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## A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MAHĀSĪ AND MOGOK MEDITATION TECHNIQUES IN MYANMAR

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the popular use of the meditation techniques developed by Mogok and Mahāsi in Myanmar. Despite the fact that these two vipassana centres are well-known in Myanmar, research on a comparative analysis of these two widely used meditation techniques has been ignored in earlier studies. Since both the Mahāsi and Mogok meditation centres are thought to have very effective meditation methods, which is why many participants from both domestic and foreign countries find them to be relatively best destination, the author is especially interested in comparing their approaches. This study uses a qualitative research method consisting of an in-depth interview with a total of fourteen research subjects. Twenty research participants, consisting of laymen and monastic participants, were chosen from each center based on their participation in multiple meditation retreats conducted under the guideline of these two centres in Myanmar. This study aims to investigate and compare the meditation techniques of the Mogok and Mahāsi meditation centres located in Yangon, Myanmar. On the other hand, the outcome presents a relatively unique discovery that resulted from the study based on interviewees throughout the fieldwork. Furthermore, based on the four foundations of Buddhist meditation techniques, the study maintains that the two meditation techniques are almost identical. The only areas where techniques differ are in how they apply their unique methodologies and examples, which are briefly covered in the results section below.

## INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the distinctive methods used at these two significant and well-known Vipassana centres in Myanmar, the study contracts the Mahāsi and Mogok meditation techniques. In Myanmar, the Mahāsi Vipassana Centre is one of the most well-known centres for vipassana meditation. Initially established in 1947, when Burma gained its independence from British-India, the center was known as the “*Buddha Sasana Nuggaha Organisation*.” It is a non-governmental and non-profit organization; it is funded entirely by donations from generous supporters. As a result, the center is able to arrange and offer participants free meditation retreats with food and accommodation during meditation course. Two years after it was founded, this center was formally opened under the patronage of the most revered Mahāsi Sayadaw gyi.

On the other hand, the Mogok Vipassana Centre, established by the followers of Mogok Saydaw in 1965, is another highly frequented meditation center and the ideal destination for numerous practitioners. Since Mogok Sayadaw was considered an arahant, this is a commemorative event to re-use his meditation techniques, so the devotees established this Mogok vipassana center in Yangon. Over the years, this center offers free meditation retreats as a non-profit, non-governmental organization. Typically, the Mogok Vipassana Centre runs consecutive ten-day meditation retreat courses twice every month. The meditation centre is able to offer free meditation retreats to a large number of practitioners in Myanmar, though, because it is also entirely supported by the donations who give monetary or other relevant material support to the center.

The author is especially interested about how these two distinct meditation methods are applied at the centres in Myanmar. In order to gain a thorough understanding of these vipassana techniques and approaches, it seeks to review and compare the meditation methods. It is widely believed that these two centres have helped many people overcome their depression and cultivate mindfulness, so many practitioners find helpful joining meditation retreats at the Mogok center. Thus, the author was greatly encouraged to carry out a comparative case study in this specific field. The information indicates that the centres apply the masters’ discoveries of Buddhist meditation techniques in a unique way. To progressively advance meditation knowledge from a basic to an advanced level, the Mogok meditation technique consists of three preparatory stages. The first stage focuses on moral principles and behaviour in order to cleanse the mind and lead a virtuous life that is linked to wisdom for comprehending and growing into the second preparatory stage of meditation. The second stage involves teaching the meditation technique and method based on the theories of *satipattānā* and *Paticcasamuppāda*, or dependent origination.<sup>1</sup>

The four fundamental preparatory stages of the Mahāsi meditation technique, on the other hand, are as follows: (a) moral behaviour; (b) entrusting oneself as well as to Buddha; (c) releasing oneself from anger, hatred, delusion, and greed while conducting a meditation retreat at the Mahasi centre, which entails maintaining devotion and confidence on meditation instructor; and (d) reflecting on the four relictions of Buddha (*Buddhanusati*), giving *mettā* to all living beings (*Metta Bhavana*), bodily repulsive. The basis for learning mindfulness meditation and comprehending the laws of nature, especially *Anicca*, *Dukkha*,

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<sup>1</sup> Vimala, Ashin U, *Meditation in Myanmar: The Theory and Practice, Management, and Key Successes* (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Press, 2018).

and Anattā (impermanence, suffering, and non-self). This study's illustrations and discussion of the two distinct and effective meditation methods used by the Mahāsi and Mogok meditation centres will take place below. This paper is structured as follows: the first section provides an overview of the two meditation centres' historical background; the second section compares and contrasts the two distinct meditation techniques; the third section discusses the research study's scope; and the fourth section concludes with research findings and conclusion.

#### BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The Mogok and Mahāsi meditation techniques have not yet been conducted a comparative study in scholarly research work on this subject. This study closes the knowledge gap regarding the comparison of two different meditation methods utilised at the well-known Mahāsi and Mogok Vipassana centre in Yangon, Myanmar. During the meditation retreat, both centres offer complimentary food and accommodation. These two centres also expanded their services throughout the country as well as abroad. Data show that Mogok Vipassana Centre alone established roughly 1,000 of its sub-branches, both in Myanmar and overseas.<sup>2</sup> Conversely, there were 400 sub-branches of the *Mahāsi Sasana Yiektha Meditation Centres* both domestically and overseas.<sup>3</sup> Thus, it should come as no surprise that these two meditation centres are so well-known in Myanmar. On the other hand, local Buddhist community believed that Mogok Sayadaw was a Arahant, because his relics show the evidence of liberated one, so local Buddhist adherents began generously sponsoring the centre and registering for the retreat with the expectation of increasing their merits and finding inner peace via the practice of Sayadaw's teachings and meditation.

Mogok Sayadaw was also known as Ashin U Vimala<sup>4</sup>, and was born on December 27, 1899, in a small farming village of Amarapura (Mandalay)<sup>5</sup>. He was a great Abhidhamma and Pāli scholar as well as meditation master. For twenty-five years, he was the dean of the Abhidhamma under three different Monarchs: Mindon, Theebaw, and the British government. He was ordained as a young novice at the age of nine, and under Ashin U Jagara Sayadaw's guidance, he studied Pāli literature at Mingala Makun Monastery in Amarapura (Mandalay). At the same temple, he took higher ordination as a Theravāda Buddhist monk in 1920. Since he was a young novice, he had an interest in Buddhism, specifically in meditation, the Abhidhamma, and Pāli literature. He consequently rose to prominence as a great meditation master very rapidly and spent his entire life instructing lay followers and Sangha members in vipassana meditation. Sayadaw is credited with re-utilizing the *Patikkasamuppāda* and *Satipattanā* meditation methods.

Three key Buddhist concepts are emphasized in the mogok meditation technique: *Attādipati* (self-reliance), *Lokādipati* (mastery over worldly things), and *Dhammadipati* (mastery over natural phenomena). Therefore, Mogok meditation technique suggests that in order to free oneself from all forms of suffering, including ageing, illness, misery, depression, birth, and death, one must confidently rely on

<sup>2</sup> There are 767 centers in Yanmar out of a total of 1,000 centers; the rest of remaining centers are located in Myanmar.

<sup>3</sup> Vimala, Venerable, "The Practice, Management and Key Successes of Mahāsi Meditation Centre," *The Journal of International Association of Buddhist Universities (JIABU)* 12, no. 1 (2019): 323-337.

<sup>4</sup> Mogok is a valuable stone of natural resources like gemstones, which are found in his hometown in upper Myanmar.

<sup>5</sup> Lwin, San, *Mogok Vipathana Alutsin Tayarr Saraut* (Yangon: U Kyaw Hinn-Yon Kyichat Sar Pay Press, 2008).

oneself. Being accountable to oneself means that one should not practice lazily or simply sit on a meditation seat with their legs crossed and their eyes closed without proper concentration to the meditation subject. Simultaneously, one needs to have a strong belief in the Dhamma and strive to view the situation from a wise perspective (Paññā). All Buddhist meditation masters emphasize these two Buddhist principles in order to comprehend the Dhamma process, which is based on the Four Noble Truths and Noble Eightfold Paths, which are the foundation of Buddha's teachings (the law of natural phenomena).

In connection to these, the five, the eight, and the ten precepts are crucial to observe for moral training and to purify one's mind and body. These precepts serve as guidelines for what one should do and refrain from; in a similar vein, the meditation masters Mogok and Mahasi Sayadaws highlighted these precepts as a prerequisite for taking part in the centres' meditation retreats. The Most Venerable Ashin U Sobhana, also known as Mahāsi Sayadaw (1904-1982), was born in the small village of Seikkhun in Shwebo town in upper Burma on July 29, 1904. His parents were U Kan Taw and Daw Oke, and he was sent to the Pyinmana temple in his hometown, Seikkhun, where he received his early monastic education as a young lay boy under Ashin U Adicca Sayadaw. After six years of monastic school, he was ordained as a novice and began his further monastic studies of Buddhism. Being a bright young novice student, he quickly progressed in his understanding of Pāli scripts, meditation, Vinaya, and Abhidhamma. After that, on November 26, 1923, Sayadaw was given his higher ordination as a Theravāda Buddhist monk under the supervision of Ashin U Sumedha and Ashin U Nirmala Sayadaws.

