

**A STUDY OF MOST VENERABLE MUN
BH RIDATTA THERA’S METHOD OF
CITTA BH VAN “BUDDHO” PRACTICE**

by

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Abstract

This study begins with the strong need for arriving at a proper understanding of the Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera’s biography and his teachings.

The objectives of the study are as follows: to study practice of meditation in Theravāda Buddhism generally, to study critically the Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera’s biography and his own method of practice, and to study the impact of the Most Venerable Mun’s method of practice on Thai society and the Buddhist world.

Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera passed away 57 years ago. Many monks who were dedicated to the practice of the Dhamma experienced great difficulty in reaching him. He was fond of wandering around the forests in the Northeastern and Northern regions of Thailand. The reason he preferred living in mountains and forests was that knowledge and understanding of the Dhamma was much more likely to arise under such circumstances.

He first began practising *bhāvanā* by internally repeating the word “Buddho”. After trial and error, he discovered the right method to use during the preliminary work of meditation. His new-found method of mindfulness and contemplation of body were to form the basis of his later progress.

Throughout his life, he was able to automatically change the attitude of people from one of little interest to one of high respect and love for the *dhutanga kammaṭṭhāna* monks.

Most Venerable Mun used many techniques of contemplation and self-training. He not only provided the model for Thai *kammaṭṭhāna* monks, but was also a true son of the Buddha, and one who maintained his teachings.

In the context of the threefold training, Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera taught his followers *sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā* in full. His method of teaching consisted of the three essential doctrines of *pariyattisaddhamma*, *paṭipattisaddhamma*, and *paṭivedhasaddhamma*.

Most Venerable Mun and his disciples spawned a lineage spanning three generations of teachers and students, who still practise the method of meditation outlined in the *Mah satipaṭṭhānasutta* concerning contemplation of the body.

The eco-friendly lifestyle of Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera and his *kammaṭṭhāna* monks is appropriate to imitate its major principles in order to solve environmental, and other social problems.

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Mrs. Phassarapha Phaisarnariyasap

Table of Contents

	Page No.
Approval Page	i
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgement	iv
Table of Contents	vi
Contents of Table	x
Abbreviations	xi
Chapter I : Introduction	1
1.1 Background and Significance of the Study	1
1.2 Objectives of the Study	4
1.3 Statements of the Problems	4
1.4 Definition of Terms	5
1.5 Survey of Relevant Literature	6
1.6 Method of the Study	9
1.7 Expected Advantages of the Study	10
Chapter II : General Buddhist Practice	11
2.1 Practice of Concentration Meditation (<i>samādhi</i>)	13
2.1.1 The Basic Principles of <i>Samādhi</i>	15
2.1.2 The Ground and Supporting-factors of <i>Samādhi</i>	16
2.1.3 The Obstacles to <i>Samādhi</i>	17
2.1.4 Factors in the Achievement, and Non-achievement, of <i>Samādhi</i>	18

2.1.5 Concentration and Absorption	19
2.2 Practice of Insight Meditation (<i>vipassanā</i>)	24
2.2.1 The Ground (<i>bhūmi</i>) and Objects (<i>ārammaṇas</i>) of <i>Vipassanā</i>	26
2.2.2 The roots (<i>mūla</i>) of <i>vipassanā</i>	27
2.2.3 Three Characteristics Marks and <i>Sattavisuddhi</i>	28
2.2.4 The Body of <i>vipassanā</i>	29

Chapter III : Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera’s Method of Practice

3.1 Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera’s Biography	32
3.1.1 His Childhood and Ordination	32
3.1.2 Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera’s Character	34
3.1.3 The Influences of his Teachers	37
3.1.4 His Perseverance and Achievements	42
3.1.5 His Passing Away	47
3.1.6 Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera’s Lineage	50
3.2 Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera’s Method of Practice	54
3.2.1 First Experience in Meditation	54
3.2.2 The Therapeutic Properties of the Dhamma	57
3.2.3 Dhamma and Instructions for Practice	59
3.2.4 His Unlimited Loving Kindness (<i>mettā</i>)	63
3.2.5 The Method of Walking <i>Ca kama</i> (Thai: <i>jonggrom</i>)	71
3.2.6 The Method of Sitting Meditation	75
3.2.7 The Practice of <i>Dhuta ga</i>	77
3.3 Muttothai Preaching	80

Chapter IV: The Impact of the Most Venerable Mun	
Bhūridatta Thera’s Method of Practice	85
4.1 The Impact on Thailand	85
4.1.1 Following the Most Venerable Mun Bh ridatta	
Thera’s Method of Practice	86
4.1.2 The Tradition of <i>Kammaṭṭhāna</i> Monks	89
4.1.2.1 Methods of Practice	90
4.1.2.2 Listening to Dhamma-teaching	93
4.1.2.3 Discussions of Dhamma	96
4.1.2.4 Respectation and Reverence for	
One’s Teachers and for One another	97
4.1.2.5 Behaving Frugally	100
4.1.2.6 Eating Methods	103
4.1.2.7 The Routine of Chanting	107
4.1.3 Foundations of the Forest Monasteries (<i>Wat Pa</i>)	108
4.1.4 Forest Conservation	120
4.2 The Impact on Thai Buddhism and the Buddhist World	124
4.2.1 The Impacts on Laypeople’s Practice	124
4.2.2 Extension of the Most Venerable Mun’s Practice	130
4.2.3 Forest Monasteries Overseas	130
4.3 Information Derived from Interviews	137
Chapter V: Conclusion and Suggestions	145
5.1 Conclusion	145
5.2 Suggestions for Further Research	156

Bibliography	158
Appendix 1	174
Appendix 2	176
Biography of Researcher	185

Contents of Table

I. Differences between <i>Samathabhāvanā</i> and <i>Vipassanābhāvanā</i>	30
II. Forest Monasteries in the Most Venerable Mun Bhuridatta Thera' s Lineage in Thailand	110

Abbreviations

In quoting the Pāli sources, references are to the volume and page number of the PTS edition.

Primary Sources:

AN.	A guttaranikāya
Dhp.	Dhammapada
DN.	Dīghanikāya
MN.	Majjhimanikāya
SN.	Sa yuttanikāya
Ptsm.	Pa isambhidāmagga
Vism.	Visuddhimagga

Other abbreviations:

PTS.	Pali Text Society
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Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 Background and Significance of the Study

The Buddhist teaching of impermanence (*anicca*) is demonstrably obvious. In human experience, nothing is permanent; everything is always in a state of change. Human beings are changing creatures living in a changing world. As long as they live, they are influenced by such changes. Human beings try to find a way to have more and more happiness. Technologies are developed. New knowledge and innovations give rise to ever more commodities. It seems that the goal of human beings is to gain, in competition with others, as many commodities as they can in order to attain a happy life. Society values those it considers being rich as successful. Economic and social problems grow up hand in hand with new developments. None reaches their goal without suffering of body, or mind, or both.

The more the world changes, the more human beings suffer. Yet such changes have an impact just as much on the winners as they do on the losers. Social problems and illness result in a failure of human beings to live happily. Human beings are fraught with problems. Illness increases, mental health decreases. Human beings suffer as results of both internal and external factors, which cause stress, tension, anxiety, yet that are beyond our control. Many seek to escape such problems by resorting to suicide.

How can one live happily, and reach the social goal, without suffering or, at least, how can one best arrange one's life properly? The Buddha's teachings on meditation (*bhāvanā*) provides an answer that helps solve these problems.

Bhāvanā, or meditation, is practice aimed at reaching the end of suffering. The Pali Canon (*Tipiṭaka*) describes two kinds of meditation: calm meditation (*samathabhāvanā*) and insight meditation (*vipassanābhāvanā*). Meditation cultivates deep states of concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*).

The practice of meditation effects both the body and the mind of the practitioner. Studies of the relations between body, mind and meditation show that meditation effects better results for its practitioners.

Thai laypeople practice both of the above mentioned types of meditation. Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera was one of the most well-known masters of meditation in Thailand, and is the archetype of the *Phra Thudong kammathan* tradition.

He is an acclaimed Buddhist *arahant*,¹ having succeeded in his method of practice, which has since become very popular.

The Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera's *cittabhāvana* is a practice involving both calm and insight meditation in order to achieve the end of suffering.

¹ J.L. Taylor, **Forest Monks and the Nation-State**, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993), p.1.

Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera taught his method of practice to both monks and laypeople. His *cittabhāvana* practice first spread in the rural areas of Thailand. Monks who were interested in meditation practice became eager to be his disciples, even if they only met him once in their lives.

Laypeople in rural Thailand during the the Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera’s lifetime did not know much the Buddhadhamma, paying respect instead to ghosts and devas. Upon gaining faith in the Most Venerable Mun, they declared themselves Buddhists and started to practise by way of giving (*dāna*), observing the precepts (*sīla*) and meditation (*bhāvanā*) in accordance with his instructions. They came to respect not only the Most Venerable Mun , but also his disciples.

Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera passed away fifty-seven years ago. The stories about his life and teachings have been subsequently derived from the reminiscences of the disciples through whom his method of practice has been transmitted. His first-lineage disciples’ achievements aroused faith (*saddhā*). As time passed by, the phrase “a disciple of Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera” after a monk’s name evoked more interest in what Most Venerable Mun really taught. The results of the practice of *samādhi* motivate people into learning about it. The Most Venerable Mun’s method of *cittabhāvanā* is developed and applied to daily life in order to help practitioners live happily in accordance with the development of their power of mind.

The model of wandering monks (*phra pa*) and the foundations of forest monasteries (*wat pa*) become favourites. The differences among

them occur in various points.

Arguments as to what the real method is, and whether the method really leads to the end of suffering, are discussed. For this reason, the fame surrounding the Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera's life and his method of practice form an interesting object of study. Moreover, the answers to these questions should contribute to solving some of the present social problems, both for the individual and for society.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1.2.1 To study practice in general in Theravāda Buddhism

1.2.2 To study critically the Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera's biography and his method of practice.

1.2.3 To study the impact of the Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera's method of practice on Thai society and the Buddhist world.

1.3 Statements of the Problems

1.3.1 What is Buddhist practice in general?

1.3.2 Who is the Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera, and what is his method of practice?

1.3.3 How does the Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera's practice impact upon Buddhists?

1.4. Definition of Terms

Bhāvanā means setting one's thought on, applying one's thought, developing, or cultivating, the mind by means of meditation.² In the circle of the Most Venerable Mun Bh ridatta Thera, they use this word as a 'verb' and a 'noun'

Cittabhavana means the process of systematic meditation to train the mind, with the full development of Samādhi the whole mental power is concentrated and the mind achieves self-mastery. It implies both mental and physical training.³

Impact means the important or noticeable effect or influence that the Most Venerable Mun's method of practice has on someone or something.

Kammathan (Pali: *kamma hāna*) means the basis of work which demolishes the world of becoming, births, defilement, craving and the destruction of all ignorance from the heart.⁴

Phra (Pali: *bhikkhu*) means an ordained Thai Buddhist man.

² T.W. Rhys Davids, William Stede, **Pali-English Dictionary**, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1997), p. 503.

³ Paravahera Vajira a, **Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice**, (Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Mission Society, 1975), p.21.

⁴ Pa va ho Bhikkhu, tr. **Pa ipad or The Mode of practice of Venerable Acharn Mun**, (Bangkok: Ruen Kaew Press, 1997), p.13.

Phra Kammathan (Pali: *kamma hāna bhikkhu*) means Thai monks who practice concentration and insight meditation.

Phra Pa means a monk who lives in forest monasteries, follows the way of living which different from other monks.

Phra Thudong (Pali: *dhuta ga*) means Thai forest-wandering monk who adopts the thirteen ascetic practices.

Practice means training in Buddhism

Wat Pa means a forest monastery in Thailand

1.5 Survey of the Relevant Literature

Some research works on meditation discuss the relation of body and mind and the benefits of the practice of meditation. Some works on the wandering monks in Thailand have studied both the history and the experiences of those monks.

1. Gunchalee Bunson in a work entitled “The Effect of Meditation Practice on Mental Health” (1999) studies 17-18 year-old students. After sixteen days, the students’ mental health of repetitive thought and action, introversion, anxiety, phobia, suspicion and mental disorder improved.

2. Narongchai Punyanontachai presented a thesis entitled “The Development of Problem Solving By Meditation Training” (1997). After

one month, the female group studied was found to be more efficient in problem solving than the control group. In the aspect of GPA (Grade Point Average), the experiment subjects, who were in the moderate GPA group (2.70-2.99), were found to be more efficient in solving problems than those in the control group.

3. Apatcha Pongyart has produced a study entitled “Facilitation of Buddhist Meditation Training to Relieve Anxiety among Colorectal Cancer Patients” (A.D.2000). The results of the study show that, after training, the colorectal patients with chemotherapy who were receiving inpatient treatment at Chulalongkorn hospital had less State-Trait anxiety score than before training. The patients disclosed their anxieties on treatment, outcome and survival, relatives, treatments, side effects of chemotherapy, the hospital environment, career and financial problems, body images, health condition and self-care, the burdens on family and friends, and sexual problems.

4. Kwanta Petmaneechote presented a quasi-experimental research paper on “Effectiveness of Buddhist Meditation on Anxiety and Pain among Rheumatoid Arthritis Patients”, the major findings indicating that the average score of anxiety and pain found in the experimental group was statistically lower, and a higher degree of skin-temperature found, when compared before and after intervention.

5. Suchada Kraiphikul presented a thesis on “Effects of Step Exercise in Combination with Meditation Practice on Changes of Electroencephalogram, Cardiovascular Endurance and Mental Health” (1996), investigating four groups of female students. The results at the

end of the eighth week showed that the average of alpha brain wave in group 1 (step + meditation) was the highest, when compared with group 2 (step), group 3 (meditation) and group 4 (control group).

6. Saovanee Pongpieng wrote a thesis on “Effectiveness of Buddhist Meditation (Vipassana) on Self-Esteem, Creative Visualization and Health Status in Elderly People”, the result showing that the experimental group experienced significantly increased self-esteem, creative visualization, health status, skin resistance and skin temperature as measured between pre- and post-test. The same group experienced significantly decreased pulse, respiration and blood pressure as measured between pre- and post-test.

7. Kamala Tiyanich presented a Ph.D. dissertation entitled “The Wandering Forest Monks in Thailand 1900-1992: Ajaan Mun’s Lineage” about the popular method of teaching Dhamma in every region by using Jataka and folk stories, instead of sermons based on Buddhist doctrine, because lay people prefer to listen to them (1993, 26). In 1900, the Sangha Education Director went to Ranong province to observe Wisaka Bucha Day at a local temple. Most of the people left soon after he started preaching the Mahabhikkamana Sutta. By the time the sermon advanced to the Mahaparinibbana Sutta, only a lay leader remained in the audience (1993, 33). Kamala also presented the Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera’s answer to many book-studying monks: that he observed only one rule, and that is mind, not the 227 precepts. His being mindful prevents him from violating the Vinaya (1993, 512). Phra Ajaan

Mun always urged his disciples to be mindful (*sati*) to keep the enemy (*kilesa*: defilements) at bay (1993, 525).

8. J. L. Taylor wrote on “Forest Monks and the Nation-State: Anthropological and Historical Study in Northeastern Thailand” (1993) focused on the well-known Thai forest monks lineage of the acclaimed Buddhist saint (*arahant*) the Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera (1870-1949) and its impact on natural religious politics.

1.6 Method of the Study

This research work is a qualitative study. The research methodology can be divided into three stages as follows:

1.6.1 Collecting materials from all the sources in which the stories of Buddhist practice and the Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera’s method are contained

1.6.2 Collecting data by interview from various persons, including monks and lay people, who have followed the Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera’s method of meditation for at least five years

1.6.3 Analyzing the raw data

1.6.4 Conclusion and presentation

1.7 Expected Advantages of the Study

1.7.1 To gain knowledge of practice in general in Theravāda Buddhism

1.7.2 To gain knowledge of the Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera's biography and his method of practice

1.7.3 To identify the impact of the Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera's method of practice.

Chapter II

General Buddhist Practice

Buddhism employs two systems of meditation: *samathabhāvanā* or *samādhi*, and *vipassanābhāvanā*. The term *samatha* is usually translated as “calm,” or “tranquillity,” whilst *bhāvanā* implies a systematic training, cultivation or development. *Samathabhāvanā* thus signifies the development of tranquillity, while *vipassanābhāvanā* signifies the development of *vipassanā*, or insight. Meditation (*bhāvanā*—literally bringing into being) requires a subject on which to focus, which is usually spoken of as a *kamma hāna*. Without such a subject for meditation, neither *samatha* nor *vipassanā* can be developed.

Samatha (calm or tranquillity) is a synonym for *samādhi*, or concentration, with the result that the terms *samathabhāvanā*, and *samādhibhāvanā*, can largely be used interchangeably, especially in the contexts of “one-pointedness of mind” and absorption (*jhāna*).⁵

Samādhi and *vipassanā* are distinct forms of meditation, differing in their function and methods, as well as their results. Whereas the function of *samādhi* is to concentrate the mind, the function of *vipassanā* is to disperse ignorance (*avijjā*) and to penetrate things as they really are (*yathābhūta*). The function of *samādhi* is to fix, focus, and

mount the mind upon the object of concentration, without examining the characteristics of that object in terms of its transitoriness, painfulness and soullessness. The function of *vipassanā*, on the other hand, is to examine, consider, and scrutinize the characteristics of a given object in order to dispel ignorance (*avijjā*) and penetrate into its real nature. The former is not concerned at all with examining any characteristic marks of a given object. It aims only at concentrating the mind on the subject of meditation, and the acquisition of serenity, calmness, and the non-distraction of mind. *Vipassanā*, however, does not aim at tranquillity of mind, but rather knowledge of things as they are, which knowledge eventually destroys the latent defilement (*kilesa-anusaya*) and fetters (*sa yojana*), thereby culminating in arahantship.

The two systems of meditation correspond to two types of disciples: (1) those who have faith as the dominant faculty; and (2) those who have intellect as the domain faculty. The first types train themselves in the *samādhi* method and, in due course, achieve tranquillity of mind, sometimes accompanied by psychic powers. They then proceed to the *vipassanā* method in order to gain the wisdom leading to arahantship. In the second type of practice, concentration of mind may also arise. With mind concentrated, they develop insight (*vipassanā*) for the sake of gaining the full knowledge that leads to the final goal at which they aim. *Samādhi* may, however, sometimes be preceded by *vipassanā*. In this case, someone who has attained the noble paths and their fruitions by means of *vipassanā* may then develop the path of *samādhi* in order to

⁵ Phamaha Narong Cherdungnoen, **A Study of Sati (Mindfulness) in Buddhism**, (New Delhi: Delhi University, 1996), p.212.

gain complete tranquillity of mind. This process is spoken of in terms of *vipassanāpubba gama samatha bhāveti* (He cultivates *samatha* preceded by *vipassanā*).⁶

Samādhi and *vipassanā* both share a number of common features, such as those of: object (*ārammaṇa*), sphere (*gocara*), abandonment (*pahāna*), relinquishing (*pariccāga*), emerging (*vuḥhāna*), breaking up (*vivattana*), peace (*santa*), subtlety (*paṭṭi*), liberation (*vimutti*), being without *āsava* (*anāsava*), passing beyond (*taraṇa*), being signlessness with reference to defilement (*animitta*), without desire (*appanīhita*), void of defilement (*suññata*) of united function (*ekarasa*) and irreversible (*anativatta*).⁷

Samādhi is said to be owned by one who eradicates distraction (*uddhacca*), whereas insight (*vipassanā*) is said to be owned by one who eradicates ignorance (*avijjā*). However, in either case, they both have one feature in common, in that they both have cessation as their object (*nirodhārammaṇa*).

2.1 The Practice of Concentration Meditation (*samādhi*)

The term *samādhi* is derived from *sa* + *ā* + *dhā*, and thus means “putting, or placing, firmly together” and, by extension, “one-

⁶ Phramaha Singhathon Narāsabho, **Buddhism : A Guide to Happy Life**, (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya press, 1971), p.81.

⁷ Ibid. p.81.

pointedness” of mind where a single object is concerned (*ekāramma e cittassa ekaggatā*). For the sake of convenience, *samādhi* may be rendered as “concentration”.⁸

In the First Sermon (*Dhammacakkappavattanasutta*),⁹ the word *samādhi* occurs, in connection with the eightfold path, as *sammāsamādhi*, or “right concentration”. This path makes for vision (*cakkhukara ī*), makes for knowledge (*ñā akara ī*), peace (*upasama*) higher wisdom (*abhiññā*), enlightenment (*sambodha*) and *nirvā a*.

Edward Conze, in his book “Buddhist Meditation,”¹⁰ points out that the function of *samādhi* is based on the assumption that our mind consists of two disparate parts—a depth, which is calm and quiet, and a surface which is disturbed. The surface layer is in everlasting tremor and confusion. There exists, however, beneath the surface of the mind, a centre that is quite still. The disturbance at the surface level of the mind is caused by three groups of factors: sense-desires and passion, wants and desires, and rambling thought. In order to conquer these enemies of tranquillity, it is necessary to withdraw the sense from their objects.

In the beginning, then, it is essential to focus one’s attention upon some object (*āramma a*) entirely separate from the passions. The meditative practitioner’s mind becomes pure or impure, not through its

⁸ Paravaheera Vajirañā a Mahāthera, **Buddhist Meditation**, (Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Missionary Society Press, 1975), p.77.

⁹ S.N.V. p.421.

¹⁰ Edward Conze, **Buddhist Meditation**, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1956), pp. 17-18.

own nature, but through the arising of pure or impure thoughts. Therefore, in the search for *samādhi*, the preparatory attention must be associated with purity, virtue and truth. Moreover, the object or ideal selected for meditation must be such as to produce some psychological effect that is suited to the practitioner's characteristic behaviour.

2.1.1 The Basic Principles of *Samādhi*

The system of *samādhi* may be distinguished from that of *vipassanā* on the basis of method, function and consequence. For, although meditation objects, such *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness of breathing), and *kāyagatāsati* (mindfulness of the physical body), and so on are recommended for both *samādhi* and *vipassanā* practice, such practices are nonetheless distinct on the grounds of their method, function and achievement.

The Visuddhimagga contains the standard list of forty *kamma hānas*, or subjects of meditation.¹¹ These are:

- (1) the ten *kasi as* (devices);
- (2) the ten *asubhas* (foul things);
- (3) the ten *anussatis* (recollections);
- (4) the four *brahmavihāras* (excellent states);
- (5) the four *arūpas* (formless states);

¹¹ Bhikkhu Ñā amoli, **The Path of Purification**, (Kandy: B.P.S., 1991), pp. 112-113.

(6) the *āhāre pa ikūlasaññā* (the perception of loathsomeness where food is concerned); and

(7) the *catudhātuvava hānas* (the analysis of the four physical elements).

2.1.2 The Ground and Supporting-factors of *Samādhi*

Samādhi, as a means of mental purification, presupposes the purification of morality (*sīlavisuddhi*) as its essential ground, or foundation. Buddhists believe that knowledge is not mastered when we simply understand it verbally, but only when we experience it.¹² *Sīla* is a fundamental feature of Buddhism. It connotes all virtues (*sīla*) known to Buddhism and forms an essential prerequisite of further progress. Because of such passages as: “And what is the beginning of profitable things? Virtue (*sīla*) that is quite purified,”¹³ and “The non-performance of any evil,”¹⁴ virtue (*sīla*) is held to be the forerunner of all higher practices. Virtue, or morality, is thus of much importance also where *samādhi* meditation is concerned, since it provides an antidote to the mental fluctuation that hinders concentration: “Ānanda, profitable virtues have non-remorse as their aim and benefit.”¹⁵ Virtue is manifested as all kinds of physical, verbal and mental purity.¹⁶ Elsewhere, in the *Āka kheyasutta*, we find that virtues lead one to the attainment of the

¹² Edward Conze, **Buddhism : Its Essence and Development**, (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), p.97.

¹³ S.N. V 143.

¹⁴ Dhp 183.

¹⁵ A.N. III 19.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 271.

jhānas, which are sublime, superhuman and represent higher states of consciousness. Virtues tend to conduce to a happy life—they are conducive to tranquillity, psychic power, higher knowledge and the complete destruction of the *āsavas*.¹⁷

Hence *sīla*, in a general sense, eradicates undesirable qualities, such as covetousness (*abhijjhā*) and ill will (*byāpāda*) and so on,¹⁸ and leads to the accumulation of charity, benevolence, and good-will, and so forth. Its greatest importance, however, lies in its forming a prerequisite for the practice of both *samādhi* and *vipassanā*.

Four principles are frequently encountered in the Nikāyas. These are moral conduct (*sīla*); restraint of the senses (*indriya-sa vara*); mindfulness and self-circumspection (*satisampajañña*); and contentment (*santu hi*). It is stated in the Sāmaññaphalasutta¹⁹ that these four principles, in their preliminary stages, form the special type of moral training, which necessarily precedes meditation. A systematic explanation of these four principles is to be found in the Dantabhūmisutta.²⁰

2.1.3 The Obstacles to *Samādhi*

There are five hindrances, or obstacles (*nīvara as*), to *jhāna* (mental absorption) and, save for the absence of hindrances, the

¹⁷ M.N., I 16.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.71.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ M.N. III 125.

attainment of *jhāna* (and, for that matter, *vipassanā*) is not deemed possible.

