the *Arahats*, and *Ariyas* (Noble ones) achieved *Nibbana* (Mahathera, 1975:33) and, in the same way, by the practice of *vipassana* of the method of Mahasi Sayadaw *Nibbana*, one can possibly realize and become an *Ariya*.

The thesis compiled information concerning the profile of four meditation centers practicing Mahasi meditation method: Wat Mahadhatu, Wat Vivekasorn, Dhammodaya Chanmyay Meditation Center and the Young Buddhist Association of Thailand (YBAT). After collecting data about these four centers, it was found that the objective of these meditation centers is to teach the practitioners to lead one's life correctly according to the Buddha teaching, to cultivate the mind (mindfulness) and to lead one's life to attain the cessation of suffering (*Nibbana*). These meditation centers provide retreat courses and encourage the practitioners to get *vipassana nyana* which lead to the ultimate goal. The meditation masters of these centers are very knowledgeable in Buddhist *vipassana* meditation and they put every effort to propagate this Mahasi meditation method following in the footsteps of Sangharaja Phra Phimoladam, Achan Chodok and Achan Bhaddanta Asabha.

Out of these four meditation centers, the largest numbers of practitioners attend the meditation courses at The Young Buddhist Association of Thailand and the second largest is at Wat Mahadhatu.

The thesis also analysed the profile of Mahasi practitioners at these four meditation centers. To obtain the profile about Mahasi meditation practitioners, I distributed 100 questionnaires to meditators and received 93 questionnaires back. Information about people adopting Mahasi meditation method reveals many interesting aspects. In the opinions of the respondents from questionnaires, this rising-falling technique is easy to note and suitable for the beginners who want to practice meditation. The immediate effect is that they start to realize how their minds work by starting to observe the arising and falling away of conditioned phenomena inside their own minds and bodies. Therefore, the benefit that the practitioners get from Mahasi meditation method is a peaceful mind.

The overview profile of the lay practitioners practicing Mahasi method is the following. Female gender is in higher number to male among those who come to every center for meditation. Male practitioners are fewer because many of them are busy earning their livelihood and are less interested in religious affairs. The solution of social problems is mainly made by other means rather than religious ways. The study shows that those who practice this meditation method are from various ages and classes. However the study further indicates that the majority of the practitioners tends to be middle classed (approximately 70%), between 30 to 60 years old and rather educated people. The practitioners who choose Mahasi meditation method find that it is reasonable and is easier to practice.

Regarding the reason why many people adopt Mahasi meditation method, the answers reveal that it is because the practitioners believe that it was a right *dhamma* practice which will help develop their spiritual state. Practitioners also think that Mahasi technique is really in accordance with the teaching of the Buddha and commentaries. Also, it is because of the fame of the meditation masters. Interestingly almost half of the respondents said that they adopt Mahasi meditation method because they believe that this method will lead them to *Nibbana*.

Moreover, concerning the overall sum up of the practitioners' opinion of Mahasi meditation, this meditation technique lets them find out the real meaning of a human being's life. It helps the practitioners to find the way to end speculation about the real nature of a human being. And when people face difficulties such as thoughts of unpleasant feelings, meditation helps to know and understand how to stop them by knowing that they are only conditioned phenomena that are impermanent, suffering and not-self.

Based on the response to my questionnaires, it can be concluded that practitioners' opinions toward Mahasi meditation method in Thai society are that most of the Thai people believe that Mahasi meditation is systematically taught and is the right practice for their spiritual development and also is the way leading to cessation of suffering and rebirth. Also the practitioners strongly believe that it is the way of Lord Buddha's teaching since it is in the Buddhist scripture. And this method has been practiced by monks from generation to generation and has widely spread in Thailand. Thai people also believe that the practice of meditation is a kind of merit making and this merit can lead to a better life in a future rebirth.