In the short period of time, Sayadaw became an expert on Dhamma, Vinaya, and Bhavana. He then began teaching vipassana and preaching Dhamma to his followers in Myanmar. Sayadaw was an excellent Buddhist scholar and meditation master who also taught Dhamma to his followers and led meditation retreats for 33 years. Before delving deeper into vipassana or insight meditation, the Mahāsi meditation technique typically requires three trainings for beginners: *Abhiisīla Sikkhā* (higher moral training), *Abhicitta Sikkhā* (higher mental training), and *Abhipaññā Sikkhā* (higher wisdom training)<sup>6</sup>. It is said that these trainings aid in the gradual repetition of developed vipassana meditation. One is deemed ready to move on to the next four preparatory stages once ones have completed these three basic trainings satisfactorily. In addition, other tasks include: (2) self-assurance and entrusting the Threefold Gems (Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha) to the fullest; (3) accepting teachers or meditation instructors with devotion and respect without any anger, hatred, greed, or delusion; and (4) contemplating four protective reflections, such as the qualities of Buddha, the strength of compassion and Mettā, the abhorrent of the body, and the reality of death.

#### MAHĀSI VIPASSANA TECHNIQUE

As part of the fieldwork for this study, the author attended a ten-day vipassana meditation retreat at the Mahāsi Vipassana Centre from August 7 to August 17, 2021, with permission from the office of the Mahāsi Vipassana Headquarter. The ten-day observation and meditation experience gave a comprehensive understanding of the Mahāsi meditation technique. The author's observations and experiences

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<sup>6</sup> T. W. and C. A. F. Rhys Davids, *Dīghanikāya: Dialogues of the Buddha*, vol. II (London: The Pali Text Society, 1998), 343

indicate that the Mahasi meditation technique places a strong emphasis on adhering to the aforementioned fundamental moral trainings and preparatory exercises while participating in the meditation retreat course at the Mahasi centre in Yangon. The primary technique of the Mahāsi meditation method is the rising and falling or passing away of the abdomen. As a fundamental meditation subject, it has four contemplative factors that participants should be aware of while breathing in and out.

As a result, during *Kāyānupassanā*, the body's contemplation, participants need constantly be aware of the movement of their abdomens rising and falling as they breathe normally in and out. When engaging in *Vedanānupassanā*, the contemplation of feelings, it is important to keep in mind that mental feelings are threefold: pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral. These feelings are experienced moment by moment through the contact of six sense doors, including the nose, eyes, ears, tongue, mind, and body. In addition to focusing on *cittānupassanā*, or the contemplation of mind objects, one should be aware of mind objects—also known as wandering mind—that arise in the mind as fantasies about the past, present, and future. Additionally, *Dhammānupassanā* is made up of five elements: the five aggregates or doors of senses (*Pañcanīvarana*), the five hindrances (*Pañcakkhandha*), the six sense doors or spheres (*Chāyatana*), the seven factors of enlightenment (*Sattābojjhanga*), and the four noble truths (*Catuāriyasacca*). Therefore, when thinking about breathing in and out on the abdomen, participants need to be aware of all of these factors. One can fully understand the mind's involvement in these various mental and physical processes when they have mastered the skills of mindfulness and concentration. One must briefly mentally record any sensations that arise in the six sense doors, such as hearing, seeing, pain, and so forth.

Participants in the meditation retreat course should also be conscious of everything they do, including eating, walking, taking showers, and sitting. This helps to maintain mental focus so that, whatever one does occasionally, one will not become disoriented for too long. The Mahāsi meditation technique typically combines two distinct meditation techniques, such as “walking” and “sitting” meditation. There are six different sitting postures used in the sitting meditation method, depending on the practitioner. As an illustration, consider the following: (1) the Full Lotus position; (2) the Half Lotus position with the legs crossed; (3) the Burmese-style sitting position; (4) the Kneeling Down posture; (5) the Kneeling Down posture while sitting on a stool; and (6) the Chair Position.

Participants simply need to sit cross-legged with their eyes closed in any comfortable position for as long as it is comfortable; there is no strict requirement to adopt one of these postures. Thus, the way a person sits during meditation is entirely up to them. When one is seated comfortably with their legs crossed, they should pay attention to the abdominal rising and falling moments as well as the length of their breaths. The technique of sitting meditation is to maintain mental attention and concentration while taking breaths in and out of the abdomen. Simultaneously, one should gently handle any physical sensations that arise on the body, such as joint pain, itching, holding legs, and so forth. Rather than verbally repeating such sensations, one should mentally note them to themselves for a temporary period of time. In fact, if the pain is so severe, carefully adjust your sitting position while practicing mindfulness.