The five hindrances are always given as:

- (1) *kāmachanda*, (sensual desire);
- (2) *byāpāda* (ill-will);
- (3) *thīnamiddha* (sloth and torpor);
- (4) *uddhaccakukkucca* (distraction and remorse); and
- (5) *vicikicchā* (doubt).

They hinder and obstruct the mind's development (*bhāvanā*), both through *samādhi* and *vipassanā*, in many ways.²¹ They are said to be the cause of blindness and ignorance. They obstruct insight, that is on the side of dukkha (*dukkhapakkhika*), and do not conduce to the ultimate truth of *nibbāna*.²² Therefore, the practitioner should seek to understand the manner in which they function so as learn the manner of eliminating them.²³

2.1.4 Factors in the Achievement, and Non-achievement, of *Samādhi*

In the A guttaranikāya,²⁴ it is stated that four types of *samādhi* meditation were practiced by the Buddha. These are:

²¹ Ibid., p. 104.

²² S.N. II, p. 97.

²³ Phramaha Narong Cherdungnoen, op.cit, pp. 105-111.

- (1) *Di hadhammasukhavihārasamādhībhāvanā*, or the cultivation of *samādhi* conducive to living in ease in these seen conditions;
- (2) *Ñā adassanapa ilābhasamādhībhāvanā*, or the cultivation of *samādhi* conducive to the acquisition of knowledge and vision;
- (3) *Satisampajāññāsamādhībhāvanā*, or the cultivation of *samādhi* conducive to mindfulness and awareness; and
- (4) *Āsavakkhayasamādhībhāvanā*, or the cultivation of *samādhi* conducive to the destruction of the *āsavas*.

The first type employs a meditation-subject that can induce *jhāna*, such as the ten *kasi as*, or mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*), and so on. The second type employs the perception of light (*ālokasaññā*), the light-device (*ālokakasi a*), or any other meditation-subject that makes the mind brilliant. The third type employs the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipa hāna*); whilst the last type employs the development of *samādhi* in conjunction with *vipassanā*, which involves observation of the rise and fall of the five aggregates. The remaining *kamma hānas* are helpful for the achievement of the four categories of *samādhi* meditation.²⁵

2.1.5 Concentration and Absorption

²⁴ Phamaha Narong Cherdungnoen, op.cit, pp. 44-45.

²⁵ Phramaha Singhathon Narāsabho, op.cit, p. 240.

Jhāna occupies a very prominent place in the Buddhist system of meditation. The term is derived from the verb “*Jhāyati*, meaning, “to think”, or “to meditate.”²⁶ In the canonical texts, both *samādhi* and *jhāna* are frequently encountered in the overall scheme of mental training, but they are not to be regarded as a goal in their own right. They are simply very useful tools that pave the way to final deliverance, which is attained through the practice of *vipassanā*. As has been declared by the Enlightened One, the master of mental training: “There is no *jhāna* for one lacking wisdom; there is no wisdom for one lacking *jhāna*; in whom there are both *jhāna* and wisdom—he, indeed, is in the presence of *nibbāna*.”²⁷

The attainment of *jhāna* is usually a slow and length process, marked by many different stages:²⁸

parikamma-upacāra-anuloma-gotrabhū-āppanā.

The first stage is that of *parikamma*, or preparation, that is, the preliminary preparation of the mind for the stage of *jhāna*. However, the quick-minded person (*tikkhapuggala*) may be able to skip this stage and commence with the second stage of *upacāra* (access), during which normal consciousness moves closer to full absorption-concentration (*āppanāsamādhi*). *Anuloma*, adaptation, and the stage during which the

²⁶ Paravahera Vajirañā a Mahāthera, op.cit, p. 23.

²⁷ Dhṛ 372: *Natthi jhāna apaññassa paññā natthi ajhāyato; yamhi jhānañ ca paññā ca sa ve nibbā asantike*, quoted in Phramaha Singhthon, op.cit, p.4 9.

²⁸ Cf. **Compendium of Philosophy** (P.T.S. 1910), p.55; Na aratana Thera, **A Manual of Abhidhamma**, Vol.1, (Colombo, 1956); pp. 46-47, quoted in Phramaha Singhthon, op.cit,pp. 52-53.

mind adapts itself for the attainment of full absorption followed the second stage of *upacāra*. However, before this occurs, the mind has to pass through yet a further stage, known as *gotrabhū*, during which the mind transcends the plane of sensory-consciousness (*kāmāvacaracitta*). Rises to the plane of the sphere of form (*rūpāvacarabhūmi*) and enters *appanā-samādhi*, or the first of the four *jhānas* associated with that sphere.

The four *jhānas* associated with the sphere of form are usually referred to simply as the first (*pa hama*), second (*dutiya*), third (*tatiya*) and fourth (*catuttha*) *jhānas* respectively. The first *jhāna* is normally described by way of the following stock depiction:

“Having become separated from sense-desires, having become separated from unwholesome states, he attains and abides in the first *jhāna*, a state of happiness and joy born of separation, accompanied by applied thought, sustained thought.”²⁹

The first *jhāna* is therefore said to possess applied thought (*vitakka*) which causes the mind to mount upon its object, in this case the after-image (*pa ibhāga-nimitta*) acquired during the *upacāra* stage, and also sustained thought (*vicāra*), which keeps the mind roaming over that object, thereby removing doubt. The fine distinction that holds between these two types of thought is found clarified, with the help of several interesting similes, in the *Visuddhimagga*.³⁰

²⁹ Phramaha Singhathon, op.cit, pp. 53-70.

³⁰ Vism 142.

It is also categorized by the presence of joy (*pīti*), which is such since it refreshes (*pītisukhan ti ettha pī ayatī ti pīti*).³¹ It arises due to the suppression of the mental defilements, and in opposition to ill will. There are five grades of joy:

- (1) *khuddakāpīti*, slight joy;
- (2) *kha ikāpīti*, momentary joy;
- (3) *okkantikāpīti*, overwhelming joy;
- (4) *ubbegāpīti*, uplifting joy; and
- (5) *phara āpīti*, pervading joy.

Of these, slight joy is just able to raise the hair on the body. Momentary joy arises and fades out just like a flash of lighting. Overwhelming joy breaks over the body again and again like waves on the seashore. Uplifting joy can be powerful enough to levitate the body into the air. Pervading joy infuses the whole body and mind.

Happiness (*sukha*) is the experience that constantly follows upon joy (*pīti*), that is, bliss in which all distraction and remorse are suspended. *Sukha* is said to be the proximate cause of concentration: “The mind of one who is happy becomes concentrated (*sukhino citta samādhīyati*).”³²

Finally, the mind, in the first *jhāna*, is also described as one-pointed (*ekaggatā*), by virtue of the fact that the mind has become unified

³¹ Vism 143-144.

³² D.N. I 75.

as a result of the four previous factors. Owing to the prior departure of the five hindrances, *vitakka* is able to direct the mind, or its co-existent factors, onto the object of concentration, after which *vicāra* keeps the mind exploring that same object. Joy then ensues, refreshing the mind and body, giving way to happiness and a resultant state in which the mind is one-pointed (*ekaggatā*), and thus no longer subject to distraction.

The individual who has attained the fourth of *jhāna* is said to possess extra-sensory states which are beyond the reach of the fivefold sense-activity. When all sense-impressions cease, consciousness, which is dominated by mindfulness, remains active, fully conscious and perfectly alert. At this stage, *jhāna* is called “*pādaka*”, or “basic *jhāna*,” because the aspirant now gains the super-intellectual powers (*abhiññā*). These are:

1. Supernormal power (*iddhividdhi*)
2. The divine ear (*dibbasota*)
3. Knowing others’ thoughts (*cetopariyañā a*)
4. Recollection of one’s own past lives (*pubbenivāsānussatiñ a*)
5. The divine eye (*dibbacakkhu*)

Such accomplishments are not the direct means to final deliverance. However, the gradual purification of mind that the *jhānas* bring about can be used as the basis of insight (*vipassanā*): “Just as the Ga ges flows, runs, moves towards the east, just so does a *bhikkhu*, by developing, and practising the four absorptions (*jhānas*), flow, run, and move towards *nibbāna*”.³³

³³ S.N. V 307-8.

In this way, insight that is the direct means leading to final deliverance can be fruitfully developed.

Arūpajjhāna (absorption of the formless sphere)

An aspirant who has accomplished the fourth *jhāna* may be able to develop the *arūpajjhānas*, attainment of which is generally spoken of as *arūpasamāpatti*. The same procedure, of the rūpa moving from a lower stage to a higher stage, is also found in the context of the *arūpajjhānas*.

The *arūpajjhānas*, or *jhānas* associated with the formless sphere (*arūpāvacara*) admit of a fourfold division:

- (1) *Ākāśānañcāyatana*: the sphere of the infinity of space.
- (2) *Vīññā añcāyatana*: the sphere of the infinity of consciousness.
- (3) *Ākiñcaññāyatana*: the sphere of nothingness.
- (4) *Nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*: the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

The *arūpajjhānas* are, however, beyond the scope of the present study, being noted here solely for the sake of completeness.

2.2 Practice of Insight Meditation (*vipassanā*)

The meditative practitioner, who has disciplined himself in accordance with the moral principles, and who has developed the habit of concentration through the practice of *samādhi* meditation, must then go on to acquire full knowledge through the development of *vipassanā*.

The term *vipassanā* is a one that is unique to Buddhism. It is derived from the verb *vipassati*, meaning “to see in many ways (*vividha*),” and also “to see, to penetrate, an object thoroughly.” Thus English term “insight” is best render of the term “*vipassanā*”. It is to see things as they really are.³⁴

The terms “*paññā*” (wisdom) and *ñā adassana* (knowledge and vision) are generally used to help explain *vipassanā* and are frequently encountered in the Pali Canon, especially the *Abhidhammapi aka*, and elaborated upon in the commentarial literature, such as the *Visuddhimagga*.³⁵

Two types of practice employing *vipassanā* are distinguished:

1. *Jhānavipassanā*.
2. *Sukkhavipassanā*.

In the former, the practitioner first destroys the five hindrances (*nīvara as*) by means of the power of concentration (*samādhi*), and then

³⁴ Quoted in Phramaha Narong Cherdungnoen, op.cit, p. 220.

³⁵ Phramahā Singhathon Narāsabho, op.cit, p.48.

proceeds to the practice of *vipassanā* or *pa* . This is therefore also spoken of as *vipassanā* preceded by calm (*samathapubba gamavipassanā*). If, on the contrary, the practitioner destroys those same hindrances through the power of insight, his practice is known as “dry-*vipassanā*” (*sukkhavipassanā*) and is spoken of as calm preceded by *vipassanā* (*vipassanāpubba gamasamatha*).

When the practitioner’s mind is free of the hindrances, he trains until he achieves flexibility of mind, when he may develop penetrative insight into the aggregates (*khandhas*), the elements (*dhātus*), and the sense-bases (*āyatanas*), and so on.

Vipassanā, as insight, does not note denote insight in general, but insight into the specific nature of three characteristics (*tilakkha a*) of the phenomenal world, namely, impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and non-self (*anattā*). Moreover, it is not to be understood as mere intellectual appreciation, or conceptual knowledge of, these characteristics, but as a direct personal and indubitable experience of them, obtained and mastered through repeated meditation on the objects singled out for the cultivation of insight (*vipassanābhāvanā*).

2.2.1 The Ground (*bhūmi*) and Objects (*āramma as*) of *Vipassanā*

At the preliminary stage, the practitioner of *vipassanā* meditation must have an extensive understanding of the real nature of the

following subjects: (i) the *khandhas* (aggregates); (ii) the *āyatanas* (bases); (iii) the *dhātus* (elements); (iv) the *indriyas* (faculties); (v) the *saccas* (the four noble truths); and (vi) the *pa iccasamuppāda* (the doctrine of dependent origination). The realisation of the true nature of things is possible only in the context of knowledge of the above mentioned subjects. If the practitioner of *vipassanā* meditation does not understand the true nature of these subjects, he will fail to penetrate into the intrinsic nature of things.

According to Buddhism, the acquisition of full knowledge, or the true view of worldly objects, consists in the comprehension of the fact that the mental and physical states that constitute phenomenal existence are liable to change, bring suffering, and lack substance. Nonetheless, these subjects are known as the ground (*bhūmi*), or soil, as well as the object of wisdom (*paññā*). It is stated in the Bahudhātukasutta³⁶ that, in order to realise *nibbāna*, one needs to be expert in the *dhātus* (*dhātukusalo*), the four great elements (*māhabhūtas*), and the things composed of them. One must also be master of one's sense organs, their objects and one's consciousness of the same, as well as skilled in the aggregates (*khandhas*). At the same time, one has to comprehend the nature of pleasure and pain, both mental and physical, as well as the nature of evil, craving and ignorance. Finally, one also needs to have clear understanding of the above six groups, before attempting to cultivate *vipassanā* meditation with a view to obtaining wisdom (*paññā*).

2.2.2 The Roots (*mūla*) of *Vipassanā*

The path of practice leading to the attainment of nibbāna involves seven stages of purification. *Vipassanā* meditation is the means of attaining the highest purification. The first requirement is that the practitioner's mind must be furnished with both moral qualities and concentration (*samādhi*). We find that training in morality (*sīla*) is an essential preliminary to further progress in all matters of Buddhist practice and development. Therefore, of the abovementioned seven stages of purification, it is the purification of morality (*sīlavisuddhi*) and the purification of mind (*cittavisuddhi*) that are said to form the ground for, and be pre-requisites of, the practice of *vipassanā*. It is stated in the *Visuddhimagga*³⁷ that the purification of morality and the purification of mind form the roots of full knowledge, and should be acquired by the practitioner possessing a through understanding of the fundamental items listed in 2.2.1 above.

2.2.3 The Three Characteristics Marks and the *Sattavisuddhi*

It is a requirement of the practitioner of *vipassanā* meditation that he possess an extensive understanding of the fundamental characteristics (*lakḥaṇa*) of phenomenal existence—this is an essential part of his *kamma hāna* practice, if he is to progress further. These are the three universal characteristics that mark all animate organisms and inanimate objects in the universe, indeed all conditioned things without exception, that is to say, *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (suffering), and

³⁶ M.N. III 216-22.

³⁷ Vism 443.

anattā (not-self),³⁸ and, when fully realised, they become the very basis of supreme enlightenment.

The only direct canonical reference to the seven stages of purification is to be found in the Rathavinītasutta (The Discourse on the Relay Chariots), the twenty-fourth discourse of the Majjhimanikāya.³⁹ The seven stages of purification (*sattavisuddhi*) are as follows:

- (1) The purification of virtue (*sīlavisuddhi*);
- (2) The purification of mind (*cittavisuddhi*);
- (3) The purification of view (*diṭṭhivissuddhi*);
- (4) The purification by overcoming doubt (*ka khāvitara a-visuddhi*);
- (5) The purification by knowledge and vision of what is path and not-path (*maggāmaggañā adassanavisuddhi*);
- (6) The purification by knowledge and vision of the way (*pa ipadāñā adassanavisuddhi*);
- (7) The purification by knowledge and vision (*ñā adassanavisuddhi*).

2.2.4 The Body of *Vipassanā*

The last five of the seven stages of purification may be regarded as the “body” of *vipassanā*. They are attainable by understanding the true

³⁸ Grant A. Olson Tr., **Buddhadhamma**, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 62-63.

³⁹ Bhikkhu Bodhi Tr., *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha* (A New Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya), (Kandy: BPS, 1995), p.243.

nature of phenomenal existence, and they also lead to *nibbāna*. The phrase “the true nature of phenomenal existence” implies the three above characteristics (*lakkha āni*), which all animate organisms and inanimate things in the universe share.

Table I
Differences between *Samathabhāvanā* and
Vipassanābhāvanā

The following table illustrates the differences between *samathabhāvanā* and *vipassanābhāvanā*:⁴⁰

<i>Samathabhāvanā</i>	<i>Vipassanābhāvanā</i>
1. The true object of <i>samādhi</i> is to create a peaceful mind.	1. The true object of <i>vipassanā</i> is <i>paññā</i> (wisdom).
2. The subject of meditation is a <i>kamma hāna</i> , such as a <i>kasi a</i> .	2. The subject of meditation is the <i>tilakkha a</i> .
3. <i>Samatha</i> is characterised by an absence of restlessness.	3. <i>Vipassanā</i> is characterised by wisdom, which reveals the true state of things.
4. The duty of <i>samatha</i> is to suppress the five hindrances (<i>nīvara a</i>).	4. The duty of <i>vipassanā</i> is to destroy ignorance (<i>avijjā</i>).
5. The goal of <i>samatha</i> is one-pointedness (<i>ekaggatā</i>) of mind.	5. The goal of <i>vipassanā</i> is right view.
6. The effect of <i>samatha</i> is a mind that is free of desires.	6. The effect of <i>vipassanā</i> is <i>paññā</i> .
7. The benefits of <i>samatha</i> are the eight attainments of <i>jhāna</i> and, in	7. The benefits of <i>vipassanā</i> are the destruction of the <i>āsavas</i> and no

⁴⁰ Boonkanjanaram Meditation Center, **Vipassana Bhavana**, (Bangkok: Allied Printers Division of The Post Publishing Co.,Ltd.,1988), pp. 43-44.

<p>the next life, rebirth in the Brahmaloaka.</p> <p>8. In <i>samatha</i>, only one meditation subject and two senses are employed at any one time, such as the eye and the mind (in the case of a <i>kasi a</i>), or touch and the mind (in the case of the breath).</p> <p>9. The practitioner should determine which of the six <i>caritas</i> is most dominant, and then adopt the appropriate meditation-subject.</p>	<p>further rebirth.</p> <p>8. In <i>vipassanā</i>, no special meditation subjects are needed, and all six senses are employed.</p> <p>9. The practitioner should determine which of the four <i>satipa hānas</i> is most suitable in his case.</p>
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According to the A guttaranikāya, the mind is fundamentally clear and pure, but it has become blemished through the influx of adventitious defilements (*kilesa*): “Radiant is the mind, monks, but sometimes it is defiled by defilements that come from without. The ordinary man without understanding does not know it as it truly is.”⁴¹

The goal of Buddhist practice is to eradicate all defilements. The techniques of *samathabhāvanā* are designed to return the mind to its original state of clarity. The immediate defilements that disturb the mind are suppressed, after which the practice of *vipassanā* can be engaged in which will eventually lead to one’s seeing things as they really are.

⁴¹ A.N. I 10, quoted in Rupert Gethin, **Foundations of Buddhism**, (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1998), p. 175.

Chapter III

Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera's Method of Practice

3.1 Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera's Biography

3.1.1 His Childhood and Ordination

Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera (Mun Bhūridatto) was one of the best-known meditation-masters in Thailand. He was born on Thursday 20th January BE 2413 (1870 AD)⁴² in the village of Ban Kambong, in the Khongjiam district of Ubon Ratchathani province. His father's name was Kamduang Kankaew, whilst that of his mother Jan. He was the eldest of eight brothers and sisters.

At the age of fifteen, he ordained as a novice in his village monastery, where he developed an enthusiasm for studying the Dhamma, and was adept at memorising the texts with exceptional speed. A young novice of affable character, he never caused his teachers or fellows any trouble.

⁴² Phra Acharn Mun Bhuridatto Foundation, **Booraphacharn**, (Bangkok: Chuanpim Printing Corporation, 2002), p. 7.

Two years after his ordination, his father asked him to disrobe, and to return to lay life in order to help out in the home.

At the age of twenty-two, feeling the urge to ordain as a monk and, having received his parents' permission, he took leave of them. They provided him with a complete set of a monk's basic requisites for his ordination. On June 12th 1893⁴³, he received his *bhikkhu* ordination at Wat Liap monastery in the provincial town of Ubon Ratchathani.

His *upajjhāya* was the Venerable Phra Ariyakawi, his *kammavācariya* Phrakhru Sitha, and his *anusāsanācariya* Phrakhru Prajak-ubonkhun. He was named Bhūridatta as his religious name, meaning "Gift of the Earth" and "A Gift of Wisdom"⁴⁴, depending on which of the several meanings of *bhūri* is adopted. After his ordination, he took up residence at Wat Liap, in Most Venerable Sao's *vipassanā* meditation centre.

In the early days of his meditation practice with Most Venerable Sao, Most Venerable Mun was taught, by way of preparatory work (*parikamma*), to utter the word *Buddho* as his meditation-subject, and he practised this day and night. He also continued to practise, and strictly observe, the *dhuta ga* (ascetic practices) from the time of his ordination right up until the time of his death.

⁴³ Phramaha Bua Yanasampunno, **Prawat Phra Acharn Mun**, (Bangkok: Srisapda Printing, 2515), p. 2.

⁴⁴ Bhikkhu Dick Sīlaratano, **Venerable Ācariya Mun Bhūridatha Thera**, (Bangkok: Silpa Siam Packaging & Printing Co., Ltd., 2005), p. 467.

He chose to live in remote areas in order to devote himself to the eradication of the defilements. Each year he would, once the three-month period of the rains' retreat (*vassa*) was at an end, go to some place in the mountains and forests with a small village nearby where he might seek his alms-food. So he spent more time in the North-eastern region than he did in any other part of the country.

3.1.2 Most Venerable Mun's Character

Most Venerable Mun's primary focus always remained the same: working tirelessly to improve his meditation practice. He knew that this was his most important task in life. He disliked involvement in monastic building projects, preferring to concentrate exclusively on the inner work of meditative development. He avoided socializing with fellow monks and avoided civil society as much as possible, much preferring to live alone—a style of living that allowed him the freedom to focus all his attention and energy on one main task: that of transcending *dukkha*. Earnestness and sincerity characterised everything he did: he never deceived himself, nor misled others.

Most Venerable Mun possessed a small figure and white skin. He was from childhood, alert, extremely intelligent, and full of vigour.⁴⁵ Because his rigorous training methods differed significantly from those practised by other monks, his style of practice was unique and difficult to imitate.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

The Most Venerable Mun’s voice impressed the monks in the assembly. As the monks sat together, quietly listening, the Most Venerable Mun’s voice would be the only sound that they heard. The rhythm of his voice articulating the essence of the Dhamma was at once both lyrical and captivating. Carried along by the flow of his teaching, his audience completely forgot themselves, their weariness, and the time that had passed. As they listened, they were aware only of the flow of the Dhamma having an impact on their hearts, creating such a pleasant feeling that they could never get enough of it. Each of these meetings would last many hours.⁴⁶

Venerable Viriyan (Phra Raja Dhammacetiacharn) states that, on their very first meeting, he was impressed by the Most Venerable Mun’s mild manner, and his mode of preaching Dhamma without any accompanying ceremony. He would preach for four hours at a stretch without stopping. Most Venerable Mun defined the middle way as “just enough”. The aim of the *majjhimāpa ipadā* is to get rid of the “not-enough” to arrive at the “just enough”.⁴⁷

He believed that desires should not be allowed to surface, and intrude into the sphere of practice, for, were they to do so, they would destroy the Dhamma, the only true way to go beyond *dukkha*. A monk should not go against the Dhamma, the monastic discipline, or the word of a respected teacher, as this is equivalent to destroying oneself.

⁴⁶ Phramaha Bua Yanasampunno, op.cit, p. 163.

Most Venerable Mun had a special talent for catching “thieves,” a technique for reading others’ minds and catching stray thoughts, which kept his students watchful and alert.

His proficiency in chanting the *suttas* was unrivaled. He chanted *suttas* alone for many hours every night without fail. He would chant long discourses, such as the *Dhammacakkavattanasutta* and the *Mahāsamāyasutta*, nearly every night.

Most Venerable Mun was convinced of the possibility of achieving the path, fruition and nibbāna. One question Venerable Kow once asked was: “At the time of the Lord Buddha, according to his biography and other writings, there were a large number who attained the path, fruition and nibbāna and, at that, quickly as well. There were far more who attained it then, than there are nowadays, for fewer people manage to get there now, than they did in those days.”

Most Venerable Mun explained: “This difference lies in the leaders and how correctly and precisely they can lead the way, in the power of the virtuous impressions (*vāsanā*) of the Lord Buddha and the *sāvakas* who followed him, which, when compared with us nowadays, is so different as to be almost beyond comparison. In this present age...we just play, like children with their toys.”⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Phra Rajadhammajetiyajarn, **Prawat Phra Acharn Mun lae Tai Saman Samnurg**, (Bangkok: Pra-Cha-Chon Co. Ltd.,1998), p. 58.

⁴⁸ Pannavaddho Bhikkhu, **Patipada or The Mode of Practice of Venerable Acharn Mun**, (Bangkok: Wisdom Audio Visual Exchange, 1997), pp. 304-305.

3.1.3 The Influences of his Teachers

Most Venerable Sao Kantasilo

In the early years of his practice, Most Venerable Mun often wandered in the company of the Most Venerable Sao, a good, experienced teacher who could lend him support. Yet when he asked his teacher to advise him on specific problems arising in his meditation, the Most Venerable Sao invariably replied: “My experiences in meditation are quite different from yours.” the Most Venerable Sao never gave him enough concrete advice to really help him, so the Most Venerable Mun was forced to solve his problems on his own.