In the opinion of the practitioners who adopt this Mahasi meditation method, they think they will recommend this method to other people because they have a positive attitude toward this method; it helps to calm down their minds and emotions, it can liberate them from the defilements and they believe if they practice more and more and have deep concentration with *vipassana nyana*, it will lead them to *Nibbana*. Overall they meditate in order to gain merit in order to reach *Nibbana* and to relieve mental suffering. The majority of the Thai people have Buddhist knowledge and customs such as merit making and transferring their merit to others. Practitioners' expectations from this method are to help overcome their immediate problems and protect themselves from future suffering and finally for hoping *Nibbana*.

In contemporary Thai society, a growing number of laypeople are taking a different view and becoming interested in more active spiritual practice. In particular, there has been rising interest in practicing meditation among laypeople. While they still constitute only a minority of the wider population, the number of laypeople practicing meditation has appreciably increased. With its popularization; meditation has become less mysterious and has entered the mainstream of Thai culture.

Furthermore, I also conducted in-depth interview with 5 key informants who are scholars and Mahasi meditation practitioners. Data from in-depth interviews reveal that Mahasi meditation method was well-known due to the Thai high ranking monks like Phra Phimoladam, Achan Chodok and their disciples, and also due to the propagation of the Burmese monk, Achan Asabha, who is well versed in *Tipitaka*. Moreover, these scholars think that when practitioners have fully developed *anicca-nyana* (knowledge of impermanent), *dukkha-nyana* (knowledge of

suffering) and *anatta-nyana* (knowledge of not-self), they will realize *Nibbana* by this method of *vipassana*.

5.2 Suggestion for Further Research

1. The thesis studied the profile of only four meditation centers where the Mahasi meditation method is taught and instructed but in fact there are many other meditation centers which adopted Mahasi meditation practice in Thailand, which are not studied in this thesis. So I would suggest further research on those remaining meditation centers practising Mahasi method or *Yup No Phong No* method in Thailand.

2. Another topic for further research can be a comparative study between the method of Mahasi Sayadaw and other methods of meditation and also a comparative study on the profile of the practitioners adopting other kinds of method of meditation.



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APPENDICES

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Appendix A

Glossary of Pali Terms

This glossary is not intended to be exhaustive, but only lists terms that occur frequently in this thesis, in order to indicate which way of translation has been used.

<i>abhijjha</i>	a balanced state of mind, free from desires
<i>abhidhamma</i>	Buddhist psychology
<i>abhinna</i>	the attainment of certain supernatural powers
<i>adhisila-sikkha</i>	training in higher morality
<i>adhicitta-sikkha</i>	training in higher mentality
<i>adhipanna-sikkha</i>	training in higher wisdom
<i>aggamahapandita</i>	the most prestigious title of the Exalted One
<i>Akankheyya Sutta</i>	the discourse on desires
<i>aloka -kasina</i>	light device
<i>anapana-sati</i>	breathing in-out
<i>anatta</i>	no-soul
<i>ariya</i>	the potential to become a noble person
<i>arahats</i>	the noble one
<i>arannavasi</i>	forest monks
<i>atapi</i>	application of effort , ardent
<i>atta</i>	soul
<i>anapana</i>	the breath
<i>aloka-kasina</i>	meditation by concentrating on a bright object
<i>anagami</i>	the non-returner
<i>appana samadhi</i>	absorptive concentration
<i>anatta</i>	egolessness
<i>bhavana</i>	meditation

<i>bojjhngas</i>	the Seven Factors of Awakening
<i>buddhamussati</i>	a part involving a mantra
<i>byapada</i>	ill-will
<i>cetasikas</i>	mental factors
<i>citta</i>	consciousness
<i>dasa-vipassans nanas</i>	the Ten Insight Knowledge
<i>dhamma</i>	state, idea
<i>dhammanupassana</i>	the contemplation of dhamma
<i>dhutanga</i>	ascetic practice
<i>Digha-nikaya</i>	Long Discourses of the Buddha
<i>domanssa</i>	discontentment
<i>dukkha</i>	suffering
<i>ekayana mega</i>	the only way
<i>idappaccayata</i>	the universal natural law
<i>jhana</i>	absorption
<i>kammatthana</i>	subject of meditation
<i>kanika Samadhi</i>	moment to moment concentration
<i>karmadipani</i>	the treatise on kamma.
<i>kamaraga</i>	sensuous cravings
<i>kayamupassana</i>	the contemplation of the body
<i>kamacchenda</i>	sensual desire
<i>kukkucca</i>	worry
<i>kusala kamma</i>	great moral actions
<i>Mahaparinibbana Sutta</i>	the discourse on the Final Passing Away of the Buddha
<i>Mahasatipatthana-sutta</i>	the Foundation on Mindfulness
<i>majjhima-patipada</i>	the middle path
<i>Majjhima-nikaya</i>	the Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha

<i>magganana</i>	path- knowledge
<i>mettabhavana</i>	loving-kindness meditation
<i>mula</i>	original
<i>magga</i>	path
<i>nama</i>	the mind
<i>nivaranas</i>	the five hindrances
<i>nibanna</i>	enlightenment
<i>nyana or Nana</i>	knowledge
<i>osana</i>	Final Editor
<i>panna</i>	wisdom, understanding
<i>pannatti</i>	prescribe
<i>paramattha</i>	conventional truth
<i>patipada</i>	the road leading to the extinction of suffering
<i>pathama-magga</i>	the ability to focus the mind on a bright crystal sphere
<i>pariyatti</i>	learning the teachings of the Buddha
<i>patipatti</i>	the practice of meditation as gained from the learning
<i>pativedha</i>	the realization after practicing, which has been accrued from the practice
<i>phalanana</i>	fruition knowledge
<i>pucchaka</i>	Questioner
<i>rupa</i>	body
<i>Sangayana</i>	Buddhist Council
<i>Satipatthana</i>	the four foundation of mindfulness
<i>vipassana</i>	insight
<i>samadhi</i>	concentration
<i>samsaric</i>	round of rebirth
<i>samanera</i>	novice
<i>sampajanna</i>	the presence of clearly knowing

<i>samatha</i>	tranquil
<i>silā-samadhi-panna</i>	the three modules of the Noble Eightfold Path
<i>silā</i>	morality or virtue
<i>silasikkha</i>	the training of morality
<i>silabbala-paramasa</i>	Eight Constituents
<i>sotapanna</i>	a stream-winner
<i>sakkaya- ditthi</i>	erroneous views
<i>sakadagami</i>	the once-returned
<i>sutta</i>	discourse
<i>sutta-pitaka</i>	Buddha's Discourses
<i>Tilakkhanas</i>	the three characteristics
<i>thina and midda</i>	sloth and torpor
<i>tri-sikkha</i>	the Threefold Training
<i>udacca</i>	restlessness
<i>upacara samadhi</i>	develop access concentration
<i>vassavasa</i>	the three months of Buddhist lent (rains retreat)
<i>vayodhatu</i>	the element of motion
<i>vinaya</i>	the monastic rules
<i>vicikaccha</i>	doubt
<i>vipassana</i>	insight
<i>visuddhimagga</i>	the Path of Purification
<i>yogi</i>	practitioner

Appendix B

Questionnaire for Mahasi meditation practitioners

I. Biographical Details of Interviewee

- 1) Gender -- Male -- Female
- 2) Occupation -Government Official -Own Business -Labor
-Housewife - Monk
-Company Staff - Num
-Student -Others
- 3) Education -Primary school, -Secondary school
-High school -Bachelor's degree (BA)
-Higher than Bachelor's degree (MA, Phd)
- 4) Age -10- 20 years old -21- 30 years old
-31-40 years old -41-50 years old
-51- 60 years old -61-70 years old
- 5) Marital Status -Single - Married -Divorced - Widowed
- 6) Income / Month - Lower than 10,000 Baht - 10,000-20,000 Baht
- 20,000- 30,000 Baht - Higher than 30,000 baht

II. Information Concerning Mahasi Meditation Method

- 6) Where did you start to learn how to practice meditation?

- 7) How did that place teach you to concentrate on:

-Buddho Buddho

-Samma-araham

-Breathing in – out

-Yup No Phong No

- Others

8) When do you start to meditate by focusing on *Yup No Pup No* meditation method?

9) If you practiced other forms of meditation, why did you change to meditate by using this *Yup No Phong No* method?