The author's experience indicates that while the Mahāsi sitting meditation technique is relatively simple, it requires some time to establish concentration when the mind wanders. Since it is easy to become distracted by the focus point's rising and falling moments on the abdomen. If one only concentrates on

the rising and falling movements of their abdomen during meditation, they can quickly regain mindfulness of the meditation subject.

Upon completing a few days of focused meditation retreat, one can determine the level of development of their meditation practice by observing the simultaneous appearance and disappearance of mental and physical phenomena. When mindfulness is well-developed within an individual, then that one is aware of what is rising and falling in the mind. For instance, when anger appears, one recognises that it is anger rising; similarly, when delusion appears, one recognises that it is delusion rising in the mind; and so forth. While practicing meditation, one should focus more on the rising and falling moments in the abdomen than other straying thoughts or emerging moment-to-moment physical sensations. This should be acknowledged as a step towards the development of mindfulness. A fully developed state of mindfulness allows one to perceive all sensations that come and go through the five sense doors (*Pañcaindriyā*). This allows ones to control their five door faculties so that bad thoughts and unwholesome are prevented from entering their minds.

The technique of *Kāyānupassanā* is the contemplation of bodily sensations, including pains, which may occur in any part of the body. It is advised to be aware of bodily pain, whatever it appears to be, without reacting to it but simply contemplating and being aware of it. Similarly, the technique of *vedanānupassanā* is also the same, as yogis must contemplate feelings such as happiness, unhappiness, and neutrality. The *cittānupassana* refers to the contemplation of mind-objects such as greed, hatred, loving kindness, anger, delusion, laziness, torpor, and so on. The *Dhammānupassanā* means the contemplation of five hindrances (*Nīvarana*), five sense doors (*Pañcakkhandha*), six sense spheres (*Āyatana*), seven enlightenment factors (*Bojjhanga*), and four noble truths (*Ariyasacca*). When one has mastered these basic skills of mindfulness practice, one can engage in the development of vipassana meditation.

According to the Mahāsi technique, one-hour sitting and one-hour walking meditation practice are mandatory. The six steps of the Mahāsi walking meditation technique include heel up, raising, moving, lowering, touching, and placing. While performing walking meditation, the participants should keep track of these six motions in their steps mindfully. For instance, raise the foot while raising the heels of another feet, and raise the foot altogether when raising it. The foot should be moved forward, noting “moving,” and lowered, noting “lowering,” when it is about an inch above the ground. Touch the earth or the floor with the toes and note “touching.” In order to emphasise the word “placing,” place the heel on the ground or floor. When practicing walking meditation, one must mentally note every moment, including lifting the heels, moving, touching, and so forth, in order to maintain mental focus on the meditation objects.

#### MOGOK MEDITATION TECHNIQUE

The two main tenets of the Mogok meditation technique are *Satipatthāna* and *Paticcasamuppāda* (dependent origination). The Mogok Meditation Centre only offers ten-day meditation retreat courses, which are offered consecutively throughout the year.<sup>7</sup> There are two five-day training or teaching

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<sup>7</sup> Sometime depends on the situation of center and decision of the committee, so it can be varied the running of meditation retreat course.

programmes within this ten-day meditation retreat course. As a result, the first day of the five-day training programme starts with a moral instruction called *Varatā Sīla* (the precepts of observance) and *Virata Sīla* (the precepts of abstention). Next, the meditation instructor teaches the fundamentals of the *Patīccasamuppāda* theory of twelve factors, starting with *Avijjā* (ignorance), and uses the breath-in, breath-out mindfulness meditation technique to develop *samādhi* (concentration). Furthermore, the Mogok meditation technique mandates that these two preparatory steps be completed before beginning actual vipassana meditation.

The research participants were interviewed by the author on February 23, 2021, at the Mogok meditation centre located in Yangon. According to several key informants, the five-day preparatory training programme greatly aids practitioners in comprehending the dependent origination process and cultivating concentration through the practice of *Ānāpānasati bhavana*. For the next four days, the practice of insight meditation, or vipassana bhavana, is taught with detailed instructions and guidelines presented in a methodical, step-by-step manner. On the final day of the ten-day meditation retreat course, *mettā bhavana* (loving-kindness and compassion meditation) is taught. This vipassana meditation is taught continuously for four days with great care.