Most Venerable Mun described his teacher as someone with a smooth, serene temperament, who inspired deep devotion, in sharp contrast to the wholly adventurous nature that characterised the Most Venerable Mun’s *citta*. Most Venerable Sao was not so motivated to live dangerously, seeking adventure; nor did he tend to perceive the variety of unusual phenomena that the Most Venerable Mun invariably did.

A rather strange feature of the Most Venerable Sao’s practice was his tendency to levitate while in *samādhi*, his body hovering quite noticeably above the floor.

Most Venerable Mun often accompanied the Most Venerable Sao on his excursions wandering *dhuta ga* across the provinces of the North-eastern region. By nature, the Most Venerable Sao preferred to say very little. He always spoke very sparingly. In an entire day, he might

utter only a few sentences. Occasionally obliged to give instruction to his lay supporters, he was nonetheless always very frugal with words. The little that he did say could be summed up as follows:

You should renounce evil and cultivate goodness. Being fortunate enough to be born human, don't waste this good opportunity now. Our status as human beings is a very noble one; so avoid all animal-like behaviour. Otherwise, you'll sink below the animals, and be much more wretched as well. When you eventually fall into hell, your tortuous existence there will be far more grievous than that of any animal. So don't do evil!⁴⁹

It was well known that these two teachers had a great love and respect for each other. They spent most of the year living together, both during and after the annual rains' retreat. In their middle years, they normally spent these retreats in separate locations, but close enough to one another to easily allow visits.

Even when living apart, they often thought of each other with genuine concern. They always uttered words of concern for each other through their disciples. Most Venerable Mun's first question always concerned the health and well-being of the Most Venerable Sao who, in turn, invariably reciprocated by inquiring about the Most Venerable Mun's well-being whenever one of the latter's disciples paid him a visit. Through such messengers, each then conveyed his respectful greeting to the other, maintaining contact in this way at every opportunity. Each of

⁴⁹ Bhikkhu Dick Sīlaratano, op. cit, p. 18.

these great teachers had enormous respect for the other's spiritual achievements. Both used words full of praise and admiration when speaking to their disciples about the other. Their comments never contained a hint of criticism.

ChaoKhun Upāli Gu ūpamācariya (Sirichando)

Most Venerable Mun spent most of the earlier years of his monastic career travelling through the various provinces of Thailand's North-eastern region. Later, as he developed a stronger inner stability, he would wander across the Central Plains region, living the *dhuta ga* lifestyle, before eventually reaching the capital, Bangkok. Upon arrival, he would enter Wat Pathumwan monastery and, during the rains' retreat, make a point of regularly going to seek advice from Chao Khun Upāli Gu ūpamācariya at Wat Boromaniwas to seek more extensive techniques for developing wisdom. Phra Upāli Gu ūpamācariya (Chand Sirichando) was a great master of the meditation of the Dhammayuttika Nikai.⁵⁰

He kept his mentor informed of developments in his meditation practice, questioning him about doubts he still had concerning the practice of wisdom. Satisfied that the new investigative techniques he had learned were sufficient to further his progress, he finally took leave of Chao Khun Upāli and left to seek seclusion at Sarika Cave in the Khaw Yai mountains of the Nakhon Nayok province.

⁵⁰ Phramaha Narong Cherdungnoen, **A Study of Sati (Mindfulness) in Buddhism**, (New Delhi: Delhi University, 1993), p. 227.

Most Venerable Mun said that he often travelled back and forth between the North-east and Bangkok, sometimes taking the train to “the end of the line,” which extended only part of the distance in those days. At all other times, he walked *dhuta ga*. During the rains’ retreats, he frequently studied Dhamma texts with the Venerable Chao Khun Upāli Gu ūpamācariya at Wat Boromaniwat.

Once people learned that Chao Khun Upāli had returned to reside at Wat Chedi Luang, they came to pay their respects and hear him expound the Dhamma. Chao Khun Upāli took advantage of the many people present to invite the Most Venerable Mun to give a discourse on the Dhamma.

Meanwhile, Chao Khun Upāli praised the Most Venerable Mun’s talk before the whole assembly of people at Wat Chedi Luang:

Most Venerable Mun expounds Dhamma so eloquently that it is difficult to find anyone to equal him. He clarifies *muttodaya*—the heart released the land of absolute freedom—in a way that leaves no room for doubt. Everything is so precisely illustrated that I myself couldn’t possibly match his unique, engrossing style.

The Most Venerable Mun is an important *kamma hāna* monk, who uses mindfulness and wisdom to faithfully follow the path taught by the Buddha. He never tramples upon it in an unseemly, worldly manner. His talks employ a full range of expression:

sometimes casual, sometimes serious, sometimes emphatic, stressing specific points. He elaborates the profound complexities of Dhamma in a way the rest of us are hard pressed to do so, candidly. He is quite capable of analyzing the disparate aspects of Dhamma and articulates them in a way that deeply affects our hearts. His commentary is so brilliant that it's hard to keep up with him. I myself have needed to ask him questions about problems I couldn't solve on my own and he quickly and adeptly solved those problems with his wisdom. I have benefited in innumerable ways from his counsel.

Monks like the Most Venerable Mun are extremely hard to find. Even though I am his senior, I wholly revere the Dhamma within him—and yet, he is still so humble and gracious towards me that I sometimes feel embarrassed.⁵¹

Most Venerable Mun is a monk truly worthy of the highest respect, and is unquestionably “an incomparable field of merit for the world.” He himself never makes claims of noble attainments, though they are apparent to me when we discuss Dhamma in private. I am wholly convinced that he is firmly established in the third level of the Noble Dhamma. It is obvious from the way he expresses himself. Although he has never made statements of his specific level of attainment, I know for certain what it is: for the knowledge of Dhamma he has conveyed to me is absolutely consistent with that level as described in the Buddhist texts⁵²

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 145.

⁵² Ibid., p. 146.

3.1.4 His Perseverance and Achievements

It was through perseverance that the Most Venerable Mun steadily attained more peaceful and calmer states of mind. He wandered through forests and over mountains, stopping at suitable locations to intensify his practice. Whether walking for alms, sweeping the grounds, sewing or dyeing his robes, eating a meal, or simply stretching his legs, he was striving to perfect himself at every waking moment and in all activities. Only when the time came to sleep did he relent, but with the resolve to get up immediately as soon as he awoke. The moment he was conscious of being awake, he rose quickly and resumed his meditation practice. If he felt sleepy, he practised walking meditation, striding back and forth to dispel the drowsiness. If walking slowly proved ineffective, he quickened his pace. Only when all drowsiness disappeared and he began to feel tired did he sit down to continue meditating until dawn.

On his alms round he walked to the nearest village, careful to maintain mindfulness the entire way. Considering his alms round a form of walking meditation, he focused his attention inward every step of the way.

With everything to be eaten placed in the bowl, he reflected on food's essential qualities: how all food, being simply a composition of gross elements, is inherently disgusting by its very nature. With this thought firmly fixed in his mind, he ate his food mindfully until he had finished the meal. Afterwards, he washed the bowl and put it away in its

proper place. Then, it was again time to resume the task of battling the *kilesas*, with the aim of destroying them gradually until they were thoroughly defeated.

As mentioned previously, the Most Venerable Mun lived mostly in wilderness areas where villages were spaced far apart. Since the countryside was relatively unpopulated then, he could easily put the teaching into practice. Virgin forests abounded, teeming with wild animals everywhere.

Since his time at Sarika Cave in the Nakhon Nayok province, the Most Venerable Mun had possessed a mastery of psychic skills. His proficiency grew to such an extent that the monks living with him took strict care to be mentally self-controlled at all times. They couldn't afford to let their minds wander carelessly because their errant thoughts might become the subject of a Dhamma-talk at the evening meeting. They learned to be especially vigilant during the meetings when the Most Venerable Mun was actually speaking to them or when they followed him on his alms-round. Those who were unmindful at such times were bound to hear about their wayward thoughts at the next meeting. All of this serves to illustrate that the Most Venerable Mun's subtle ability to know the thoughts of others was very real.⁵³

Most Venerable Mun revealed to his closest disciples that he had attained the stage of *anāgāmi* in Sarika Cave.⁵⁴ Most Venerable Mun said

⁵³ Bhikkhu Dick Sīlaratano, op. cit, p. 123.

⁵⁴ Siri Buddhasukh, **The Venerable Phra Acharn Mun Bhūridatta Thera**, (Kuala Lumpur: Majujaya Indah Sdn.Bhd.,2000), p. 32.

that before reaching that level, one must successfully pass through the contemplation of body, which requires seeing the attractive, as well as the repulsive, aspects of the body without getting caught up in either extreme. The *citta* uses this wisdom to isolate the attractive and repulsive aspects of the body, resolving all doubt and attachment concerning the body. This, however, is nothing more than a transitional stage along the way. Those who have penetrated to the *anāgāmi* level of understanding must still train their wisdom until it reaches an even more refined degree of expertise, before it can be said that they are a fully-fledged *anāgāmi*.

Most Venerable Mun talked of the many struggles he had at that level and the time he took to pass through it, because he had no one to advise him. He knew from his experience in analysing subtle aspects of Dhamma that the *kilesas* might undermine his efforts, for they were as equally subtle as the mindfulness and wisdom he was using to counter them. This made it very difficult to penetrate each successive level of Dhamma.

Most Venerable Mun said that upon coming across a suitable location, he would decide to remain awhile and practise meditation until the time came to move on again. In those days, the forested terrain consisted of isolated settlements of three or four houses bunched together for livelihood. The inhabitants hunted wild animals and planted rice and other crops along the edge of the mountains. Villagers there had great faith in *dhuta ga* monks, and so he could depend on them for alms food.

His citta had long attained the *anāgāmī* level, before he was able to maximize his practice in Chiang Mai province. From evening to late at night, the Most Venerable Mun contemplated the law of dependent origination (*pa iccasamuppāda*) both during walking and sitting meditation, in both its serial and reverse order, backwards and forwards again, traversing and retraversing the great domain where ignorance (*avijjā*) and desire have been massing to create various aspects of suffering within mind.⁵⁵

Most Venerable Mun described the fateful moment when he achieved arahantship and how it was accompanied by a tremor that appeared to shake the entire universe:

By the time he sat down at about nine o'clock, his mind was concentrated solely on scrutinising *avijjā*, examining each of the interdependent conditions through to the logical conclusion, then reversing the order to arrive back at *avijjā*. Contemplating thus, he deliberated back and forth, over and over inside the *citta*—the focal point where birth, death, and *kilesas* converge with the principal cause of *avijjā*.

Seated in meditation late that night, the crucial moment had arrived. The battle lines were drawn: supreme-mindfulness and supreme-wisdom—the razor sharp weapons against *avijjā*, an enemy especially adroit at repulsing their advances and then counter-attacking, leaving its opponents in total disarray. Since

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 114-115.

time immemorial no one has dared to challenge its might, allowing *avijjā* to reign supreme and unopposed over the “kingdom of birth and death” inside the hearts of all living beings. But, at 3 a.m. that night, when the Most Venerable Mun launched his final, all-out assault, the result was the total destruction of the king’s mighty throne and the complete overthrow of his reign in the kingdom of birth and death. Suddenly impotent and deprived of room to maneuver, the king could not maintain his sovereignty. At that moment, *avijjā* perished victim to a lightning strike of magnificent brilliance.⁵⁶

Most Venerable Mun had many unusual experiences, more while living in Chiang Mai than during any other period of his life. Some of these phenomena appeared within his *citta*, while others appeared in the environment. Frequently living alone, he encountered myriad varieties of mysterious phenomena. In the *citta*’s natural state of knowing, knowledge and understanding arise continuously, both during meditation and in engagement with normal daily activities.

Whether in *upacārasamādhi*, or in its normal waking state, the Most Venerable Mun’s *citta* was always receptive to a multitude of phenomena. If he wanted to investigate something thoroughly, he would enter into *upacārasamādhi* to get a more extensive view. In a state of clairvoyance or clairaudience, for example, both of which require *upacārasamādhi*, one can perceive whatever one wishes to know about

⁵⁶ Bhikkhu Dick Sīlaratano, op. cit, p. 154.

the forms or sounds of people and animals, and much, much more besides.

Most Venerable Mun was very skilled in the practice of mindfully contemplating the body (*kāyānupassanāsati* *hāna*). He had a wide and precise understanding of all aspects of the Dhamma, both inwardly and outwardly, far beyond all others who were then practising the way. He said that when he went beyond contemplation of body (*kāyagatā*), sexual craving ceased to be a problem.

From then on, his *citta* was devoid of all material things, including both the body and all other things, which existed externally. Nor did he have any *nimittas* arising, which were symbols of beauty (*subha*) and foulness (*asubha*), as he had used to experience prior to this stage. There was just brightness and a *citta* devoid of all things throughout its field.

3.1.5 His Passing Away

Most Venerable Mun had already lived for five years at Ban Nong Pheu monastery when his health weakened and he began to show signs of illness. News of his illness spread rapidly throughout the country and people from throughout Thailand rushed to see him. When people came to him, he started to preach with a voice loud and clear throughout, and showing no signs of illness. When, in March of 1949, and at the age of 79, his body began exhibiting signs, indicating that the end of his life was approaching, he informed his disciples of this and from then on

showed no interest in any medicines whatsoever. He expressed his annoyance about medicine in no uncertain terms:

This is the illness of an old man who has reached the end of the line. No matter what kind of medicine I take, it will never be cured. All that's left is the breath in my body, biding its time, awaiting the day it finally ceases. I'm like dead tree that's still standing: no matter how much you fertilise and water that tree, it is impossible to make it sprout and flower again. This old dead tree now stands anticipating the day it will topple over and go crashing to the ground, felled by this very same illness. I thoroughly investigated my condition long before the symptoms appeared. That is why I've been warning you all: Don't be complacent. Hurry up, intensify your efforts now while I am still alive. In that way, I can help you resolve any problems you may have in the meantime. Missing this opportunity now may cause you to waste a lot of time in the future. I will not be here much longer. Soon I shall depart this world, in keeping with the law of impermanence that follows constantly on the heels of all conditioned things without exception. Three years ago I warned you that I would not last more than three years. What more can I say? What I've told you, I know to be inevitable. The work that the round of *sa sāra* performs inside the minds and bodies of human beings and animals alike continues unerringly along its natural course. In just a few months time it will complete its final

task within this body of mine. How can it possibly alter its appointed task?⁵⁷

As the months passed, although his condition continued to deteriorate, the Most Venerable Mun did not neglect his teaching obligations. His compassionate concern for his disciples never diminished, though he was no longer able to expound the Dhamma in such detail as before. He condensed the essential meaning of virtue into concise statements:

Refrain from all evil, develop goodness and wisdom in abundance, and purify the mind until it is bright and clear. This is the essence of the Buddha's teaching.⁵⁸

Refraining from evil—what does it mean? Some people refrain from acting in evil ways but still speak in evil ways. Others may not act or speak in evil ways but still like to think in evil ways. They continue to amass evil within themselves from dawn to dusk. Waking up the next morning, they resume amassing more evil. So it continues, day in and day out, and they are not interested in reflecting upon their actions. Convinced they are already virtuous people, they wait around expecting a state of purity to arise from virtue that exists in name only. So they never find a state of purity; instead, they find only defilement and disquiet. This is bound to happen, for anyone intent on looking

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 365-366.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 369.

for trouble is sure to find it. What else would they find? There is no shortage of such things in the conventional world we live in.”⁵⁹

Most Venerable Mun had a total fifty-seven vassas. At the age of eighty, he calmly passed away on Thursday, November 11th 2492 BE (AD 1949), at Wat Suddhavas, in Sakol Nakhorn province.⁶⁰ Instead of the usual pile of firewood or charcoal, the Most Venerable Mun’s funeral pyre was made with fragrant sandalwood that had been specially ordered from across the Mekong River in Laos. Having acquired a sufficient amount, they mixed it with incense, using the combination as a pyre to cremate the body.

At nine o’clock the following morning, the bone remains were carefully collected from the ash. Bone relics were distributed to monks representing the various provinces in attendance, on the understanding that these relics would be placed in suitable public shrines in their respective locales. Fragments of bone were also handed out to members of the general public.

Some four years later, Mrs.Wan Khamanamoon found that the bone fragments that she received at the cremation had all been transformed into crystal-like relics.⁶¹

3.1.6 Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera’s Lineage

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 369.

⁶⁰ Phra Acharn Mun Bhuridatto Foundation, **Booraphacharn**, (Bangkok: Chuanpim Printing Corporation, 2002), p. 39.

⁶¹ Siri Buddhasukh, op. cit, pp. 280-281.

Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera was a *vipassanā* meditation-master of the highest calibre, and one who was truly worthy of the eminent praise and admiration accorded to him by his close disciples.

The number of bhikkhus who followed him, and who still follow the lineage of the Most Venerable Mun, are manifold. They stem from the early period, the middle period, and the final years, of his teaching.

In the early years, when the Most Venerable Mun first began wandering, he started in the North-eastern province of Nakhon Phanom. From there, he travelled across the provinces of Sakon Nakhon and Udon Thani, finally reaching Burma, from which he returned to Thailand by way of the northern province of Chiang Mai. He then travelled into Laos, practising the ascetic way of life in Luang Prabang, and later Vientiane, before eventually returning to Loei province. From this North-eastern locale, he wandered in stages down to Bangkok.

These many years of wandering *dhuta ga* in the North-eastern and central provinces had given him the opportunity of instructing some of the *kamma hāna* monks whom he met there.

Amongst the monks forming the first generation of the Most Venerable Mun's disciples were Venerable Suwan, former abbot of Wat Aranyikawat monastery in the Tha Bo district of Nong Khai province; the Venerable Singh Khantayākhamo, former abbot of Wat Pa Salawan monastery in Nakhon Ratchasima; and the Venerable Mahā Pin Paññā phalo, former abbot of Wat Saddharam monastery in Nakhon Ratchasima. All three of these venerable teachers came originally from

the province of Ubon Ratchathani; all have since passed away. They were influential disciples, whose teaching careers helped to perpetuate the Most Venerable Mun's legacy for the benefit of future generations from all walks of life.

Before the Most Venerable Mun left the North-east to spend twelve years in Chiang Mai, he charged the Venerable Singh with propagation of the Dhamma.⁶² Venerable Singh and the Venerable Mahā Pin were brothers. Before taking up the way of practice, they had already thoroughly studied the Buddhist canonical texts. They were two of the senior teachers who gained faith in the Most Venerable Mun and followed in his path to teach the practice as he taught it. Eventually, through their teaching efforts they were able to assist many people. Others included the Venerable Thet Thesarangsī, of Wat Hin Mak Peng, Nong Khai province, the Venerable Fan Ajāro, of Wat Udomsophon, Sakhon Nakhon province and the Venerable Khao Anālyo, of Wat Tham Klong Phen, Udon Thani province.

Most Venerable Mun taught several different generations of disciples, many of whom have become important teachers in their own right. Being a meditation master of great stature and virtue, he was able to elucidate the path of practice and its fruits. Traveling to many regions of the country during his teaching career, he instructed large numbers of monks and lay supporters, who in turn developed a deep devotion for him and a genuine fondness for the Dhamma he taught.

⁶² Phra Rajadhammacetiyacharn, op. cit, p. 298.

Wandering in stages across the North-east, the Most Venerable Mun gradually attracted increasing numbers of disciples at every new location along the way. When he stopped to settle in one place for some time, scores of monks gravitated to that area to live with him.

After the Most Venerable Mun had passed away, his first group of disciples traveled throughout Thailand, during the period 1947-1956, founding their own temples. In the Thai tradition, people usually regard a teacher's disciples as though they were relatives, with the first group spoken of as "sons" (*looksis*). Amongst that first group were the following:⁶³

Venerable Waen Suji ๐, of Wat Doi Maepung, Chiang Mai

Venerable Prom Cirapu ๐, of Wat Pa Dongyen, UdonThani

Venerable Dool Atulo of Wat Boorapharam

Venerable Chob Dhanas ๐, of Wat Pa Sammanusorn, Lei

Venerable Kamdee Pabh ๐, of Wat Tam Papoo, Lei

Tanpor Lee Dhammdharo, of Wat Asokaram, Samuthprakarn
and

Luangta Bua ๐asampanno (Phradhammavisuddhimonkol), of

Wat Pa Baan Taad, Udornthani.

All have already passed away, save for Luangta Bua Nanasampanno, who is nowadays the sole survivor of the first group of "sons".

The Most Venerable Mun’s second lineage of “grandsons” (*lansis*) consisted of those monks who started to receive training from him in 1949. At that time the laypeople actively practised *dāna-sila-bhāvanā* throughout Thailand, and showed much respect for the *dhuta ga kamma hāna* monks. Those monks had well-constructed monasteries and large material possessions, and a good many monks tended to spend their time in various construction works, rather than *bhāvanā*.⁶⁴

The third lineage, the “great grandsons” (*lanesis*), consist of the modern *Phra Kammatthan*, or forest monks, from 1975 up until the present day.

3.2 Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera’s Method of Practice

3.2.1 First Experience in Meditation

When the Most Venerable Mun first began practising *vipassanā* at the Most Venerable Sao’s centre, he meditated constantly, internally recollecting the Buddha, by way of repeating the word *Buddho*. This was the theme he preferred above all others.

⁶³ Phra Preeda Chandakaro, *Phra Pa nai Yook Rattanakosin*, (Bangkok: 1999), p. 27.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

At one point during his meditation training at Wat Liap, the Most Venerable Mun’s *citta* “converged” into a state of calm, whereupon a vision spontaneously arose. The mental image (*nimitta*) was that of a dead body laid out before him, bloated, oozing pus, and seeping with bodily fluids. Vultures and dogs were fighting over the corpse, tearing into the rotting flesh and flinging it around, until whatever remained had become scattered all about.⁶⁵

From then on, the Most Venerable Mun constantly used this image as a mental object upon which to contemplate, irrespective of whether he was sitting in *samādhi*, practising walking-meditation, or engaging in other daily activities. He continued in this manner until, one day, the image of the corpse changed into a translucent disk that appeared suspended before him. The more he focused intensely on the disk, the more it changed its appearance. The more he tried to follow it, the more it altered its form, such that he found it impossible to tell where the series of images might end. The more he investigated the visions, the more they continued to change in character.

For three months, the Most Venerable Mun continued to meditate in this way. Each time he dropped into *samādhi*, he would withdraw his attention from it, and continue his investigation of the ever-changing, translucent disk. After practicing in this manner for some time, he became over-sensitive to the sights and sounds around him, pleased by some and disappointed by others.

⁶⁵ Bhikkhu Dick Silaratano, op. cit, p.8.

Because of this sensitivity, he came to believe that the *samādhi* that he practised was definitely the wrong path to follow.⁶⁶ His mind felt distracted and unsettled influenced by the many sense-objects that it encountered.

It was in this way that the Most Venerable Mun arrived at a new understanding of himself. Instead of focusing his mind on external matters, he brought his *citta* back inside, within the confines of his own physical body. From then on, his investigations were centred only on his own body.

Keeping his mindfulness sharp, he examined the body from top to bottom, from side to side, from inside out and throughout. When he sat in *samādhi* for a short period of time, he refused to let his *citta* “converge” into its habitual state of calm. Rather, he forced it to stay put within the body’s domain. The *citta* had no choice but to travel around the many parts of the body and probe into them. When it was time for him to lie down, the investigation continued inside his mind until he fell asleep.

He finally felt ready to sit in *samādhi* and to try to attain a state of calm with his newly discovered method. Having begun the intense training associated with contemplation of body, his *citta* “converged” rapidly into a state of calm with unprecedented ease. He knew with certainty that he had the correct method; for, when his *citta* “converged” the next time, his body appeared to be separated from himself. It seemed to split into two, with mindfulness in force throughout the entire time. It

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 9.

did not wander as it previously had done. Most Venerable Mun was convinced that his newfound method was the right one for the preliminary work of meditation practice.⁶⁷

From then on, he religiously continued to practise contemplation of body, until he could attain a state of calm whenever he wanted. With persistence, he gradually became more and more skilled in this method, until the *citta* was firmly anchored in *samādhi*.

3.2.2 The Therapeutic Properties of the Dhamma

Most Venerable Mun spent one year living and practicing in Sarika Cave.⁶⁸ His entire stay there was filled with many unusual, and often unpleasant, experiences, making it a memorable episode in his life. He passed the first few nights, at the very beginning of his stay, contentedly; but on subsequent nights he began to suffer stomach pains. Although such pains were nothing new, this time the condition grew steadily worse, eventually becoming so severe that he sometimes passed blood in his stool. Before long his stomach refused to digest food properly. He tried several different combinations of herbs, but none relieved his symptoms. They worsened with each passing day. His body was extremely weak, and though his mental resolve was not greatly affected, it was clearly weaker than normal. He made an emphatic decision. From that day on, he would treat his stomach disorder using only the “therapeutic properties of Dhamma.”

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

⁶⁸ Phramaha Bua, op. cit p.17.

