

Chapter III

The Factors Leading to the Success of Dhammakāya Temple

3.1 The Founder

The success of Dhammakāya Temple comes as the successful result of utilizing Dhammakāya Meditation practice in its religious mission to revive Thai Buddhism, establish the sense of morality in Thai society and hopefully far advance to create world peace through inner peace. However, it is the attempt to do the impossible and to fulfill the Temple's lofty vision without a charismatic founder of the Dhammakāya Meditation method. And without first gaining the complete understanding of the Dhammakāya Meditation founder's vision, the factors leading to the success of Dhammakāya Temple is beyond comprehension.

3.1.1 Founder Is born²⁶

The founder or the re-discoverer of Dhammakāya Meditation Technique was a Buddhist monk named Candasarō Bhikkhu or better known among his followers as Luang Pu Sodh or Luang Pu Wat Paknam. He was born on Friday 10th, October 1885 as Sodh Mikaewnoi in a rice trading family in Supanburi Province. His father was called Ngeun and his mother Sutjai. He was the second born of five brothers and sisters. His father died, when he was fourteen; since then the burden fell upon his shoulders that of running the family business and supporting his mother and family. His earnestness brought him his fortune. His business grew and finances prospered.

In July, 1903, he was ordained at Songpinong Temple and was given the monk's name 'Candasaro Bhikkhu'. The name 'Candasaro' was in the traditional Pāli language and meant 'the one with a bright radiance like the moon'. The day after his ordination, he began to study the Pāli scripture known to be Mūlakaccāyana. He memorized the chanting and the Pātimokkha. Unlike many monks, he studied both meditation and scriptures at the same time, in earnest. Phra Acharn 'Nong' was his first teacher. His intention was to translate the **Mahā Satipatthāna Sutta** fluently.

During his first rains-retreat (vassa) at the temple, he learned the Pāli scriptures by heart up to 'Avijjāpaccayā'. He became curious about the meaning of this word. He asked a fellow monk who had been ordained for three vassas for the translation, but received the answer:

²⁶ Dhammakāya Foundation, **The Life & Time of Luang Phaw Wat Paknam**, (Thailand: Dhammakāya Press, Patumthani 1996.), p.18

‘Brother, we don’t translate the Scriptures here,
we just recite them - if you want to know more
you will have to study in Bangkok. ...’²⁷

After only seven months’ ordination, Candasaro Bhikkhu’s heart was already set on furthering his studies in the capital. Even so, the Pāli studies were for him only a means to an end - mastery of the knowledge of the Buddha through meditation. He concealed a bundle of the Mahā Satipatthāna Sutta scriptures at Songpinong Temple with the intention that as soon as he was able to translate them fluently, he would discontinue his Pāli studies in Bangkok and devote himself entirely to meditation.

Moving to Bangkok and stayed at Phra Chetupon Vimmongkalaraam Temple commonly known as Wat Po meant Candasaro Bhikkhu had many difficulties distracting him from his studies. In his life story, one section illustrates the daily living condition of the monks in those days especially regarding morning alms round as:

‘Sometimes there was insufficient food to feed all the monks.’²⁸

Candasaro Bhikkhu, himself alike, could not escape facing this sort of hardship. Sometimes, his total sustenance for the day would be a single orange. Some days he would receive no food at all. He reflected upon the difficulties he and his fellow brethren had experienced through lack of food. This led himself to vow:

‘When I get enough support from benefactors I will build a kitchen so that the monastic community can put all their energies into Scripture study and meditation instead of having to worry where the next meal will come from.’²⁹

It would take a decade before Candasaro Bhikkhu’s dream became a reality.

When he was at Phra Chetupon Temple, there he also continued studying the monk’s discipline called Vinaya, and other texts called **Dhammapāda** and **Mūlakaccāyana**.

At that time the education of monks and novices began with memorizing the Suttas in their original Pāli language. When these had been committed to memory, the monks would have to memorize the grammar of the Scriptures: i.e. the Pāli root forms (mūlakaccāyana) from euphonic combination (sandhi) onwards. Candasaro Bhikkhu pursued his Scriptural studies in the same way, continuing his studies with nouns (nāma), secondary derivation (taddhita), indeclining (ākhayāta) and primary derivation (kita). Only then would the monks be allowed to begin the study of the Scriptures. Candasaro Bhikkhu memorized the foundation materials and started studying his first scripture -the Dhammapada. When he had mastered the second part of the Dhammapada, he studied the first part.

In those days, the Scriptures were not in book form, but etched on palm leaves using Khom script. He went on to study two other texts popular among contemporary monks -the Mangaladipani and Sārasangaha, until he became so well versed that he was able to teach others.

²⁷ Dhammakāya Foundation, **The Life & Time of Luang Phaw Wat Paknam**, op.cit., p.29

²⁸ Dhammakāya Foundation, **The Life & Time of Luang Phaw Wat Paknam**, op.cit., p.30

²⁹ Dhammakāya Foundation, **The Life & Time of Luang Phaw Wat Paknam**, op.cit., p.32

Academic life was by no means easy. Students had to seek out their teacher. Lessons were not held in classrooms but in the teacher's quarters. If the teacher happened to reside in a remote temple, it was the duty of the students to wend the weary miles each day. After breakfast Candasaro Bhikkhu would cross the river from Phra Chetupon Temple to Arun (Rajavararam) Temple. At eleven he would return to Phra Chetupon Temple for lunch. In the afternoon, he had to attend a class at Mahathat Temple. For his evening class, sometimes he would have to travel to Su that Temple, sometimes to Samphleum Temple. By night, he had to attend the last class of the day at his home temple, Phra Chetupon Temple. However, it was not every day of the week that he had such a busy schedule.

No matter how far away the lessons were, how heavy the scriptures or how tired he felt, Candasaro Bhikkhu was never absent from his classes. With his scriptures on his shoulder, he was such a frequent passenger on the Chaophraya River ferry between Peacock Gate Jetty and Arun Temple, that even the jetty-keeper realized his academic perseverance. His perseverance also stirred many of the regular passengers to faith. Many invited him to receive their alms each morning. Others offered to pay his living expenses.

For years Candasaro Bhikkhu travelled to various schools to study the Scriptures. More and more people were inspired by his diligence and tried to find ways to help him. The monks' food improved greatly. So strong was the support that Candasaro Bhikkhu succeeded in establishing a private Pāli college at Phra Chetupon Temple using his own quarters as a classroom. He invited Phramahāpee Vasuttamo, a talented monk of Pāli Grade V who had followed the abbot, Somdej Phraputhacham (Khem Dhammasaro), from Mahathat Temple, Bangkok as a permanent lecturer. Candasaro Bhikkhu catered for as many as ten students and teachers in the school at his own expense, and taught Pāli up to Grade V.

Times, however, were changing in the world of Thai monastic education. The Council of Elders issued a policy directive to base Pāli study on grammar (rather than free translation from the root meaning). Phra Chetupon Temple was therefore left with no choice but to merge its various private colleges into one, in order to be the line. Accordingly, Candasaro's Pāli School ceased to exist. Candasaro Bhikkhu was unperturbed however by the curriculum changes. Even though Pāli examinations changed from oral to written - he persevered to adapt and was an inspiration to others.

Monastic study became more institutionalized in the reign of H.M. King Rama V (Chulalongkorn, 1868-1910) with the building of Mahamongkut Academy (1893) and Mahachulalongkorn Academy (1911) specifically for monks studying Pāli. The written system of 'Pahrean Studies' (Thai: เปรี๊ยะญกรรม) favored by King Chulalongkorn and the reformed Dhammayutthika sect was introduced on a small scale at Mahāmongkut Academy from 1894-1900, but did not gain favor with the majority of the Mahānikāya monks who favored the oral examinations held at the Grand Palace chapel. It was not until the reign of H.M. King Rama VI (Mahavajiravudh, 1910-1925) that the Prince Patriarch Vajiranana replaced the oral examination system with standardized written examinations, during the time when Candasaro Bhikkhu was a Pāli student at Phra Chetupon Temple. Thenceforth, the emphasis on expansion of Pāli meaning from the root meaning (Mūlakaccāyana), in the Burmese style, was replaced by the memorization of the concise Pāli grammar written by Prince Vajiranana himself.

It was only in retrospect that Candasaro Bhikkhu realized that if he had continued to study and attained a high degree of scholarship, the Sangha authorities would surely have recruited him to work in an academic capacity to the detriment of his meditation practice. From that time onwards he devoted himself entirely to the study of meditation.

He became a wandering bhikkhu and practiced ‘dhutanga’ for self-purification, leaving the comforts of a fixed abode behind to travel alone searching for more knowledge -going anywhere in Thailand where there was a reputable master. His travels took him back to his old temple of Songpinong Temple. While Candasaro Bhikkhu was at Songpinong he recalled the bundle of Mahā Satipatthāna Sutta scriptures he had concealed since his ordination. He realized, in his eleventh year of monkhood, that he had reached the benchmark he had set for himself in Pāli studies. He was now able to translate that bundle fluently -and in accordance with his original intention, would discontinue his Pāli studies and undertake the task of studying meditation in earnest.

3.1.2 Self-dissatisfaction Lead to the Spiritual Attainment: A New Meditation System Being Decade-long Intensively Questioned

Even though Candasaro Bhikkhu seemed to devote himself to the study of the Scriptures, he always made time for meditation as well. In those days he followed the technique taught by his ‘anusavanacariya’, Phra Acharn Nong. On the quarter-moon days, when he was free from Scriptural study, he travelled to different temples renowned for their meditation teachers.

He studied with Phrasangavarānuwongse (Phra Acharn Eam) of Rajasiddharam Temple, Bangkok; Phra Kru Nyanavirat (Po) of Phra Chetupon Temple, Bangkok; Phra Acharn Singh, Lakom Thaam Temple (behind Rakhangkositaram Temple), Thonburi; Phramonkolthipmuni (Muy) the abbot of Chakrawat Temple, Bangkok, and Phra Acharn Pleum of Kao Yai Temple, Thamaka district, Kanchanaburi. All these famous masters were regarded as the foremost of their time in Buddhist meditation. As a result of their level of discipline, all had multitudinous students. Candasaro Bhikkhu completed the teachings of all these masters within an exceptionally short period of time.

After having studying meditation with many foremost meditation masters of the times for years, still he was dissatisfied with his own level of knowledge. He thought:

‘My knowledge is too superficial to qualify me as a meditation master.’³⁰

He however concluded that there must be a better way to gain the Truth taught by Lord Buddha -a way presently lacking which would make meditation easier to learn and accessible to all people. He then started learning meditation by following the great Buddhist Manual: **The Path of Purity (Visuddhimagga)** written by **Buddhaghosa**, a famous Buddhist exegete of the fifth century C.E.

During the eleventh Rains Retreat of his monkhood, he reportedly re-discovered the method of Dhammakāya Meditation Technique through his strong resolution to dedicate his life for the goal of insight in the main chapel in a monastery

³⁰ Dhammakāya Foundation, **The Life & Time of Luang Phaw Wat Paknam**, op.cit., pp.36-37

named Bodhi Bon Temple in Nonthaburi Province. Then, throughout the resting of the Rains Retreat, he dedicated himself to his new-found technique of meditation. Going deeper and deeper into the interior dimension of meditation he had discovered, he became more and more skillful. The more he studied and practiced meditation, the more he discovered the miraculous within and the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha.³¹

The tradition of meditation in Thailand is as old as Buddhism in Thailand itself. During the time of Candasarō Bhikkhu, there were several ancient texts of meditation written in Thai along with contemporary masters who could explicate them. All of the meditation techniques available at the time had their shortfalls. They were limited in their results -often deviating in search of the miraculous rather than leading to the wisdom known by the Buddha. Elements of the Dhammakāya meditation technique rediscovered by Venerable Candasarō were present in some of the contemporary meditation techniques of the time, but none of these allowed Samātha to develop naturally into Vipassanā without the need for conceptualization.