Furthermore, every day in the evening, an audio recording of Mogok Saydaw is played for an hour following the meditation. It is considered to be Saydaw's "*Dhamma Talk*," explaining in vivid detail how to cultivate *samādhi* and get rid of wrong views (*micchāditthi*). The meditation master of Mogok Centre argues that *micchāditthi* is one of the most potent mental barriers and disturbances that prevent the development of meditation because, when mindfulness is developed, the wisdom mental factor advances, causing one to begin to investigate the validity of every meditation technique and so forth. As a result, until one overcomes it, misperception (*Micchāditthi*) and doubt (*vicikicchā*) simultaneously appear and vanish multiple times in minds. The wisdom mind can comprehend the Dhamma process clearly once these obstacles are constantly removed. Therefore, a crucial component of the Mogok technique is an understanding of the twelve *Patīccasamuppāda* factors. For example, a meditation instructor teaches it to the participants until they grasp the steps involved in getting rid of the *vicikicchā*, *nīvarana*, and *micchāditthi*.<sup>8</sup>

One should know the twelve factors of *Patīccasamuppāda*, which are linked one after another like beginning with ignorance (*Avijjā*), and due to this ignorance then mental formations (*Sankārā*) arises, due to *sankārā* then rebirth consciousness (*Viññāna*) arises, due to *viññāna* then mental and physical formation/phenomena (*nāmarūpa*) arises, due to *nāmarūpa* then the formation of six sense spheres (*Salātana*) arises, due to *salātana* that causes contact (*phassa*), due to *phassa* then feelings (*vedanā*) arises, due to *vedanā* then craving (*tanhā*) arises, due to *tanhā* then attachment (*upādānā*) arises, due to *upādānā* then causes of formation of becoming (*bhava*) processes, due to *bhava* then finally birth (*Jāti*), due to *jāti* and it leads to decay (*jarā*), death (*maranam*), grief (*soka*), lamentation (*parideva*), suffering/pain (*dukkha*), sorrow (*domanassa*), and despair (*upāyāsa*). These are the twelve factor processes of *Patīccasamuppāda*. One can be freed from all forms of suffering if they fully understand the causes and effects with wisdom knowledge. This allows them to realise *Anatta* (*non-self*) or emptiness within

<sup>8</sup> Bhikkhu Suriyo (trans.), *The Three Signs: Anicca, Dukkha and Anatta in the Buddha's Teachings* (Bangkok: 2007), 72.

themselves<sup>9</sup>.

The *paticcasamuppāda* is one of the most profound, nuanced, and obscure aspects of the teachings that Gautama Buddha discovered and imparted during his lifetime. After the Buddha attained *mahāparinibbāna*, this technique was passed down from generation to generation, and teachers have continued to use it for a very long time, even up until the present day. Thus, Ledi Saydaw in Burma taught this meditation technique long earlier, and it is thought that Mogok Sayadaw followed in her footsteps<sup>8-9</sup>.

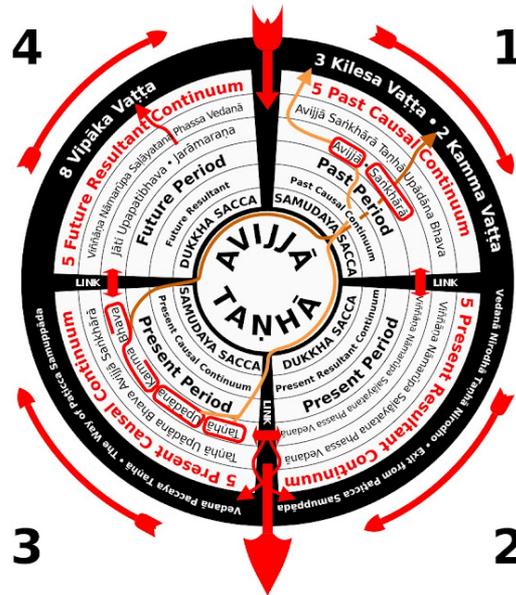


Figure 1: Dealing with *ditthis*

Dealing with *ditthis* is one of the most difficult aspects of a vipassana meditation retreat, according to the Mogok Sayadaw meditation method, because one must carefully deal with different ditthis (views). If one cannot fully eradicate *micchāditti* (wrong view), *Sakkāyaditti* (misconception), *sassataditti* (externalisms), and *uccheditti* (Belief in the annihilation of the soul) then one cannot progress to upper level of vipassana knowledge. So, it is very crucial part to destroy all these kinds of interruptions from the minds with knowledge of wisdom. When one's mind is fully concentrated on meditation objection and prepare for proceeding to upper level of vipassana knowledge then mind starts investigating on whole process of meditation technique and method. The minds start with suspicious or doubt (*vicikicchā*) then constantly create wrong view and misunderstanding one's meditation level of knowledge thinking or believing oneself as an arahant, gainer of *maggapāla*, and so on. This is absolutely wrong way of practicing vipassana meditation because when ones lost the right mindfulness and concentration then it might happen to them.