The biography of the Most Venerable Mun describes what happened:

With this solemn determination, he stopped taking all medicines and began earnestly focusing on meditation as the sole remedy for all spiritual and bodily ailments. Discarding concern for his life, he let his body follow its own natural course, turning his attention to probing the *citta*—that essential “knowing nature” which never dies. He set to work examining the *citta*, using the full powers of mindfulness, wisdom, faith and perseverance that he had been developing within himself for so long. The seriousness of his physical condition ceased to interest him; concerns about death no longer arose. He directed mindfulness and wisdom to investigate the painful feelings he experienced, making them separate the body into its constituent elements, and then thoroughly analyzing each one. He examined the physical components of the body and the feelings of pain within it. He analyzed the function of memory which presumes that one or another part of the body is in pain. And he analyzed the thought processes which conceive the body as being in pain. All such vital aspects were targeted in the investigation conducted by mindfulness and wisdom as they continued to probe into the body, the pain, and the *citta*, relentlessly exploring their connections from dusk until midnight. Through this process, he succeeded in fully disengaging the body from the severe pain caused by his stomach disorder, until he understood, with absolute clarity,

just how they are interrelated. At that moment of realization, his *citta* “converged” into complete calm—a moment that saw his spiritual resolve immeasurably strengthened, and his bodily illness totally vanish. The illness, the pain, the mind’s preoccupations—all disappeared simultaneously.”⁶⁹

The Most Venerable Mun’s *citta* had “converged” into calm at midnight, after which he met the terrestrial *deva*, communicating by means of *samādhi* meditation until four a.m., when his *citta* withdrew to normal consciousness. The stomach disorder that was troubling him so much when he sat down at dusk had completely disappeared by that time. The therapeutic power of Dhamma, administered by means of meditation, was the only remedy he needed to effect a decisive cure—an experience that the Most Venerable Mun found incredibly amazing. Forgoing sleep, he continued striving in his practice until dawn. Instead of feeling tired after a night of exertion, his body was more energetic than ever.”⁷⁰

3.2.3 Dhamma and Instructions for Practice

Within the coterie of *dhuta ga* monks, listening to a Dhamma discourse is considered another form of meditation practice. *dhuta ga* monks have an especially high regard for their teacher and his instructions. He constantly guides and admonishes them to such good effect that they tend to view his teachings as the lifeblood of their meditation practice.

⁶⁹ Bhikkhu Dick Silaratano, op. cit, p. 28.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 32.

Most Venerable Mun often assembled the monks in the evenings, around dusk, to give a discourse on Dhamma. He emphasised the constant use of mindfulness as a remedy for ignorance and for correcting mistakes. He said that a monk should remember that the Lord Buddha made mistakes, but realised where he had gone wrong and strove to correct his errors as soon as he became aware of them. Anyone can make a mistake—the value lies in recognising our mistakes. It is with the use of mindfulness at all times that one can watch out for oneself.

In the Most Venerable Mun’s case, the *dhuta ga* monks listened to his instructions with great reverence. This was especially evident when he advised one of his monks to go to live in a certain cave in order to give his practice new impetus. Monks singled out in this manner never objected, but were pleased, feeling that their practice was bound to be strengthened by living in the locations he recommended.

Most Venerable Mun preferred to remain longer in provinces that were mountainous and thickly forested, because they were especially suitable for meditation. For instance, south and south-west of the town of Sakon Nakhon there were many forest-covered mountain ranges where he spent the rains retreat near the village of Phon Sawang in the district of Sawang Dan Din. The mountainous terrain in this area is so conducive to the ascetic way of life that it is still frequented by *dhuta ga* monks today.

The biography of the Most Venerable Mun gives the following account of the lifestyle of these *dhuta ga* monks:

Monks wandering in such areas during the dry season usually slept out in the forest on small bamboo platforms. They were made by splitting sections of bamboo lengthwise, spreading them out flat, then securing them to a bamboo frame with legs, making a raised sleeping surface of about six feet long, three or four feet wide, and about one and a half feet above the ground. One platform was constructed for each monk and was spaced as far apart from another as the living area of the forest would allow. A large tract of forest allowed spacing of at least 120 feet with the thick foliage in between each platform acting as a natural screen. If the area was relatively small, or a large group of monks lived together in an area, then the spacing might be reduced to 90 feet intervals, though the minimum distance was usually 120 feet. The fewer the number of monks living in a particular area, the farther apart they were individually—being close enough to one another only to hear the distant sound of a cough or a sneeze. Local villagers helped each monk to clear a walking meditation track approximately 60 feet in length, which was located beside his sleeping platform. These tracks were used day and night for practicing meditation in a walking mode.”⁷¹

When monks who were fearful of ghosts, or tigers, came to train under the Most Venerable Mun, he usually made them stay alone, far from the rest of the monks. They were required to remain there until they became accustomed to the wilderness environment. Then they would not have to carry the burden of fear indefinitely.

⁷¹ Bhikkhu Dick Silaratano, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-77.

Upon arriving in a new location, a *dhuta ga* monk had first to sleep on the ground, collecting various kinds of leaves or, in some places, straw, to make a crude mattress. The months of December and January were especially difficult due to the prevailing seasonal weather patterns, as the approaching cold weather met and mixed with the outgoing rainy weather. When it did rain during the winter months, a monk inevitably got drenched, as the umbrella-tent he used as shelter was no match for the driving rain and high winds. A downpour during the daylight hours was not quite so bad. Essential items like his outer robe and his matches had to be kept in his alms bowl with the lid tightly secured. Folding his upper robe in half, he draped it around himself to keep out the cold and damp. The cloth mosquito net that hung from the suspended umbrella down to the ground formed a tent-like shelter that was indispensable for blocking out the windswept rain. Otherwise, everything got soaked.

The months of February, March, and April saw the weather change again, as it began to heat up. Normally at such times, *dhuta ga* monks would move up into the mountains, seeking out caves or overhanging cliffs to shelter them from the sun and the rain. Had they gone to these mountainous locations in December and January, the ground would still have been saturated from the rainy season, exposing them to the risk of malarial infection.

Most Venerable Mun's chief concern was teaching monks and novices. He said: "Training monks to be beneficial is equal to having a hundred thousand laypeople. A well-trained monk who reaches the level

of his teacher will teach numerous students.”⁷² He took a special interest in those students experiencing various insights during their meditation, and would call them in for a personal interview. Some meditators are inclined to know only things existing exclusively within their own mind. Others tend to know things of a more external nature, such as visions of ghosts or *devas*, or visions of people and animals dying right in front of them. Practitioners who are not inclined to analyse their experiences carefully may come to a wrong understanding, believing what they see to be genuine. This could increase the likelihood of psychological damage in the future. It is crucial that they receive advice from a meditation-master with expertise in these matters.

Listening to *dhuta ga* bhikkhus as they related their meditation results to the Most Venerable Mun, and hearing him give advice on ways to deal with their experiences, was both moving and inspirational. In explaining the proper method for dealing with visions, the Most Venerable Mun categorised different types of *nimittas* and explained in great detail how each type should be handled. Hearing these discussions was both a valuable and joyous experience, both for those who were already well developed and those who were still struggling in their practice.

3.2.4 His Unlimited Loving Kindness (*mettā*)

⁷² Dhammasapha, **Cheevit-Garnngan-Lugtham Phra Acharn Mun Bhūridatto**, (Bangkok: Dhammasapha Printing, 1995), p. 170.

The biography of the Most Venerable Mun contains the following description of the way he would radiate loving kindness (*mettā*):

Most Venerable Mun said that he set aside three times each day to extend loving kindness to all living beings. He would do this while sitting in meditation at midday, before retiring in the evening, and after rising in the morning. In addition to that, there were many times during the day when he sent loving kindness out to specific individuals. When radiating all-encompassing loving kindness, he did so by focusing his *citta* exclusively inward and then directing the flow of his *citta* to permeate throughout all the worlds, both above and below, in all directions without interruption. At that time his *citta* had the power to extend its aura of brilliance to all worlds: limitless, all-pervasive, and brighter than a thousand suns—for there is nothing brighter than a heart that's entirely pure.⁷³

The Most Venerable Mun's loving kindness and compassion also manifested themselves in other ways. He had, for instance, no objection to other sects (*nikai*) coming to seek his teachings.

(1) Members of other *nikai*.

There are two monastic orders (*nikai*) in Thailand, the Dhammayuttikanikai and the Mahanikai. The Most Venerable Mun was a North-eastern monk of the Dhammayuttikanikai, which was established

⁷³ Bhikkhu Dick Silaratano, op. cit, p. 91.

in the North-east in 1851 A.D.⁷⁴ It was within this *nikai* that the *dhuta ga kammathāna* way was first practised. In 1919 A.D., the Most Venerable Mun's habit of travelling for *dhuta ga* began to influence monks of the Mahanikai, and many joined the Dhammayuttikanikai in order to follow the *dhuta ga kamma hāna* way of life.⁷⁵ In 1925, a big change took place at Wat Srichan, in Khon Kaen province, when it left the Mahanikai to become a Dhammayuttika temple, since all its monks had opted to become Dhammayuttika monks. These days, however, the *dhuta ga kamma hāna* is not inimical to either *nikai*, and the practice is to be found amongst monks of both orders.

(2) Helping laypeople in general :

Most Venerable Mun once visited a village called Bahn Thum in the district of Tha Khek on the other side of Mekong river in the kingdom of Laos. At that time, almost all of the people in the village were suffering from smallpox, with many people dying every day.⁷⁶ He advised the people that they should take refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sa gha, instead of worshipping ghosts and spirits. He taught them to pay homage to the Triple Gem twice a day. The people took his advice seriously. It is said that he also did something to help them from within his own inner practice. Whatever the case, it is also said

⁷⁴ Premvit Tokao, **The Establishment of Dhammayuttika Nikaya in the Northeastern Region**, (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 1991), p. 49.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p.132

⁷⁶ Siri Buddhasukh, op. cit, p. 62.

that thereafter no further people died, and that the infection miraculously disappeared as the sick people started to recover speedily.

(3) An incident involving two disguised tigers

An interesting incident occurred when the Most Venerable Mun was wandering with another bhikkhu amongst the hilltribes people. At one point, they stayed about two kilometers from a village, yet the villagers showed them no respect, save for giving him and his companion some cooked rice. The village headman spoke of them as “two disguised tigers” and told the villagers, during a meeting, to be on their guard since they were dangerous. They would go in groups of three or four each afternoon to observe the pair, without speaking a word to one another.

One night, during his meditation, the Most Venerable heard, or rather knew by means of his psychic powers, that the village headman was asking the groups of observers what faults they had found in the two monks. The observers reported unanimously that they were not able to find any fault whatsoever with the two “tigers,” adding that their own suspicions might be doing themselves more harm than good:⁷⁷ “If we keep thinking like this, it might be harmful to us. It would be better if we had a talk with them so that we can know them better.”⁷⁸

The Most Venerable Mun took great pity on the villagers, since they were being misled by their leader and a few others, and were

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 144.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

ignortant of what would happen to them as a result. He therefore decided to guide them in the practice of meditation, used the strategy of the method of repeating the word *Buddho*, at the same time asking them whilst doing so to try to find the “buddho” which had become lost within them. The Most Venerable’s instruction produced wonderful results, and much sooner than anyone would have expected. Not long afterwards, at least one man who was able to find the “buddho” through the ingenious method advocated.⁷⁹ From that time on, the villagers realised what the truth is and adopted the right attitude of mind towards him. The respect and reverence of the hilltribes people is strong and sincere, and they thereafter maintained the Most Venerable and his companion in well-being and comfort until their departure during April of the following year.

(4) Loving kindness for all living beings

The end of the rains retreat at Ban Nong Pheu, Sakon Nakhorn, saw an increasing number of senior disciples begin arriving from their own retreat locations to pay the Most Venerable Mun their respects and help look after his needs. By that time his condition was critical, and becoming more unstable by the day. Eventually, he one day called all his disciples together to remind them of the proper way to handle his impending death. He told them that, since his ordination as a monk, he had never for a moment considered doing harm to any animal, not to mention killing them. Compassion has always been the foundation of his conscious existence. He was continuously extending the spirit of loving-

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 146.

kindness and dedicating the fruits of his merit to all living beings without exception.

His illness had reached its final stage. He also told them:

I do not wish to die here at Ban Nong Pheu. If I die here, it will be necessary to slaughter large numbers of farm animals in order to feed all the people coming to my funeral. Villagers would become sinners. I do not want to see any animal lose the life it cherishes so dearly. I could never countenance having my own death become a source of enmity between myself and the world's animals. I want you to take me to Sakon Nakhon, so that I can die there. That town has a large marketplace, so my death should not affect the lives of so many animals.⁸⁰

Most Venerable Mun emphasised that monks should practise meditation in places that arouse fear, and avoid places that do not. He assured his monks that, unless they lived in an environment, which forced them to focus internally on themselves, they would find it difficult to attain a stable state of calm and their meditation practice would suffer accordingly. On the other hand, the results were bound to be good in places where they were always alert to the possibility of danger, since mindfulness—the skillful means for directing the effort—was inevitably close at hand. No one who genuinely hopes to transcend *dukkha* should succumb to the fear of death while living in what are imagined to be

⁸⁰ Phra Rajadhammacetiacharn, op. cit, p. 300.

frightening places, such as remote areas in the wilderness. When faced with a situation involving a real crisis, the focus of attention should be kept on Dhamma, and not outside the sphere of one’s own body and mind. In any case, unless that person’s *kamma* dictates that his time is up, he will not die at that time—no matter what he thinks:

Most Venerable Mun taught his disciples that becoming firmly established in the practice means putting everything on the line—both body and mind. Whatever occurs, allow nature to take its course. Everyone who is born must die—such is the nature of this world. There’s no point in trying to resist it. Truth cannot be found by denying the natural order of things. Most Venerable Mun taught that a monk must be resolute and brave in the face of death. He was particularly interested in having his disciples live in isolated wilderness areas infested with wild animals. Such places encourage the development of *samādhi* and intuitive wisdom.”⁸¹

Most Venerable Mun said that his inspiration for meditation was derived almost exclusively from living in dangerous environments, which is why he liked to teach his disciples to be disciplined in threatening situations. Instead of merely relying on something vague like “inherent virtuous tendencies,” they had a chance to realise their aspirations in the shortest possible time. Relying on the rather vague concept of virtuous tendencies from the past is more likely to suppress mindfulness and wisdom than to promote them.

⁸¹ Bhikkhu Dick Silaratano, op. cit, p. 95.

One prominent aspect of the Most Venerable Mun’s teaching, which he stressed continuously during his career, was the Dhamma of the five powers: faith, diligent effort, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. Faith (*saddhā*) denotes faith in the Dhamma that the Lord Buddha rediscovered and presented to the world. There is no doubt that each of us in this world is perfectly capable of receiving the light of Dhamma—provided we practise correctly and earnestly. We all accept the fact that we have to die. The key issue is: will we die defeated by the cycle of the *kilesas* and the cycle of *kamma* and its results, or we will overcome them.

Most Venerable Mun’s own personal interpretation of the five powers is found in his biography. This is what he himself used in his own practice, and also taught to his disciples:

If we are to die victorious, like the Lord Buddha and the Arahants, then we must practice with the same faith, effort, and forbearance as they did. We must be mindful in all our bodily and mental activities, as they were. We must take our task very seriously and not waver uncertainly like someone facing a crisis without mindfulness to anchor him. We should establish our hearts firmly in those causes that give rise to the satisfactory results that the Buddha himself attained. The *sāsana* is the teaching of a great sage who taught people that they too can develop wisdom in all its many aspects. So we should reflect on what he taught. We should not wallow in stupidity, living our

whole lives in ignorance. No one considers the word “stupid” to be a compliment. Stupid people are no use. Adults, children, even animals—if they are stupid, they are hardly any use at all. So if we remain stupid, who’s going to admire us for it? We should all analyze this matter thoroughly to avoid remaining bogged down in ignorance. Wallowing in ignorance is not the way to overcome *dukkha*, and it is definitely not becoming for a *dhuta ga* monk, who is expected to skillfully analyze everything.⁸²

The Most Venerable Mun’s Dhamma-explanations were tailored to fit the individual needs of his students. When he determined that a student was practising correctly, he encouraged him to increase his efforts. But when he felt that someone’s meditation was faulty or potentially dangerous, he pointed this out as a way of encouraging the student to practice correctly.

3.2.5 The Method of Walking *Ca kama* (Thai: *jonggrom*)

In the Most Venerable Mun’s meditation practice, one can choose any of the four postures: walking (*ca kama*), standing, sitting, or lying down. One may find one of them is the more suited to one’s own temperaments than the others. Different people have different temperaments. One can use any of these four postures at different times.

⁸² Ibid., pp. 101-102.

Indeed, changing one's posture keeps the body fit for maintaining one's practice.

Most Venerable Mun gives the following instructions for practising walking meditation correctly:

Firstly, the direction of the compass in which the *ca kama* path is created, and its length, are as follows: the Most Venerable Mun determined that the direction of the *ca kama* path should be from east to west, although this may vary slightly, straying as far as one leading from north-east to south-west, or from south-east to north-west. Under no circumstance should it exceed these limits. The length of the path should accord with what is suitable. He did not give any fixed ruling on this, and one must therefore decide for oneself what is reasonable. Normally it should be about twenty paces long, although there is no fixed limit. He also said that it should not be less than ten paces long for those occasions when one cannot find a longer and more suitable place. Generally speaking, a path of between twenty and thirty paces is considered most suitable. He made a special point of keeping to the above mentioned limits of direction, never deviating from this unless he had no other alternative, and taught the bhikkhus and novices to practise in this way also.⁸³

⁸³ Paññāva ho Bhikkhu, op. cit, pp. 357-358.

Before practicing walking meditation, one should decide on how long or how short a distance one will cover, and from which direction to the other. One may need to clear a path in order to prepare it, making it as long as one wishes, before one making use of it.

The researcher used to walk beside the path of the Most Venerable Mun at Wat Pa Acharn Mun, Amphur Phrao, Chiang Mai, whose length is that of women’s forty paces. Most Venerable Mun also advocated that one should walk parallel to the path taken by the sun throughout the day, or between the two limits already cited above.⁸⁴ In her experience, she found that failing to follow the sun’s path resulted in headache.

In walking *can kama*, one should, in the first instance, go to one end of the place, or the prepared path, where one will walk, put one’s hands together and raise them to one’s forehead in *pūjā*. One should then recollect the virtues of the Triple Gem—the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sa gha—to which one goes for refuge, a refuge which is firmly implanted in one’s heart. One should next recollect the virtues of one’s mother and father, one’s preceptor (*upajjhāya*), one’s teacher, and all others who have been of value to one. Then one should reflect on the goal of the practice which one is about to perform, and how one should do it with determination to reach that goal. Following this, one should lower one’s hands and set them before one, the right hand over the left, just below the level of the navel—as one sees in

those images of the Buddha which depict him in contemplation—and then develop the four *brahmavihāras*. Finally, one should lower one’s eyes in a modest manner, set up mindfulness so as to become aware of the *citta*, and that Dhamma which one usually uses as a preparatory method (*parikamma*) to control the heart, or else investigate the various things one has been doing in other situations, such as sitting.⁸⁵

Much emphasis is placed on the importance of walking in a controlled manner, while remaining mindful of the *parikamma*, such as the word “Buddho” or the Dhamma which one is investigating, and not let one’s *citta* depart from the work which one is presently doing. One should not allow oneself to be distracted and look about the area while one is walking.

One can determine for oneself what amount of time one will spend walking, for walking is only one of the four postures. Using all four postures, at different times, is valuable, not only for suppressing the *kilesas*, but also maintaining mindfulness of the current posture. Moreover, changing one’s bodily posture from time to time mindfully keeps the body fit and able to do the work effectively. If one does not look after it in various ways, the body-mind complex can become an enemy of its owner.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 360.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 361.

The *dhuta ga* monk considers the practice of walking meditation to be not only a duty, but also a fundamental part of his life, and he will generally walk for at least one hour on each occasion, though he should decide to remain walking longer than normal, should he notice any deceptive *kilesas* creeping in. Under normal circumstances, he will commence walking after he has finished his morning meal and stop at around 11.00 a.m. or noon. He will then resume walking at around 1.00 or 2.00 p.m., and continue until it is time to sweep the surrounding ground where he is staying and bathe. With such duties completed, he will then recommence his walking meditation, stopping around 7.00 or 8.00 p.m. in the winter, though at other times may continue up until 10.00 or 11.00 p.m., after which he will return to his dwelling and practise sitting meditation.

3.2.6 The Method of Sitting Meditation

It is taught that, when engaging in the practice of *samādhībhāvanā*, one should sit in the *samādhi* posture with the legs crossed. The folded right leg should be placed on top of the left, with the hands placed on the lap, the right hand above the left. The body should be upright, without bending either forwards or backwards, or inclining to the right or the left, to any marked degree beyond that which is normal and natural. No part of the body should be under abnormal pressure or tense. It should be relaxed.

After the meditation practice has started, it is considered important to keep the attention on the meditation practice alone. Being concerned with maintaining the correct bodily posture indicates a concern for the body, rather than for the *citta*, and the practice will not proceed smoothly. Once one has started *cittabhāvanā*, one should concentrate on doing the work of the *citta* until one reaches the time for ending the practice.

When one first commences *cittabhāvanā*, one should establish awareness, which means the *citta* pays full attention to what one is doing, and be careful not to let the *citta* move away towards emotional attachments (*āramma a*) of various kinds. In this way, one can come to know clearly of anything that happens to the *citta*, and of any changes or alteration in the various kinds of mental objects of emotional attachment (*dhammāramma a*). This involves establishing the *citta* by way of full attention to what one is doing with mindfulness (*sati*). Mindfulness

entails that the heart has a fully conscious state of knowing, and it is this that keeps one mindful of the work in hand.

When doing *bhāvanā* with a preparatory method (*parikamma*), one should do so with whatever method is suited to one's nature, rather than one that is opposed to it. One should adopt whatever aspect of Dhamma feels right and harmonious, and continue with that as one's *parikammabhāvanā* as explained earlier.

When attending to one's *parikammabhāvanā*, one should not speculate or imagine what results should, or might, arise from it. One should not let the *citta* wander and become fascinated by other objects of attachment, and chase after them. The right way is to set up the *citta* with constant mindfulness here and now in the present with the *parikamma* word as the only object of attention. Those who practise *bhāvanā* should keep their attention and interest entirely on their *parikamma* work. While sitting in the practice of *parikamma bhāvanā*, they should not be concerned about the way they are sitting, once they have initially set their sitting posture correctly. The goal which they truly aim for is to be found in the *bhāvanā*, not in the sitting posture. It is by attending closely to the *bhāvanā* work alone that the *citta* becomes calm, and that the meditative practitioner comes to know of all the causes and results affecting oneself that are relevant to the main purpose in hand.

3.2.7 The Practice of *Dhuta ga*

The five *kamma hāna*, and the thirteen *dhuta gas*, play an important role in the path of progress which the Most Venerable Mun taught. When teaching the monks, he laid great stress on the *dhuta ga* observances, and on the importance of living in isolated places, such as forests, hills, caves and overhanging cliffs. In the *Visuddhimagga*, a monk on the path of *sīla* (morality) should practise strict ascetic practices which allow him to shake off, or remove, defilement during the practice of calm and insight meditation. The *dhuta ga* observances are therefore adopted as a means training by monks who favour living peacefully in the forest, and are described in detail by Buddhaghosa in the *Dhuta ganiddesa* of his *Visuddhimagga*.⁸⁶

The ascetic practices, which are thirteen in number, are generally divided into the following four groups:

1. The group connected with robes (*cīvarapa isa yutta*).
2. The group connected with alms-food (*pi apāta-pa isa yutta*).
3. The group connected with the resting place (*senāsana-pa isa yutta*).

⁸⁶ *Vism.* II. 1-90 (Buddha Bharati, 1988); Ñā amoli, **The Path of Purification**, (Kandy: BPS, 1979), pp. 59-83, quoted in Phramaha Narong Cherdzungnoen, *op. cit.*, pp. 206-208.

4. The group connected with energy (*viriyapa isa yutta*), which contains only one member, viz. that of the *nesajjika ga*.

Each of the thirteen observances is capable of subjugating the *kilesas* for all practitioners. The following six are elucidated in “The mode of practice of Venerable Acharn Mun”:⁸⁷

- a. Dwelling under the shade of a tree.
- b. Going on *pi apāta* as a regular duty.
- c. Eating from the bowl.
- d. Eating only once a day.
- e. Using only *pa sukūla* robes.
- f. Not accepting any food given after the *pi apāta* round.

Most Venerable Mun used to praise the practice of staying under the shade of a tree, in a manner that left a deep impression on those who heard him. He used to say that:

If my monks want to know about themselves, both in regard to what is gross and subtle, and to have confidence in their own abilities, such that they know whether or not they are monks who practise the way in full measure, they ought to go and take up the practice of *rukkhamūla*, living under the shade of a tree in a desolate forest which is full of tigers and other wild animals to keep them alert. In addition, this will test them, and show to what extent they are skilled and fearless, and also the extent to which they are incompetent and timid, until they know fully, in

⁸⁷ Bhikkhu Dick Silaratano, op. cit, p. 123.

all ways, what is meant by “living *rukkhamūla*”, which was established by the Lord Buddha.⁸⁸

Most Venerable Mun said that this had brought him remarkable results. He believed that one who lives the way of *rukkhamūla* is much more careful and cautious than someone who lives in a place that is enclosed, both as regards physical movements involved in his living routine, and in lying down and sleeping, as well as in his *samādhi* meditation practice. Consequently his *citta* is likely to progress more rapidly.