The method of Dhammakāya Meditation is undeniable one of the most contentious features of the Dhammakāya movement both during the Founder's and the Successor's Times. There are several comments and views made by Buddhist scholars and critics that deserve some investigations, such as:

Danna Marie Cook in her thesis³², referred to Dhammakāya Meditation as '... the unique meditation technique is one of the aspects of Dhammakāya Movement that has attracted followers.'

And on the same page, Cook said '... the arguments against the movement are uncommon teachings and practices employed by the Dhammakāya tradition.'³³

At the same time, Cook also accepted the fact as '... indeed, the followers of this new tradition emerging from Thailand maintain a creed that Dhammakāya Meditation is helpful for all, regardless of faith and if spread throughout humankind would lead to world place.'³⁴

More comments that are worthy of attention are: '... The technique was labelled novel and unique, while at the same time, similar to Tantric systems and influenced by Mahāyāna belief.'³⁵

The criticism regarding Dhammakāya Meditation System when comparing to Tantric Schools in Tibet which reveals several striking similarities especially the concept of bodies within the bodies. Jeffrey S. Bowers in his thesis³⁶ anticipated this point that '... it is likely that monks from different countries including those

³¹ Dhammakāya Foundation, *The Life & Time of Luang Phaw Wat Paknam*, op.cit., p.48

³² Danna Marie Cook, *Wat Phra Dhammakāya: Competition and Authoritative Conflict with the Thai Monastic Elite*, MA-Thesis, Arizona State University, August 2009, p.2

³³ Danna Marie Cook, op.cit., p.2

³⁴ Danna Marie Cook, op.cit., p.1

³⁵ Peter Jackson. *Buddhism, Legitimation, and Conflict. The Political Functions of Urban Thai Buddhism*, 1989, pp.201-203, Jim L. Taylor. 'New Buddhist Movements in Thailand: An 'Individualistic Revolution,' Reform and Political Dissonance' in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* Vol. 21, No. 1, pp.141-142, Edwin Zehner. *Buddhist Revitalization, Modernization, and Social Change in Contemporary Thailand*, Sojourn, Volume 8, Number 1.. 'New Buddhist Movements in Thailand: An Individualistic Revolution, Reform and Political Dissonance', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, pp.407-408, March 1990)

³⁶ Jeffrey S. Bowers, op.cit., p.45

practicing Tantric Buddhism could have been present with Luang Phaw Sodh and taught him about Tantric idea such as mantras, mandalas, bodily centers.’

It can be argued as it is noticeable that in Luang Pu Wat Paknam biography, there was not a single piece of evidence confirming his relationship with any Tantric-practiced monk, nor his enthusiasm in Tibetan Buddhism. Furthermore, Tantric meditation system is popular in Tibet but in the time of Luang Pu Wat Paknam, Vajrayana Buddhism was not only alien to Thailand but also to the global society. This Tibetan school of philosophy came into the outside world recognition by the time of the present Dalai Lama was exiled from the country. In the Thai Buddhist history, Tibetan Buddhism had been presented as a vague picture of nothing more than the connection of black magic, myth and mystery.

On contrary, the Buddhist scriptures: **The Path of Purity (Visuddhimagga)** and **Satipatthāna Sutta** are strongly emphasized in Luang Pu Wat Paknam biography and confirmed by his contemporaries as being used as his instruction manual guiding him in meditation breakthrough.

However, the speculation of Jeffrey S. Bowers about the Tantric idea and **Satipatthāna Sutta** in his thesis³⁷ containing some interesting substance as ‘... it is significant that this sutta (Satipatthāna Sutta) is also cited by Tantric schools as canonical evidence of Khadomas, or genies, who appear during meditation ...’

Bowers provided an anticipation that ‘... Luang Phaw Sodh was influenced by Tantric meditation in his development of Dhammakāya meditation.’

However at the end of the paragraph, Bowers concluded with uncertainty as ‘... however knowing exactly how he (Luang Phaw Sodh) was influenced and by whom is by all accounts impossible. Only circumstantial evidence based primarily on speculation remains.’

Dr. Kate Crosby in her writing³⁸ states that ‘... Dhammakāya meditation is ‘a somewhat adapted, form of the Yogavacara tradition.’

On the previous page, she said, ‘... Some Dhammakāya borrowing from the Yogavacara tradition appears probable; however, there is not yet sufficient evidence to prove that Dhammakāya meditation is ‘derived from the Yogavacara tradition’.³⁹

In the circle of Dhammakāya insiders including those closely related to Luang Pu Wat Paknam life and his own family (his devout family members living in Supanburi Province), no one could favor the idea of Dhammakāya Meditation System as a production of Tantric influence as being zealously investigated and assumed by the western scholars’ studies.

Moreover, in tracing throughout Luang Pu Wat Paknam life history, his life in monkhood engrossed within the Theravāda circle. His first teacher was Phra Acharn Nong. His meditation masters included:⁴⁰ 1. Phra Mongkolthipayamuni (Wat

³⁷ Jeffrey S. Bowers, op.cit., p.45

³⁸ Dr. Kate Crosby, ‘**Tantric Theravāda: A Bibliographic Essay on the Writings of François Bizot and others on the Yogavacara Tradition**’ in *Contemporary Buddhism* Vol. 1, No. 2, 2000, p.187

³⁹ Dr. Kate Crosby, op.cit., p.186

⁴⁰ Mae Chee Amphai Tansomboon, ‘**An Analysis of Phramongkol-Thepmuni’s (Sodh Candasaro) Buddhadhamma Propagation**’ Master Thesis. Graduate School, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, B.E. 2547, p.59

Chakravatrajavas, Bangkok), 2. Phra Acharn Dee (Wat Pratusarn, Supanburi), 3. Phra Acharn Nong Indasuwanño, (Wat Songpinong, Supanburi), 4. Luang Phaw Neum (Wat Noi, Supanburi), 5. Chao Khun Sangvaranuvong (Aium) (Wat Rajsitharam, Bangkok), 6. Phrakhrū Nyanavirat (Po) (Wat Po, Bangkok), 7. Phra Acharn Singha (Wat Lakorn Thaam, Bangkok) 8. Phra Acharn Pluem (Wat Kao Yai, Kanchanaburi).

He was said to be recognized by Phra Khru Nyanavirat of Wat Po and Phra Acharn Singha of Wat Lakorn Thaam as being able to be an accomplished meditation instructor equally to them.

However another option can be viewed as a more rational alternative in explaining the similarity of both systems is the usage of **Satipatthāna Sutta** as the meditation guidance of both schools (Tantric and Theravāda Dhammakāya) enables the practitioners to experience then explain the same/similar meditative attainment of their practice especially the experience of serial inner bodies.

Dhammakāya Meditators claimed that Dhammakāya Meditation Practice is originated from the guidance of the Buddhism meditation manual: **Visuddhimagga** and it is the practice which used by the Lord Buddha himself. The series of inner bodies experienced during meditating is in line with the discourse in **Satipatthāna Sutta**. Luang Pu Wat Paknam, himself often quoted the reference in Pāli Canon, Samyutta Nikaya⁴¹ the Saying of the Lord Buddha to his disciple: Vakkali ‘Yo kko Vakkali Dhammam passati so mam passati’ which means ‘Vakkali whoever sees Dhamma, see me.’

He also gave another reference from **the Agganna Sutta** of Digha Nikaya⁴² when the Lord Buddha discoursed to the novice Vasettha: ‘Tathagatassa h’etam Vasetthadhi vacanam Dhammakayo iti pi ...’ which means ‘O Vasetthas! The word of Dhammakāya is indeed the name of the Tathagata.’

Luang Pu Wat Paknam further explained that **the Agganna Sutta** relates to the nature of that people experience in meditation and gives them the real meaning of the word ‘Tathagata’. Dhamma in the absolute truth, the word ‘see’ means ‘the Dhamma inside’, the Dhammakāya or the Body of Dhamma.’

For those who are pro-Dhammakāya, the above explanation is textually accepted and experimentally affirmed; moreover, they go on to provide further elaboration as the real Buddha is the Dhammakāya, not the physical body of the historical Buddha. This is why the Lord Buddha speaks thus to Vakkali even though at the moment the Lord Buddha was standing in front of him.

On contrary, for those who are against-Dhammakāya, such explanation is seemed as odd to them. Jeffrey S. Bowers in his thesis⁴³ has given a view about the intention of Luang Pu Wat Paknam’s interpretation as:

‘...from its very inception it presented a contrast to traditional meditation practices in Thailand but was made legitimate by its founder aligning it with the Buddha himself.’

⁴¹ S.III.120

⁴² D.III.84

⁴³ Jeffrey S. Bowers, op.cit., p.92

Mae Chee Amphai Tansomboon, a Buddhist Eight-precepted observer provided a conclusion in her thesis⁴⁴ as she found that ‘... This was his rediscovery of the Dhammakāya meditation technique which had been long lost to Theravāda Buddhism. The method is not detailed in the Tipitaka, but is simply a meditation technique for practicing the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (**Satipatthāna**), which makes sense of the phrase contemplating ‘body in body, feelings in feelings, mind in mind, and mental objects in mental objects.’

In the same paragraph⁴⁵, she also stated that ‘... The teaching has been verified scientifically by many practitioners in accordance with Lord Buddha’s directive ‘See for yourself (paccattām veditabbo viññuhi).’

Meanwhile, another Thai Theravāda Buddhist monk researcher named Phramahā Sawai Chotiko (Tamna) found in his thesis work that ‘...Dhammakāya was a name of the Buddha who was the center of Dhamma according to the Tipitaka and Commentary of Theravāda Buddhism.’⁴⁶

In the same paragraph, he said ‘... In the sense of Theravāda, Dhammakāya consisted of the nine supramundane states, namely the Four Paths, the Four Fruits and Nibbāna. Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni (Sodh Candasaro) defined Dhammakāya as a name of the Buddha and at the same time was one of the many bodies of man.’⁴⁷

He, however concluded the Dhammakāya Meditation System in another angle of view that ‘... Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni’s interpretation seemed to be his own personal view which was not found in the texts of Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhism.’

3.1.3 The First Turning of the Dhamma Wheel Which Ending with Flying Color

Luang Pu Wat Paknam’s biography stated that amidst the depth of his meditating absorption, a temple named Wat Bangpla appeared to him, which made him feel sure that at the temple there might be someone ripe for the path. Therefore, he took the opportunity to go for teaching engagement and supported the ceremonies there until the end of the Rains Retreat. It was reported that his first group of meditation disciples who successfully attained Dhammakāya after his manner comprised three monks and four laypeople. Since then his reputation as a skilled meditation instructor began to grow.

Consequently, the teaching of Dhammakāya Meditation Practice was revived and gradually gained popularity in Thai urban society and went across the country. The factors of his Dhamma mission success can be analyzed as the three following categories:

⁴⁴ Mae Chee Amphai Tansomboon, op.cit., p.iii

⁴⁵ Mae Chee Amphai Tansomboon, op.cit., p.iii

⁴⁶ Phramahā Sawai, Chotiko (Tamna), Master’s Thesis ‘**A Critical Study of the Concept of Dhammakāya in Buddhism**’, Buddhist Studies, Graduate School, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 2542 (1999), p.iii

⁴⁷ Phramahā Sawai, Chotiko (Tamna), op.cit., p.iii

1. The charismatic teacher
2. The propagating savvy
3. The meditating model

No. (1) can be obviously witnessed through his biography. No. (2) will be illustrated more details later in this chapter. No. (3) can be clearly understood from the meditation experience (testimonies) of the Dhammakāya meditators. The attractive part of the Dhammakāya Meditation Model is its simple and easy features to follow. However, it cannot deny that No.(1) and No.(2) are the combining factors in making No.(3) possible. As the matter of fact, No.(1) is the most crucially important factor enabling Dhammakāya Meditation rising amazingly high and surprisingly continuing even after the founder's death. Unlike other religious movements, the death of their leaders is the indication of the ensuing decease of the movement. Luang Pu Wat Paknam's great personal charisma and his legacy of Dhammakāya Meditation Tradition remain exerting an unbelievably confidence upon Dhammakāya meditators even nowadays.