When it happens, one begins to believe in themselves with *sakkāyaditti*, or misconception that breeds egoism. *Sassataditti* disrupts minds with wrong beliefs that regard the five aggregates as self, soul, eternal, and existing even after death, which is a path that leads in the wrong direction. After then, *uccheditti* arises in the mind, leading one to believe that they have finally been freed from the cycle of rebirth and death. This is a completely wrong belief, according to vipassana knowledge. In order to

<sup>9</sup> Candavarabhivamsa, Ven., *Paticcasamuppāda: The Cycle of Dependent Origination* (Yangon: The University of Yangon Press, 2000).

surmount these challenges, Mogok Sayadaw recommended implementing three key practices: performing acts of charity, adhering to the Sīla (five, eight, ten precepts and patimokkha Sīla), and engaging in bhavana<sup>10</sup>.

As part of the fieldwork for this study, the author participated in an intensive ten-day meditation retreat at the Mogok Vipassana Centre in Yangon from February 12–22, 2021. The author’s personal experience indicates that the *Mahāsatittāna* theory is also applied in the Mogok meditation technique. This is particularly evident in the guidelines for the Mogok mindfulness vipassana meditation practice. When breathing in and out, the centre of the abdomen should be the focus of mindfulness as meditation subject. When breathing in and out, ones should always be conscious of their own breathing on the abdomen of rising and falling. In the meantime, practitioners ought to mentally record any feelings that appear and disappear moment by moment. Different forms and level of feelings, such as strong or normal pleasant or unpleasant feelings (*Sukkhā* and *Kukkha vedanā*) and *upekkhāvedanā* (neutral feeling), may be experienced. Six sense spheres or faculties—eye, nose, ear, tongue, mind, and body base—come into contact with each other to produce these feelings, which rise and fall continuously in a moment. Ones can quickly understand the impermanent (*Anicca*) nature of these three types of feelings by focusing their mind on them and how they arise and pass through the six sense doors.

The theory of Buddhist meditation holds that when one understands the nature of impermanence, suffering, and non-self (*Anicca, Dukkha, Anattā*) and has no more defilement (*Kilesa*) in mind, then one does not accept the things as permanent and can achieve about *Maggaphala* (fruition of path to liberation). Furthermore, the Mogok meditation technique places emphasis on the applications of *kāyānupassanā*, *cittānupassanā*, *vedanānupassanā*, and *Dhammānupassanā* to enhance mental concentration on the meditation subject. This method is almost exactly the same as the Mahāsi meditation technique that has mentioned above of this study. As with all Buddhist meditation techniques, the Mogok method also involves sitting and walking meditation; however, the methods may differ slightly from one another depending on the way the teachers teach it. The Mogok Sayadaw walking meditation technique, for instance, places a strong emphasis on paying attention to the movement of footsteps as one lifts and lowers their feet.

To maintain focus for as long as possible, one should always be mindful of where ones are walking and when to release their “moment” of the feet. The three most crucial aspects of walking meditation, as illustrated by Mogok Sayadaw, are (a) the moment of lifting, (b) the moment of falling, and (c) the touching movement of lowering the feet. It is said that by lifting and lowering the feet off the ground, one can experience the lightness and heaviness of *Tejovāyo* (heat and air)<sup>11</sup>. Furthermore, the technique recommends mentally recording the following six points: lifting, raising, pushing forward, lowering, touching, and pressing the feet while practicing walking meditation.

<sup>10</sup> Vimala, Ashin U, *Meditation in Myanmar: The Theory and Practice, Management, and Key Successes* (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Press, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> U Kyaw Thein, *Mogok Sayadaw’s Way to the Vipassanā Practice* (Yangon: Mogok Meditation Centre, 1957), 78.

## SCOPE OF THE STUDY

For the purpose of conducting research fieldwork at the Mahāsi and Mogok Vipassana centres in Yangon, the author left Bangkok early in 2021 and travelled to Myanmar. However, the fieldwork has been postponed because of travel restrictions brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The author attempted several times to conduct fieldwork in the middle of 2021, but the meditation centres refused to give permission. Thus, during the COVID-19 pandemic, fieldwork was completed by interviewing 40 research participants from two meditation centres, 50% in-person and 50% virtually. Later, permission to conduct fieldwork at the Mahāsi and Mogok meditation centres has finally been granted, following the return to normalcy of the COVID-19 pandemic situation in Yangon. As a result, the author finished research fieldwork and data collection in late 2021.