10) How do you come to know about this *Yup No Phong No* meditation method?

- My parents and relatives
- My friends
- By reading books
- Internet and other advertising
- My interest in the practice of this method.

11) Where did you learn this kind of meditation practice? From which temple or which meditation center, and how do you know that place?

12) What benefit do you get from this meditation?

13) When you have problems in your life, how does this meditation method help you? Please explain.

14) Do you practice meditation at home?

15) When do you usually come to practice meditation at the temple or meditation center? (you can answer more than one)

- weekend period
- when you know that meditation courses are offered
- when you have problems in life: suffering, stress, unhappiness
- when you are free
- when you want to escape from work
- when you want to do merit making or transfer merit to other people

16) For what reasons you come to practice meditation at this temple?

- Because of the fame of the meditation master
- Because of the convenience of the place
- Because I think this place teaches the right way of meditation

17) Why do you think this *Yup No Phong No* meditation method is well known (or) popular in Thailand?

- it is systematically taught
- it is the right practice as you think for your spiritual development
- it is easy to practice and concentrate
- it is supported by general public
- it is supported by the high ranking monk like Somdej
- it is the way leading to Nibbana

For other reasons, please specify:-----

18) What are other temples do you normally go to practice meditation?

19) Which temple do you go for merit making on your birthday or *tham bun* in general ?

20) Will you continue to come and practice this meditation technique again in the future?

-Yes Why ? -----

-No Why ?-----

21) Would you recommend this form of meditation to others?

-Yes

-No

22) Do you know before that this Yup No Phong No meditation method is derived from Mahasi Sayadaw , Myanmar?

23) What are your expectations from the practice of this meditation?

Appendix C

In-depth Interview on Mahasi Meditation Method

1) Interview with Phra Rajasiddhimuni, the Deputy Abbot of Wat Mahadhatu, Section (3), July 12, 2009

Question: There are so many meditation methods in Thailand. Why do Thai people choose this Maharsi meditation method which originally came from Myanmar and why do they accept this method?

Answer: When Mahasi meditation method came to Thailand, it attracted some high ranking monks at that time such as Achan Jodok and Phra Phimoladham and also royal supports. Venerable Asabha Mahathera of Myanmar was also an important figure for the popularization of Mahasi meditation method in Thailand. He can explain the Mahasi meditation method as mentioned in the *Pali* canon (*Tipitaka*) and also its commentaries (*the Atthakatha*). This meditation method has accuracy in practice according to the Buddhist canonical texts. It is also a true method to get enlightenment or the realization of *Nibbana*. Because of this kind of interpretation and practice, it was accepted by high ranking monks in the Thai *Sangha* and it has also gained its popularity among the laity in Thailand after its arrival. The popularity of this practice among the laity happened due to the propagation and the promotion led by Phra Phimoladham, by then a high ranking monk of Wat Mahadhatu.

Question: How does this Maharsi meditation method spread and have influence throughout Thailand?

Answer: Phra Phimoladham, an important monk of Wat Mahadhatu played a crucial role and helped in many ways to spread and to popularize Mahasi meditation throughout the country. He invited many monks from across the country to come and practice the meditation method of Mahasi Sayadaw. Because of this, many monks came to practice meditation under his guidance. Another important monk was Ven. Asabha Mahathera of Myanmar, who was an expert and well versed in the *pariyatti* (learning the teachings of the Buddha), the *patipatti* (the practice of

meditation as gained from the learning) and also in the *pativedha* (the realization after practicing), which has been accrued from the practice, caused to propagate, promote and influence on Thai Buddhist society of the meditation method of Mahasi Sayadaw. He explained and focused on the *Pali* canon together with its commentaries (*atthakatha*), the sub-commentaries (*tika*) and also the commentaries to the sub-commentaries (*anu-tika*) which he taught and explained to monks and laity alike.

Question: What is unique about this meditation method?

Answer: The uniqueness method of Mahasi Sayadaw meditation is noting the mind (which aimed for the realization of the ultimate nature of the phenomena - *paramattha*), the object is concept or *pannatti*. The basic factor of the Mahasi meditation method is noting the abdominal movement which is rising and falling. It is called the concept or the apparent of form or physical basis.

