

Mogok Vipassanā Meditation method in Myanmar : A Historical Study

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ABSTRACT

Meditation is a kind of peace of mind and the remedy for mental and physical sufferings too. Meditation practice also is very distinct in Myanmar. It is practiced not only a comprehensible and applicable way of life but also an essential way to the final liberation. There are meditation teachers in Myanmar. Among of them, MoeGok meditation method and MoGok Sayātaw,s biography will be briefly presented in this paper. The purpose of this paper is to understand about the MoGok meditation method which based on Dependent origination (Patīccasamuppāda) Mankind, with the scientifically advanced mind, pondering and searching for a happier state and betterment of living, has been engaged in trying to find a solution to the problems of life. From the man became inquisitive to investigate into everything he had come across, he often asked with rational thinking questions such as; what is life? How does it originate? Is life miserable or happy? What is True philosophy of life? Where will he go after death? Why is man faced with miseries? Is it possible for him to escape from these painful miseries or not? Is there any actual ways and means for his deliverance? So on and so Forth. Those problems connected to life, I will point out to give the answer in this paper as much as I can, making focus on Buddha's teachings.

Key Words : Mediation, Mogok Sayātaw's method, Dependent origination, Problem, Deliverance

INTRODUCTION

Sayātaw's Parents were U Aung Tun and Daw Shwe Eit. Before he was born, Daw Shwe Eit, sayātaw's mother had a strange dream that a virtuous person came into her womb. Then Mogok Sayātaw was born in 1261 ME (27-12-1899). He started studying at the age of his four years old at the primary school and U San Ya was his first teacher in life. At the age of 9, he became a novice and presiding monk at his novice ordination ceremony was Sayātaw U Jāgara, Gway Bin Taw Ra kyaung. His religious name was Shin Vimala. And he learnt religious basic learning under his first mentor, sayātaw U Jāgara. His mind was steady and stable in character since his young life and never gave trouble to anyone. Even the novice hood, sometime he used to give Dhamma talk instead of his Dhamma teacher. U Jāgara. He was ordained at his 20 age under Baddhanta Sujāta Mahāthe, presiding monk at ordination ceremony His supporters were U Win and Daw Daw Saw who lived in Amarapura, southern part of Mandalay. Ven Vimala

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(mogoksayātaṅga) studied hard under many educated monks such as Khemāsīvaṅga, Phayargyitaṅga and Shwe ye chaungtaṅga etc....Mogoksayātaṅga gave lecture to many monks, in addition gave dhamma talks to laypeople till the end his life. Mogoksayātaṅga passed away at the age of 63 Mogoksayātaṅga's instruction was helpful to many meditators, who want to meditate calm and insight meditation. After Sayātaṅga passed away, traditionally sayātaṅga's pupils and generations distributed sayātaṅga's tectonic to the people who interesting in meditation practice. So Mogok meditation centers are many, not only domestic but also abroad. Mogok tectonic teaches to the meditators with together Law of Dependent Origination' (Patīcassamuppāda), taught by the Buddha.

Aim and significance of dissertation :

Myanmar is widely acknowledged as a Theravāda Buddhist country where Vipassanā (insight) meditation practice is prominent. Vipassanā is studied not only as a traditional, comprehensible and applicable way of life but also as an essential guide to the final emancipation. Besides, in Myanmar, Vipassanā practice is pursued not only by monks and nuns but also by lay people. When someone talks about the Vipassanā meditation methods and its tradition of Myanmar, the first and foremost thing that came to mind is Mahasi or Mogok methods, which have the largest number of followers. In Theravāda Buddhism Mogok Vipassanā meditation method which will be discussed in this paper is essential and meditative technique is so significant, for those who want to practice Vipassanā meditation. The purpose of this dissertation is subjected to understand about the Mogok Vipassanā Meditation method, to study how to take Mogok Vipassanā meditation method in Myanmar, and to analyze the centrality of Mogok Vipassanā meditation method in Myanmar. This dissertation is based on historical method using Pāli Cannons, Commentaries and Sub-Commentaries as primary, especially, Buddhist literature.

The meditation is the remedy for problems. Medical science and therapy is not so effective in helping a person to eradicate mental disturbances such as frustration and worries because they arise not as a result of natural disorders, but are mind created. The mind is the most powerful in the world. A single thought appearing in this invisible mind can either save or destroy the world, the mind is a gold mine but people pollute it. Therefore, it is important that the mind must be properly guided by discipline and reason to avoid mental pollution.

