

[SUMMERY OF THESIS]

VIPASSANA MEDITATION AND THERAVADA TRADITION: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The present work entitled '*Vipassna Meditation and Theravada Tradition: A Historical Perspective*' is trying to shed light on the teaching of the Buddha particularly his way of meditation that he discovered and it aims at producing a state of perfect mental health, equilibrium and tranquility. One who wants to liberate from the circle of life called *Samsara* in Buddhist perspective has to do the only thing and it is nothing but practicing Vipassana Meditation. The word 'meditation' in English is a very poor substitute for the original term '*bhavana*' which means 'culture or 'development', i.e. mental culture or mental development. Mental culture plays the most important role for everyone as a human being. By removing one's impurity, one can reach the highest mental culture. Only human beings can gain this culture by training his or her mind through his or her strenuous effort.

According to Buddhism, man's position is supreme. Man is his own master and there is no higher being or power that sits in judgment over his destiny. The Buddha said, "One is one's own refuge who else could be the refuge? He admonished his disciples to 'be a refuge to themselves', and never to seek refuge in anybody else. The Buddha introduced Vipassana Meditation technique to the world and His disciples, especially the Sangha handed down the entire teachings of their Master. Among His disciples, those who follow and practice strictly the disciplines and teachings of the Master are called Theravadins.

The Buddhist Bhavana aims at cleansing the mind of impurities and disturbances, such as lustful desires, hatred, ill-will, indolence, worries and restlessness, skeptical doubts, and cultivating such qualities as concentration, awareness, intelligence, will, energy, the analytical faculty, confidence, joy, tranquility, leading finally to the attainment of highest wisdom which sees the nature of things as they really are and realizes the Ultimate Truth, *Nibbana*, the final goal of Buddhism.

There are two forms of meditation mentioned in Buddhist texts. One is the development of mental concentration prescribed in the texts, leading up to the highest mystic states such as ‘the Sphere of Nothingness’ (*Akincannayatana*) or ‘the Sphere of Neither-perception-nor-Non-Perception’ (*Nivasanna nasannayatana*). According to the Buddha, all these mystic states are mind-created, mind-produced, conditioned. They have nothing to do with Reality, Truth. This form of meditation existed before the time of the Buddha. The Buddha himself studied these yogic practices under different teachers and attained to the highest mystic states, but he was not satisfied with them because they did not give complete liberation. They did not give insight into the Ultimate Reality.

He discovered the other form of ‘meditation’ known as *Vipassana* ‘Insight’ into the nature of things, leading to the complete liberation of mind, to the realization of the Ultimate Truth, *Nibbana*. This is an essentially Buddhist meditation, Buddhist mental culture. It is an analytical method based on mindfulness, awareness, vigilance, observation. In this paper, we focus on *Vipassana* meditation and *Nibbana*, its final result.

The Buddha accomplished His mission for the welfare of the world for forty-five years. Out of forty-five years, the present study **Vipassana Meditation and Theravada Tradition: A Historical Perspective** is to trace the ways and means of Vipassana rediscovered by the Buddha and after the demise of the Buddha the schism among the Bhikkhus, the disciples of the Buddha appeared one hundred years later. The aim of the present work is to focus on the historical background of the *Sutta* with the aspects of socio-religious, ethico-philosophical and cultural ideas that prevail from the time of the Buddha till the present situation.

Therefore, in this research work we present the above mentioned topic with the intention of gaining a man's position in supreme from Buddhist perspective as well as Theravada tradition who are following strictly as taught by the Buddha, it is one of Buddhist schools exercising in Asia.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find out the methods and techniques of Vipassana tradition;
2. To study the Theravada tradition in Myanmar
3. To understand the similarities and dissimilarities in these two traditions
4. To compare and contrast Vipassana and Theravada traditions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the present study historical method and literary criticism were used Historical data have been gleaned from encyclopedias and articles. In order to establish the facts, all collected data have been analyzed and compared. Texts composed in Burmese (Myanmar) have also been consulted.

ASSUMPTIONS

- 1) Vipassana is the essence of Buddhism that everyone should follow who wanted to enjoy eternal peace.
- 2) This Vipassana method has been preserved by Theravada Buddhist monks.
- 3) Nibbana preserved by the disciples of the Buddha is known as Theravada Samgha.

CHAPTERIZATION OF STUDY

The present work is divided into six chapters. The following section presents a brief description about the chapter of the proposed study:

CHAPTER-1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of systematic introduction of the topic, objectives, hypothesis, methodology, context of study, review of literature and mention of sources and conceptual framework of thesis are part of this chapter.