A piece of interview done by Phibul Choompolpaisal for his thesis (2003): 'Materialism or Religious Practice? An Application of the Debate between Gadamer's and Habermas' Hermeneutics to a Study of Phra Dhammakāya Buddhist Temple: the Stupa and its Interpretations' revealed some interesting fact in regard of the practitioner part: experience, confidence, attitude, which serves as testimony as the following:

'... Interviewees feel that the Dhammakāya teachings are 'practically easy to follow' it is likely that this is because they are familiar with the teachings due to having belonged to the Dhammakāya tradition for 11 and 5 years, respectively. Similarly, when person C and D believe that the teachings and the path they follow are 'right' this can be interpreted in 2 ways: 1) 'the path' and the 'teachings' are really 'correct' according to the Buddhist teachings, or 2) no matter whether the teachings are 'correct' or not, they may believe so because they are familiar with the teachings and their practice.'⁴⁸

In the teaching of Dhammakāya Meditation to the general public, Luang Pu Wat Paknam referred a Buddhist sutta named **Satipatthāna** to back up the genuineness of his method. Jeffrey S. Bowers's thesis⁴⁹ viewed it as a well-thought teaching savvy and a self-protected tactic as he said '... in teaching a new meditation technique as one originally used by the Buddha and citing canonical evidence, Luang Pu Wat Paknam was able to begin a movement away from traditional Thai meditation practices and at the same time align himself more closely with the Buddha to avoid accusations of heresy would-be critics might have made. It is significant that the canonical evidence cited by Luang Pu Wat Paknam is **the Mahā Satipattāna Sutta.**'

Generally, Dhammakāya Meditation Practice is classified into two tiers; one dealing with ordinary Dhammakāya Meditation and the other dealing with what is called 'Vijjā Dhammakāya' Meditation or the so-called 'high level'. When Dhammakāya

⁴⁸ Phibul Choompolpaisal, 'Materialism or Religious Practice? An Application of the Debate between Gadamer's and Habermas' Hermeneutics to a Study of Phra Dhammakāya Buddhist Temple: the Stupa and its Interpretations' MA-Thesis, University of London, September 2003, p.23

⁴⁹ Jeffrey S. Bowers, op.cit., p.29

Movements both at Paknam Temple and at Dhammakāya Temple refer their mission of spreading the knowledge of Dhammakāya Meditation Technique to the general public and to the world (for world peace through inner peace), they mean the teaching of Dhammakāya Meditation at the ordinary level.

Historically, Vijjā Dhammakāya was literally taught during Luang Pu Wat Paknam's times inside the so-called 'Meditation Workshop' (roang-ngan-tam-vijjā) to a relatively small group of adept meditators. (This will be discussed later in this chapter.) The reason lies out of the fact that before being able to study Vijjā Dhammakāya, the practitioner requires first to attain inner Dhammakāya body. Luang Pu Wat Paknam often taught that:

All of you must try to attain Dhammakāya first –then I can start to teach you insight. Even if it takes you twenty years to attain it, that's not too late for you to learn something from me.⁵⁰

Since the starting of Dhammakāya Temple up to present, even though one of the Abbot Dhammajayo's goals of building the Temple, apart from spreading Dhammakāya Meditation Technique around the world, is to further the advanced meditation research of Vijjā Dhammakāya left unfinished by the death of Luang Pu Wat Paknam. His meditation workshop (roang-ngan-tam-vijjā) is supposed to be located at the 60th Birthday Anniversary Building; however, the mission has never yet been started. His advanced meditation research project remains unchanged only the time frame has not yet been settled.

At the present time at Dhammakāya Temple where Dhammakāya Meditation has been pro-actively and widely propagated, Dhammakāya Meditation System is literally taught and practiced at basic level which emphasizes on generating mindfulness and the sense of ease in the practitioners' mind.

Concerning the problematic argument of attā and anattā regarding the characteristic of Nibbāna, Dhammakāya system of meditation is marked by its literal interpretation of Buddhist technical terms, (including the term Dhammakāya) in their physical meaning, as described by Luang Pu Wat Paknam. Many sermons of himself can be traced back to some schools of meditation in Southeast Asia preserved only in ancient meditation manuals. According to the Dhammakāya Movement, the Buddha made the discovery that Nibbāna is nothing less than the attā (the true Self).⁵¹

According to Paul Williams, some respects the teachings of the Dhammakāya Movement resemble the tathagatagarbha (Buddha Nature) and trikaya (three bodies) doctrines of Mahāyāna Buddhism.⁵² Williams sees the Dhammakāya Movement of Thailand as having developed independently of the Mahāyāna tathāgatagarbha tradition but as achieving some remarkably similar results in their understanding of Buddhism.⁵³

According to Paul Williams, Dhammakāya meditations involve the realization,

⁵⁰ Dhammakāya Foundation, **The Life & Time of Luang Phaw Wat Paknam**, op.cit., p.109

⁵¹ Paul Williams. **Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations** (PDF) (2 ed.). Taylor & Francis e-Library. ISBN 0203428471. 2008 Retrieved 21 April 2015, p. 126.

⁵² Paul Williams., op.cit., pp.126-128

⁵³ Paul Williams. **Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations**, London: Routledge, London, 2009, p. 128

when the mind reaches its purest state, of an unconditioned ‘Dhamma Body’ Dhammakāya in the form of a luminous, radiant and clear Buddha figure free of all defilements and situated within the body of the meditator. Nibbāna is the true self, and this is also the Dhammakāya.⁵⁴

The bulk of Thai Theravāda Buddhism rejects this teaching and insists upon non-self as a universal fact.

Venerable Dhammapitaka (Prayudh Payutto)⁵⁵ expresses the opinion that Dhammakāya Temple do not stick to the Pāli cannon, and in absolute terms, there is no such thing as attā. Venerable Dhammapitaka views Āyatananibbāna as the Nibbāna, or extinguishing of the fires of greed, hatred and delusion. Indeed, the scholar-monk⁵⁶ comments that there is a lot of speculation on Nibbāna and that the important issue is not to define Nibbāna for others but rather to look into oneself to see if defilements are decreasing.

As against this view, Venerable Dhammajayo of the Dhammakāya Movement (which does not see itself as Mahāyānist but as modern Theravāda) argues that it tends to be scholars who hold the view of absolute non-self, rather than Buddhist meditators. Also, according to him, only the compounded and conditioned is non-self –not Nibbāna. Williams summarizes Venerable Dhammajayo’s views, and adds his own comment at the end:

Scholars incline towards a non-self perspective. But only scholars hold that view. By way of contrast, Venerable Dhammajayo mentions in particular the realizations of several distinguished forest hermit monks. Moreover, he argues, impermanence, suffering and non-self go together. Anything which is non-self is also impermanent and suffering. But, it is argued, Nibbāna is not suffering, nor is it impermanent. It is not possible to have something which is permanent, not suffering (i.e. is happiness) and yet for it still to be non-self. Hence it is not non-self either. It is thus (true or transcendental) self ...⁵⁷

3.1.4 Being a New Incumbent at Paknam Temple

In 1916, Candasaro Bhikkhu was appointed the acting abbot of Paknam Temple located in Thonburi, Bangkok with the ecclesiastical title of Phra Kru Samutananukorn. The first night as the Abbot, in front of the shrine of the main Chapel in privacy, he meditated and then made this resolution:

‘May any monk still to come, come quickly to join this temple.
May any monk already here stay all of his life.’⁵⁸

During his abbotship, Luang Pu Wat Paknam had been through various formidable and dreadful challenges. The brush with death was only one among them. He dealt calmly with the responsibilities for reforming the temple with the resolve,

⁵⁴ Paul William. **Mahāyāna Buddhism**, Routledge, 2009, p.126

⁵⁵ Phra Dhammapitaka (Prayudh Payutto). **Karani Thammakai or ‘The Dhammakāya Case’** (Thailand: Buddhadhamma Foundation, Bangkok, 1998), p.9

⁵⁶ Phra Dhammapitaka (Prayudh Payutto), op.cit., pp.80-86

⁵⁷ Paul William. **Mahāyāna Buddhism**, Routledge, 2009, pp.127-128

⁵⁸ Dhammakāya Foundation, **The Life & Time of Luang Phaw Wat Paknam**, op.cit., p.53

‘Obstacles are to be overcome’ and ‘Difficulties are the grist of perfection. Being a monk, I win every battle without even a fight.’⁵⁹

He sometimes mentioned to his close disciples, ‘We, Bhikkhus, must never fight nor run.’⁶⁰

3.2 Paknam Temple Itself

3.2.1 The Temple Under His Administration

Scriptural study and meditation practice went hand-in-hand in the temple. Luang Pu Wat Paknam had studied both and he expected his disciples to do the same. Whoever had special aptitude in the study of Pāli emphasized academic studies. Whoever had special aptitude in the study of meditation emphasized Dhamma practice. If anyone lacked either or both aptitudes, there was always the choice of helping with the administration of the temple. Luang Pu Wat Paknam insisted his monks be active.

Paknam temple was soon established as a seat of learning. The number of monks and novices in the Temple increased from the original thirteen to a thousand. The more monks came the happier Luang Pu grew –keeping with his wish on the first night.

3.2.2 Fulfillment of His Long-awaited Dream – Another Form of Monastic Reform

Luang Pu Wat Paknam had one immediate worry on his mind. The lack of food for the monks was the regular occurrence. In 1916 now that he was in his abbotship long enough to gather for the princely sum adequate to build a kitchen sufficiently large to cater for a one-thousand strong community of monks, novices, nuns and laypeople. In the beginning of the project, rice had to be shipped from his family in Supanburi. Later, the help from the local people, this tradition continues down to present day.

It was the first monastic refectory to be built in Thailand –the first of its kind in the country. Luang Pu Wat Paknam took upon himself the responsibility to provide for all the monks, novices in the Temple. His concept is:

‘Eat along and there’s never enough –eat together and there’ll be too much to finish – just you wait, success is just around the corner!’⁶¹

In actual fact, Luang Pu Wat Paknam himself always had sufficient to eat because supporters would always single out the Abbot for special attention; however he could not let the rest of his monks go hungry. His food providing continued to do so throughout his life time.

⁵⁹ Dhammakāya Foundation, **The Life & Time of Luang Phaw Wat Paknam**, op.cit., p.55

⁶⁰ Dhammakāya Foundation, **The Life & Time of Luang Phaw Wat Paknam**, op.cit., p.54

⁶¹ Dhammakāya Foundation, **The Life & Time of Luang Phaw Wat Paknam**, op.cit., p.65

Jeffrey S. Bowers in his thesis (1995) analyzed this regards as another religious reform; he said ‘...Wat Paknam under Luang Pu’s abbotship began a movement of meditation reform with accompanying ancillary reform, such as having food prepared at the temple kitchen to allow monks more time to study.’⁶²

3.3 Dhammakāya Meditation System

3.3.1 The More Criticism toward this Groundbreaking Meditation System, the More Dramatic Bounce in Success to the Practice

The impact of the Dhammakāya meditation was widespread, causing a stir among those used to other Buddhist practices. Moreover, references to Dhammakāya in the Theravāda Buddhist canon are scant and Luang Pu Wat Paknam found himself confronted by many people who believed that Dhammakāya Meditation was alien to Buddhism and that the highest Truth of the Buddha’s Teachings had died with the passing of the historical Buddha.

During Luang Pu Wat Paknam’s times, Dhammakāya Meditation System caused many points of controversy to be raised among his fellow Buddhists. Some monks thought that Luang Pu Wat Paknam had meditated too much and as a result was teaching something that was not in keeping with Buddhism. At first sight, his teaching did not seem to correspond with those recorded in the Pāli Canon. Such was the absolute profundity of the truth into which Luang Pu Wat Paknam had gained insight that his Buddhist teachings were very precise. He like any pioneer had to treat these prejudices as just another obstacle to be overcome.