Of the morning alms round, he said:

Pi apāta is an essential duty for those monks who are ordained as sons of the Sākya in the Buddha’s Sa gha. The Buddha himself performed this duty. If we who are his subsequent disciples do not do so, it means that we are better than the Buddha. That would be unorthodox (Thai: nog-reet, nog-kroo).⁸⁹

He would teach them the way the robes should be worn and how they should behave in a proper, controlled manner. Not looking here and there, but looking in a self-controlled manner, they should remain quiet, modest and have mindfulness present at every movement, whilst their hearts should review the Dhamma it has been their habitual practice to develop.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 126.

⁸⁹ Dhammasapha, op. cit, p. 198.

*Pi apāta*⁹⁰ is always considered to be a very important duty for the *dhuta ga* monk who follows the method of the Most Venerable Mun, who should never overlook to perform it, save when there is no need to eat food. He taught that, when going on *pi apāta*, they should make an effort to work internally without letting up, both while going out and returning to the place where they were staying, while they were arranging their food, putting it into the bowl and eating it with the hand. Before eating, they should thoughtfully examine it, repeating the words *pa isa khā yoniso*,⁹¹ and so on, with whatever skill each one has. This should be done for at least one minute before beginning to eat in a modest manner, being mindful of both oneself and the bowl.

The various methods of training and asceticism, which each individual uses to develop his *citta*, are individually selected in accordance with need and ability. All *dhuta ga* monks in the lineage of the Most Venerable Mun, however, have always followed his method of practice in its entirety, right up to the present time.

The ascetic practices are not regarded as essential training rules in the Vinaya. Their practice is optional, and depends upon decision of the individual monk. The *Phra Kammatthan* should carefully consider which, if any, ascetic practices generates progress in his particular case.

⁹⁰ Thai : *binthabart*—the morning alms round to get food in the bowl.

⁹¹ These are the first two words of a short stanza in Pāli, which in summary goes; “I reflect on this *pi apāta* food, that it is not for pleasure, strength, beauty etc.,but in the practice of Dhamma.etc.,but in the practice of Dhamma.

3.3 Muttothai Preaching

Most Venerable Mun once gave a discourse on Dhamma at Wat Chedi Luang, Chiang Mai Province. Chao Khun Upāli praised his talk, in which he had clarified the concept of *muttodaya* (the heart released). This Dhamma-preaching, which contains seventeen topics, has come to be known in Thai simply as *Muttothai*.

Most Venerable stated that our practice is not simply a theoretical study, but also consists in training our hearts to eliminate the corruptions (*uppakilesa*). We should train ourselves well before attempting to train someone else. If a person attempts to propagate the Dhamma without having first mastered it himself, a bad reputation concerning him will spread to the four quarters, in that he has failed to follow the example set by the Lord Buddha and all the noble disciples of the past.⁹²

The root inheritance, the starting capital for self-training, is our physical body, whose source is the combination of the generative elements of the mother (*na*) and father (*mo*). Moreover, when one rearranges the above syllables, one arrives at the term *mano*, or the heart.

We then have a body together with a heart, and this is sufficient for forming the root foundation for practice. The root-cause (*hetu*) that acts as the primal sustaining factor (*paccaya*) for all things in the cosmos is nothing other than the heart (*mano*).

He also spoke of the root instigator of the cycle of death and rebirth as follows:

*hītibhūta avijjāpaccayasa khārā...upādāna ...bhavo...jāti*⁹³

in which *hītibhūta* denotes the primal mind. When the primal mind is imbued with delusion, its sustaining factor is a lack of awareness. Once there is a lack of awareness, it gives rise to the *sa khārā*, or mental fashioning, together with the act of clinging to them, which, in turn, give rise to further becoming and rebirth. If we are to sever the cycle of death and rebirth, we must train the primal instigator so as to develop awareness, and become alert to all sustaining factors for what they really are. Human beings occupy a supreme position in their ability to attain the path, fruit, and nibbāna.

The Buddha established the *satipa hāna* as the fortress in which one can practise and train oneself. Those who go into battle with the enemy that is defilement must start by maintaining the body as their frame of reference, since when sensual passions and so on arise, they do so both in the body and the mind, after which we should then investigate things as they really are by way of *vipassanā*. *Vipassanā* provides a technique for uprooting the defilements by seeing that the body is both foul (*asubha*) and repulsive (*pa ikūla*).

At the beginning, all earnest meditators should therefore pay methodical attention to the body (*yonisomanasikāra*). In working at it

⁹² Thanissaro Bhikkhu, **A Heart Released**, (Kuala Lumpur: Wisdom Audio Visual Exchange, 2001), p. 2.

repeatedly, we should also be mindful, continuing our observation of the body in all places and at all times, whether sitting, standing, walking, or lying down, whether eating, drinking, working, speaking, or thinking—we should at all times have all-round mindfulness of the present.⁹⁴

Once you have a clear understanding of the body, you should then consider analysing it into its constituent elements of earth, water, fire, and wind. The entire world will, in time, come to be seen as nothing but elements. With this vision, there arises that insight consisting of knowledge and vision of things as they really are (*yathābhūtañā a-dassanavipassanā*).⁹⁵

At this juncture, the Most Venerable Mun then explained to the final goal of liberation (*vimuttidhamma*):

*Pabhassaram ida bhikkhave citta tañ ca kho āgantukehi
upakkilesehi upakkili ha*

(this mind, monks, is radiant, yet it is corrupted by adventitious defilements):⁹⁶

So meditators should seek to develop the mind at its primal level, so that all counterfeits can be destroyed. Or rather, so that all counterfeit things will not be able to reach into the primal mind, since the bridge providing the connection will have been destroyed. Even though the mind may, thereafter, still have to come into contact with worldly concerns,

⁹³ Ibid., p. 6.

⁹⁴ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, op. cit, p. 11.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 12.

such contact will be similar to that of a bead of water rolling over a lotus leaf.

He concluded the discourse by reminding those present of the importance of the practice of mindfulness:

*Ekāyano aya bhikkhave maggo sattāna visuddhiyā
sokaparidevāna samatikkamāya, dukkhadomanassāna
attha gamāya ñāyassa adhigamāya, nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya,
yadida cattāro satipa hānā.* (This path is the sole vehicle,
monks, for the purification of beings, for transcending sorrow
and lamentation, for bringing suffering and dejection to an end,
for attaining the method, for the realization of nibbāna, that is to
say, the four foundations of mindfulness).⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 15.

⁹⁷ D. II. 290; DB.II. 327 (PTS-1989), quoted in Phramaha Narong Cherdungnoen, op. cit, p. 35.

Chapter IV

The Impact of the Most Venerable Mun's Method of Practice

4.1 The Impact on Thailand

Throughout the period 1917-1948, any monk who came to hear of the Most Venerable Mun's attainment of arahantship, and who were themselves aiming at the cessation of suffering, would seek him out and ask him to teach and train them. In those days, because of the difficulties of travel, one had to go to a great amount of trouble in trying to find him. Anyone who did manage to achieve this therefore placed great faith in what he told them.⁹⁸ His fine appearance and the manner in which he spoke were greatly appreciated.⁹⁹

The mode of practice of the *dhuta ga kamma hāna* monks has long been favoured within the Dhammayuttikanikai. As knowledge of the Most Venerable Mun's method of practice became more widespread, numerous monks within the Mahanikai also became his disciples. A

⁹⁸ Phra Acharn Goo, **Dhammanaya**, (Bangkok: Samphan Phaniich Co. Ltd., 1953), p. 7.

⁹⁹ Phrakoo Nanadhapannaporn, **Biography and Dhamma-ovaat**, (Bangkok: Mitchareon Printing Co. Ltd., 1990), p. 15.

notable example is Venerable Chah¹⁰⁰, a Mahanikai monk, but one who adopted the Most Venerable Mun's method of practice after receiving advice from him at Wat Ban Nong Pheu Nanai, Pannanikom, Sakon Nakhon Province, in the year of 1947 (BE 2490).¹⁰¹ He was to become the most famous *kamma hāna* monk, both within the Mahanikai here in Thailand as well as overseas.

The monks whom the Most Venerable Mun trained always entertained deep feelings of affection for him. This was their way of rewarding him for his playing the role of the good teacher, and his disciples have had a profound effect on the tradition of the *dhuta ga kamma hāna* monk as a whole. The *Phra Kammatthan* of the Most Venerable Mun's lineage pay great respect to their teachers, or acharns (*ācariya*). They act very modestly and obediently where their acharns are concerned. This tradition established by the Most Venerable Mun has been continuously practised up to the present day.

4.1.1 Following the Most Venerable Mun's Method of Practice

The Most Venerable Mun's method of practice includes Dhamma-teachings and various methods of training both body and mind. In following his teaching, his disciples train their minds to attain

¹⁰⁰ Phra Bodhiyan Thera was the founder of Wat Nong Pah Pong, a forest monastery in Ubolrajadhani province.

¹⁰¹ Phramaha Norong Cherdungnoen, op. cit, pp. 243-244.

samādhi, and then go on to *vipassanā* to reach the final goal. Mind is said to have the “monkey’s habit”. It never stops moving. Meditative practice in the four postures is not enough to tie it down sufficiently for one’s attaining one’s objectives. In order to help them in their training, the *dhuta ga kamma hāna* monks of the Most Venerable Mun’s lineage emphasise the fourteen *khandhavatta* (or the group of duties) and the thirteen *dhuta gas* (or ascetic practices).

The relevant duties (*khandhavatta*) are to be performed under the following circumstances:¹⁰²

1. By a monk when he visits a monastery or a dwelling-place
2. By a resident monk in a monastery or dwelling-place
3. By a monk who is leaving a residence
4. By chanting thanksgiving after receiving food or other gifts
5. At the place where food is eaten
6. During the alms round
7. By a monk dwelling in the forest
8. In the dwelling-place (*senāsana*)
9. In the washroom (lit: fire-room)
10. In the toilet
11. By the preceptor (*upajjhāya*) for his follower
12. By a monk for his preceptor
13. By a teacher for his pupil
14. By a pupil for his teache

¹⁰² Pa va ho Bhikkhu, **Patipada or The mode of practice of Venerable Acharn Mun**, (Bangkok: Ruen-Kae Press, 1997), p. 547.

Dhuta ga practices are capable of subjugating all kinds of defilements (*kilesa*): *dhuta ga kamma hāna* monks emphasize the importance of the thirteen *dhuta ga* on the following occasions:¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Ibid., p.123.

1. Dwelling under the shade of a tree.
2. Going on an alms round (*pi apāta*) as a regular duty
3. Eating from the alms bowl
4. Eating only once a day, at one sitting
5. Using only three robes
6. Not accepting any food given after the alms round during rains' retreat

The decision as to which type of ascetic training is to be employed will take into account each person's character, since this will help determine which method(s) are suited to that person, and enable him to gain strength of heart.

This is seen as a way of preserving the Buddha's own method of teaching his disciples. Meditation practice, when conjoined with the *dhuta gas*, enables the practitioner to control his behaviour more easily and develop calm and wisdom.

The method of bodily and mental training advocated by the Most Venerable Mun may be compared with the method of study, both in theory and practice, in a university. In this case, however, the university is the Dhamma. The forests and jungles, the high mountains, the caves, together with the various places of seclusion, form the site of the university founded by the Buddha.

The Most Venerable Mun's school represents a campus of the Buddha's university. In this type of university, it occupies no fixed site.

The schedule of teaching and learning is flexible, involving natural teaching aids, and is free of charge. The curriculum consists of the meditative methods, the fourteen *khandhavatta*, and the thirteen *dhuta ga* practices. It is “learning by doing”. The specific *dhuta ga* of wandering (*doen thudong*) is like “on the job training”; one learns by putting one’s life at stake. Life or death depends on previous bodily and mental training gained while wandering alone, or in-groups.

4.1.2 The Tradition of *Kamma hāna* Monks

The *kammaṭṭhāna* monk uses various ways to render his heart courageous. This is sometimes achieved by going on a fast, by refraining from lying down, by going up into the hills, staying in a cave or under overhanging cliffs, and at other times by sitting in *samādhi* to discipline his desire to indulge in thinking and imagine various pleasures. The method must be used to the extent that it will result in his ability to relax and live contentedly day after day.

Generally speaking, *kamma hāna* monks will train in the method described above, until such time as they attain a higher level of *citta* that will bring them constant satisfaction.

Wherever he stays, whether in the forest, in the hills under an overhanging cliff, in the jungle, or on a mountainside, the *kammaṭṭhāna* monk will look for a place that arouses fear, in order to encourage the effort necessary to do his work more easily.

Even when using other methods to train themselves, such monks should do so with the confidence derived from having seen the results of what has already been achieved. This allows them go on increasing their efforts to progress in the development of the *citta* and the Dhamma, until they reach the goal that their hearts long for.

As a consequence, the training of the mind, or of oneself, which the *dhuta ga kamma hāna* monks undertake, takes many different kinds, depending on which suits their different temperaments. But generally, the methods which each of them uses will be those which have produced results in the past. They should therefore continue working with those methods constantly, rather than any others.

It is now appropriate to examine some of those practices and methods in greater detail.

4.1.2.1 Methods of Practice

Normally, when the *kammaṭṭhāna* monks go anywhere, they like to travel in the *dhuta ga* way, which means going about on foot all the time. They walk up one hill, climb another, search for a place to stay and practise the *bhāvanā* that suits their temperament. They do their practice in a silent way that the others do not know about.

While some stay at the *vihāra*, others look for a suitable place in the forest, outside the monastery, where they can perform their *ca kama* and sit in *samādhībhāvanā* whenever they feel like it, both in the daytime and at night. After the end of the rains' retreat, many of them like to go out far away from the monastery and find a place where they can hang their umbrella-tents (*glod*) and where it is suitable for the work of self-development. But when it is time for sweeping the paths and clearings¹⁰⁴ and for doing other routine functions of various kinds, including going on their alms round and eating food, they will normally come and join in with the others.

These monks do not fix their times for walking *ca kama* and sitting in *samādhībhāvanā*, for as soon as they are free they just start doing it. Some of them sometimes walk from dawn to dusk, whereas, at other times, they may walk from between two to seven hours.

Doing the sitting practice, the beginner can sit for about one hour and then gradually increase the time, as he gains more skill and ability concerning *citta*. But those who have become used to sitting can do so for a long time and the more the *citta* has the ground of *samādhi*, or wisdom, the longer they can sit. Each time they may sit for between three and eight hours, and sometimes all night; but walking *ca kama*, or sitting in *samādhībhāvanā*, for three to five hours is considered normal by those who are used to it and do it regularly.

¹⁰⁴ It is normally done at about 3 or 4 p.m. everyday.

It is much the same with those who give up lying down, who reduce the amount of food they take, or those who go on a fast, for they are all methods of leading them to calm and happiness. For those who find that fasting suits them, however long they go on to fast their minds become increasingly calm and clear and their level steadily increases and becomes more subtle. Calm is then attained much more quickly and easily than usual and, when they withdraw from it to contemplate by way of wisdom, their minds will be skilful, agile and daring, and whatever they investigate they can penetrate throughout just as the mind wishes. As for hunger and tiredness, instead of being a source of trouble or suffering for the body and mind, these instead provide a smooth and pleasant way for them to progress. The meditative practitioners whose nature is suited to this kind of practice that points out the good results they bring.

Those who reduce their food intake find that eating only a little make all parts of the body become light. Its strength decreases so that it no longer bother the *citta*, which makes the practice of *bhāvanā* easier and the attainment of calm quicker than it normally would take.

Most Venerable Mun taught all his followers about the importance of monks not becoming the teacher teaching the others.

Before anyone can become a teacher, he must first teach himself, so that the mind will have gain a firm controlling principle, which is able to look after and protect one. Then, wherever he goes, he will be neither a danger to himself, nor harmful to others. As for being of value to others,

this will follow on naturally when such a person has gained a ground or basis in the Dhamma.

With such an attitude, the *dhuta ga kamma hāna* teachers become experienced in all, or almost all, aspects of practice.

4.1.2.2 Listening to Dhamma-teaching

It was a characteristic of the Most Venerable Mun's method of revealing Dhamma that he would not normally repeat lines of talk which he had already used in the past.

When one listened to the Dhamma-teaching of the Venerable teacher, if one listened for the sake of the Dhamma and the truth. Opening one's mind to deep knowledge and true reasoning, without holding oneself back and letting the *kilesas* of conceited opinions (*ditṭhimāna*) obstruct and influence the Dhamma which he revealed. Then the Dhamma that one heard would go to one's mind. While listening to him, his Dhamma could cure the *kilesas* one after another, as though one were going straight up a flight of stairs.

When the Venerable teacher taught Dhamma to those monks who practised the way and who were close to him, he would teach in a manner that went directly to the truth of causes and their effects. He did not mince his words, but rather wrap them up nicely. He would range through all the various levels of *samādhi*, all the grounds of wisdom, and all three of the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*).

While listening to the Most Venerable Mun giving a Dhamma-talk, those whose *cittas* had reached the ground of wisdom would have been in a fit state to be able to analyse and see the implications of all that he said while following the lead given by him. This entailed that, once the Most Venerable Mun's Dhamma had prepared the ground, they would see clearly, which would then lead to wisdom destroying the *kilesas*. Those who listened to, and analysed, what the Venerable Acharn said would, therefore, upon listening to further Dhamma-talk on a future occasion, make further inroads into the *kilesas*, and thus, in time, become free of all of them.

When an *acharn*, one who practices the way, asks his followers, immediately after he has given them a Dhamma-talk, whether they made any sense of it, he is asking whether they attained a sense of peace and calm, or whether they received any insight. He is not asking them whether they had taken note of what he said and could remember the meaning of the Dhamma, which he had revealed, although some of it might have filtered into their memories, which they could then easily recall later. It is not necessary that one be able to remember, or recall.

The important thing is to set up one's *citta* so as to attend with awareness present right there and then, while listening, and have mindfulness accompany the *citta* with the inward knowledge of self. The flow of the Most Venerable's display of the Dhamma enters and makes contact with this act of knowing. Whereupon one will clearly hear, and listen to, every word, rather than sending the *citta* outwards to receive the Dhamma. Then, while listening, other emotionally-charged sense-stimuli will not interfere and cause trouble, nor will the *citta* go out and become

involved with external things which arouse interest, and which agitate the mind, making it dull and inert. So there is just the contact of *citta* and Dhamma, one with another, whereupon the *citta* will tend to become calm of its own accord.

The experience starts from a state of calm and happiness and proceeds to a state of brightness and clarity of wisdom that can, on each occasion, enable one to get rid of some, or other, of the *kilesas*, depending on the level one has already reached. This is what the Most Venerable Mun meant by “getting the meaning” while listening to a Dhamma-talk. It may happen many times over, up until the point at which one can finally reach the end of the *kilesas* and know all Dhamma at the same moment. This is what he called “getting the whole meaning”.

Generally speaking, when *dhuta ga kamma hāna* monks listen to Dhamma, they “get the meaning”. They set up the intention to “get the meaning” in which the mind and Dhamma come together and result in a state of calm and clear vision. Because of this, they become so still that it seems almost as if nobody is there.

If anyone present had an unresolved problem, they could raise the issue either before, or after, the Dhamma-talk, when the teacher would explain and resolve the problem. When there were no further questions, or issues to be discussed, all present would pay their respects, and the meeting would finish.

The Dhamma-talk would last three or four hours, after which, if any of disciples had any problems that were appropriate, they could

respectfully, ask the Most Venerable to help point out the solution to the problem. After this they would disperse, each one returning to the place where he was staying. Some would then go to walk on their *ca kama* paths to ease the stiffness from having sat for a long time, and to remove the *kilesas* from their minds, using whatever method resulted in their mindfulness and wisdom being strong. They would probably go on walking for several hours before stopping and going to have a rest.

4.1.2.3 Discussions of Dhamma

The Dhamma conversations between *kamma hāna* monks are really praiseworthy, because the intention is to pick up hints and teachings concerning the True Dhamma which each can contribute. For they talk at the ground level (*bhūmi*) of their *cittas* and of the Dhamma that arises out of the *cittabhāvanā* which they have been practicing. So they may talk about *kha ikasamādhi*, *upacārasamādhi*, or *appanāsamādhi*, depending on the level their practice has reached. And if they have any doubts, they ask one another, during which those who understand can clarify matters, one by one, until full understanding is reached.

It is much the same in the case of *paññā*, which, like *samādhi*, has different levels. For, if any of the monks has a problem concerning *paññā* at the particular level that they are currently investigating. They cannot get beyond this. Some other monk who does understand it will explain it step by step, until the former understands in the same manner as all the other levels he has already understood.

These Dhamma conversations amongst *kamma hāna* monks take place in accordance with the various levels of Dhamma. They are quite delightful, because the questions come out of the heart of the questioner who has been doing the practice and has experienced various things, and the answer also comes from the heart of one who has done the practice and experienced similar sorts of things. Both of them have seen for themselves the true facts which have come from their practice, and this provides an opportunity for them to go on gaining more and more from it. They keep passing on what they know to others, since each practises differently and knows about different aspects of the practice, both internally and externally.

Discussions of Dhamma generally revolve around the results of the practice which they have experienced, which in turn derives from the level of attainment that they have reached, and also around the various locations in which they have done the practice. This is the way in which their knowledge and vision by way of the heart are mutually passed on and shared.

4.1.2.4 Respect and Reverence for One's Teachers and for One another

It is a tradition amongst *kamma hāna* monks to have great respect and reverence for their leaders. If, when eating food, the leader has not started eating, the others will wait until he has begun. If the

teacher or the chief monk is not present, they will wait until someone more senior starts eating, before they do.

Kamma hāna monks know all about each other, both inwardly and outwardly. They know the whereabouts of one another, in which districts of which province they are staying, and the number of monks and novices residing with them. This is because they frequently keep in touch with one another. They have faith and respect for the senior teachers, and enjoy visiting them, paying them respect, and training in Dhamma under them. They come for instruction on a regular basis, such that there is hardly a time when there is no monk staying with their teacher. As soon as one leaves, another arrives, both during the dry season and the rainy season, excepting only the period of the rains' retreat, when this becomes difficult for those living far away. Those who live close enough to visit each other will probably go with great frequency to see the teacher and learn about Dhamma in an attitude of faith and reverence. The need to visit, pay homage, and listen to the various forms of teaching of the teachers whenever the time is appropriate, is looked on as a custom amongst *kamma hāna* monks which goes back right to the inception of their tradition.

The need for such frequent visits stems from the many questions and other issues which regularly arise from their *cittabhāvanā*, and can only be dealt with by a teacher who has gone through the same things himself. So they learn Dhamma from the heart of the teachers such that it becomes their own Dhamma. It would not even be wrong to say that there

is a transmission from one heart to another, for this is, in fact, what happens.

When monks who practise in the same manner come together and stay with the teachers, wherever they may be living, there are bound to be opportunities for training, as well as discussions and consultations. Anyone who has a personal problem can inform the teachers and get their guidance whenever a suitable opportunity presents itself. When the teachers have explained and cleared up some problem such that the monk fully understands the matter, the latter will then go and practise accordingly and try to consolidate his knowledge and understanding, and the practical application of the teachers recommendations. If further problems arise later, he can again go and get them cleared up.

Generally, those who practise consult their teachers, and seek their advice, from the very initial stages of their training in *bhāvanā* right up to the highest levels. Thus, whenever their *bhāvanā* gives rise to some knowledge or experience of any sort, they go to tell the teacher so that he can then explain more about it. In this way, their mindfulness and wisdom increase with each visit, just as they become able to gradually correct any faults, at each level of both their *samādhi*, and their wisdom.

The *dhuta ga* monks who follow in the lineage of the Most Venerable Mun have great faith and reverence for their teachers, and try to overcome each problem as it arises, since to hold on to their doubts and let them pile up would delay their progress, or it might even present a danger to them. The respect and reverence for their teachers greatly assist

the disciples in achieving various attainments. However, listening to them is only the first step—they have themselves to put into practice what they have heard, so that they can share in their teachers' wealth.

4.1.2.5 Behaving Frugally

The *dhuta ga* monks, especially those who follow the Most Venerable Mun, always tend to be economical with their possessions and use of things. The Most Venerable Mun was never wasteful.¹⁰⁵ He never used the requisites in an ostentatious way, and consistently maintained such practices. But when it came to giving help to other monks, he was ever ready to give all of whatever he had to the fullest possible extent. He never held anything back, nor did he ever accumulate things. He would give away whatever he had to help the monks, novices, and lay followers, and any others who came to see him.

As for the requisites and other things that he himself wore and used, he acted like a true monk, as if he had nothing of any value on him at all. His three robes and bathing cloth were all worn and torn and one could see that they were made up of bits and pieces patched and sewn together. In fact, the Most Venerable was probably the first to act in this way in recent times, for he tried to keep on patching and mending his robes until there was hardly anything but the patches left. When the robe finally became unfit to wear, he still would not throw it away, but used it first as a towel or as foot rags, and afterwards for other things where it would still be of some value. Only when it was so torn to bits that there was nothing more that one could do with it, would he agree to throw it away.