Question: What kind of people does this method appealed to?

Answer: It appealed to all kinds of people, such as high class, middle class and also low class. But, the lower classes are fewer, perhaps because they are struggling for food, shelter and for their daily needs for their daily lives. However, those who have *parami* (perfections of the past) are able to come and practice meditation accordingly.

2) Interview with Dipankaro, M.A, Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University, at the time studying Ph.D programme at Mahidol University. March 28, 2009.

Question: There are so many meditation methods in Thailand. Why do Thai people choose this Mahasi meditation method which originally came from Myanmar and why do they accept this method?

Answer: Firstly, Mahasi meditation method is in conformity with the *Pali* canon and commentaries of *Theravada* tradition. It is not a new meditation method that Mahasi Sayadaw taught, but, it is a new dimension in meditation system which explores beyond the interpretation

of the meditation traditionally practiced by Buddhist according to the *Mahasatipatthana Sutta* (the four foundation of mindfulness). It is worthy of note that Mahasi Sayadaw was a questioner (*pucchaka*) during the sixth Buddhist Synod in 1954 in Myanmar, because of his being very well versed in both the *Pali* canon and commentaries.

Secondly, from this method lots of people have benefited both inside and outside of its country of origin which resulted in the springing up of many centers worldwide.

Question: What is the purpose or objectives of this Mahasi meditation method?

Answer: The sole purpose of this method is to get rid of suffering, the realization of *Nibbana* in this very life, without any *jhanic* experience by being a dry-insight practitioner. In fact, it is the escape from the *samsaric* cycle of rebirth and death.

Question: How was this Mahasi meditation method spread and how has its influenced throughout Thailand?

Answer: It is because of some serious meditation practitioner monks from Wat Mahadhatu, who then went to Myanmar to practice meditation under the direct guidance of Mahasi Sayadaw. Sayadaw taught them and on return home, Thai monks brought the teaching of this master together with some other Burmese monks who were also meditation practitioners, such as Bhaddanta Ashin Asabha of Wat Bhaddanata Asabharam in Chonburi, Thailand.

Question: What benefit will a meditator gain from this Mahasi meditation method?

Answer: Generally, a meditator will gain some sort of concentration in his mind which pacifies his mind, thinking and so on. He would be somewhat different from those who earlier went to practice there at least to some extent. Finally, a serious practitioner will succeed and accomplish the job – attaining the goal that he wanted and cherished for – the knowledge of *vipassana* – eventually the *Nibbana*.

Question: Why is Mahasi meditation method popular in Thailand?

Answer: Because of its simplicity in practice and its conformity with the teaching of the Buddha and the attainment of inner peace and happiness.

3) Interview with Phra Suphat Siribhaddo , Assistant of the Deputy Abbot of Wat Mahadhatu , Section (3) , Bangkok , Thailand. August 13, 2009.

Question: There are so many meditation methods in Thailand. Why do Thai people choose this Maharsi meditation method which originally came from Myanmar and why do they accept this method?

Answer: Because Mahasi meditation method is practiced according to *Tipitaka* directly, that is *Mahasatipatthana Sutta* (rising-falling technique) and due to its accurate interpretation of canonical and post-canonical *Pali* literary. The way of practice is also suitable for beginners to practice. The location of Wat Mahadhatu is a convenient place to come to practice.

Question: What is the purpose of this meditation method?

Answer: The purpose of this meditation method is firstly to calm the mind, and then when we practice more, we will realize the insight knowledge as the result.

Question: How was this Maharsi meditation method spread and how has its influenced throughout Thailand?

Answer: Because the meditation master who propagated Mahasi method, both Choakun Chodok and Phra Phimoladham are high ranking monks and popular in the Thai Sangha.

Question: What benefit will a meditator gain from this Mahasi meditation method?

Answer: Most people who practice according to Mahasi method will gain a peaceful mind, and then when they practice more and more, developing *Samatha* to *Vipassana*, they will gain the result of *Vipassana* that is cessation of suffering.