Strange enough that amid the long and heavy blow of criticism, the practice of Dhammakāya Meditation Technique was and is widely accepted, keeping abreast of the reputation of its founder. The hate campaign could never destroy Luang Pu Wat Paknam’s confidence and determination to the propagation of his re-discovered meditation technique. Mae Chee Amphai Tansomboon opined in this regard that:

‘... His key success was renewing meditation practice in an era emphasizing academics. Samma Araham is now an accepted school of meditation in Thailand. Despite some continuing hostility, his Buddha-Dhamma propagation has been successful, because it is based on the Truth, which can be verified in personal meditation practice.’⁶³

Danna Marie Cook in her Thesis⁶⁴ concludes the result of the high public criticism toward Dhammakāya Meditation Technique that ‘... the practices and teachings most ardently criticized were those that contributed the most to the Dhammakāya movement’s popularity and resources.’

Jeffrey S. Bowers in his thesis⁶⁵ expresses another point of view as he regards Dhammakāya Meditation practice as a kind of religious reform as ‘... Clearly his dissatisfaction with traditional meditation techniques and establishment or rediscovery of the systematized Dhammakāya Meditation technique was the fundamental reform.

⁶² Jeffrey S. Bowers, op.cit., p.82

⁶³ Mae Chee Amphai Tansomboon, op.cit., p.iii

⁶⁴ Danna Marie Cook, op.cit., p.32

⁶⁵ Jeffrey S. Bowers, op.cit., p.89

This reform was also accomplished very cautiously, reflecting Luang Pu Wat Paknam's knowledge of the conservative nature of the Thai Sangha and reforms were traced back directly to the Buddha to avoid charges of heresy.'

In an Interview with Donald K. Swearer conducted by Phibul Choompolpaisal, for his thesis⁶⁶, Swearer agrees with Bowers in term of seeing Dhammakāya Meditation practice and the Temple's overall religious activities as a kind of reform as he said '... it shares several characteristic of modern religious movements with it's emphasis on 'this worldly' activities, a simple method of practice (ref. meditation), and a simple creed or doctrines. It can be considered a reform or 'revitalization' movement in its efforts to establish a vital national center with satellites throughout Thailand and in other countries.'

3.3.2 Dhammakāya Meditation Going Along Well with Cutting-edge Innovative Teaching Method

Although Luang Pu Wat Paknam's life was heavily burdened with commitments, he kept to a strict daily schedule in order to perform all the duties expected of him without sacrificing the time for instructing his disciples in meditation. He had his mission and he had the courage to follow it. His goal was to make the training he gave continuous.

Luang Pu Wat Paknam was a kind of person who was very open to new ideas. He pioneered the mass teaching of meditation made possible by the latest microphone technology. He gave sermons and taught to the general public by the hundreds. He took the initiative to make a drawing half-side of body diagram indicated seven locations of the mind as the teaching aid to demonstrate the method of meditation so that learners could easily understand his teachings and practice meditation effectively. He also made tape recordings of his teachings for posterity. All of these were considered being state-of-the art in his time.

Mae Chee Amphai Tansomboon saw this type of meditation-teaching innovation as she said '... Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni only adapted the Buddha's Dhamma propagation to the practical needs and realities of the twentieth century, amidst World Wars I and II.'⁶⁷

3.3.3 Meditation Workshop – Another Ahead of Its Time

Luang Pu Wat Paknam designed that this Meditation Workshop (roang-ngan-tam-vijjā) be used by meditators for twenty-four hours-a-day to do meditation research. He selected the most gifted of the meditators to be his meditation researchers. This extraordinary group of people was to devote their lives to the investigation of the spiritual world that lies beyond the path to Dhammakāya. The Workshop meditators (paug-tam-vijjā) gave up everything –even their own free time. They had almost no time to sleep, including Luang Pu Wat Paknam, himself who had to keep up his public appearances for the general welfare of the Temple.

⁶⁶ Phibul Choompolpaisal, op.cit., p.40

⁶⁷ Mae Chee Amphai Tansomboon , op.cit., p.iii

The idea of utilizing the ‘shift system’ in teaching meditation in his Meditation Workshop (roang-ngan-tam-vijjā) which allowed perpetual meditation around the clock is truly innovative. It perhaps came as the influence of an industrial revolution during his time.

In the Meditation Workshop (roang-ngan-tam-vijjā), the Knowledge of Dhammakāya was the main focus. In the initial stages this meant an understanding of the knowledge known to Lord Buddha, i.e., the Threefold Knowledge, the Eightfold Supra-normal Knowledge and the Sixfold Super-knowledge. Once adept in these forms of knowledge they would apply that knowledge to free all beings from Samsāra.⁶⁸

Mae Chee Amphai Tansomboon confirmed this fact finding in her thesis (B.E.2547/2004) as ‘... Stopping the mind still (at the center of the body) permits climbing a ladder of increasingly pure spiritual bodies and mental states from the mundane through celestial and Noble State (Dhammakāya) to Nibbāna.’⁶⁹

3.3.4 His Futuristic Decision of Propagating Dhamma Knowledge Abroad

At a time when transportation to the temple had not even advanced to the level of a roadway, Luang Pu Wat Paknam was making far-sighted plans to acquire ‘an airplane to the temple’ to send monks off to countries abroad to spread the Dhamma and on the return trip to carry those foreign initiates who wanted to come to Thailand to be ordained.

In 1953, one of the first Bhikkhu from Paknam Temple to travel abroad was Thitavedo Bhikkhu who paid a short visit to England. Through connections at the Buddhist Society of London he was introduced to a leaned journalist and lay Buddhist teacher by the name of William Purfurst who planned to take ordination as a monk. In February 1954, Purfurst flew to Thailand and ordained as a monk named Kapilavaddho on Visakha Pūjā Day of the year.

The news of his ordination caused a wide-spread sensation in near and far communities. In this ordination ceremony, ten thousand people attended and many were inspired to be ordained.

In November 1954, Kapilavaddho Bhikkhu was sent back to England in order to search for fellow countryman interested in ordination. He preached in London and Manchester and was the subject of many newspaper articles. He set the foundations for the English Sangha Trust which was to continue to support the work of the English monastic community from that time onward. Three young men came to him with the intention to ordain.

3.3.5 Times After Luang Pu Wat Paknam’s Time

On February 3, 1959, at the age of 73, Luang Pu Wat Paknam passed away. Today, his personality is still a living force. It remains a matter of wonder to many that Luang Pu Wat Paknam could exert such an influence on the minds of the faithful even after his decease. The great compassion of Luang Pu Wat Paknam in teaching the profundity of Dhammakāya Meditation Knowledge to a core of disciples during his life

⁶⁸ Dhammakāya Foundation. **The Life & Time of Luang Phaw Wat Paknam**, op.cit., p.96

⁶⁹ Mae Chee Amphai Tansomboon, op.cit., p.iii

time has turned out to be an undying achievement as today number of followers of Luang Pu Wat Paknam is in the millions with students of Dhammakāya Meditation throughout the world.

3.3.6 The Second Phase of Dhammakāya Meditation: the Factors of Dhammakāya Temple's Success

3.3.6.1 Repeating Luang Pu Wat Paknam's Accomplishment in Catering for the Monastic Community

After Luang Pu Wat Paknam's times, it was widely predicted that Dhammakāya Meditation Tradition would fall part because the Technique is led by him and so closely identified with him. However, this was not the case. The Dhammakāya Meditation System continued to grow under the Abbot Dhammajayo's leadership at Dhammakāya Temple.

Upon settling down at the new place in Patumthani Province, Khun Yay Chandra considered that if the number of monks at Dhammakāya Temple were to increase, alms food would be insufficient for the monks and certainly insufficient for the congregation members attending the Temple or volunteers helping at the Temple. Thus she suggested that Luang Phaw Dhammajayo follow the Abbot of Wat Paknam's example and set up a temple kitchen. And she had been helping the supervision of the kitchen until her last day in life because she had a special concern in the kitchen since she believed that an army marched on its stomach. Khun Yay Chandra frequently made the wish about the kitchen.

‘May my meritorious deeds help me to be able to
feed all the staff, no matter how many they are.
May I have the means to support them. If there
are a hundred, may I be able to feed a hundred.
If there are a million, may I be able to feed a million.’⁷⁰

Khun Yay Chandra passed away on 9th September 2000, at the age of 92.

3.3.6.2 Ceremony: A Mechanism for Propagating Dhammakāya Meditation Well-planned and Run Professionally

Weekly ceremony is held on Sunday. Approximately 10,000 people participate in this one-day-long activity regularly. In the late morning, it is the time for meditation session lasting till 10:45 a.m. followed by the ceremony of mid-day meal offering to the Sangha. In the afternoon, it is scheduled for Dhamma lecture; sometimes seminars on religion-related issues are included.

The Temple is prepared to serve breakfast and lunch for everyone, also serving pre-packaged food, offering refreshment in the evening with no fee. This is to support the Temple's goers in their meditation practice.

Jeffrey S. Bowers⁷¹ provided a critical judgment on Dhammakāya Temple holding the weekly ceremony on Sunday as oppose to Thai traditional practice which

⁷⁰ Dhammakāya Foundation. **Second to None**, op.cit.,P.134

⁷¹ Jeffrey S. Bowers, op.cit., pp.79-80

considering ‘Wan Phra’ as the day for weekly ceremony that ‘... the temple holds its services on Sunday when schools do not have classes and most businesses are closed.’ Bowers viewed this point as one of the Temple’s reforms.

In the same paragraph⁷², Bowers also described about and concluded his first-hand experience with the Temple’s ceremony that ‘... the services are systematized, brief and regular, incorporating a short sermon, various announcements of temple’s activities, a meditation session, all of which ends at approximately 11:30 a.m. allowing time for followers to offer the monks’ noon meal. Following the services lay-members are welcome to partake of the temple’s complimentary lunch. All of these elements combine to make participation in regular temple activities as easy and convenient as possible.’

In Bowers’ point of view, all mentioned above appeal to the Temple’s target group: the educated modern middle class, sending Dhammakāya Temple soaring high.

In every grand religious event, the Temple welcomes thousands of followers seeking inner peace and advice on their spiritual quest; looking for practicing meditation under the guidance of the Abbot Dhammajayo: the leading proponent of the special Dhammakāya technique of meditation, with the ceremonious scene that can only invite admiration. The smooth flow of the meritorious activities always satisfies the crowd to no end with energy, style and an optimistic promise of positively steered rebirth. Significant events often end with fireworks display. At the end, when the crowds make their way out of the giant center of ceremony, they are gently shepherded by the ever attentive temple minders. This has certainly been one day to remember, a feast for the eyes and for the senses with thousands of people all together in a huge celebration of oneness. And as the memory begins to fade the devotees can simply look forward to attending the next one.

At Dhammakāya Temple, every religious ceremony regardless big or small, held inside or outside the Temple must include meditation practice into part of the activity. This is to correspond to the goal of starting the Temple as a place to spread Dhammakāya Meditation Technique worldwide. Dhammakāya Meditation System is the core value of Dhammakāya Temple and its member-network community (grum-kalayanamittara). Initially, the accomplishment of Khun Yay Chandra in bringing the pioneer group of meditators together at the original Dhammaprasit House in Paknam Temple was her teaching of Dhammakāya Meditation. And it is obvious that Dhammakāya Temple has grown out of a meditation technique that has taken on a life of its own. Thus Dhammakāya Meditation Technique and its Masters are equally held.