¹⁰⁵ Paññāva ho Bhikkhu, op. cit, p. 411.

Similarly, whenever any of the other things in the monastery became damaged, he would mend them and put them to some new purpose, until they finally reached a state beyond recovery.

In looking after his possessions and the other things he used, either in the monastery or in his *kū ī*, he was equally strict. Everything had to be used in a proper way, or arranged in an orderly and tidy manner, and not just thrown down anywhere, when it might become lost or misplaced.

Such behaviour is an important means of rousing the disciples' skill in observation, who would be censured, if they were not always mindful.

Of being satisfied with little, the Most Venerable Mun said:

Dhamma is very precise and subtle, and it is difficult for those hearts which have *kilesas* such as ours and yours to penetrate and reach it, as we have already explained above. Therefore although your intention was good in making this request of me, it also brought up an important aspect of Dhamma concealed within it. For thriftiness, economy, contentment and satisfaction with little are all factors of mind (*dhammā*) that mean the same thing as being careful and not forgetting oneself. And those who practice these dhammas are sure to be able to conduct and look after

themselves in a way that is admirable, regardless of whether they are ordained members of the *Sa gha* or lay people.¹⁰⁶

Similarly:

But, in order to uphold the Ariyan tradition, so that it may remain harmonious, undisturbed and fully satisfying in the future, both for ourselves and for those who follow us in future generations, so that they may take up what we do as a basis to be followed in practice, I respectfully ask my companions in Dhamma to commit yourselves to the practices of being prudent, being economical, being contented and satisfied with little, and doing it with sincerity in regard to all your requisites to maintain the tradition and to be someone who goes the way of practice smoothly and consistently.¹⁰⁷

In those days, the Thai economy was under-developed. At that time, villagers were poor, and never extravagant. It was very different from the present day, for now there is an abundance of everything, such that it is more a case of opulence rather than starvation and shortages. Nowadays, when monks go on their alms round each morning, they return with the bowl filled with sweet and savory foods, sometimes carrying an extra food container. When they arrive at the assembly hall, the food-carriers lay this down in rows. But they can not avoid accepting these things—for it is given out of faith by people who are hoping to make merit by doing good acts and who have made an effort to come from all sorts of places, both

¹⁰⁶ Paññāva ho Bhikkhu, op. cit, p. 426.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 436.

far and near, in order to share in the merit derived from the *dhuta ga kamma hāna* monks.

Moreover, in many temples at midday, or in the afternoon and evening, there is ice, orange juice, soft drinks, cocoa, coffee, sugar cane juice, sugar, and so on. The frugal behaviour of the *dhuta ga kamma hāna* monks benefits both other monks and lay people. During the Thai financial crisis that occurred in 1997, King Bhumipol advocated a plan for a “self-sufficient economy” (*setthagit phophiang*) to help solve hard-going problems, in which the “satisfaction with little” and economic lifestyle of the monks in the Most Venerable Mun’s lineage was said to provide the best model for a happy life for all human beings in all situations.

4.1.2.6 Eating Methods

The alms bowl is always considered to be an essential requisite for Thai monks, from the day of their ordination right to the end of their life in the *Sa gha*. There are many types of bowls and many sizes as well. Amongst the monks who follow in the lineage of the Most Venerable Mun, it is generally held that the bowl should be of medium to large size. This comes from the way in which they like to go wandering as ascetics in the forests and mountains as suits their inclination, for they do not like staying fixed in any one place, outside the rainy season. When they go wandering, they walk barefoot, and go wherever they feel inclined. They have to carry along with them the necessary requisites, but

they do not take much. What they carry generally consists of the bowl, the three robes (*sa ghā i*, *cīvara* and *sabong*), a bathing cloth, an umbrella tent (*glod*), a mosquito net, a kettle of water, a water-filter, a razor, sandals, some small candles, and a candle lantern which is made of a piece of white cloth, sewn up to form a tube and two circular pieces made of metal, the top one being an open ring. A candle is then mounted on the bottom end and when lit, it gives light for walking *ca kama* at night and for going anywhere round about the place where they are staying. So it acts in place of the more usual types of lantern.

When they are wandering about, the bowl is a convenient place to keep many of the requisites, such as, the outer robe (*sa ghā i*), the mosquito net, the razor, the candle lantern and candles. For *dhuta ga* monks, a fairly big bowl is also more convenient to eat from, since all the food is put together in the bowl. The rice, savoury food and sweet things are all there in the one bowl, for they do not use plates. They have to wash and dry the bowl, making it clean and free from smell.¹⁰⁸ In washing the bowl, it is necessary to do it at least three times each time with fresh water. Then, after it has been wiped dry, if the sun is out, it is put out to dry completely for a short while, before being put away in a suitable place, depending on circumstances; if the weather is overcast, the bowl may then be left with the lid off to get rid of any lingering smell that it may have.

¹⁰⁸ A kind of Thai vegetable namely “magrood” is effectively used after washing to get rid of smell of the food.

If there are several *kamma hāna* monks staying together in a dwelling, or monastery, they will normally eat together after returning from their *pi apāta*. The ordinary practice is to take the food out of their bowls and put it all together on trays, after which it is shared out evenly to all of them. After this, if there are any lay people present, the monks will give thanks (*anumodanā*) by chanting the *Yathā...sabbī*, after which they will start eating from the bowl by hand.

Before they start eating, they make themselves calm. Then they contemplate the food by recollection (*paccavekkha a*) of its purpose, using the verse commencing *Pa isa khā yoniso*, which points out the nature of the various kinds of food which are in the bowl, by way of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*, by way of *pa ikūlasaññā* (perception of loathsomeness), or by way of the *dhātu* (elements of existence). Whichever one of these is used will depend on the skill and ability of each individual to use as he is able. This is done for at least one minute, after which they dip their hands into their bowls and start to eat in a controlled and seemly manner, with mindfulness watching over the process of chewing and unseemly noises of crunching and munching which would be bad manners and characteristic of carelessness and greed.

They keep their eyes on the bowl and their thoughts mindfully associated with what is in the bowl, not looking all about the place at other things. While they are eating, they contemplate whatever aspect of Dhamma suits their ability, such as taking the food as a supporting basis (*āramma a*), or sometimes other forms of Dhamma which they are used

to investigating as the supporting basis of their contemplation. But usually they contemplate the food that they are eating, rather than other forms of Dhamma.

While eating, they do not chatter or talk except when it becomes necessary, in which case they make themselves fully self-conscious before speaking, they say what has to be said and then stop. Before speaking, they wait until they have had time to swallow any food that they may have in the mouth and then speak clearly, not mumbling, which would be an ill-mannered way of speaking. While speaking, they fix their attention on speaking until they have finished saying what is necessary.

Eating food in a careful, self-controlled manner with mindfulness present, while contemplating with wisdom, will probably give rise to some unusual experiences. Eating food is one of the primary routines in the monk's life and not inferior to any of the others as a means of steadily getting rid of the *kilesas* within them. Therefore, all the true teachers such as the Most Venerable Mun, have always looked upon the process of eating food as being a most important routine. He said:

Dhamma always tends to become apparent while eating. Sometimes it brings various skilful ways which stick fast in one's mind so that one follows and thinks about them for many days. At other times it can give rise to revulsion and weariness for the food in one's bowl, which can reach the point where the *citta* is so disenchanted with food that there is no desire to eat. After that I had to use many different ways in association with it.

In the investigation into the food in my bowl, to see it as loathsome for the purpose of cutting away at the concern and delusion associated with taste, and as mere elementary materials, that I had to depend on to live from day to day.¹⁰⁹

4.1.2.7 The Routine of Chanting

There is no formal meeting for the purpose of paying respect and chanting. The only exception is the Uposatha days (*wan phra*) on which the *Pā imokkha* is chanted.

The reason why the Most Venerable Mun did not institute any of the regular morning or evening chanting was that he intended the monks and novices to practise these chants and others on their own, as it suited them. Therefore the practice of chanting which they performed depended entirely on what each individual wanted to do, and it was a form of *bhāvanā* which each one did in himself, because they performed their recollection of the chants internally and silently, without making a loud noise, unlike when they are together. Some of them were very good at it and could go on chanting for several hours.

While chanting, the *citta* is not involved in anything else and one is happily absorbed in the aspects of Dhamma which one is chanting, until the *citta* becomes calm and peaceful. The Most Venerable Sao and the Most Venerable Mun used to do a lot of chanting, as they had always done since they first learnt the chants, and they went on doing so until the

end of their lives, when they became very weak and sick, and could no longer keep it up.¹¹⁰ When the Most Venerable teachers started chanting, one could hear a gentle murmuring noise going on continuously without any breaks or hesitation until, after a long time, he reached the end of his chanting, and would then go on by sitting in *samādhi bhāvanā* until it was time for him to rest. So one can say doing the regular chanting was truly part of his routine.

The above represents only a few examples of the duties observed by *kamma hāna* monks. Such monks are not to be confused with certain other monks, claiming to live as *dhuta ga kamma hāna* monks, but who wander about telling people's fortunes and giving numbers for the lottery, magical material, and sprinkling holy-water and so on. Such behaviour causes people to form a wrong image of the genuine *dhuta ga kamma hāna* monks, which misunderstandings persist both in town and countryside.

4.1.3 Foundation of the Forest Monasteries (*wat pa*)

In 1920, Most Venerable Mun and Most Venerable Sao first set up their umbrella-tent (*glod*) as temporary shelter while travelling in the Thabor district, Nongkai province. In 1916, Venerable Suwan Sujinno first came across the abandoned chedi. He had gone back and forth to the Thabor forest. On each occasion, the villagers gave him a positive

¹⁰⁹ Paññāva ho Bhikkhu, op. cit , p. 446.

¹¹⁰ Paññāva ho Bhikkhu, op. cit, p. 479.

reception. After Venerable Suwan, Venerable Doon Atulo spent the rains' retreat in the forest. Then, in 1925, nine years after Most Venerable Mun set out from his base in Nokhon Phanom, his small group arrived in Thabor to spend the coming retreat. At this stage, the villagers started to build shelters for the monks and the place gradually became an important forest monastery by the name of Wat Araññavāsi.¹¹¹ There were, besides Most Venerable Mun, Most Venerable Sao and Venerable Thet, other monks who were later to become well-known, such as Venerable Ku Thammathino, Venerable Oun Thammatharo, Venerable On Yanasiri, Venerable Fan Ajaro and Venerable Kwa Sumano.¹¹² However, the Most Venerable Mun never established a permanent base for himself. He did not encourage disciples or devotees to reside permanently in the same monastery, which he believed was harmful to the *dhuta ga* monks' way of life.

The foundation of forest monasteries increased widely in Thailand. The following are some of the monasteries belonging to the Most Venerable Mun's lineage.¹¹³

¹¹¹ J.L. Taylor, **Forest Monks and the Notion-State**, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993), p. 93.

¹¹² Dhammasapha, op. cit, p. 107.

¹¹³ 1) Collected data from the descriptions below the Ācariya's photographs printed in **Booraphacharn**, (Bangkok: Chuanpim Printing Corporation, 2002), pp. 88-100.

2) Names of provinces as given in the **Thailand Highway Map**, (Bangkok: Road Association of Thailand, 2000), pp. 44-48.

Table II
Forest Monasteries in the Most Venerable Mun’s Lineage
in Thailand

Region/Province	Name of Monastery
Northeastern:	
Amnat Charoen:	Wat Samrannives Wat Tham-Sangpech
Buriram:	Wat-Pa Khaonoi Wat Gogao-Thudongkasathan
Kalasin:	Wat Prachaniyom Wat Rangsipaliwan Wat-Pa Majjimavas Wat Phochaimanous
Khon Kaen:	Wat-Pa Khao-Soengwang Wat-Pa Sumanamai Wat Udomkongka-Kirikhet Wat-Pa Keereewan Wat Rahopho Wat-Pa Wiwegdham Wat Srichan

Loei:	Wat-Pa Summa-Nusorn Wat Srisuthavas Wat Thamphapoo Wat-Pa Umpawan Wat-Pa Sri-Aphaiwan Wat-Pa Hueydur Wat-Pa Sammasorn Wat-Pa Ban-Hueylad
Maha Sarakham:	Wat-Pa Wanglurng
Mukdahan:	Wat Glangsanam Wat-Pa Wiweg Wattanaram Wat-Pa Natham-Wanavas Wat Banpot-Kiri (Phoo-Joko) Wat Tham-Phaphurng
Nakhon Phanom:	Wat Phochai Wat Aranyawiweg Tham-Chaiyamongkol Wat Srivichai Wat-Pa Santitham Wat Lugsila-Mongkol Wat Saraphan-Nimit Wat Aranyawiweg Tham-Chaiyamongkol

	Wat Srivichai
	Wat-Pa Santitham
	Wat Lugsila-Mongkol
	Wat Saraphan-Nimit
Nakhon Ratchasima:	Wat-Pa Salawan
	Wat-Pa Soongnurn
	Wat Tham-Submurd
	Wat Vajiralongkorn
	Wat Suddhichinda-Voraviharn
	Wat Theppitag-Poonnaram
Nong Bua Lam Phu:	Wat Sirisalawan
	Wat Tham-Glongpale
Nong Khai:	Wat Aranyawas
	Wat Chantraram
	Wat Hinmagpeng
	Wat Srimueng
	Wat-Pa Prasathit
	Samnuksong Pasug
	Wat Jetiya-Kirivisarn
	Wat-Pa Wiweg-Pattanaram
	Wat Bueng-Phalaram
	Wat-Pa Dansrisamran
	Wat-Pa Danwiweg (Sangaroon)

	Wat Samukki-Uppatham (Phoogratae)
	Wat Thamphra-Phoowoa
	Wat Thambooja
	Wat Suwannaram
	Wat Siri-Uppatham
	Wat Phrangam-Srimongkol
	Wat Aranya-Bunpot
Roiet:	Wat-Pa Sripthraiwan
	Wat Prachakom-Wanaram
	Wat Santiwieweg
	Wat-Pa Samukkidham
Sakon Nakhon:	Wat-Pa Glangnoanpoo
	Wat Pracha-Niyom
	Wat-Pa Issaradham
	Wat-Pa Ban-Moengkhai
	Wat Srijampa-Chonnabot
	Wat-Pa Suthavas
	Wat Doi-Dhammajedi
	Wat Udom-Rattanaram
	Wat Kamawasi
	Wat-Pa Udom-Somporn
	Wat-Pa Sriswang-Dandin
	Wat-Pa Srisamran
	Wat Heo-leug

Wat Tham-Aphaidamrongdham
Wat-Pa Gaochoompol
Wat Thanmigaram
Wat-Pa Pateep-Poonyaram
Wat Prasit Samukki
Wat Samukki-Bampenphol
Wat-Pa Kamsamran
Wat Nongwan
Wat Mai-Bantan
Wat-Pa Siphanom-Prachakom
Wat-Pa Soatthipol
Wat Thamkham
Wat Phathepnimit
Wat Poohintag
Wat-Pa Nagnimit (Bannamon
Wat Thamped
Wat Thamaphai-Domrongdham (Thampoeng)
Wat-Pa Nongphai
Wat-Pa Ban-Nongpheu
Wat-Pa Choke-Phaisan
Wat Toongsawang
Wat-Pa Visutthidham
Wat-Pa Noansangthong

Si Sa Ket: Wat Phoodindang
 Wat-Pa Banbag

Surin:	Wat Boorapharam
	Wat-Pa Triwiweg
	Wat Khaosala
	Wat-Pa Dongkoo
	Wat-Pa Bovorn-Sangkaram
Ubon Ratchathani:	Wat-Pa Sansamran
	Wat-Pa Bankoom
	Wat Boorapha
	Wat-Pa Himaphan
	Wat Saprasansuk
	Wat Nongpaphong
	Wat-Pa Nongyao
	Wat Bueng-Khaoloeng
	Wat-Pa Wiweg
	Wat-Pa Bandong
	Wat Phookhaogao
	Wat Tai-Phrachao-Ongtur
	Wat Phoolon
Wat Donthat	
Wat-Pa Sanamchai	
Udon Thani:	Wat Thepsinghan
	Wat Photisompon
	Wat Prasitthidham
	Wat Thippayarat-Nimit (Banjig)

Wat-Pa Noannives
Wat-Pa Nikrotharam
Wat-Pa Bantaad
Wat-Pa Santigavas
Wat-Pa Nongsang
Wat-Pa Chantharangsi (Nasida)
Wat Thamgogdoo
Wat Doibandai-Sawan
Wat-Pa Nakoon
Wat-Pa Nonggong
Wat Thamphadang
Wat-Pa Pooloo-Santiwattana
Wat-Pa Bankor
Wat Thamsahai
Wat-Pa Phoothong
Wat Nongchangcow
Wat Phooyao
Wat-Pa Nakamno
Wat-Pa Donkhom
Wat-Pa Phoosangko
Wat Prachachoompol-Pattanaram
Wat-Pa Noansawang

Yasothon:

Wat-Pa Soonthararam
Wat-Pa Nongkrai
Wat Srithannai

Wat-Pa Ban-Nongsang

Wat Nikom-Vanaram

Wat Sridhammaram

Northern:

Chiang Mai:

Wat-Pa Sunpong

Wat Donmoon

Wat Doi-Maepung

Wat Tham-Phaplong

Wat Jediloeng

Wat Suntidham

Wat-Pa Phadan

Wat-Pa Phra-Ajaan-Tur

Wat Tham-Pagpiang

Wat Aranyawiweg

Wat-Pa Roangdham-Samukki

Wat-Pa Phra-Ajaan-Mun

Wat-Pa Moomai

Wat-Pa Wattanara

Sumnugsongka Pamiang

Chiang Rai:

Wat Banlao

Wat Udomvari

Wat Tham-Phajom

Kamphaeng Pet:	Wat-Pa Khao-Kheo
Lamphun:	Wat-Pa Khaonoi
Petchabun:	Wat-Pa Chaichoomphol Wat-Pa Khao-Charoendham
Phichit:	Wat-Pa Doi-lab-nga
Phitsanulok:	Wat-Pa Samrannivas Wat Thamphrasabai
Western:	
Tak:	Samnugsongha Moosir-Hoeyplalod Wat-Pa Roemthai-Samukki
Southern:	
Phattalung:	Wat Banggao Phadungdham
Phuket:	Wat Charoen-Samanagij
Eastern:	
Chanthaburi:	Wat Dhama-Hunsaram Wat Pichai-Pattanaram Wat Khao-Sugim

Prachin Buri:	Wat-Pa Pradoo
Rayong:	Wat Dhamma-Sathit
Central:	
Bangkok area:	Wat Phrasi-Mahathat
	Wat Pathum-Wanaram
	Wat Baromnivas
	Wat Noranat-soontharigaram
	Wat Siri-Kamalavas
	Wat Sumphanthawongsaram-Voraviharn
	Wat Dhammamongkol
	Wat Buddha-Booja
Kanchanaburi:	Wat Weruwan
	Wat-Pa Luangta-Bua
Lop Buri:	Wat Maneecholakhan
Pathum Thani:	Wat-Pa Phurithatta-Patipataram
Pechaburi:	Wat Sanamphram
Prachuap Kiri Khan:	Wat-Pa Witthayalai
	Wat Rajayatana-Bunpot
Ratchaburi:	Wat Ariya Wongsaram
	Wat Khao-Punog
Samut Prakan:	Wat Asokaram

Forest Monasteries in towns differ from monasteries in the natural forests.

Some monks establish forest monasteries as though they were wats, or temples, but these are really *samnag song* (*Sa ghanivāsa*) or *thiphak song* (dwelling-places).

Later on, the number of forest monasteries increased, as did the variety of styles. The Royal Forest Department has since taken charge of them and, in 1995, investigated monasteries in the forest, subsequently registering their names formally, under a threefold scheme of classification, in which:

A *wat* is defined as a monastery, or temple.

A *samnag song* (*Sa ghanivāsa*: monastic residence) has the same status as a *wat*.

A *thiphak song* is declared illegal within the forest.

4.1.4 Forest Conservation

Most Venerable Mun loved the solitude of the forest and always taught his disciples that the Buddha had been born in the forest, became enlightened in the forest, preached Dhamma and passed away in the

forest. *Kamma hāna* monks profit from a life in the forest. The forest should be the place *kamma hāna* monks adore.¹¹⁴

Forest monasteries are situated both in natural forests, and in those that have been planted. Usually, *kamma hāna* monks conserve the forests and the natural environment. They love to live in the environment of the forest. They regenerate the forest rather than destroy it. *Kamma hāna* monks play an important part in forest conservation. At the present time, some of the natural forest monasteries in a wilderness environment that can be visited are as follows:¹¹⁵

Buriram 1) Wat Pa Khao Noi

Chaiyaphum 2) Wat Pa Khao Noi

Chanthaburi 3) Wat Pa Sai Ngam, 4) Wat Pa Amphawon,
5) Wat Muttothai, 6) Wat Khao Sugim,
7) Wat Khao Noi Samphan (Pichai Pattanaram)

Chiang Mai 8) Wat Pa Acharn Tur, 9) Wat Pa MooMai,
10) Wat Pa Dong Lun, 11) Wat Pa Doi Sang Tham,
12) Wat Pa Dongda (Wat Dong Pada),

¹¹⁴ Luangpoo Louis, **Booraphacharn**, (Bangkok: Silpa Siam Packaging & Printing Co. Ltd., 2000), p. 5.
SiaPackaging2000), p. 5.

¹¹⁵ These are some of forest monasteries the researcher visited during 1998-2005 AD.

- 13) Wat Pa Phra Acharn Mun,
 14) Wat Pa Giw Doo, 15) Wat Jedi Bia,
 16) Wat Aranya Viveg, 17) Wat Phra Phutta Bart Si Roy,
 18) Wat Tham Pag Piang, 19) Wat Doi Mae Pung,
 20) Samnag Song Doi Pui

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Chiang Rai | 21) Wat Pa Ban Lao |
| Chon Buri | 22) Wat Tham Pathoon |
| Kanchanaburi | 23) Wat Pa Sunantha Vanaram |
| Khon Kaen | 24) Wat Pa Samukki Santitham |
| Mukdahan | 25) Wat Phoo Pha Phurng |
| Nakhon Nayok | 26) Wat Tham Sarika |
| Nakhon Phanom | 27) Wat Pa Viveg Khantharam |
| Nakhon Ratchasima | 28) Wat Pa Khao Wanchai Navarat,
29) Wat Tham Trairat |
| Nong Khai | 30) Wat Aranya Banpot,
31) Wat Phoo Loan,
32) Wat Tham Chaiya Mongkol Phoo Langa |
| Petchabun | 33) Wat Pa Chai Choomphon |
| Phichit | 34) Wat Pa Khao Noi |
| Ratchaburi | 35) Thiphug Song Pa Tanaosi (Pa Tanaosi Dwelling Place),
36) Thiphug Song Phutthatham (Phutthatham Dwelling Place) |

- Sakon Nakhon** 37) Wat Pa Ban Nong Pheu (Wat Pa Bhuridatta Thiravat),
38) Wat Pa Visutthi Tham, 39) Wat Pa Glang Nurn,
40) Wat Pa Gao Choomphon, 41) Wat Pa Si Phanom,
42) Wat Pa Pateep Punyaram,
43) Wat Jetaya Kiri Viharn (Phoo Thog),
44) Wat Tham Kham, 45) Wat Tham Heuy Leug,
46) Wat Doi Thamma Jedi

- Ubon Ratchathani** 47) Wat Pa Huay Goom,
48) Wat Pa Nanachat (International Forest Monastery)

- Udon Thani** 49) Wat Pa Nong Gong, 50) Wat Pa Nakhoon,
51) Wat Pa Phoo Gon, 52) Wat Pa Ban Phurm,
53) Wat Pa Nakham Noi, 54) Wat Pa Ban Khor,
55) Wat Pa Phoo Sangkho,
56) Wat Pa Phoo Pha Dang,
57) Wat Pa Nag Nimitt, 58) Wat Tham Gog Doo,
59) Wat Tham Sahai Tham,
60) Wat Tham Glong Pain

Since 1995, the Royal Forestry Department has created projects encouraging the *wat* and *samnag song* to become its partners in forest management. Last year, they had three action plans for forest development by wats or *samnag song*.

Most of the above forest monasteries in the Most Venerable Mun's lineage were established before A.D. 1995. However, there are

some monasteries that have forest development plans in various areas. These are:¹¹⁶

Chanthaburi	1) Wat Pa Amphawon (Wat Amphawon Vanaram) – 10 Rais
Chiangmai	1) Samnag Song Doi Pui – 50 Rais 2) Wat Pa Moo Mai – 50 Rais
Kanchanaburi	1) Wat Pa Sunanta Vanaram – 550 Rais
Nong Khai	1) Wat Tham Chaiya Mongkol Phoo Langa (Wat Tham Chaiya Mongkol) – 50 Rais
Sakon Nakhon	1) Wat Tham Heuy Leug – 145 Rais

4.2 The Impact on Thai Buddhism and the Buddhist World

4.2.1 The Impact on Laypeople’s Practice

The Most Venerable Mun’s disciples’ way of living, such as eating only one meal per day in the morning, and being content with the least possible possessions, attracted the lay people, who also appreciated their well-trained characters. The Most Venerable Mun and his disciples were able to bring Buddhism to the laypeople by setting good examples with their teachings and their practices.