Question: When did Thai people come and practice this method?

Answer: The starting point of this method is the time when Phra Phimoladham and Choakun Chodok brought Mahasi method from Myanmar to Thailand.

Question: Why is Mahasi meditation method popular in Thailand?

Answer: Because of the propagation and the support from Phra Phimoladham and Choakun Chodok who are meditation master of Wat Mahadhatu.

Question: Why do Thai and other Buddhists accept insight meditation as a direct path to *Nibbana*?

Answer: Because most Thai people are Buddhists, and the aim of Buddhism is overcoming suffering *Nibbana*. Thai people are taught to observe the five precepts and practice meditation leading to *Nibbana*.

Question: Why do Thai people adopt this Mahasi meditation method?

Answer: Because Mahasi method is firstly propagated in the most popular temple, Wat Mahadhatu. After that, when people come to make merit and practice at Wat Mahadhatu, they can also practice according to Mahasi method from now on.

Question: What is unique about this Mahasi meditation method?

Answer: The uniqueness of Mahasi method is the reaching of cessation of suffering and having happiness inside.

Question: What kind of people does this method appeal to?

Answer: According to Mahasi method, all people can practice Mahasi method. In Wat Mahadhatu meditation center, 70% of people who practice are old people.

Question: Who are the devotees of this Wat Mahadhatu?

Answer: The main devotees of Wat Mahadhatu are people who always come to make merit in the temple and other groups are students who come to study at Wat Mahadhatu. The teacher teaches them to practice according to Mahasi method.

3) Interview with Dr. Sudarat Bantaokul, Lecturer of Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University, July 16, 2009.

Question: When did you come to practice this method?

Answer: As a student of Chulalongkorn University, and as a member of the meditation group, I have been practicing meditation. I have practiced meditation in Chonburi under the guidance of Bhaddanta Asabha at Wat Vivekasorn. I began practicing meditation since 2516 BE, from the first year of my Bachelor Degree at Chulalongkorn University.

Question: What benefit do you get from this meditation?

Answer: I did not hope for any benefit. I practiced to attain *Nibbana*.

Question: Why do you practice this method?

Answer: Because it is my previous merit that I have met meditation masters like Achan Bhaddanta Asabha, who is very clever, really knows the nature of human being both in mind and body. He can explain *dhamma* by using meditation method of Mahasi Sayadaw, which is according to the teachings of the Buddha found in the *Pali* canon (*Tipitaka*).

Question: How long have you been practicing this method?

Answer: Since B.E 2516 to till now. But, now I practice occasionally.

Question: When did you come to practice this method?

Answer: Since B.E 2516. The first time I practiced was at Chonburi, when I was a student at Chulalongkorn University. I practiced almost every weekend. The longest time I have practiced was for two months in B.E 2520. Additionally, I have practiced at the Mahasi meditation center in Yangon, in B.E 2543 for nearly four months. In B.E 2547, a month long practice was also held in Thailand as part of my Master's degree, which was done under the Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Bangkok.

Question: What is the importance of this meditation for your life?

Answer: I always try to find out the actual/real meaning of the life of the human being. It helps me to find the way to end thinking about the real nature of human being. It helped me very much in daily life. When I faced difficulties such as the thought of unpleasant feeling, this helped me to know and understand how to stop it.

Question: Why do you think Mahasi meditation method is popular in Thailand?

Answer: It is concerned with how this great event happened. The president of the council of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Somdej Phra Phimoladhamma (Putthachan), contacted the Myanmar Government and asked for some meditation masters (monks) to come and teach the method of rising and falling (movement of the abdomen) and to be teachers in Thailand. Since then Bhaddanta Asabha came to Thailand in 1953. This technique spreads by introducing it first at Wat Mahadhatu, Section 5.

Another reason is at that time the king's mother practiced this method, who was interested in this method. By practicing this method, she could expel her suffering for losing her son, Rama VIII, Ananda Mahidol. Thus, it has gained the royal patronage by the royal family of Thailand.