Venerable Dhammajayo used to say that ‘... Wat Phra Dhammakāya commenced with meditation because the Dhammakāya resides in every human being. Whatever your nationality or religion, whether you are educated or not, you have the Dhammakāya. Wherever human beings are located, the Dhammakāya exists. Wat Phra Dhammakāya was constructed to preserve and nurture this spirit.’⁷³

The Abbot Dhammajayo, himself also made it clear to every member in the community that whatever projects had been done and those will continue to be done are

⁷² Jeffrey S. Bowers, op.cit., pp.79-80

⁷³ Tawandhamma Foundation, **Journey2Joy**, op.cit., p.32

for the sole purpose of promoting the Dhamma propagating mission. He has been cherishing the hope to see Dhammakāya Meditation being practiced worldwide and humankind can taste the taste of inner peace through Dhammakāya Meditation Technique within his life time. Thus Dhammakāya Meditation Practice is the crucial significance for the Temple and its all contributions.

Venerable Dhammajayo once spoke his mind openly in his Dhamma Talk Program on DMC Television Channel ‘... I dream that all families and all households around the world will meditate together via satellite broadcasts. Together we will attain true inner happiness, see the brightness inside, and enter the Body of Truth within us: the Dhammakāya. This has been a dream of mine for a long time. I have relied on satellite broadcasts to share the meditation experiences of the students in the Inner Dreams Kindergarten Programme to people across the globe. These students, who come from such diverse backgrounds, unite to meditate and perform deeds of universal goodness.’⁷⁴

Jeffrey S. Bowers⁷⁵ provided the idea of Dhammakāya Meditation System in related with Dhammakāya Temple’s world-scale mission in another angle of view that ‘... Dhammakāya Meditation and Wat Phra Dhammakāya are inter-related in such a way that neither could exist without the other. If convenient, modern appearing and forward looking temple existed without some worth-while goal, such as becoming the center of Buddhism in the world, it would have difficulty infusing its followers with necessary zeal.’

In the following page of his thesis⁷⁶, Bowers further opined, ‘... the meditation technique is a key element of the temple. Conversely, if the ‘popularized’ meditation technique was made available to followers without the conveniences and pleasing surrounding, it would likely fail to attract the necessary attention.’

3.3.7 Dhammakāya Meditation Nowadays: The Cause of High Appeal and Severe Attack Same as the Times of Its Founder

Thai Buddhist scholars have an academic interest in this area particularly during the past few decades. Before starting the discussion in details on this controversial topic, let delve into some general information about the practice of Buddhist meditation in order to provide a clearer picture for better understanding.

The general knowledge about meditation practice, at its simplest, meditation is the ability of the mind to stay in a single mood extendedly without wandering – a sort of happiness which one can bring about oneself – something which is advantageous for all to practice, bringing benefits in life including happiness, non-recklessness (appamada), mindfulness (sati), self-possession (sampajañña) and wisdom (pañña) -- which is not beyond anyone’s power to practice easily.

There are two types of Buddhist meditation: Samātha and Vipassanā. Samātha means tranquility, serenity and calmness or mental development to have ‘concentration’. Samātha is cultivated at the fundamental step to train one’s mind to be calm and tranquility in order to cultivate wisdom through Vipassanā. Samātha can be

⁷⁴ Tawandhamma Foundation, **Journey2Joy**, op.cit., p.32

⁷⁵ Jeffrey S. Bowers, op.cit., p.91

⁷⁶ Jeffrey S. Bowers, op.cit., p.92

contemplated through Forty Devices of concentration namely ten objects (Kasina), ten impurities (Asubha), ten reflection (Anusati) and four modes of sublime conduct (Bhramavihara) and one perception of the loathsomeness of material food (Āhārepaṭikūlasaññā), one analysis of the four elements (Catudhātuvavaṭṭhāna) and four non-form realms (Arūpā Jhāna).

Vipassanā means insight or intellectual development. Vipassanā is cultivated at the advanced level in contemplating the Five Hindrances, Five Aggregates according to the Four Noble Truths and the Three Characteristics and the Chain of Dependent Origination. Samātha-Vipassanā meditation is the cultivation of mind to get wisdom through contemplation of The Foundation of Mindfulness. This consists of contemplation of the body, feelings, mental functions and phenomena (Dhamma).

General speaking, meditation is performed to calm the mind which is called Samātha meditation and prepare the mind for insight meditation or so called Vipassanā meditation. Samātha meditation leads the mind through the Four Jhānas which required for the practitioner to advance in Vipassanā meditation.

3.3.7.1 The Typical Dhammakāya Meditation System and Its Salient Features

The Salient Feature is Dhammakāya Meditation re-discovered by Luang Pu Wat Paknam described as both Samātha and Vipassanā, incorporating both types of meditation in one compact meditation technique.⁷⁷

Phra Mahā Santhiti Visudhved discovered in his thesis (2000) that ‘... that the methodology of Wat Pak Nam included both concentration and insight meditation and taught according to the Theravāda Pāli Canon and its commentaries. The teaching was the use of the Aloka Kasina together with recollection of the Buddha and mindfulness of breathing in order to refine the mind until attaining Jhāna (absorption), and then contemplated upon the body in the body onwards from the human body to the refined Dhammakāya body. The insight meditation attained at the Dhammakāya level was to contemplate phenomena according to Dhamma.’⁷⁸

Meanwhile, Mae Chee Amphai Tansomboon talked about Luang Pu Wat Paknam’s meditation teaching as ‘... He taught an integrated meditation technique, starting with Samātha (concentration), followed by Vipassanā (insight).’⁷⁹

The meditation teaching techniques of Luang Pu Wat Paknam involved five steps as follows:⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Phra Acharn Sermchai Jayamangalo, *The Heart of Dhammakāya Meditation*, (Thailand: Dhammakāya Buddhist Meditation Foundation, Bangkok 1997 (B.E.2540)), p.18

⁷⁸ Phra Mahā Santhiti Visudhved, *The Comparative Study of Theravāda and Tibetan Buddhist Meditation Methods: A Case Study at Wat Paknam and Dhammasala (India)*, Comparative Religion, Master’s Thesis, Graduate School, Mahidol University, 2543 (2000), p.v

⁷⁹ Mae Chee Amphai Tansomboon, op.cit., p.iii

⁸⁰ Mae Chee Amphai Tansomboon, op.cit., pp.95-96

1. Giving introduction of general knowledge to know one's objective why we meditate for.
2. Creating a comfortable and friendly atmosphere.
3. Giving encouragement to everyone to feel that meditation is not difficult to practice.
4. Explaining the procedure of meditation clearly and easy to follow.
5. Guiding the practitioners do it themselves to be able to see by individual experience with close guidance from him.

To guide the practitioners to reach a concentrated mind involves two processes; one: two aids, two: seven bases of mind.

Two aids include:

1. A object of visualization (the crystal sphere, parikamma-nimitta)
2. A mantra or phrase to repeat (parikamma-bhāvanā– ‘Samma Arahant’)

Seven bases of mind include:

1. The nostril - ladies on the left and gentlemen on the right
2. The eye socket - ladies on the left and gentlemen on the right
3. The center of the skull level, level with the eyes
4. The back end of the palate
5. The throat aperture
6. The center of the body, level with the navel
7. Two finger widths above the navel level (the sixth base)

Through Dhammakāya Meditation Method, the ‘Mind’ becomes strong, be able to do many useful things. When the mind is concentrated, the mind is proper for the mental work.⁸¹ And at this mental stage, the condition of the mind is adequately subtle to attain the inner refined bodies. There are eighteen successively refined bodies as practitioners penetrate deeper and deeper in meditation. The eighteen inner bodies are:

1. The Human form	2. The Refined Human Form
3. The Celestial Form	4. The Refined Celestial Form
5. The Brahman Form	6. The Refined Brahman Form
7. The Arūpa Brahman Form	8. The Refined Arūpa Brahman Form
9. <u>The Dhammakāya Form (Gotrabhū)</u>	10. <u>The Refined Dhammakāya Form (Gotrabhū)</u>
11. The Sotāpanna Form	12. The Refined Sotāpanna Form
13. The Sakadāgāmī Form	14. The Refined Sakadāgāmī Form
15. The Anāgāmī Form	16. The Refined Anāgāmī Form
17. The Arahantta Form	18. The Refined Arahantta Form.

Starting from the Crude Human Body (Manussakaya) up to the Dhamma Sphere is Samātha Meditation. From Noble-State Wisdom (Dhammakāya Gotrabhū) up to the Perfect One (Dhammakāya Arahantta) is Vipassanā Meditation. This is a coincidence of the explanation of Venerable Sermchai Jayamangalo that Dhammakāya Meditation System is the practice which combines Samātha and Vipassanā as one.⁸²

⁸¹ Mae Chee Amphai Tansomboon , op.cit., p.97

⁸² Phra Acharn Mahā Sermchai Jayamangalo, op.cit., p.18

In the point of reference to **the Satipatthāna Sutta** by Luang Pu Wat Paknam as the fundamental practice of Dhammakāya Meditation method is another key component backing up the claim that the all-in-ones attribute that combines the two: Samātha and Vipassanā, features in Dhammakāya Meditation technique; as it is clearly understood that the discourse of Satipatthāna Sutta is covering both the area of Samātha and Vipassanā.

Phramonchai Saitanaporn's Ph.D thesis, University of Sydney, (September 2008) provided an articulate explanation about the relation of Samātha and Vipassanā in the practice of Satipatthāna Sutta as:

‘... An exploration of Satipatthāna practice indicates its practical relevance to the synthetic contemplative practice of Samātha and Vipassanā. This relevance is substantiated through the attainment of the psychological states which accompany experiential knowledge of the mental bodies and the subsequent attainment of deathlessness. The Satipatthāna exercises were seen as related to the synthesis between Samātha and Vipassanā because they are founded on the achievement of refined and peaceful bodies, feelings, minds and dhammas, which accompany them, and which are coincident with the arising of the five instrumental factors.’⁸³

Thus, in short, the integration of Samātha and Vipassanā as ones is regarded as a salient feature of Dhammakāya Meditation technique.

3.3.7.2 Dhammakāya Meditation Seen As Pervasion in Some Academic Views

As previously mentioned, Luang Pu Wat Paknam achieved his meditation breakthrough on his own and called the discovery as Dhammakāya Meditation Technique, by relying on the meditation guidance stated in **Visuddhimagga** and he explained the newly-found meditative experiences especially the eighteen Inner Refined Forms based on the Pāli sutta: **Satipatthāna**. His explanation caused practice-induced controversy; as being accused by some scholars as the teaching of perversion (vipalasa) in Buddhism (Charoon Somnoi's thesis, Mahidol University, 2000).⁸⁴ Later, in 2004, Mae Chee Amphai Tansomboon's thesis, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University argued the point that ‘... The study found that Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni taught directly in accordance with the Buddha's Dhamma Vinaya. His teaching was Right View (Sammā-ditthi), not Wrong View (Miccā-ditthi) or perversion.’⁸⁵ The issue is yet settled as researches are continuously conducted to bring out more satisfactory explanations.

3.3.7.3 Dhammakāya Meditation Technique Explaining the Non-Noble Individuals

The Pāli Canon (Tipitaka)⁸⁶ lists eight types of ‘Noble Individual’ which are from Sotāpanna up to the Arahantta, the lower ones listed in the eighteen consecutive Inner Forms of Dhammakāya Meditation Technique are not ‘Noble Individuals’, only

⁸³ Phramonchai Saitanaporn, **BUDDHIST DELIVERANCE: A RE-EVALUATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SAMĀTHA AND VIPASSANĀ**, Doctor of Philosophy, Department of Studies in Religion, University of Sydney, September 2008, p.298

⁸⁴ Charoon Somnoi, ‘**A Teaching of Pervasion (Vipalasa) in Buddhism: A case study of a teaching of Dhammakāya Monastery**’, Comparative Religion, Master Thesis Mahidol University, 2543 (2000), p.iv

⁸⁵ Amphai Tansomboon, op.cit., p.iii

⁸⁶ M.III.255, S.III.168

steps along the way and are rarely found in neither Pāli Scriptures nor other Buddhist meditation traditions. Thus the eighteen Inner Forms can be considered as one of the salient features of Dhammakāya Meditation Tradition re-discovered by Luang Pu Wat Paknam. Moreover, it is interesting to note that one at the very least-famous non-Noble Individual: Gotrabhū as listed in no. 9 and no. 10 on the previous page features prominently in Dhammakāya Meditation practice, at another extent distinguishing the practice from other Buddhist meditation methods.