People in the Most Venerable Mun’s lifetime were given to a belief in ghosts, devas, and sacrificial vows. It was in Ban Huasai, Nakorn Phanom province, that Most Venerable Mun first persuaded

¹¹⁶ Forest Administrator Officer, Bangkok, 2006.

people to abandon this belief in favour of esteem for the Triple Gem—the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sa gha.¹¹⁷ The Most Venerable Mun’s method of teaching laypeople was that of *dāna-sīla-bhāvanā*, which brought about a change in their views (*di hi*) and adoption of the Buddhist way.¹¹⁸ They had faith (*saddhā*) in Buddhism and believed in the teachings of the *kamma hāna* monks. As a result, they began regularly to observe the Buddhist precepts, to pay attention to the practice of meditation, and to be willing to give financial and other material support to the monks. It also resulted in their cooperation in Dhamma practice and in the establishment of forest monasteries and other support.

During Most Venerable Mun’s early years as a wandering monk, people showed little interest in the practice of *kamma hāna* meditation. Many regarded it as something strange, even non-Buddhist. Its practitioners would wear jackfruit-colored robes, with their big alms bowls and their *glods*¹¹⁹ slung over each shoulder. Walking in single file and dressed in their yellowish-brown robes, they have an eye-catching sight to those as yet unfamiliar with their mode of practice. Thus, sight of *Phra Thudong Kammatthan* walking in the distance on the far side of a field was sufficient to cause country folk to panic. Being fearful, those still were close to the village quickly ran home. Those walking near the forest ran into the thick foliage to hide, being too scared to stand their ground or greet the monks. Wandering in unfamiliar regions during their

¹¹⁷ Dhammasapha, op. cit, p. 109.

¹¹⁸ Phra Acharn Suvaj Suvajo, **Biography of Phra Acharn Fun Acaro**, (Bangkok: I.P. Samphan Phanich Corporation, 1981), pp. 20-27.

¹¹⁹ A large umbrella hanged with a mosquito net to make use like a tent.

travels, *dhuta ga kamma hāna* monks seldom had a chance to ask the locals for much needed directions.

Upon finding a quiet area, conducive to meditation, in the outlying forests of rural communities, such *dhuta ga* monks would settle for a while, allowing the locals a chance to get better acquainted with them. By listening to their teachings, questioning them, and receiving their advice, people's lives began to benefit in so many ways. Gradually over time, their hearts grew to accept the reasonable explanations they heard, and faith issued naturally of its own accord. With a belief in Dhamma thus instilled in their hearts, old suspicions died away, being replaced by a reverence for monks whose teachings had made such a great impression. Then, to those well acquainted with their peaceful temperament and exemplary conduct, the mere sight of monks walking across the countryside would inspire devotion. During that early period, country people all over Thailand shared such enlightening experiences:

In some villages there were good people who, as soon as they saw a Bhikkhu come and stay in the vicinity of the village, would go out and ask them whether everything was all right and what their intentions were, whether they were going to stay or move on and how long they intended to stay. We would then tell them something about what we were doing so that they could get some understanding of it. Then they would get together and make up a shelter where we could live, enough to ward off sun and wind, and a rough platform on which we could rest and sleep

at times. Also, a place for walking (*ca kama*), which would be long enough to make it convenient for doing the practice.¹²⁰

Wherever we went, generally if we stayed there long enough the villagers would come and make up a place to live and other thing and they would come to have a true faith in us.¹²¹

Nonetheless, some of the earlier misunderstandings and the wrong images concerning *dhuta ga kamma hāna* monks still linger in some laypeople's minds.

Generally, when laypeople visit a monk, they bring with them uninhibited habitual tendencies, pretensions, conceits and problems, which they then unload on the monk, along with complaints and criticisms, in the expectation that he will agree with them and act accordingly, without ever considering whether it is morally right or wrong. Thus, when they try to involve a monk in their affairs, he is quite likely to become troubled or harmed, even though they had no intention of doing this. Or he may become harmed indirectly by frequent requests, such as their asking him to give them a number for the state lottery, which is an activity that conflicts with the monk's Dhamma and Vinaya. Then, again, they may ask a monk for love-potions which will cause a man and woman to love each other, or for the monk to tell them some auspicious occasion upon which they will have good luck and become wealthy, or for any one of a thousand other purposes. They may ask

¹²⁰ Paññāva ho Bhikkhu, op. cit, p. 83.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 84.

monks to cast their horoscope and to advise them about their affairs, for magic spells and utterances that will make them invulnerable to bullets, knives, pointed weapons and clubs, or for “holy water” to be sprinkled on them to annul perils, danger from enemies and bad luck; and all sorts of other things such as these.¹²²

Most Venerable Mun modified his talks according to the character and the level of his listeners’ understanding, so that everyone who was present gained some benefit from the assembly. He was careful in explaining the teaching in all its stages, ensuring that listeners at different levels of meditation were able to understand and apply it to their individual practice in order to attain satisfactory results. When teaching laypeople, he usually emphasised aspects of Dhamma that were suitable to their situations, such as generosity (*dāna*), moral virtue (*sīla*), and meditative development (*bhāvanā*) as a basis for their practice. He explained that these three are the basic requirement for birth in the human world, as well as the foundation of the *Sāsana*. Someone born as a human being must necessarily have cultivated these three things in the past. At least one of them must have been previously developed to serve as a catalyst for being born fully human.

The benefits of meditation are too numerous to address, so the Most Venerable Mun kept his explanations to his lay audience at a level appropriate to their practice. Moreover, he persuaded lay people to be strictly aware of good actions.

¹²² Phra Maha Bua Yanasampanno, op. cit, pp.204-205.

The Most Venerable Mun’s teaching of *kamma* had a full impact of the laypeople he taught. Here is a summary of what he said to the people of Nakhon Ratchasima:

Don’t think and act as if you, your family and friends, and the society you live in will never have to face the cemetery. Otherwise, when death comes—as it does to everyone in the world—you will find yourself hopelessly unprepared and so risk sinking into the kind of unfavorable state no one would wish for. Whatever you think, say, or do should be accompanied by some recollection of the cemetery, which symbolizes death, for cemeteries and *kamma* go hand in hand. Reflection on death will encourage reflection on *kamma*, which in turn will cause you to reflect back on yourself.¹²³

adding:

Don’t get cocky, thinking you’re so smart, when in truth you are always at the mercy of *kamma*. Such arrogance will merely lead to your own misfortune. You should never take the attitude that you are smarter than the Buddha—that great, all-knowing teacher who, unlike people with *kilesas* who feel very cocky, never relied on conjecture. In the end, such people become trapped in the bad *kamma* that their own arrogant assumptions have created for them.¹²⁴

¹²³ Bhikkhu Dick Sīlaratano, op. cit, p. 303.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 304.

4.2.2 Extension of the Most Venerable Mun's Practice

The Most Venerable Mun had vast numbers of disciples during his lifetime. Of the 190 names scrutinised in A.D.2002, no less than twenty six were still alive.¹²⁵ These disciples spread the Most Venerable Mun's teachings to their own disciples and layfollowers, who still follow such teachings and method of practice. The influence of the Most Venerable Mun's lineage extends throughout Thailand and overseas. Examples of that lineage in Thailand include the following teachers:

Venerable Acharn Maha Bua asampanno, Wat Pa BaanTaad,
Udon Thani.

Venerable Acharn Viriyan Sirindharo, Wat Dhammamonkol,
Bangkok.

Venerable Acharn Cha Subhuddho, Wat Nong Pa Phong, Ubon
Rajathani.

Venerable Acharn Lee Dhammadharo, Wat Asokaram, Samut
Prakan.

Venerable Acharn Thet Dhesara s Wat Hin Magpeng, Nong
Kai.

4.2.3 Forest Monasteries Overseas

Kamma hāna monks in Most Venerable Mun's lineage have had Western disciples who have spread the method of his teaching to

¹²⁵ Foundation of Phra Acharn Mun, op, cit, pp. 126-132.

foreign lands. Examples of forest monasteries that have been established overseas include those of:

Venerable Acharn Suvaj Suvajo at Wat Bhuridhattavanaram, Wat Pa Dhammachat, Wat North Sanhuan and Wat Mettavanaram in the U.S.A.

Venerable Acharn Cha Subhuddho at the Amaravati Buddhist Monastery, Chithurst Forest Monastery and Hamhan Buddhist Monastery in England, the Bodhinyanarama Monastery in New Zealand, the Dhammapala Buddhistisches Kloster in Switzerland, the Bodhinyanarama Monastery in France, and Bodhiyana Monastery and Santacittarama Monastery in Australia.¹²⁶

Venerable Acharn Viriyan Sirindharo (Phra Thepceiyacharn) at Wat Ratchadham in Ottawa, Wat Ratchadham 2 at the Niagara Falls, Wat Ratchadham 3 at Edmonton, at Wat Ratchadham 4 in Calgary, Wat Yanviriya 1 in Vancouver, and Wat Yanviriya 2 in Toronto, all of which are in Canada.

The Most Venerable Mun's method of practice, which is described at the beginning of Chapter III, has various impacts on the household life and in monastic circles. Practice of *samādhi* and *vipassanā*, the *khandhavatta* and the *dhuta gas* constitute the training

¹²⁶ Phramaha Vicharn Suwijano, **A Study of Buddhist Personnel Training Process of Phrabodhinanathera**, (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 2000), pp. 206-208.

techniques necessary for achieving all the states partaking of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiyadhamma*).

The teachings of meditative practice for laypeople are designed to fit in with their household lives. Most Venerable Mun teaches those who are of fast progress individually. Generally, he emphasises *kamma*, *sīla*, *dāna* and *bhāvanā* which are directly related to the Buddha's teaching of the *Ovādapatimokkha*, a fundamental principle of Buddhism which is summarised in the following verses in the Dhammapada:

Sabbapāpassa akara a

(Not doing any evil)

kusalassa upasampadā

(undertaking that which is sound)

sacittapariyodāpana

(purifying one's own mind)

eta Buddhāna sāsana

(this the Buddhas' instruction).¹²⁷

Sīla prevents its observers from doing any evil, awareness of good *kamma* and offering *dāna* cultivate that which is good, whilst *bhāvanā* is the means to purifying one's mind.

This method consists of various Dhamma-teachings centred upon the *bodhipakkhiyadhamma*, in which the *khandhavatta*, the

¹²⁷ Dhp 183.

dhuta ga and *yonisomanasikāra* provide the tools to aid the process. The whole of the Most Venerable Mun's practice, his teachings and disquisitions provide the compositional means for attaining the final goal.

The *bodhipakkhiyadhamma* consist of the following thirty-seven items:¹²⁸

The four foundations of mindfulness (*satipa hānas*) :

- 1) *kāyānupassanā* (contemplation of the physical body).
- 2) *vedanānupassanā* (contemplation of feelings).
- 3) *cittānupassanā* (contemplation of the mind).
- 4) *dhammānupassanā* (contemplation of dhammas).

The four right efforts (*sammappadhāna*):

- 1) *sa varapadhāna* (right effort in preventing the rising evil thoughts).
- 2) *pahānapadhāna* (right effort in getting rid of evil thoughts that have already arisen).
- 3) *bhāvanāpadhāna* (right effort in cultivating good thoughts).
- 4) *anurakkhanāpadhāna* (right effort in keeping good thoughts that have already arisen).

The four bases of psychic powers (*iddhipādas*):

- 1) *chanda-iddhipāda* (concentration practised with will).
- 2) *virīya-iddhipāda* (concentration practised with energy).

¹²⁸ D. II. 290; DB.II. 327, quoted in Phramaha Narong Cherdungnoen, op. cit, p. 35.

3) *citta-iddhipāda* (concentration practised with thought).

4) *vima sā-iddhipāda* (concentration practised with investigation).

The five faculties (*indriyas*):

1) *saddhindriya* (the faculty of faith).

2) *viriyindriya* (the faculty of energy).

3) *satindriya* (the faculty of mindfulness).

4) *samādhindriya* (the faculty of concentration).

5) *paññindriya* (the faculty of wisdom).

The five powers (*balas*):

1) *saddhābala* (the power of faith).

2) *viriyabala* (the power of energy).

3) *satibala* (the power of mindfulness).

4) *samādhibala* (the power of concentration).

5) *paññābala* (the power of wisdom).

The seven constituents of enlightenment (*bojjha gas*):

1) *satisambojjha ga* (mindfulness as a constituent of full enlightenment).

2) *dhammavicayasambojjha ga* (investigation of Dhamma as a constituent of full enlightenment).

3) *viriyasambojjha ga* (energy as a constituent of full enlightenment).

4) *pītisambojjha ga* (joy as a constituent of full enlightenment).

5) *passaddhisambojjha ga* (serenity as a constituent of full enlightenment).

6) *samādhisambojjha ga* (concentration as a constituent of full enlightenment).

7) *upekkhāsambojjha ga* (equanimity as a constituent of full enlightenment).

The noble eightfold path (*ariya ha gikamagga*):

- 1) *sammādi hi* (right view).
- 2) *sammāsa kappa* (right intention).
- 3) *sammāvācā* (right speech).
- 4) *sammākammanta* (right action).
- 5) *sammā-ājīva* (right livelihood).
- 6) *sammāvāyāma* (right effort).
- 7) *sammāsati* (right mindfulness).
- 8) *sammāsamādhi* (right concentration).

Most Venerable Mun states that practice of the *bodhipakkhiyadhamma*¹²⁹ starts with contemplation of the *kamma hāna* and leads to attainment of *samādhijjhāna*. Such contemplation involves the *satipa hāna*, aided by *sammappadhāna*. This entry into *jhāna* within the primal mind (*hiticitta*) thus represents, according to Most Venerable Mun, full convergence of the mind in *hītibhūta* , and a new type of

¹²⁹Kusol Gaodoo noted this preaching of Most Venerable Mun since B.E.2492.

jhāna which the Buddha himself discovered as a result of the *satipa hāna* method, and of which he states:

Ekāyano aya bhikkhave maggo sattāna visuddhiyā.

(This is one and only way, monks, for the purification of beings)¹³⁰

Jhāna in Buddhism thus differs from the *jhāna* of the other schools, which are said to be *lokiyajjhāna*. It brings about the *indriyas* and the *balas*, which in turn bring about great and powerful calm to the *hītiñā a*, followed by *a ha gikamagga* and the *lokuttaramagga*.¹³¹

The Thai word *picharana*, sometimes rendered as “contemplation”, involves not only thought, but also *yonisomanasikāra* (paying methodical attention), and in the Most Venerable Mun’s method of practice thus denotes wise consideration, and analytical thinking, for gaining a realisation of things as they really are. It is not endless thinking in the form of fanciful thought.

In the context of Buddhist education, which revolves around *pariyatti*, *pa ipatti* and *pa ivedha*, the Most Venerable Mun’s method is undoubtedly correct. Neither Buddhist monks nor laypeople can afford to ignore the teachings that have to be studied (*pariyatti*). In the ordination of a monk, the *upajjhāya* (preceptor) has to teach the five *kamma hāna*

¹³⁰ Kusol Gaodoo, **Naothang Patibatt taam Bhodipakkhiya – dhamma nai Thassana khong Luang Poo Mun Bhuridatta Thera**, (Bangkok: Silp Siam Packaging & Printing Co. Ltd., 2537), p.13.

¹³¹ Ibid., p.14.

of *kesā*, *lomā*, *nakhā*, *dantā*, *tajo* (hair on the head, hair in other parts of body, nails, teeth, skin) as the first step in the study of *pariyatti*. In the Buddha's day, monks and laypeople had to study the teachings from the Buddha or their teachers' lips. Nowadays, however, Buddhist disciples can study in the classroom, where they can listen to tape-recorders, CDs or MP-3, or else watch television programmes or browse the Internet.

During the researcher's visits to the monasteries of the Most Venerable Mun's lineage in Chiang Mai, she found that the *Tipi aka* is used in both Wat Kiwdoo and Wat Tham Phapurng. The *kamma hāna* monks read such texts during the daytime. *Pariyatti*, for the Most Venerable Mun's disciples, provides a map for *pa ipatti* in order to ensure that one will not lose one's way during the practice. These two cohesive principles lead to *pa ivedha*, or penetration.

The efficiency of the Most Venerable Mun's method of practice proved effective for at least 800 disciples.¹³² His first-generation disciples are expert meditation teachers, whose names and works are nowadays well known.

4.3 Information Derived from Interviews

Interviews were conducted with six *dhuta ga kamma hāna* monks, one *mae-chee* and one layperson:

¹³² Dhammasapha, op. cit, p.159.

Phra Acharn Boonchuey Puññavando – 55 years old / 33 phansa

Phra Acharn Jurawat Attarakkho – 54 years old / 33 phansa

Phra Acharn Sathaphon Paphākaro – 51 years old / 24 phansa

Phra Acharn Kheo Thitasi hi – 40 years old / 19 phansa

Mae-chee Uruvin Kanchanagom – 56 years old / 19 phansa

Khun Pissamai Charoensakthaworn – 58 years old

The interviews, which were conducted separately—firstly with the monks, and then with the laypeople—centred around two issues.

Part I: Information derived from monks

1) Information concerning the Most Venerable Mun’s method of practice.

The interviewed are all *dhuta ga kamma hāna* Dhammayuttikanikai monks who have been transferred the teachings by the Most Venerable Mun’s lineage as follows: Venerable Fan Ācāro, Venerable Chah Subhaddo, Venerable Bua Ñānasampa no, Venerable Jia Cundho, Venerable Fug Santidhammo and Venerable Unla Thitadhammo. They all studied the teachings as long as their ordination phansas lasted. Phra Acharn Sathaphon spent six years in the Mahanikai Sect in his hometown. He went to Wat Nong Pa Phong and Wat Pa Baan Taad. After that he joined the Dhammayuttikanikai at Wat Pa Gao-Chumpol.

They followed the mode of practice of Most Venerable Mun. During the performance of the first practice of *samatha-vipassanā*, inner

recitation of the bh van word “Buddho” is used, to arouse mindfulness, placing the base of mind at the middle of the chest. After tranquility has been attained, and the mind’s power has become fit for work, they contemplate the body. The contemplation of the body is practised either by the analysing the body, in whole or in part, or in investigating the foulness (*asubha*) of the three characteristics (*aniccatā*, *dukkhatā* and *anattatā*).

As regards the experiences of the wandering *doen thudong*, the interviewer was informed that the *dhuta ga* practices of today are very different from those of previous times. Monks use a car to get to the place where they intend to practice. However, they still face sufferings and fear in the wilderness environment. Their experiences improve their *bhāvanā* much more than their usual practice in their monasteries.

Some of those interviewed who used to wander with Venerable Fan, said that the theoretical wandering is quite a different from the actual wandering. Wandering in the wilderness is surrounded by dangers, just as one also has to become skilled in certain techniques, such as drawing clean water from a dirty basin.

Problems also stem from forest conservation and the opium trade, which occasionally lead some of the *dhuta ga kamma hāna* monks being suspected of trading in opium and weapons.

At the present time, *dhuta ga kamma hāna* monks tend not to wander, preferring to practise in the forest retreats of the teachers. This change is seen as beneficial.

2) Opinions of those interviewed

The monks state that the Most Venerable Mun's mode of practice can be effectively pursued. At first, the monks have to obtain the various benefits of achievement individually for themselves, before they can become a reliable refuge for lay Buddhists. They spread calm and loving-kindness to all, which helps the latter both in everyday life and in times of crisis. For example, Venerable Bua distributes money and other material things to help the various communities, schools and hospitals. Since 1998, he has travelled throughout Thailand inviting donations of money, and gold, to act as a support for the Thai economy.

The eighteen *kamma hāna* monks of Wat Pa Bh ridatta Pa ipad ram (whose late abbot was Venerable Jia Cundo) have joined the Queen's project and stay in Southern Thailand. The unrest there has destroyed the local lay Buddhists' morale, but the presence of monks should help them with their problems as well as prevent deserted monasteries. Some monasteries which are surrounded by Thai Buddhists receive *dāna* from the laity. The monks lead them in chanting in the morning and the afternoon. They teach them *bhāvanā* and suggest they practise at home.

Adhering to the Most Venerable Mun’s mode of practice should help to solve social problems. After training oneself, one can then share the results of one’s own experience with others, both monks and lay, and thus become an effective human resource for society at large.

Laypeople, especially those who have achieved the first step of the practice, obtain more happiness than ever before. These results are then reflected on other members of the family, the most important unit of society. If each family were to follow the Most Venerable Mun’s method of practice, the tangible results would be a decrease in bad actions, an increase in compromise, and improved financial status.

Laypeople who strictly persevere can reach a high level of meditative practice. However, even the mere practice of *sīla*, *dāna*, and *bhāvan* , and chanting daily to the Triple Gem, can lead to a happy state (*sugati*) in the next life.

Dhuta ga kamma hāna monks of the Most Venerable Mun’s lineage still continuously maintain the way of practice. Over a thousand of them still hide themselves, quietly practising *bhāvanā* in the wilderness, be it in caves, mountains or frontier forests. In Phetchabun province, there are about three to four hundred *dhuta ga kamma hāna* monks. Most of them dislike either showing off or mentioning their teacher’s name, feeling shame should they do so. One significant reason for this is to protect their teachers’ reputation from being sullied by any misuse, mis-application or misrepresentation, of his teachings on the part of others.

The changes in social development are forcing the *kamma hāna* monks in town to relate to society in certain activities, if only as a result of common courtesy, yet the way of the Dhamma is still firmly adhered to. The practice of *bhāvana* does not depend on place and time. Society may change from time to time, but the Dhamma is beyond time.

Part II: Information derived from laypeople

1) Information concerning the practice of following the Most Venerable Mun’s method.

Both Mae Chee Uruvin and Khun Phissamai are youngsters interested in Buddhism. They first study Dhamma practices from books and tape-recorders.

They are formally trained in meditative practice in their middle-age. Whilst searching for a teacher and an appropriate monastery, the former observed the eight precepts as a *mae chee* at Wat Tham Gogdoo, Udonthani, under Phra Acharn Camphong Tisso, the late abbot. Khun Phissamai now helps out by working at Wat Pa Bh ridatta Pa ipad ram, studying under Phra Acharn Boonchuey, whom she praises as a “real teacher”, and who has helped her gain much progress in her *bhāvan* . His teaching reminds her of loving kindness (*mettā*).

Their practice starts by using inner recitation of the word “Buddho”, linked to mindfulness of breathing in and out. Both of them practise meditation in all four postures. They learn always to see inside the mind. Mae Chee Uruvin appreciates Phra Acharn Poonsak’s teaching of seeing the real mind by holding the breath. She is a Bangkokian who spends her life in the Northeastern tradition. She has learned much and lives happily due to the adjustment of body and mind. Khun Phissamai tries to achieve what she calls living in a “human forest” (*pa manus*). She

admires Venerable Mahā Bua as the first human teacher who has taught her an effective practice of breathing.

Both of them have learned of the need for self-realisation in order to reach the final goal of deliverance from all suffering.

2) Opinions of those interviewed

Two laypeople stated that the Most Venerable Mun's mode of practice is still able to be followed at the present time. This method teaches the practitioner to first teach himself.

After having trained themselves, monks should then teach other monks and laypeople. Their followers have to realise both themselves and the nature of things in the world.

Dhuta ga kamma hāna monks are beneficial to the society. They help solve social problems without broadcasting the fact. They build the schools and streets, help the poor, and educate the Mong hilltribe, whilst the late abbot at Wat Tham Gogdoo had three basins dug to distribute water for the villagers.

Laypeople who follow this mode of practice should achieve self-understanding. They have more loving kindness and like to share their experiences. However, they should not put society behind them, but rather live without attachment in their own environment.

These days, the mode of practice of *kamma hāna* monks is not as strict as it was previously. Extravagant use of the four necessities of life can cause the problems—over-eating being, for instance, an obstacle to *bhāvanā*.

Chapter V

Conclusion and Suggestions

5.1 Conclusion

The present thesis has portrayed the essential details of the noble life of the well-known *vipassanā* meditation master, the Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera, who was considered by some to be one of the important arahants of recent times.

Most Venerable Mun was born into a traditional Buddhist family on Thursday, January 20, 2413 BE (1870). His birthplace was the village of Ban Khambong in the Khong Chiam district of Ubon Ratchathani province. He ordained as a monk on June 12, 2436 BE (1893), his monastic life can be divided into four separate phases.

The early years (1892-1915)

The period of meeting with the Most Venerable Sao and practised *samatha* and *vipassanā* meditation and wandered throughout the Northeast region. This was the longest time that he spent there.

The middle years (1916-1928)

The period of training disciples and preached the Dhamma.

Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera wandered *dhuta ga* in the Northern of Chiang Mai province for many years, spending the annual rains' retreat in a different location each year. Outside the rains' retreats, he wandered extensively through the provinces of Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai for a total of eleven years, making it impossible to give a strict chronological account of all the village communities he passed through on his travels.

The Chiang Mai years (1929-1940)

This period marks his temporary residence in the mountain area around Chiang Mai.