Therefore, it is assumed that when this method gained royal patronage, the public or the subjects of the Kingdom of Thailand, Mahasi meditation spread and was widely accepted by the public. It has drawn a wide group of followers from diverse backgrounds that are mostly educated.

Question: What are your expectations from the practice of this meditation?

Answer: For my life, I expect nothing. But, I get satisfaction and calmness of my mind when I practice this method. And, for everybody, from the social aspect, socially it is very helpful for daily life. It is crucially beneficial for human beings.

4) Interview with Ms. Rapanun Vipatayoyin, Master of Arts (M.A) in Religious Studies at Mahidol University, at the time, Studying Buddhist Study for Ph.D Programme at Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University, August 23, 2009.

Question: There are so many meditation methods in Thailand. Why do Thai people choose this meditation method which was originally come from Myanmar?

Answer: Most of the Thai people did not realize that this technique came from Myanmar. In the beginning, I would like to say thank you to Phra Phimoladam, who was the first one interested in *vipassana* meditation. In the beginning, he started with the technique which is not the rising and the falling. He started with the counting the breath in-out which was not successful, so he sent Achan Chodok to Myanmar and let him study under the guidance of Mahasi Sayadaw and that's why when Achan Chodork came back, he promoted this Mahasi meditation method. At that time, Phra Phimoladam was the head of *Sangha*.

The technique was quiet clear, systematic and the teacher was also very good. All the *Dhamma* talks that he gave and the information about the *vipassana* was very clear and always referred to the *Tipitaka*. He always said that *Yup No* and *Phong No* come from the arising and falling of the abdomen while breathing and why he works this way and explained in detail about this meditation. Therefore the technique got support of the head master of monks and meditation teachers all over Thailand. The technique is also easy to understand and easy to meditate and gain the results quickly. Therefore I think all of them hope they can attain the final liberation of *Nibbana*.

At that time, when Achan Chodok started to teach this *vipassana* meditation method, there were a lot of his disciples and they are now very famous in all around Thailand. His disciples are Achan Torn, Achan Phithar from Singburi and Khun Mae Siri. All these are very famous so that is why this method spread nationwide. I think that is the one main reason and another reason is that since the monks have many disciples, the disciples themselves later on become teachers. They all have also a good technique and also have their own temples. The teachers are good and gain good results and this technique has spread quiet widely. But definitely most of the Thai people don't know that this method was originally from Myanmar.

Question: What is the purpose of the Mahasi meditation method?

Answer: To attain *Nibbana*, enlightenment. I think this is the ultimate goal for Thai people. I think the state of insight called the sixteen *Nyana* become quite well known to Thai people due to these techniques. Because the monk himself teaches this technique and always sees the end he always gives the *Dhamma* talk on sixteen *Nyana* (insight knowledge). And then people just start

to grab on that. They would reflect on and look at the meditation progress through the sixteen *Nyana*. Sometimes they get to the fifth *Nyana*, the six *Nyana*, etc. So I think for Thais they definitely realized that this technique could lead them to enlightenment and also they could attain the *vipassana Nyana*. The *vipassana Nyana* became well known because the meditation teachers themselves always explain about these sixteen *Nyana* at the end of the *vipassana* session, so I think that's why Thai people like this meditation method.

Another thing I would like to talk about is my mother who used to tell me that when she was young, her mother always made wishes that when she went to the temple. It may lead her to *Nibbana*. And my mother said she also followed after my grandmother but she didn't really know what *Nibbana* actually meant. And she thinks maybe her mother also didn't know what it meant until she came and started to meditate and then she realized what *Nibbana* is.

Question: What does a practitioner gain general benefit from this meditation method after practicing?

Answer: I think for the immediate effect is that they start to realize how the mind works by starting to observe things, what is happening inside the mind and body and they start to realize that there are causes and effects for everything. They start to see emotions quicker and sometimes they start to gain peace and calm which normally come when you go for a meditation retreat. And so they gain a peaceful and calm mind and also they are able to see emotions faster. I think that this is the immediate result that they get after the meditation retreat.

Question: When do Thai people come and practice this method?

Answer: It depends on their emotion, most of the questionnaires that I gave away I think they were looking for a peaceful mind but that would be some when they suffer from life. But most of them are more likely to be just looking for a peaceful mind.