Historical background :

The Buddha has expounded the Dhamma for forty five years till the last day of His Mahāparinibbāna. What the Buddha taught all words for forty five years were called Dhamma. The words of the Buddha are embodied in the form of the Tipitaka, the three baskets of knowledge. The Tipitaka is voluminous, so we must take the essence of it venerable Webu Sayadaw said that "The essence of Tipitaka is the 37 factors of bodhipakkhiya Dhamma (the requisites of Enlightenment). The essence of bodhipakkhiya Dhamma is the Noble Eightfold Path. The essence of the Noble Eightfold Path is the three Sikkha and the essence of the three is Ekodhammo or One and only Dhamma. The three Sikkha are Adhisila (Higher Morality), Adhicitta (Higher mentality) and Adhipannā (Higher Wisdom)." All the teachings of Buddha's Dhamma have only one object: liberation from suffering. Methods are various but the object is the same. It is not necessary to follow all the methods. Vipassanā meditation is considered the essence of the Buddha's teaching. The fundamental principles of the technique have been delineated in various ways in His suttas and discourses.

What is calm meditation in Buddhism? :

Calm meditation: its pāli term is Samathakammattāna (work place for meditators or yogīs) Technically, “samatha” defined as the one –pointedness of mind (cittassaekkgatā) in the 8 meditative attainments 4 Rūpajhāna of Suttanta System (5 in the Abhidhammā System) and Arūpajhānas. These attainment are called calm, owing to the one-pointedness of mind, the wavering or trembling of the mind is subdued and brought to an end, by subduing the mental disturbances or hindrances (nivarana).

What is Insight meditation? :***Insight meditation:***

Its pali term is vipassanākammattāna (meditation subjects for insight) the word “vipassanā” rendered insight is explained as seeing in diverse ways (vividhakarotodassana) that is, to see things as they truly are or to see the true nature of things-mental and material). Insight is the direct meditative perception of mental and material phenomena in terms of the 3 characteristics- impermanence, suffering, non-self. It is a function of the cetasika of wisdom (Paññā) directed towards uncovering the true nature of things. Insight meditation is meant to attain path and Fruition Knowledge and then to gain one’s emancipation (vimutti) from the cycle of existences or birth and death

The Lord Buddha explained and taught many meditation subjects for developing calm and insight : 10 Kasina, 10 imputities-Asubha, 10 recollection–anussati, 4 illimitable –appamaññā, 1 perception –Sāññā, 1 analysis-vavattāna and 4 immaterial states –Arūpa

In connection with these 40 meditation subjects, guided by Lord Buddha. Mogoksayāta preferred Mindfulness of in-and –out breathing (Ānāpānassati) to other meditation subjects and gave the way to practice his followers. All ordinary people (not familiar to meditation) cannot control their mind before taking meditation, so most of meditation teachers teach them Mindfulness of in and out breathing at start taking meditation. The meditator must do it ardently, mindfully and clearly. Without, effort, the mediator cannot keep his mind on the object and cannot meditate. So a certain amount of energy is needed to practice. The meditator must always be mindful. The meditator must be mindful of his breath, When the meditator has mindfulness, combined with energy, his mind stays with the objects for some time; the mind goes to the object and, when it is helped by energy and mindfulness, it stays with the object of meditation. That staying of the mind with the object is called concentration (Samadhi) Only when meditator have developed concentration, will you have wisdom (panna) and the understanding or clear comprehension of the nature of things (or mind and body). In other words, four things are needed so that meditation is good ;

1. Meditator has to ardently make effort;
2. Meditator has to practice mindfulness;
3. Meditator has to develop concentration;
4. Meditator has to understand and comprehend the nature of things.

When the meditator practices meditation, meditator keeps his mind on the breath. He breathes in and out mindfully. Actually, meditator put his mind at the entrance of his nostrils and observes the breath as in-out and so on. Meditator’s mind stay at the tip of his nose, it must not follow the breath into and out of his body. Meditator must try to see the in-breath and the out –breath as two separate things.

What is the law of dependent origination? :

According to this law, every phenomenon owes its origin to another Phenomenon prior to it. It may simply be expressed as “depending on this, this originates”. An example of Dependent Origination in nature is given below: There being clouds in the sky it rains. It having rained, the road becomes slippery. The road becoming slippery, a man falls down. The man having fallen down becomes injured. Here a shower of rain depends on the clouds in the sky. The road becoming slippery depends on the rain. The fall of the man depends on the road becoming slippery.

The injury of the man depends upon his fall:

Conversely:

If there were no clouds in the sky, it would not have rained.

Then the road would not have become slippery.

Then the man would not have fallen.

Then he would not have become injured.

How does the law of dependent origination work? :

In this chain of events, we see one incident depends on one prior to it and gives rise to one after it. Everything that we find in this world can be brought in a chain of dependence like this. Nothing can originate without depending on something else previous to it, and no originated thing can be conceived of, which does not give rise to something else in its turn. Thus the process goes on. Anything can be traced upwards to where it originated from and everything can also be traced downwards to that which is produced depending on it.