According to the description, Gotrabhū means 'who has entered the lineage of the Noble Ones', i.e. 'the Matured One' or 'change-of-lineage-Moment'.

The word 'Gotrabhū' occurs in a Sutta passage with unclear meaning but probably just referring as 'a member of the Sangha'. There are a few different interpretations of the word Gotrabhū, which Venerable Bodhi commented to (AN.IX.10.247) in his 'Numerical Discourses'. Later the Abhidhamma and commentaries develop a theory in which Gotrabhū is one of the preliminary stages to awakening.

Gotrabhū, in the translation of **Visuddhimagga**, where the word is used in a technical sense, Venerable Nanamoli renders it 'change-of-lineage'.⁸⁷ Manorathapirani explains this individual, in accordance with the exegetical scheme of the commentaries, as 'one with a mind of powerful insight that has reached the peak, the immediate condition for the path of stream-entry.' Manorathapirani is here referring to the Gotrabhū mind-moment in the cognitive process (Cittavithi) of the path, the mental event that immediately precedes Sotapattimagacitta, the mind-moment of the path of stream-entry.

Gotrabhū-citta is the last of the four impulse moments Javana cf. Viññāna-kicca immediately preceding the entering into an absorption (Jhāna) or into one of the supra-mundane paths.⁸⁸

'Gotrabhū' in **the View of the Forest Monks (Aranyavasi)** which is based on experience, are described as follow:

Samādhi means the mind that is firmly concentrated, and the more practice, the firmer the mind becomes. The more firmly the mind is concentrated, the more resolute in the practice it becomes. The more contemplate, the more confident. The mind becomes truly stable to the point where it cannot be swayed by anything at all; the meditator is absolutely confident that no single mind-object has the power to shake it. Mind-objects are mind-objects; the mind is the mind. The mind experiences good and bad mental states, happiness and suffering, because it is deluded by mind-objects. If it is not deluded by mind-objects, there is no suffering. The undeluded mind cannot be shaken. This phenomenon is a state of awareness, where all things and phenomena are viewed entirely as dhātu-11 (natural elements) arising and passing away.

It might be possible to have this experience and yet still be unable to fully let go. Whether the meditator can or cannot let go, the suggestion is do not let this feeling be a bother. Before anything else, the meditator must at least develop and sustain this

⁸⁷ Vism 672–75, Ppn 22.1–14

⁸⁸ Ariya-puggala A.. Cf. Visuddhi VII.

level of awareness or fixed determination in the mind as well as keep applying the pressure and destroying defilements through determined effort, penetrating deeper and deeper into the practice.

Having discerned the Dhamma in this way, the mind will withdraw to a less intense level of practice, which the Buddha and subsequent Buddhist scriptures describe as the Gotrabhū citta-12. The Gotrabhū citta refers to the mind which has experienced going beyond the boundaries of the ordinary human mind. It is the mind of the Puthujjana (ordinary unenlightened individual) breaking through into the realm of the Ariyan (Noble One) - however, this phenomena still takes place within the mind of the ordinary unenlightened individual like the rest.

The Gotrabhū Puggala is someone, who, having progressed in their practice until they gain temporary experience of Nibbāna (enlightenment), withdraws from it and continues practicing on another level, because he has not yet completely cut off all defilements. It is like someone who is in the middle of stepping across a stream, with one foot on the near bank, and the other on the far side. He knows for sure that there are two sides to the stream, but is unable to cross over it completely and so steps back. The understanding that there exist two sides to the stream is similar to that of the Gotrabhū Puggala or the Gotrabhū citta. It means that he knows the way to go beyond the defilements, but is still unable to go there, and so takes a step back. Once he knows for himself that this state truly exists, this knowledge remains with him constantly as he continues to practice meditation and develop his Pāramī. He is both certain of the goal and the most direct way to reach it.⁸⁹

‘Gotrabhū’ explained in **the Discourse of The Seven Stages of Purification & Sixteen Insight Knowledges**⁹⁰ maps out the systematic transition of the Citta under the development of Samādhi by Venerable Mahāsi Sayadaw as follows:

- I. Purification of Conduct (Sila-visuddhi)
- II. Purification of Mind (Citta-visuddhi)
- III. Purification of View (Ditthi-visuddhi)
 1. Knowledge of Delimitation of Mind-And-Matter (Nāma-rupa-pariccheda-ñāna): brought to maturity in three ways: internally, externally and both internally and externally.
- IV. Purification by Overcoming Doubt (Kankha-vitarana-visuddhi)
 2. Knowledge of Discerning Cause and Condition (Paccaya-pariggaha-ñāna)
 3. Knowledge of Comprehension (Sammāsana-ñāna)
 - 4a. Knowledge of Contemplation of Arising and Passing Away (Udayabbaya-ñāna): in its weak stage, involving the Ten Corruptions of Insight (illumination, knowledge, rapturous delight, calmness, bliss, faith, energy, assurance, equanimity, and attachment)

⁸⁹ Acharn Chah, **The Path & Peace: Gotrabhū Citta**. trans. by Ven. Gavesako http://www.acharnchah.org/book/Path_Peace.php (Jan 04, 2009).

⁹⁰ Venerable Mahāsi Sayadaw, **The Progress of Insight** - A Modern Treatise on Buddhist Satipatthāna Meditation, composed on 22.5.1950.

- V. Purification by Knowledge and Vision of What Is Path and Not-Path (Maggamagga-ñānadassana-visuddhi)
 - VI. Purification by Knowledge and Vision of the Way (Patipada-ñānadassana-visuddhi)
 - 4b. Knowledge of Contemplation of Arising and Passing Away (Udayabbaya-ñāna): in its mature stage.
 - 5. Knowledge of Contemplation of Dissolution (Bhanga-ñāna)
 - 6. Knowledge of Contemplation of Appearance as Terror (Bhayatupatthana-ñāna)
 - 7. Knowledge of Contemplation of Danger (Adinava-ñāna)
 - 8. Knowledge of Contemplation of Disenchantment (Nibbida-ñāna)
 - 9. Knowledge of Desire for Deliverance (Muncitu-kamyata-ñāna)
 - 10. Knowledge of Contemplation of Reflection (Patisankhanupassana-ñāna)
 - 11. Knowledge of Equanimity about Formations (Sankhar'upekkha-ñāna): Insight Leading to Emergence (Vutthanagami-Vipassanā-ñāna)
 - 12. Knowledge in Conformity with Truth (Conformity Knowledge) (Anuloma-ñāna)
 - 13. **Knowledge of Change-of-Lineage (Gotrabhū-ñāna)**
 Immediately afterwards, a type of knowledge manifests itself that, as it was, falls for the first time into Nibbāna, which is void of formations (conditioned phenomena) since it is the cessation of them. This knowledge is called 'maturity knowledge.'
- Gotrabhū-ñāna (maturity knowledge) is, literally, the 'knowledge of one who has become one of the lineage (gotra).' By attaining to that knowledge, one has left behind the designation and stage of an unliberated worldling and is entering the lineage and rank of the noble ones, i.e., the stream-enterer, etc. Insight has now come to full maturity, maturing into the knowledge of the supramundane paths and fruitions. Maturity knowledge occurs only as a single moment of consciousness; it does not recur, since it is immediately followed by the path consciousness of stream-entry or once-returning, etc.⁹¹
- VII. Purification by Knowledge and Vision (ñānadassana-visuddhi)
 - 14. Knowledge of Path (Maggā-ñāna)
 - 15. Knowledge of Fruit (Phala-ñāna)
 - 16. Knowledge of Reviewing (Paccavekkhana-ñāna)

Attainment of Fruition (Phalasamapatti) - The Higher Paths and Fruitions: When the meditator has thus become skilled in achieving the fruition attainment, he should resolutely set his mind upon the task of attaining to the higher paths and fruitions. Just as before, he should carry out the practice of noticing (anything occurring) at the six sense doors....

⁹¹ Ven. Mahāsi Sayadaw, **The Progress of Insight: (Visuddhinana-katha) the Treatise on the Purities and Insights.** trans. by Ven. Nyanaponika Thera, composed on 22.5.1950.
<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/mahasi/progress.html#fn-42>

The Differences of **Gotrabhū in Samātha and Vipassanā**

Gotrabhū is the last Kāmāvacara citta in a process before a Citta of another plane of consciousness arises in that process. The other plane of consciousness may be Rūpāvacara (in the case of Rūpa-jhāna), Arūpāvacara (in the case of Arūpa-jhāna) or Lokuttara.

In Samātha, Gotrabhū is the last Kāmāvacara citta before the Rūpa-jhāna citta or the Arūpa-jhāna citta arises. In Vipassanā, Gotrabhū is the last Kāmāvacara citta of the non-Ariyan before the Lokuttara citta arises and he becomes an Ariyan. The object of the Gotrabhū arising before the Lokuttara citta is different from the object of Gotrabhū in Samātha. Gotrabhū arising before the Lokuttara citta has Nibbāna as object.

To the question that why Gotrabhū is not Lokuttara citta even the fact that it is the first Citta which has Nibbāna as object.

The answer is, at the moment of Gotrabhū, the meditator who is about to attain enlightenment is still a non-Ariyan. Gotrabhū does not eradicate defilements. Gotrabhū is succeeded by the Magga-citta which eradicates the defilements that are to be eradicated at the stage of the Sotāpanna. The Magga-citta is the first Lokuttara citta in that process of Cittas. When it has fallen away it is succeeded by two (or three) Phala-cittas which are the result of the Magga-citta and which still have Nibbāna as the object.

As having seen, the Magga-citta is succeeded immediately by its result, in the same process of Citta. The Magga-citta cannot produce Vipāka in the form of rebirth, such as the Kusala citta of the other planes of consciousness. The Phala-cittas are succeeded by Bhavanga-cittas.

To the question that when the Lokuttara cittas have fallen away and there are Kāmāvacara cittas again, if Nibbāna can also be the object of Kāmāvacara citta.

The answer is, Nibbāna can be the object of Kāmāvacara-cittas which arise after the Lokuttara cittas have fallen away. Before someone becomes an Ariyan there can only be speculation about Nibbāna. Since the Ariyan, however, directly experiences Nibbāna, he can reflect upon his experience afterwards.

The **Visuddhimagga**⁹² stated that, after the Lokuttara cittas have fallen away, the person who attained enlightenment reviews in different mind-door processes of Citta, the path, fruition, the defilements which have been abandoned, the defilements still remaining as well as Nibbāna.

In conclusion, Gotrabhū-ñāna: with meditation on the Five Aggregates, Change of lineage knowledge arises taking Nibbāna as object. It is the knowledge that sees the freedom from cause and effect. It sees Nibbāna but not yet the Four Noble Truths simultaneously. Summarizing the process of Citta, during which enlightenment attained, is as follows:

⁹² **Visuddhimagga** (XXII, 1)

1. Mano-dvārāvajjana-citta (mind-door-adverting-consciousness)
2. Parikamma (preparatory; for some people not necessary)
3. Pacāra (proximatory)
4. Anuloma (adaptation)
5. Gotrabhū (change of lineage)
6. Magga-citta
7. Phala-citta (two or three moments, depending on the individual)

3.3.7.4 Dhammakāya Meditation System Simplified and Being Wider Acceptance in the Present Dates

As a wide range of people from different demographic backgrounds becomes interest in Dhammakāya Meditation Practice, in order to make the practice befitting practitioners of various temperaments, teaching of Dhammakāya Meditation to the general public at Dhammakāya Temple in the present time has been adjusted to a certain extent. This development has been done without sacrificing the Tradition's true essence.