The research samples were selected from two centres that were participating in meditation retreats at the Mahāsi and Mogok meditation centres in Yangon, which served as the study's fieldwork locations. Fourteen research participants, aged between thirty and sixty, consisting both laymen and monastic orders, participated in the interview. They had prior experience with specific Mahāsi and Mogok meditation techniques and methods. Thus, the study participants are proficient and knowledgeable advanced practitioners of both Vipassana Bhavana (Insight meditation) and Samatha Bhavana (Tranquilly meditation). The research participants described these two widely used meditation techniques in great detail based on their personal experiences. As a result, the data presents a comparatively unique outcome that was obtained from the research based on interviews conducted in the field.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results indicate a similar technique between Mahāsi and Mogok meditation practices, particularly in the early phases when moral code and conduct is emphasised as a prerequisite for meditation practice. The ethical guidelines and moral conducts are referred to in all Buddhist traditions as the *Pātimokkhā sīla* for monks, the five and eight precepts for lay participants, and the ten precepts for inexperienced practitioners. Nonetheless, there are some abrupt approaches to the preparatory tasks that participants are expected to observe as much as possible from the centres. Three Buddhist principles, for instance, are suggested to be followed when practicing Mogok meditation: *Attādipati* (self-reliance), *Lokādipati* (be master of worldly things), and *Dhammadipati* (be master of natural phenomena). To put it another way, the only way to free oneself from suffering of any kind—including ageing, illness, suffering, depression, birth, and death—is to confidently rely on oneself. For this reason, Mogok Sayadaw advised followers to rely solely on themselves.

In addition, it is important to take responsibility for oneself, which entails not practicing meditation carelessly or merely sitting on a seat with one's legs crossed and eyes closed without paying proper mindfulness to the meditation subject. At the same time, one needs to have a strong belief in the Dhamma and strive to right view the situation with wisdom (*Paññā*). However, the Mahāsi meditation method suggests practitioners to complete the threefold trainings prior to beginning a vipassana or insight meditation practice. Thus, in accordance with T. W. and C. A. F. Rhys Davids' "Dīghanikāya: Discourse of the Buddha," *Abhisīla Sikkhā* (higher moral training), *Abhicitta Sikkhā* (higher mental training), and

*Abhipaññā Sikkhā* (Higher wisdom training).<sup>12</sup> Mahasi Sayadaw suggests that these trainings help in the gradual increasing of *samādhi*, or one-pointedness of the mind. If a person completes these three fundamental trainings satisfactorily, one is then considered to proceed with practicing vipassana meditation. Furthermore, *Abhisīla Sikkhā* refers to living a completely virtuous life without violating a single *sīla*. Higher mental training is defined as *abhicitta sikkhā*, which means to always maintain one's mind pure and beautiful insight mind free from anger, hatred, greed, delusion, and so forth. As the diagram illustrates, *Abhipaññā Sikkhā* is commonly known as the Noble Eightfold Path.