After that, we discussed about the ideological environment that propelled Buddhism India never saw before or during the sixth century B.C. The feature of Buddhism is also necessary to examine the main stages of development of Indian religious and philosophical ideas such as Brahmanical religion. From the Buddhist point of view, the basic feature of ancient religions is the belief in the supernatural. Both Gotama and Mahavira made an outstanding contribution to the ideas of man, giving to Indian culture a philosophy that has influenced the whole world. The famous six teachers and their teachings that prevailed in those days those who were contemporary to the Buddha were linked.

CHAPTER-2: THE BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS

In chapter two, we traced to discuss the authentic history of the Buddha, His fundamental and important teachings based on the last days of the Buddha. All the teachings that he taught within 45 years can be found in one discourse called Mahaparinibbana sutta. We shed light on the summary of his teachings: the seven principles of social and political stability of the country; the fruits of an Immoral and a Moral life which gives us a fair idea of the socio-ethical and religious life of the lay devotees; Buddhist Stratification of Society and the essence of Buddhism, the Four Noble Truths.

CHAPTER-3: VIPASSANA AS A WAY TO LIBERATION

This chapter deals with our main topic and we explore the meditation technique taught by the Buddha. Based on the main sources we tried to explore the two methods of meditation and how Buddhist meditation leads to spiritual liberation and how the meditative experience assists in understanding the meaning of *Nibbana*. In Theravada Pali Texts, the notion of enlightenment is emphasized as the eradication of kilesas (defilements) and liberation from samsaric sufferings. The two levels of liberation: psychological level of liberation and biological level of liberation have been explained.

CHAPTER-4: NIBBANA FROM DIFFERENT PERSEPECTIVE

This chapter focuses on the final goal of Buddhism known as Nibbana, emancipation or liberation. Actually, the Buddha gave the exact definition about Nibban. Free from craving is Nibbana, absolute peace or unconditional peace. The concept of Nibbana and its characteristic and the way how to attain it has been emphasized. Actually,

Nibbana cannot be explained fully for only if we have experienced and free from defilements we can enjoy it.

CHAPTER-5: THERAVADA TRADITION AND DOCTRINE

This chapter is the second part of our topic and we traced the historical background of the term and their important role in preserving the genuine teaching of the Buddha. Different schools of Buddhism have been discussed in brief. After the passing away of the Buddha, the role of the Elder monks and collecting and preserving the Master's doctrines later known as Sangiti, the Great Council was discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER-6: CONCLUSION AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

There are many findings or broad observations that this study highlights as a contribution to the existing knowledge on Insight Meditation called Vipassana Meditation and Theravada tradition in Buddhism.

Firstly, the philosophical setting of ancient India was influenced by three main approaches to the acquisition of knowledge, namely, the Brahmins, the Upanisada and Samana Brahmana, wandering ascetics and intuitive knowledge, gained through meditative experience, as important means for the acquisition of knowledge.

Secondly, The Buddha introduced Vipassana Meditation technique to the world by avoiding the two extremes: self-mortification and self-indulgence and his disciples, especially the Sangha handed down the entire teachings of their Master.

Thirdly, man's position is the vital role in the world. Man is his own master and there is no higher being or power that sits in judgment over his destiny. The Buddha said,

“One is one’s own refuge who else could be the refuge? He admonished his disciples to ‘be a refuge to themselves.

Fourthly, The Buddhist meditation aims at cleansing the mind of impurities and disturbances, such as lustful desires, hatred, ill-will, indolence, worries and restlessness, skeptical doubts, and cultivating such qualities as concentration, awareness, intelligence, will, energy, the analytical faculty, confidence, joy, tranquility, leading finally to the attainment of highest wisdom which sees the nature of things as they really are and realizes the Ultimate Truth, *Nibbana*, the final goal of Buddhism.

Finally, the disciples of the Buddha split into many schools, one century after the passing away of the Buddha. Then, the term ‘*Theravada*’ ‘*Mahasanghika*’ and soon came into use among the disciples representing the doctrine and discipline they follow. Theravada is one of the schools that is existing even today in Southeast Asia, especially practicing in Burma (Myanmar), Sri Lanka, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. We trace the historical background the reasons why Buddhist schools were divided into several denominations. Theravada Buddhism founded by the Elderly Mahathera preserved the genuine doctrines of the Buddha even today, so by following the footprint of the Buddha, we can enjoy perfect happiness.