In leading the congregation in meditation practice, the Abbot Dhammajayo suggests all practitioners to first cultivate the sense of ease both physically and mentally by adopting a comfortable sitting posture and let go all mental worries. He emphasizes that the success in achieving this initial stage is the precursor of the further advance in the practice. He devotes a certain amount of time in each meditating session only to guide the practitioners to reach this initially required mental quality. Then he suggests practitioners to gently place the mind at the center of the body; simultaneously continue nurturing the sense of ease. The continuity of ease enables concentration to develop of its own accord.

According to his recent meditation guidance, the sense of ease thorough the session is the crucial factor. The tactic of employing the mantra 'Samma Arahant' and the object of visualization are optional. And instead of leading the mind through the seven bases, he suggests the practitioners to take a short cut across to the seventh base as doing so, it is efficient to reach the goal of generating a concentrated mind.

One noticeable thing is the eighteen inner refined forms have been long absent from being mentioned in his meditation guidance. However this innovation in Dhammakāya Meditation Technique does not cause the Technique to lose its unique identity.

The eighteen inner refined bodies whether or not being mentioned can be experienced through the practitioners' meditative progress and eventually the attainment of Dhammakāya Body. This can be understood from his words in a book title: When You Do Not Know What to Read (Meau Mai Ru Ja An Arai). He said:

'... when one's mind has developed concentration and mindfulness, the transform of the individual mind will enable one to see 'the real Buddha' from inside which he calls 'Dhammakāya' or 'the body of the Buddha'.⁹³

⁹³ Tawandhamma Foundation, **When You Do Not Know What to Read (Meau Mai Ru Ja An Arai)** (Thailand: Fongthai Company, Bangkok, 2003), p.54

Phibul Choompolpaisal in his thesis explained his observation in this regards as ‘... the Abbot focuses upon two objects of concentration as a means to develop concentration and mindfulness: 1) ‘visualizing’ either the crystal Buddha or the crystal ball (which is a type of ‘kasine’) and 2) the recollection of the ‘Buddha’, this means that through these two methods one’s mind becomes purified and one can see the ‘real Buddha’ or Dhammakāya (the body of the Buddha) inside oneself.’⁹⁴

In summary, it can be capsulated at this point the development of Dhammakāya Meditation Practice in the following table:

<u>Typical Dhammakāya Meditation Teaching</u>	<u>Innovative Dhammakāya Meditation Teaching</u>
1. The five steps are implemented.	1. Some of the five steps are implemented.
2. Two process of guiding: Two Aids and Seven Bases are emphasized.	2. Two process of guiding are optional. Only the Seventh base is emphasized.
3. The eighteen inner refined bodies are mentioned during the guiding process.	3. The eighteen inner refined bodies are not mentioned in the guiding process.

Meanwhile, Jeffrey S. Bowers in his thesis viewed the differences between traditional Thai-Theravāda meditation and Dhammakāya Meditation in another dimension as⁹⁵ ‘... the themes of traditional meditation and Dhammakāya Meditation also vary considerably. in traditional meditation, one is told to find a secluded spot, preferably quiet and meditate individually. Dhammakāya Meditation, while capable of being done individually, is nearly always done in groups.’

In the same page (page 30), Bowers gave the comparison of some different aspects between the traditional meditation and Dhammakāya Meditation Technique as follows:⁹⁶

<u>Traditional Meditation</u>	<u>Dhammakāya Meditation</u>
1. Individual performed	1. Practice in groups
2. Desired meditation theme provided	2. Meditation theme chosen
3. Vision may or may not appear	3. Vision should appear
4. Vision may or may not have significance	4. Significance of vision underscored
5. Powers, abhinyā are a by-product	5. Powers, abhinyā are essential goal

⁹⁴ Phibul Choompolpaisal, op.cit., p.27

⁹⁵ Jeffrey S. Bowers, op.cit., p.30

⁹⁶ Jeffrey S. Bowers, op.cit., p.30

Danna Marie Cook in her Thesis observes the differences between traditional meditation practice and Dhammakāya Meditation Practice as she said ‘... Tradition Buddhism reserved meditation for monks but the Dhammakāya movement has extended the practice to laity, even claiming Dhammakāya Meditation can help average people get closer to attain enlightenment.’⁹⁷

Rory Mackenzie in his Ph.D. dissertation (2007) observes the meditation teaching at Dhammakāya Temple in another facet as he said, ‘... One feature of Wat Phra Dhammakāya’s approach is that Dhammakāya meditation is not taught as a Buddhist practice but as a religiously neutral technique suitable for those of all faiths, or none.’ He also provides further information obtained from his own personal dialogue with a foreign monk as:

‘... A Western meditation instructor informed me that Phra Dhammajayo had told him that he did not wish people to change their religion as a result of practicing Dhammakāya meditation but rather to become more committed members of their faith systems.’⁹⁸

In page 63, Mackenzie also questions if Dhammakāya Temple can utilize their Dhammakāya Meditation Technique to actualize their dream of making Dhammakāya Meditation being accepted internationally, he opines, ‘... The movement is also seeking to bring together those from different faiths, and indeed those with no faith. Clearly Dhammakāya Meditation is the key component in this process. Genuine interfaith dialogue is an important activity for a variety of reasons but is Dhammakāya Meditation sufficiently neutral to be appropriate for people of other religious traditions? Temple members believe it to be so, yet I remain unconvinced.’ He also reasons that ‘... The religious commitment of those who lead meditation and the ‘sacred space’ of the temple are both significant.’⁹⁹

It is the actuality that over the past two decades, through the propagation scheme, the multiplied numbers of Dhammakāya Meditation branch centers/temples worldwide have proven the Temple’s offbeat approach to the teaching of Dhammakāya Meditation in the non-Buddhist countries is fundamental right; as basically the mission has encountered zero resistance and minimum hesitancy from the locals to view Dhammakāya Meditation as a religiously neutral activity which is worth a try. The Temple’s optimistic vision of ‘world peace through inner peace’ sound clichéd but Dhammakāya Meditators are confident in spite of the present vague tangibility. The clear end is yet in sight. To reach the fulfillment line is undeniably a long way to go. It is the challenge awaiting for the Temple to prove their driving potential and how they strategize the next step of their working plan.

3.4 The Criticism Toward the Successes of Dhammakāya Temple by the Critics

3.4.1 A Big Step Toward the World Dhamma Propagation Becoming A Big Headline

On 22nd April 2000 was the first grand inauguration day of the Mahā Dhammakāya Cetiya. The main purpose of this huge construction project is the Cetiya

⁹⁷ Danna Marie Cook, op.cit., p.35

⁹⁸ Rory Mackenzie, op.cit., p.72

⁹⁹ Rory Mackenzie, op.cit., p.63

will serve as the focus of faith for Buddhists all over the world. As all know that the Abbot Dhammajayo does not only focus his teachings upon Dhammakāya Meditation Technique, but also seek to organize mass religious activities with a view to promoting and spreading Buddhism on both national and international levels.

Regarding this Cetiya, one aspect cannot be omitted to be pointed out is, apart from the fact that Dhammakāya Meditation Technique itself having been a pivot of public controversy, the construction of Dhammakāya Cetiya project was abreast controversial. Let's have a fresh look at this construction project without blinkers for some close scrutiny in order to broaden our horizons:

The physical form of Dhammakāya Cetiya represents the Triple Gem (The Buddha, The Dhamma, The Sangha): the dome part enshrining Buddha statues, the base of the dome symbolizing the spread of Dhamma and the outer terrace providing a sanctuary for up to 10,000 monks and novices and the grounds surrounding the Cetiya providing the area up to 1 million lay people to sit for meditation.

Dhammakāya Cetiya is a symbol of world peace through inner peace. Built entirely on international public contributions, it is also the embodiment of unity and love for humankind. This dome-shaped Cetiya is the hallmark of what has become the largest venue for mass meditation and prayers for Buddhists and peace-loving people of the world. The design has been likened to a grand stadium or even seem like a UFO (abbreviation for 'Unidentified Flying Object'), rather than resembling a traditional Thai temple.

In general, building a cetiya for the homage to the Buddha or His Teachings (Dhamma) is acceptable to most Westerner and Thai scholars as the **Mahāparinibbāna Sutta** relates that '... so Vasetthas, should they treat the remains of the Tathagata. At the four cross roads a cairn (stupa) should be erected to the Tathagata. And whosoever shall there place garlands of perfumes or paint, or make salutation there or become in its presence calm in heart –that shall long be to them for a profit and a joy.'

Therefore, it is clear that the building and the Puja (Homage) of the Stupa is then doctrinally unproblematic.

Another statement of the Buddha appeared in a Buddhist literature known as chronicles or 'Vamsa' form the idea advocating pilgrimages to the sites of the key events in the life of the Buddha where the relics of the Buddha's remains or that of its items are enshrined. From this statement, it is thus obvious that the Dhammakāya Cetiya is not something alien to the traditional Buddhist concept as it is a place where not only the relics but also other items related to Buddhism are housed. However it is because of the high cost of grand scale construction of the Cetiya causing people outside the Dhammakāya member-network community (grum-kalayanamittara) casted doubt over whether the Temple has become too materialistic.

In the standpoint of a Thai critic: S. Sivarakas about the Temple as '... Dhammakāya is like a cult-like practice.' For Tang, E.¹⁰⁰ in his article published in The Strait Times, May 22, 1999, he regards the Dhammakāya Cetiya as 'a luxurious meditation retreat with world-class facilities for thousands of worshippers.'

¹⁰⁰ Tang, E., Article published in **The Strait Times**, May 22, 1999, p.41

In the facet of Puja (Homage) in Pāli Canon:¹⁰¹ states two types as: ‘Amis-puja’ and ‘Patipatti-puja’; when the Lord Buddha was alive, he praised the later as being superior. Therefore a question is raised of how necessary to financially invest for an expensive cetiya for homage.

According to Gombrich’s research studies of ‘The Consecration of the Images’ concluded that ‘... although practitioners accept that the Buddha is dead, they feel an ‘emotional’ response to him and need his assistance.’ That is why, as Gombrich explained: ‘... practitioners ‘materialistically’ worship the Buddha as ‘they are not strong enough and misunderstand the Buddhist teachings’¹⁰²

The **Mahāparinibbāna Sutta** suggests two features of ‘appropriate puja’. Firstly, ‘puja’, as a means to recollect the Buddha, is a meditation practice in trying to emulate Him and His qualities. The practitioners are ‘inspired’ and reminded of a soteriological goal. Secondly, ‘puja’ as paying homage to the Buddha is a ‘meritorious activity’. This practice helps transform the mental state of the individual and in turn leads to progress in the spiritual path and future rebirth.

There are other several interesting arguments about the Dhammakāya Cetiya. Jeffrey S. Bowers¹⁰³ viewed Dhammakāya Cetiya in another angle that ‘... the point is the Dhammakāya Chedi, more than adequately illustrates how the temple blends traditional symbols with their own modern and intellectual-sounding teachings to establish in their followers a strong sense of faith in and belonging to the temple.’

In an interview of Donald K. Swearer by Phibul Choompolpaisal for his thesis,¹⁰⁴ Swearer’s opinion about the Dhammakāya Cetiya is ‘... Symbolically, e.g. architecture, Buddha image, Phra Chedi, as well as doctrinally and in practice it is striving for a universal expression of Buddhism. In this regard, the movement is both nationalistic but also universalistic.’

Danna Marie Cook’s thesis¹⁰⁵ said about Dhammakāya Cetiya as ‘... in its mission to attain world peace through inner peace, to accomplish this, it will provide a venue for a historic gathering of one million people meditating at the same time. The power of such merit being accumulated by so many at the same time is believed to be tangible to spreading goodness outward.’

In the same page, Cook¹⁰⁶ saw the physical form of the Dhammakāya Cetiya as ‘...has both a distinctive aesthetic quality and an ultimate purpose in line with the vision and goals of the Dhammakāya movement. Together they serve to create and support a unique and vibrant community of like-minded practitioners.’