When Most Venerable Mun first arrived at Chiang Mai railway station, his reputation had already preceded him and he was met by a group of notable supporters. He made his position clear and told them that, as a wandering monk, he intended to reside in the forests and mountains outside the town. He stayed at Wat Chedi Luang with the Venerable Upāli only for short period of time, after which he left for the forests and mountain area of Chiang Mai and its surrounds.

He finally left Chiang Mai, heading first for Bangkok. He took up his residence in Wat Boromnivas at the request of Phra Mahavirawong. Laypeople and monks came to see him, having heard of his fame and of his ability to preach as a real *dhuta ga* monk.

The final years (1940-1949)

Returning to Northeast region, he spent the final stage of his life in the forest area of Sakon Nakhon.

Most Venerable Mun stayed at Wat Suddhawat before moving on to a small forest monastery. He stayed continuously in the area around Ban Huay Kaen, Ban Na Sinuan, Ban Khok, and Ban Na Mon in the Tong Khop district of Sakon Nakhon province.

In the dry season, following the third rains' retreat, a group of laypeople from the village of Ban Nong Pheu Na Nai went to see Most Venerable Mun, and invited him to return with them to live near their village. He accepted their offer, and was escorted to their village in the Na Nai sub-district of Phanna Nikhom in Sakon Nakhon province, where he spent the next rains' retreat.

This study confirms the belief of the *arahantaship* in these days. People say that, the time of the path, fruit and enlightenment has over since the Buddha has passed into Parinibbāna, those who practise are not able to achieve these. Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera demonstrates that the path, fruit and enlightenment did not disappear with the death of the Buddha. He taught and acted in such a way that he brought confidence to his disciples, who held that he, was one practised Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma (*dhammānudhammapaṭipanno*).

He was a model teacher in every aspect of his practice. His will power, courage, frugality and all-round ingenuity were outstanding qualities that put him in a class by himself in this age.

He possessed celestial divine ears (*dibbasota*), divine eyes (*dibbacakkhu*), as well as *paracittavijjā*. Living with Most Venerable Acharn, some disciple always fearful and on guard. This kind of sensation prevented him from unconventionally thought. He became quickly aware that his mind deviated and he was able to pull it back in time.

Living continuously with a good teacher for a long time had various advantages. Following his example, his disciples gradually modified their attitudes and ways of behaviour. They adjusted their behaviours and increased their inner skills little by little until coming at last their characters naturally harmonized with his as much as possible.

Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera taught how to behave in various manners, both meditation techniques and the practices to eradicate the defilements.

Those who went to the Most Venerable Mun's monastery for training and the practice of *kammaṭṭhāna* were normally initially taught by him that they should become diligent and energetic in doing all duties and tasks. He taught them that their seeing and hearing should be sharp, rather than clumsy. He taught them to be resourceful and to use their ingenuity, both externally and internally, for the sake of the Dhamma in all sorts of ways, and not to remain idle like a lost person. In moving here and there, they should have mindfulness, be careful and precise in all circumstances.

His method of meditation is the *Samathay nika*'s way which generally based on *samādhi*. After possessing the firm *samādhi*, the disciple was taught to progress by wisdom (*paññā*). As an initial form of meditation, he had taught a distinct method designed to tune the practitioner's mind to tranquillity.

In regard to meditation practice, the Most Venerable Mun taught all methods, starting from the five *kammaṭṭhānas* as a basis, and going on to include the other *kammaṭṭhānas* depending on what suited each individual's character. While listening to his teaching they would also practise *samādhi* meditation. It was a good way to lull the hearts of the listeners into both the states of *samādhi* and *paññā* in their various ascending levels.

When teaching his monks, Most Venerable Mun was thorough and precise. The rules of monastic discipline were taught in detail, and *samādhi* and *vipassanā* at even greater depth. He conducted higher Dhamma teaching only within the coterie of his close disciples.

The meditation practice of Most Venerable Mun is a revival of early meditation practice of elder disciples. It accords with the suttas, whilst his strict observation of the *Vinaya* adheres more closely to early Buddhist practice.

The meditation method consists of all four postures practices - *ca kama bhāvanā* (walking meditation), sitting, standing and lying meditation.

Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera believed that the body is the dwelling-place of the more gross forms of sexual craving and conceit. He laid stress on the practice of the four foundations of mindfulness given in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhānasutta*. Most Venerable Mun used the practice of *kāyānupassanā* at the outset of his practice. He was very skilled in this practice and in maintaining mindfulness of the body (*kāyagatāsati*) in order to cease the problems of them.

This is in keeping with the development of *vipassanā*, as described in the texts, D.N. I76; M.N. II 17.

An obvious aspect of the Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera's teaching was the dhamma of the five powers: confidence (*saddhā*), effort (*virīya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*). Particularly the mindfulness is always indispensable in all activities and at all time. Without mindfulness, walking or sitting meditation is just empty action that could not be called the 'right effort'

For this very reason, Most Venerable Mun emphasized mindfulness of his disciples' practice. His strictly keeping the order in placing things, speaking and moving actions was the examples of the practice of mindfulness.

He stressed the need of mindfulness along with other teachings to suit an individual's level of mind (*citta*). Those with the expectation of the attainment of concentration (*samādhi*) as well as path (*magga*) and

fruits (*phala*), have to pay attention to mindfulness of all postures and situations. His teaching thus accorded with the text, M.L.S. III 54.

Mindfulness is the principal foundation supporting every aspect at every level of meditation practice. Practised continuously, it eventually develops into the kind of supreme-mindfulness that fosters the highest levels of wisdom. Mindfulness and wisdom must be developed to work as a team.

Moreover, mindfulness also prevents the practitioners from evil actions. According to the Most Venerable Mun's teaching of the good moral virtue development by maintenance one's mind. Generally speaking, it is quite true that morality means keeping the actions and speech in good order. But before one can put his actions and speech in good moral order, one must consider the source of moral virtue. It originates with the mind, which is the master of body and speech to make him behave properly.

It is clearly understood that the disciples who take the Most Venerable Mun's teaching seriously not only progress in meditation practice but also well observe the *bhikkhu sīla* according to the discipline (*vinaya*).

His method included the attention on the five *khandhas*, and the contemplation of *paccayākāra* (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) to break up *avijjā*. In order to reach the final goal (*nibbāna*), Most Venerable Mun taught how to consider the four noble truths (*ariyasacca*).

In order to help eradicate the defilements (*kilesa*), Most Venerable Mun was the best model of the practice of *dhuta ga*. His

kammaṭṭhāna monks follow the Vinaya rules strictly, and are advised to adopt at least six *dhuta ga* practices.

Dhuta ga Kammaṭṭhāna monks go wandering in order to progress their practices. This kind of training needed continuously mindful and strictly self-discipline. They experience harsh self-training and learn much more than do those who regularly stay in monasteries.

From the above essence, it can draw a conclusion that the Most Venerable Mun does not follow anyone's method of practice. He himself develops his achievement by making use of the Buddha's dhammas and the applications of the monk-lifestyle. His method of *citta-bhavanā* practice is the synthesis of the three essential doctrines of *pariyattisaddhamma*, *paṭipattisaddhamma*, and *paṭivedhasaddhamma*.

The method consists of his dhamma preachings, instructions of practice and the dhamma conversations, as to the *pariyattisaddhamma*. As for the *paṭipattisaddhamma*, it is made up of meditation in four postures, Bhikkhu Vinaya, monastic discipline, *dhuta ga*, *khandhavatt* and the contemplation of the essential dhammas for the achievement of calm and insight meditation. All of the practices included all activities in daily life put an emphasis on the mindfulness.

Each part of his teaching supports to each other and merges together for the achievement. Monks learned Dhamma by listening to the teacher. They saw the teacher's way of practice. They practiced, and acquired the fruits in their minds.

In the context of threefold training, Most Venerable Mun taught his followers *sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā* in full. *Sīla* must be long-life learned and observed. *Samādhi* and *paññā* are step by step to each other. Wisdom (*paññā*) is varied with the level of the concentration (*samādhi*).

Thus the Most Venerable Mun's method of practice should to be the process of life-long learning. Following his method can lead both monks and laities to the achievement in the level depending on their perseverance. It is in accordance with his teaching that the Dhamma belongs to everyone who truly desires it. The Buddha did not limit the possession of Dhamma to a particular individual. Everyone who practices in the right way enjoys the same right of ownership.

For laypeople, Most Venerable Mun usually emphasized the aspects of Dhamma that were suitable to the condition of laities- such as, generosity (*dāna*), moral virtue (*sīla*) and meditative development (*bhāvanā*). As long as people still value self-sacrifice and extend a helping hand to one another, life will always have meaning. As long as people believe that material wealth is valuable more than moral virtue, they will have no real security.

Most Venerable Mun was always generous and self-sacrificing. He gave away every thing he was offered to support others. Without keeping things for himself he never regretted of what it was or how much it cost.

Meditation techniques are actually methods for developing self-awareness for laypeople. This means observing the mind which is not content to just remain still but tends to move fast. Observing the mind

requires mindfulness to keep aware of its movement. The mind is the principal leader to create the action (*kamma*). It is the source of all *kamma* that belongs only to the one who makes it. The mind is the most precious of all things that should be valued and cared for. Maintenance mindfulness is the best way to look after it well.

The Most Venerable Mun's method of *citta-bhāvnā* practice is still beneficial to people at present day. We can implement the main principles of meditation practice and the way of living altogether to exist in this world.

Those who are not in the ordinary way the meditative practitioners could have happy life by following the teachings of generosity, moral, and frugality. People should economize in accordance with the level of their financial status for the sake of economy.

The teachings of death and the action to deal with the sickness will profit people to remind of the nature of this world. Everyone must die, there is no point in trying to resist it. Truth (*ariyasacca*) can not be found by denying the natural order of things.

When the monks living with the Most Venerable Mun became sick, he usually advised them to develop meditative techniques for relieving the symptoms. At the same time, he wanted them to develop those techniques into methods for investigating Dhamma. Physical and mental pains are direct manifestations of the truth of *dukkha*. He did not expect the monks to simply surrender to pain as though they had never acquired training in Dhamma.

Monks, who remain mindfully self-controlled, never showing sign of restlessness, are considered truly praiseworthy examples of their fighting spirit. In stead of concentration solely on the painful points, Most Venerable Mun advised the sick monks to analyze the body, the pain, and the *citta*. In this way, they understand the true nature of them.

There is no escaping the fact that we are born with the aging, sickness and death, so these techniques are valuable for all of us as long as we are still alive. The technique of contemplation of the body, feelings, mind and mind-objects can be applied to other critical situations such as pain, grief and lamentation.

People are the same human beings but different in being human. Various models of Dhamma practices should be widely propagated to meet those differences. Learning the ways and means to achieve the individual goal is the important point that having respect for Buddhism values for life.

Generally speaking, religion is a part of peaceful society. Successful and happy life has to be based on the ways and means to attain the benefits that are the objectives of life.

Buddhism provides three levels of benefits, therefore the temporal objective or present benefit (*di hadhammattha*), the spiritual objective or future benefit (*samparāyikattha*), and the highest objective or greater benefit (*paramattha*).

The Most Venerable Mun's method of practice responds to the attainment of the three levels of benefits. Monks who aim at the highest objective strictly follow his teachings. They then attain the goal. Also, his teaching for monks to satisfy with little, and the teachings of *dāna-sīla-bhāvanā* for lay people, help reaching benefits both the individual and Buddhist society.

The implement of these teachings to match the management for reducing the social problems would help ease the economic crisis, illegal drugs, alcoholic problems and other problems. This is the way the Most Venerable Mun's method of practice responds to social problems solving.

Most Venerable Mun has made meditation practice in Thailand boom since his lifetime. The *parikamma* word 'Buddho' is widely used in meditation schools both of his lineage and not. At present time, the forest monasteries are established all over Thailand. No matter of whose the teacher descended from and what the mode of practice is, the *dhuta ga* practice is popular amongst both monks and laypeople.

In the same manner, *d na*, *s la* and *bh van* are in the ordinary way the Thai Buddhist practices. Giving *d na* spread widely in order to support monks and the monastic constructions. *S la* and *bh van* are the main objectives of the extraordinary occasions. On the *Uposatha* day (wan-phra), laypeople develop the observance of five precepts (*Pa ca-s la*) to the eight precepts (*A ha-s la*).

To acquire fresh experiences, those who are interested in the Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera's method of practice should visit the monasteries in his lineage and learn more.

5.2 Suggestions for Further Research

This study has proved beneficial to the present writer through its arousing a fight to live happily, even though the body is beset by long-term illness, and through bringing much liberation from sufferings. The Most Venerable Mun's method of practice is undoubtedly declared by him himself and by his senior disciples, and offers an effective means for reaching the final goal of Buddhism. That Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera and his senior disciples were able to transform relics into various crystal-like shapes and colours provides tangible evidence of this.

The story of Most Venerable Mun and his lineage is still be interested. Some are investigable issues and bared to proof.

Topics awaiting further research include:

A study of the transformation of relics

The social benefits of the *ariyapuggala*'s power of mind

The role of *kamma hāna* monks in the natural environment

A study of the Most Venerable Mun Bhūridatta Thera's Dhamma preachings

A comparative study of meditation practices as found in town and forest monasteries

A field-training in forest monastery

A study of *kammaṭṭhāna* monks since 2000 AD

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Appendix 1

Relics Transformed

All the people, who received some of the bone fragments that were distributed after Ācariya Mun’s cremation, placed them in suitable reliquaries and worshipped these relics in his stead.

It is the understanding that Khun Wan’s store in Nakhon Ratchasima was the first place where Ācariya Mun’s bone fragments were found to be genuine relics. From that time on, such relics have appeared in many different places, where faithful people, who have received pieces of Ācariya Mun’s bone, continue to worship them with special reverence.

Questions have arisen concerning the spontaneous transformation of the bone remains of Ācariya Mun and Ācariya Sao into relics. As news of this marvel spread shortly after the first relics of Ācariya Mun appeared, many people voiced doubts about why the bone remains of ordinary people could not also become relics: after all, the bones of an arahant and the bones of an ordinary person are composed of the same body-elements. Why is it that only an arahant’s bones can become relics? What is the essential difference between the two?

Ācariya Boowa explained, briefly, that the heart, or *citta*, is the fundamental, determining factor here. Although the *citta* is something common to all living beings, it varies greatly in power and quality from one person to the next. The *citta* of the Arahant consists of *ariyacitta*, meaning that it is absolutely pure. The *citta* of the average person, on the other hand, is merely an ordinary *citta*, meaning, that it is polluted by *kilesas*. In either case, the nature of the *citta*—the master and prime mover—has a decisive impact on the condition of the physical body in which it resides. For instance, the arahant’s *citta*, being pure, may well have the power to cleanse the body-elements, making them pure as well, and thus allowing his bones to transform themselves into relics.

Appendix 2

Practice of the *dhuta ga*

The *dhuta ga* practices which the monks regularly and frequently practise include:

- 1) Living in the forest
- 2) Living under the shade of a tree (*rukhamūla*)
- 3) Going for *pi apāta* regularly
- 4) Eating food only once a day
- 5) Eating out of the bowl
- 6) Wearing *pa sukūla* robes.
- 7) Living in a cemetery or charnel ground,
- 8) Maintaining a sitting position (*nesajja*)—not lying down for as many nights as one has so resolved.
- 9) Not accepting any food which is offered after one has returned from *pi apāta*.

The *Dhuta ga* Observance of Living in the Forest

The observance of living in the forest is a tradition of those *dhuta ga kammaṭṭhāna* monks in the Venerable Acharn Mun's lineage,

who considered this to be the most important of all the *dhuta ga* observances.

The *Dhuta ga* Observance of Using only *Pa sukūla* Cloth

The observance of using only *pa sukūla* cloth is one of the ways to reduce the *kilesas* concerned with worldly ambition and the desire for beauty and attractiveness.

The *Dhuta ga* Observance of *Pi apāta*

Pi apāta apāta is an essential duty for those monks who are ordained as sons of the Sākya in the Buddha's Sa gha (*Sākyaputta Buddhajinorasa*).

The regular routine of going on *pi apāta* is a duty which brings peace and happiness of heart to those who practise it. This means, firstly, that when one is walking in those places where there are houses and where people live together, and also when one is going to and coming from such places, one is constantly striving for one's own development within oneself, which is the same sort of thing as walking *ca kama* at the place where one is staying. Secondly, it is a change of bodily posture and activity during the time that one is going on *pi apāta*. Thirdly, for those who are in the process of constantly developing wisdom, they may, while walking on *pi apāta a*, at times see or hear various things passing by that can enter and stimulate the doors of their senses. These are things

which can promote wisdom and which they can take hold of and often gain value from. Fourthly, it helps overcome laziness, which is an inherent characteristic of human beings, who like to get results, but who are too lazy to do that which will bring the desired results. Fifthly, it also helps overcome conceit, which makes one believe that one is an important and superior person, whose family is long-established in the upper-classes, wealthy and opulent in all ways, by casting oneself into the role of a beggar.

In eating once a day, one should take sufficient, but not too much, so that one's stomach does not become disturbed by indigestion, a sign that one has exceeded the natural capacity of one's digestive system. In addition to eating only once a day, one should also examine and consider which types of food are of value to one's body, and do not cause any stomach trouble, as well as being of value to the *citta*, so that one's meditation practice goes smoothly, and the *citta* is not tarnished due to the wrong type of food causing it damage. For instance, foods that are too hot and spicy, or too salty, and cause heart-burn, make one feel anxious and are of no help in one's striving for Dhamma. For body and mind (heart) are closely interrelated, and can quickly react upon each other. So it is taught that one should choose those foods that are beneficial (*sappāya*) and of value to both body and mind, should one be in a position to choose. However, if one has no choice and one knows that the food before one is not beneficial, then it is better not to eat any of it at all. For if one were then to persist in eating, this would only do harm to the body and bring *dukkha* and anxiety to the mind. However, those who eat

only once a day are likely to be well aware of their needs, and will not be carried away by the tastes of the various foods.

Eating out of the Bowl

This is the *dhuta ga* of eating from a single vessel, which means that one eats all the food out of the bowl, where it is all grouped together in one place. Both savouries and sweets are all together in the one bowl, and not divided up in separate containers outside the bowl, which would tend to promote greed and excess—the very opposite of the essence of the *dhuta ga* practices, which are designed to make one contented with little.

Before putting his hand into the bowl to take the food to eat, the monk should reflect upon it (*paccavekkhana*) by way of *paṭisa khā yoniso pi apāta paṭisevāmi*, and so on, which is a skilful way to consider all food gathered together there in the one bowl. He should do this with whatever strength of wisdom he may have for at least one minute.

Ways and Manners of Eating

If there are several *kamma hāna* monks staying together in a dwelling or monastery, they will normally eat together after returning from their *pi apāta*, in which case the normal practice is to take the food out of their bowls and put it all together on trays, after which it is shared out evenly between all of them. If there are any lay people present, the monks will then give thanks (*anumodanā*) by chanting *Yathā...sabbī* and so on, after which they will start eating from the bowl by hand. Generally, however, they tend to give *anumodanā* in the village, after they have

received all *pi apāta* food, in a small shelter which the villagers have constructed in one or two suitable places for this purpose. The monks then sit down there and give the *anumodanā*, after which they return to where they are staying. In such cases, the villagers do not follow them, simply putting all the food into their bowls and then leaving them alone.

After the monks have arranged the food in their bowls, they make themselves calm before starting to eat. They then contemplate the food by way of recollection (*paccavekkha a*) of its purpose, using the verse commencing *paṭisa khā yoniso* which points out the nature of the various different kinds of food in the bowl, by way of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*, by way of *pa ikūlasaññā* (perception of its loathsomeness), and/or by way of the various *dhātus* (elements). Whichever of these is used will depend on the skill and ability of each individual monk. This is done for at least one minute, after which they then dip their hand into the bowl and start to eat in a controlled and seemly manner, all the while mindful of the process of eating.

While eating, they do not chatter or talk, except when this becomes necessary, in which case they make themselves fully self-conscious before speaking, say what has to be said and then become silent. Before speaking, they wait until they have had time to swallow any food that they may have had in the mouth, and then speak clearly, without mumbling, which would be an ill-mannered way of speaking. While speaking, they fix their attention on their speech, until they have finished saying what is necessary. Then they resume eating in a seemly and proper manner, as before, with mindfulness, watching over the process of

chewing, and avoiding any unseemly noises of crunching and munching which would be bad manners and characteristic of carelessness and greed.

They keep their eyes on the bowl and their thoughts mindfully associated with what is in the bowl, not looking at other things around them while eating—which is the way of those who forget themselves, and lack mindfulness, eat. Moreover, while they are eating, they contemplate whatever aspect of the Dhamma suits their ability, such as taking the food as a supporting basis (*āramma a*). But usually they contemplate the food that they are eating, rather than other aspects of the Dhamma.

Eating food in a careful, self-controlled manner, with mindfulness present, and contemplating it with wisdom, will probably give rise to some unusual experiences, quite often whilst one is still in the process of eating. Sometimes a feeling of weariness and disaffection with eating can arise, so that one has to stop eating for a short while, or stop eating entirely. This is because the “taste” of the Dhamma, which arises at that time, is so greatly superior to the dull fascination that one has in the food one is eating.

The process of picking up the food and putting it in one’s mouth should be done with mindfulness present the whole time, just as with any other form of practice. For eating food is one of the primary routines in the monk’s life, and is not inferior to any of other means of steady eradicating the *kilesas*. If they are not careful, and become so fascinated by the taste of the food that they forget themselves, their eating turns into the “way of the world”, and cannot then be considered one of the regular

routines of a monk who aspires to see the danger lurking in everything sensual. Therefore, all the true *ācariyas*, such as the Most Venerable Acharn Mun, have always looked upon the process of eating food as being a most important routine. When the monks eat food, although doing so together, it nonetheless seems to each one as though he were alone, with no other monks present, since they do not talk, and each is concerned only with his own practice, self-controlled and peaceful. This comes from the view that eating food is just another Dhamma-routine, like all others that they observe.

The Size of the Alms-bowl

Amongst the monks in Thailand, the alms-bowl is considered to be an important requisite which no Buddhist monk should be without. In fact, it is always considered to be an essential requisite, from the day of their ordination, and right upto the end of their sojourn in the Sa gha.

But the Vinaya rules allow many types, and sizes, of bowls. In the lineage of the Most Venerable Acharn Mun, it is generally thought that the bowl should be of medium to large size. This comes from the way in which they like to go wandering as ascetics in the forests and mountains, as suits their inclination, for they do not like staying fixed in any one place outside the rainy season (*vassa*). When they go wandering, they walk barefoot, go wherever they feel inclined, and are obliged to carry such requisites as are necessary with them wherever they go. Yet they do not take much. What they carry generally consists of the bowl, the three robes (*sa gā i*, *cīvara* and *sabong*), a bathing-cloth, an

umbrella-tent (*grod*), a mosquito-net, a kettle of water, a water-filter, a razor, sandals, some small candles, and a candle-lantern which is made of a piece of white cloth, sewn up to form a tube, with two circular pieces of metal, the top one being in the form of an open ring. A candle is then mounted at the bottom end and, when lit, gives sufficient light for walking *ca kama* at night, and for going anywhere round about the place at which they are staying. So it acts in place of the more usual type of lantern.

When they are wandering about, they store many of the requisites in the bowl, such as the outer robe (*sa gā i*), the mosquito net, the razor, the candle-lantern and candles, thus demanding a rather larger bowl than normal.

A big alms-bowl is more convenient to eat from, because all the food is put together in the bowl. The rice, along with various savoury and sweet items, are all there in the one bowl and, since they have no plates, they have to wash and dry the bowl, so as to make it clean and free of smells. Each time they wash the bowl, it is necessary to do so at least three times with fresh water. Then, after it has been wiped dry, it is put out to dry completely, if the sun is out, for a short while, before being put away in a suitable place; but if the weather is overcast, the bowl may be left with the lid off to get rid of any lingering smell that it may have.

The *kamma hāna* monks look after their bowls very carefully. If someone offers to wash and wipe out their bowl for them, they are reluctant to allow them do so, if that person has never done so before.

This is because they are afraid of the bowl getting rusty, afraid that it may be put down in a place where it is not safe, afraid that it may knock against hard objects, or that it may drop and hit something hard which may damage or dent it, so that rust will start forming before long. When this happens, and corrosion forms, the whole bowl has to be rubbed down with abrasive stones and emery paper to remove all the black iron oxide, both inside and outside, until the metal is clean. It must then be re-oxidised by heating it in a fire, which fire must be replenished five times to accord with the Vinaya rules, before it may be used again. All this entails a lot of trouble and hard work, so the monks look after their alms-bowl more carefully than any other requisite and are reluctant to let other people handle them.

Biography of the Researcher

Mrs. Phassarapha Phaisarnariyasap was born in Petchaburi province, Thailand, on November 1, 1945. She graduated with a Bachelor of Education (Social Studies) degree from Chulalongkorn University in 1968, and a Master of Business Administration (Management and Organization) degree from Durakijpandit University in 1994. She became a lecturer at the secondary, tertiary and higher education levels following her graduation. After her resignation, she studies Buddhism and meditation practice.