Question: Why did Thai people adopt Mahasi Meditation method?

Answer: Now the rising and falling method is very famous in Thailand and because it has spread after it became famous to most of the temples provides this techniques so it is automatically become well-known and I think all the meditation teachers are very good.

Especially now we have the master degree for *vipassana* and the technique that have to know on the curriculum for the students need to join a retreat at least six months and the technique that they go to study is under the rising and falling meditation method.

So it definitely became more and more popular around Thailand. And another reason is the duty of the monks is to teach meditation. But to teach *vipassana* meditation is not easy, for example, one cannot become a good meditation master who has practiced only for at least one 10-day retreats. So all meditation master have full of knowledge about *vipassana* meditation. They need to spend time practicing meditation and have to understand how to use it themselves and to have much insight knowledge and understanding of this *vipassana* meditation technique.

Question: How did you come to know about this Mahasi meditation method and when did you start to meditate?

Answer: Because of my mom I was learning first how to meditate. Achan Chodok was my first meditation teacher. My mother started to practice meditation with rising and falling method only and then later when Achan Chodok passed away, she was introduced to Achan Chiyano and he is one of the *Dhamma* friends who want to practice meditation at Chanmyay Meditation Yeikthar , from Myanmar under Ven. Sayadaw U Janaka, follower of Mahasi Sayadaw.

But for me to know that about this *Yup No Phong No* meditation is originally come from Mahasi Sayadaw, Myanmar, is from my friends Mr.Charlie. I started to practice meditation when I was very young at Wat Mahadhatu, Section 5 under the guideline of Achan Chodok.

Question: What benefit do you get after practicing this Mahasi meditation method?

Answer: The insight is the way one could realize one's own connection between the *Nama* (mental) and *Rupa* (physical) and could detect one's own emotions faster and then know that be able to help us to be able to react to the society easier and then since when we meditate, we start to realize that life seems to function through the process of mind and body. One thing that definitely helps is the accepting the feeling and not so much attachment to the self. That is one the Buddha wants anyway. When we meditate he would like us to see the three main common characteristics of everything *Nama* (mental) and *Rupa* (physical) when we see that then when we start to detach the self and, yes, we see the process and then the self seems to weak in and when

we stay in human society, when we contact someone it affects the self, but it is not as upsetting as before, if it is upsetting, it does not last as long as before.

So I think that for me is this is the main benefit even through when I meditate for sometime but I always reflect back to the benefit that I need to go back to meditate to stay away from self more. I think that is exactly what we gain from *vipassana* meditation.

Question: For what reason do you come to practice meditation?

Answer: It was because of my mom. When I was young I grew up in the temple. My mom faced so many difficulties in life, so then she started to visit the temple more and more often and I have been at the school near my mom's temple, Wat Mahadhatu. In the beginning my mom sent me to school in the morning and then she stayed the whole day in the temple and in the evening she picked me up and we went back home. So every week Monday to Friday I grew up in temple and only went back home on Saturdays and Sundays. After that she got a room at Wat Mahadhatu and she ordained as a Nun and I stayed together with my mom at Wat Mahadhatu. So it is my luck.

Question: What kind of people practice Mahasi Meditation Method?

Answer: I think all are quite educated people from different backgrounds.

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BIOGRAPHY

Zar Zar Min Thaw was born in Yangon, Myanmar on the 25th of January, 1977. She has attended No.2 Basic Education High School at Kamayut, Yangon for her primary and high school education. Following the period of schooling, she attended Yangon University majoring in Physics and obtained a B.Sc degree. After completing her graduation, she started to build her career after joining at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Myanmar as the Third Secretary position in the Protocol Department, where she worked from the 30th March 2006 to 20th March 2009. Starting from the 20th March 2009, she was promoted to work in the same department as the Second Secretarial post. She has received a scholarship from Thailand International Development Cooperation Agency, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, and, thereby, as a means of Thai-Myanmar diplomatic relationship, in the academic year 2007-2009, she has enrolled in the Thai Studies Center, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand.



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