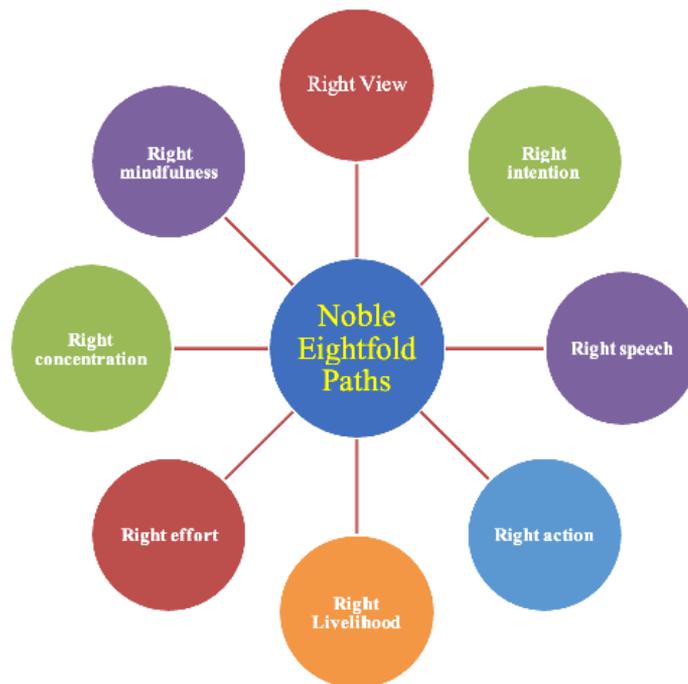


Figure 2: The Noble Eightfold Paths

One who prudently follows the Noble Eightfold Paths is referred to as having knowledge of *Abhipaññā sikkhā*. Three additional requirements are also emphasised by the Mahāsi meditation method: (1) entrusting oneself to the Threefold Gems (Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha); (2) accepting one's teacher or meditation instructors with devotion and respect, free from any anger, hatred, greed, or delusion; and (3) taking about four protective reflections, such as the characteristics of Buddha, the strength of compassion and *Mettā*, the abhorrence of the body, and the reality of death.<sup>13</sup> Both of these meditation techniques share a similar approach in that they both focus on *Kāyānupassanā*, or body contemplation. In this method, participants need always be aware of the movement of their abdomens rising and falling as they breathe normally in and out. When engaging in *Vedanānupassanā*, the contemplation of feelings, it is important to keep in mind that there are threefold: pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral. These feelings are experienced moment by moment through the contact of six sense doors, including the nose, eyes, ears, tongue, mind, and body.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas William Rhys, Davids, T. W. and Rhys Davids, Caroline Augusta Foley, *Dīghanikāya: Dialogues of the Buddha*, vol. II (London: The Pali Text Society, 1998), 343

<sup>13</sup> Mahāsi, Sayadaw. *The Progress of Insight: A Treatise on Buddhist Satipatthana Meditation*, Trans. Nyanaponika Thera (Yangon: Buddhist Publication Society Press, 1954).

In addition to *cittānupassanā*, or the contemplation of mind objects, one should be aware of what is known as wandering mind—mind objects that exist in the minds in the past, present, and future as a kind of imagination. Additionally, *Dhammānupassanā* is referred to the five elements: the five aggregates or doors of senses (*Pañcanīvarana*), the five hindrances (*Pañcakkhandha*), the six sense doors or spheres (*Chāyatana*), the seven factors of enlightenment (*Sattābojjhanga*), and the four noble truths (*Catuāriyasacca*). Therefore, when focus about breathing in and out on the abdomen, participants need to be aware of all of this sensation. One can fully understand the mind's involvement in these various mental and physical sensations when they have mastered the skills of mindfulness and concentration. This outcome is consistent with the research of U Than Daing since the vipassana meditation application techniques used in both approaches are similar.<sup>14</sup>

The main ideas of the Mahāsi meditation technique centre on the *satipatthāna* technique of the four foundations that were previously discussed in this study, whereas the Mogok meditation technique is based on the twelve factors of *paticcasamuppāda*. Another unique aspect of Mogok Saydaw's walking meditation technique is the emphasis on the movements of footsteps while lifting and dropping the feet. When practicing the Mogok walking meditation technique, it is important to pay attention to the three most crucial aspects of the technique: (a) the moment of lifting; (b) the moment of falling; and (c) the touching movement of dropping the feet. However, the Mahāsi walking meditation method suggests that the primary focus should be on tracking footsteps. As an illustration, raise one foot while elevating the heels of other foot, and raise the foot collectively when raising it. The foot should be moved forward, noting "moving," and lowered, noting "lowering," when it is about an inch above the ground. Touch the earth or the floor with the toes and note "touching." In order to emphasise the word "placing," place the heel on the ground or floor. One must mentally note all moments like lifting the heels, moving, touching, and so on in order to keep the mind concentrated on meditation objects while practicing walking meditation. This result is in line with Myint Swe and Thin, U Pe's work findings.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In conclusion, there are similarities between the Mogok and Mahāsi meditation techniques, especially with regard to the four *satipatthāna*-based foundations of mindfulness. Both methods use the abdomen as the meditation subject while the breathing in and out. On the other hand, it also implies that participants should mentally note of sensations, as they manifest through the interaction of six sense doors, namely the eyes, ears, tongue, mind, and body. After taking some time to mentally note feelings without acting upon them, one should progressively try to focus on the primary meditation object once again. A practitioner of advanced vipassana meditation knows that all sensations arise and vanish through contact with the six sense doors moment to moment. This outcome aligns with the research conducted by James Gng (2014), wherein both authors emphasise the importance of rising and falling moments on the abdomen during breathing in and out. Furthermore, the *Paticcasamuppāda* method—which emphasises that participants must understand all twelve factors clearly before engaging in actual vipassana knowledge—is emphasised more than any other aspect of the Mogok meditation technique.

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<sup>14</sup> Daing, U Than, *The Doctrine of Paticca SSAYARDA Wamuppada: The Law of Dependent Origination* (Yangon: Society for the Propagation of Vipassana Press, 1966).

The Mahāsi Meditation Centre provides meditation retreats for seven days, ten days, one month, three months, six months, and even a year. In contrast, Mogok Meditation Centre only offers ten-day courses. Mogok Centre actually offers at least two ten-day meditation retreat courses each month. Additionally, the instructors at the centres play a significant role in assisting each participant in developing meditation skills by providing thorough explanations and excellent hospitality. This study suggests that in order to obtain a clearer image of the two meditation techniques, more research on the subject of how Mahāsi and Mogok centres compare their meditation techniques needs to be done.

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