Dependent origination :

Dependent arising or origination is essentially an account of the causal structure of the round of existence (vatta) disclosing the conditions that sustain the wheel of birth and death, and make it revolve from one existence to another. In the commentaries, dependent arising is defined as the arising of effects or results evenly in dependence on a conjunction of condition (paccaya-sāmaggimutticcasamamphalānamuppādo). This implies that no single cause can produce an effect, nor does only one effect arise from a given cause. Rather, there is always a collection of conditions giving rise to a collection of effects. When, in the familiar formula, one state is declared to be the condition for another, this is said in order to single out the chief condition (cause) among a collection of conditions and relate it to the most important effect among a collection of effects.

The purpose of the Buddha in teaching the paticcasamuppāda was to show to the suffering mankind how, depending on ignorance and craving the present existence and suffering has come about, and how through extinction of ignorance, and of craving and clinging conditioned thereby, no more will follow, and thus the standstill of the process of all suffering.

According to Buddha’s teaching, there are twelve factors (anga) which can make cycle of rebirths; dependent on ignorance arise the Kammic formations (avijjāpaccayāsankhārā)

Dependent on Kamma-formations arise rebirth consciousness (sankhārapaccayāvinnānam)

Dependent on the (rebirth) consciousness arises mind and matter (vinñānapaccayānāmarūpam)

Dependent on mind and matter arise the six sense bases (nāmarūpapaccayāsalayatanam)

Dependent on the six sense bases arises contact (salayatanapaccayāphasso)

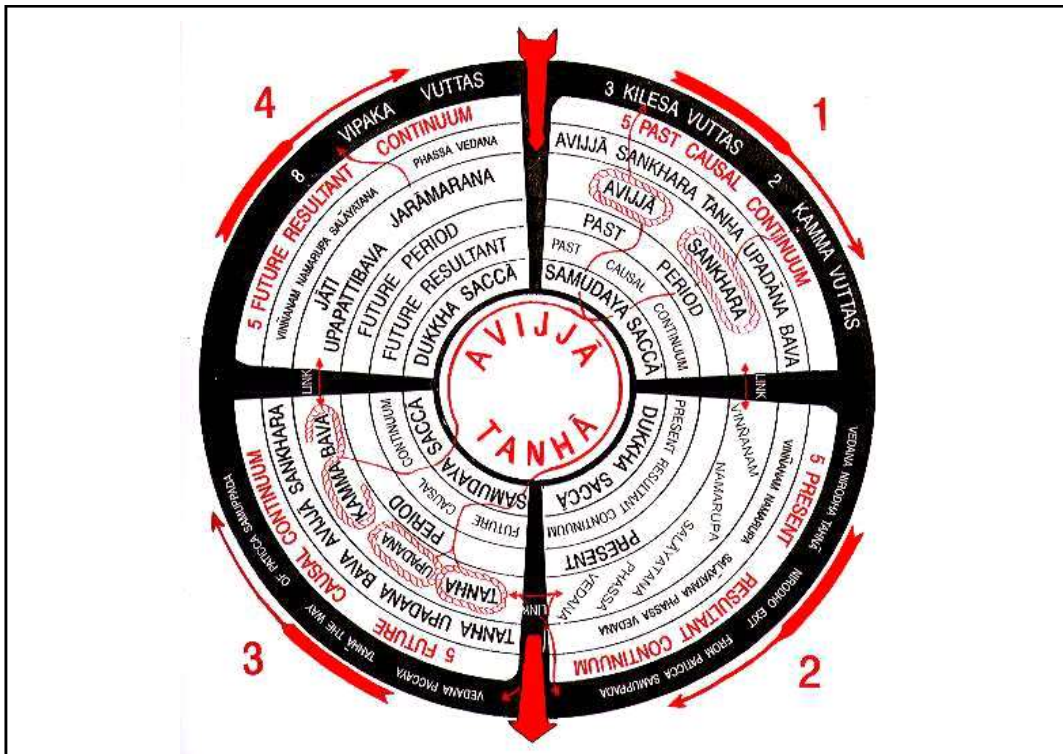
Dependent on contact arises feeling (phassapaccayāvedanā)

Dependent on feeling arises craving (vedanāpaccayātahnā)

Dependent on craving arises clinging (tahnāpaccayāupādānam)
 Dependent on clinging arise the (Active) process of Becoming (Upādānapaccayābhavo)
 Dependent on the active process of becoming arises birth (bhava-paccayajāti)
 Dependent of birth arise decay-and death,etc.. (jātipaccayājarāmarana)

Thus the whole mass of suffering arises through the concatenation of interdependent conditioning and conditioned states described in the formula of Dependent origination.

Mogoksayātaṅga taught mainly his followers dependent origination (paticcasamuppāda). He explained well with the circle of paticcasamuppāda to his Dhamma followers. In circle of paticcasamuppāda, it chiefly explains origination and ending of suffering of mankind. All meditators very interested in sayātaṅga's explanations and giving dhammatalks. So there are meditation centers not only domestic but also abroad till present day. If we understand it well, we will come to know root of sufferings and can overcome sufferings that face everyday.



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