¹⁰¹ AN.1.93; DN.11.138

¹⁰² Dr. Kate Crosby: Lecture’s paper on ‘**Devotion to the Buddha in Theravāda**’ 2003, pp.4-7, R. F. Gombrich: **Buddhist Precept and Practice**: Traditional Buddhism in the Rural Highland of Ceylon. 1971, pp.121-168. R. Gombrich. **The Consecration of a Buddhist Image**. The Journal of Asian Studies, 1966, pp.23-36.:10.2307/2051829. Note: (Dr. K. Crosby is the supervisor –with co-supervisor: Dr. C. Zene for the MA-thesis of Mr. Phibul Choompolpaisal: **Materialism or Religious Practice? An Application of the Debate between Gadamer’s and Habermas’ Hermeneutics to a Study of Phra Dhammakāya Temple: the Stupa and its Interpretations**’ the Study of Religious of the school of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2003)

¹⁰³ Jeffrey S. Bowers, op.cit., p.9

¹⁰⁴ Phibul Choompolpaisal, op.cit., p.40

¹⁰⁵ Danna Marie Cook, op.cit., p.30

¹⁰⁶ Danna Marie Cook, op.cit., p.30

Phibul Choompolpaisal in his thesis¹⁰⁷ viewed the Dhammakāya Cetiya as ‘... the religious puja of the Stupa can be seen as helping establish a firm connection between the physical Stupa and the ‘mental religious’ practice of ‘insiders’ –when one ‘religiously’ puja(s) a sacred site, there is an ‘ongoing’ interplay between one’s inward feelings of ‘recollection of the Buddha’s qualities’ and the ‘outward expressions’ of ‘deep admiration’.’

In a book title: **Karani Thammakai or ‘The Dhammakāya Case’** written by Venerable Dhammapitaka (Prayudh Payutto)¹⁰⁸, towards the end of the book, he answers series of questions about the Temple. The author points out that religion has to do with creating people of high moral character rather than building grand buildings. Later, he engages with the movement’s belief that ‘... Mahā Dhammakāya pagoda (cetiya), and indeed, the buildings that make up the temple complex, will become the eighth ‘Wonder of the World’. He pointed out that ‘... the ‘Wonders’ did not reduce human attachments! Anyway, the modern wonders of the world are well known for being small (high-tech inventions) rather than huge buildings.’

It however can be argued that the idea of ‘... the modern wonders of the world are well known for being small (high-tech inventions) rather than huge buildings’ is unnecessary always true because in the present IT age and the futuristic technology innovation, things are unnecessary to go under the concept of smart and small; in the construction field, real estate developers compete to break a new record of building the world’s tallest skyscraper in their country, for example, in Malaysia, the Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur were listed the world’s tallest building in 2004. Meanwhile, other countries were attempting to reach a new high but not until in 2010, United Arab Emirates claimed the victory of the attempt in listing the Burj Khalifa in Dubai to be the world’s new tallest building.

To highlight the Dhammakāya Cetiya with the brand: ‘the eighth World Wonder’, might not help reduce people’s attachment; however, in another facet, it can more likely be viewed as a savvy PR strategy of Dhammakāya Temple in creating widely public sensation to draw people to visit the venue and participate in the religious events held at the site which one of the emphasized activities is usually meditation practice. Thus the true essence of this propagation-based tactic is to make the Cetiya become a vibration to lead people back into Buddhism and create a Buddhist-like peaceful society as the Temple aims to gather one million meditators to meditate at the same time to generate adequate positive mental energy for the possible world peace and to enable the Temple’s concept ‘World Peace through Inner Peace’ possible. This strategy-based PR approach provides an edge of competitive attraction of followers and a magnet of donation for the Temple.

This world Dhamma vision to spread Dhammakāya Meditation Technique of Dhammakāya Temple is clearly stated in the Temple’s official website: www.Dhammakāya.org 2000-2009 in its webpage: Visitor Zone as ‘... The clean energy generated by a million of purified minds is expected to help purify this world for the shared happiness and of humankind, transforming the negative energy of greed, malice and hatred into forgiveness, compassion and understanding. The power of loving-

¹⁰⁷ Phibul Choompolpaisal, op.cit., p.19

¹⁰⁸ Phra Dhammapitaka (Prayudh Payutto), **Karani Thammakai or ‘The Dhammakāya Case’** (Thailand: Buddhadhamma Foundation, Bangkok, 1998), p.374

kindness that all meditators will share and spread to other people in the entire area, nation, religion and world will help defuse the heat of hostilities and conflicts among fellow human beings elsewhere in this shared planet.’

3.4.2 The Statement From the Most-Criticized Abbot About the Modern Dhammakāya Buddhist Complex -World Dhammakāya Center

Venerable Dhammajayo once talked at length about the real objectives of his extra land expansion and continuous construction of the increasing size of Dhamma-preaching halls along with other magnificent structures such as the 1 Km. x 1 Km. Dhammakāya Cetiya that make up the Dhammakāya Buddhist Complex; his rendered statement seemed as an attempt to squash the criticism made by some fellow monks in the Sangha as well as the Thai critics toward his ambitious plan of empire building; further than that neighboring communities are skeptical about the Temple’s claim of the need to provide the adequate facilities to receive one million Dhammakāya-meditator gathering in the future as for them the vision of one million people coming to make merit at a temple is an unprecedented occurrence; moreover, in these days , unlikely a religious reality phenomenon.

To a substantial extent of pressure and a great deal of pungent criticism on the receiving end, Tawandhamma Foundation was established with the purpose of creating interface communicational channel between the Abbot Dhammajayo and the outside-temple society aiming to address one criticism towards his deliberate attempt to distant himself from the rest. The Foundation’s main responsibility is to publish the collections of his teachings and sayings to open chance to reinvent his image of remote individualist. In regard of the accusation of his ambitious plan, here is what the Venerable has spoken his thought: ¹⁰⁹

‘...Initially, the temple brought the community together to mediate. Later it gained popularity because people with wisdom wanted to test the Dhammakāya’s existence and came to meditate. The desire for knowledge of the Dhammakāya Meditation grew and the number of people coming to the temple expanded. Meditation first took place under trees, then later under tents. When the numbers expanded beyond the tents’ capacity, it was necessary to construct the Catummahārājikā Pavilion which could seat 500 people. It was thought that this was all that was need. It was possible to sit in meditation and teach one subject: how to attain the Dhammakāya.

More people continued to come to the temple so that a pavilion meant for 500 people had to accommodate 5,000. The temple had to rent hundreds of tents and the financial burden became excessive. So, the straw-roofed Meditation Hall was built. It could seat more than 10,000 people and we thought it to be adequate since no other place had 10,000 people sitting in meditation together. But soon 30,000 people came, so it became necessary to rent tents as before. With the original straw-roofed Meditation Hall unable to accommodate the growing community, we began construction on the World Dhammakāya Center. The Center is composed of more than 320 hectares of land. It was believed that this would be enough to welcome people from all over the world who are interested in learning to meditate and in finding true happiness. We have welcomed guests from all nationalities, languages and religions to practice and teach meditation at the Center.’

¹⁰⁹ Tawandhamma Foundation, *Journey2Joy*, op.cit., p.32

In the case of having been accused by his critics of subverting and commercializing the fundamental tenets of Buddhism and creating what is essentially a cult, based more on money than spirituality, Venerable Dhammajayo answers these critics with the idea that Buddhism is open to a wider interpretation than some might like to suggest.

3.4.3 Dhamma Teachings Go Beyond the Frontier with the Arrival of Cutting-edge IT Assistance Viewed as the Materialism Decision

The satellite television channel called DMC (Dhammakāya Media Channel) is established aiming to accelerate Dhamma propagating mission internationally. Via the satellite system, DMC Channel can cover every region of the world and broadcasts 24-hours a day. The DMC TV channel provides a variety of resourceful and creative programs which is suitable for viewers of all ages. In addition, it is translated into a numbers of languages such as English, Chinese, Laos, German, French, Spanish, Japanese, Cambodian, etc. This truly makes DMC a global TV channel.

DMC Channel live-broadcasts every Temple's ceremony including the meditation session. Simultaneously the Temple's website: www.dmc.tv live-net-casts the activity to serve those at business office and on a go to not miss the chance to be part of the event. With the use of the web-based technology, the dmc.tv website keeps all the data files of all Temple's activities in the archive for their site visitors to later review at their convenient time.

Danna Marie Cook said about DMC Channel in her thesis¹¹⁰ as '... There are over 40 Dhammakāya meditation centers worldwide. At these places, large television screens display the DMC for special events. This allows Dhammakāya members to feel connected to the greater Dhammakāya community and feel included in activities at the Dhammakāya temple, which is attempting to become the world's 'Mecca' for Buddhism. Through the DMC, the Dhammakāya movement is able to reach potentially limitless numbers throughout the world.'

In the same thesis, Cook¹¹¹ further opined about this regards as that '... the Dhammakāya movement is extremely adept at utilizing modern technology for its own purposes. This has raised some questions about the appropriateness of monks' involvement in technology-based activities. The opinions are very mixed, even among Dhammakāya proponents.'

Cook¹¹² herself concluded without conclusion that '...since the technology use was to disseminate Buddhist teachings, it became difficult to draw the line between appropriate for the sake of spreading the Buddhist faith, and inappropriate behavior in consideration of monks' vows to remain detached from worldly things.'

¹¹⁰ Danna Marie Cook, op.cit., p.47

¹¹¹ Danna Marie Cook, op.cit., p.50

¹¹² Danna Marie Cook, op.cit., p.51

Venerable Dhammajayo talked about his own television programme live broadcasting daily on DMC channel and simultaneously live netcast on the Temple's website: www.dmc.tv as¹¹³ '... In 2002, The Inner Dreams Kindergarten Programme (thereon will be referred as 'the School') was established to share knowledge with all Dhammakāya members (thereon will be referred as 'student'), knowledge from the Tipitaka (the Buddhist Scriptures), from Khun Yay Acharn, and most importantly, from the Dhammakāya Meditation and also to express gratitude to all those who offer food and necessities to the monastic community. These offerings to the monks and novices provide us with the mental and physical energy for studying Dhamma and maintaining the code of monastic discipline bequeathed by the Lord Buddha.

The Inner Dreams Kindergarten Programme is based on making learning enjoyable. In the early days of the School, students joined the School via telephone. They would pick up the telephone and take delight in listening to stories about the true nature of life. Later, the School spread to the Internet (www.dmc.tv/en). Presently, the School broadcasts globally via satellite television.

Students attend a single class, which is composed of men and women of all ages and religious beliefs, where they watch, meditate, and learn about the Dhamma. Together they accumulate great merit. Through what they learned, some students' lives underwent great transformation, others gradually made adjustments. Hearing about these positive changes, other students, who are less diligent about meditating, become more dedicated. Each student's success encourages the others. This is what invigorates me and gives me the energy to continue teaching.'

Stanley Tambiah¹¹⁴ viewed the advantage of Dhammakāya IT Dhamma broadcasting as '... Teaching disseminated like this will be received uncritically and will serve to ensure that 'the lesser unit is a reproduction and imitation of the larger'

On contrary, Rory Mackenzie¹¹⁵ questioned about the effectiveness of the method of Dhammakāya Dhamma deliverance in term of gaining evangelical success as '... One feature of Wat Phra Dhammakāya's approach is that Dhammakāya meditation is not taught as a Buddhist practice but as a religiously neutral technique suitable for those of all faiths, or none. ... While respecting the movement's desire to introduce non-Buddhists to Dhammakāya meditation without converting them to Buddhism, one wonders if this is the best long-term policy for all concerned.'

Conclusion Remarks:

The above gripping coherent narrative weaves various strands of contributing factors to the success of Dhammakāya Temple, within a close look to all fabulous innovated systematized activities and the ambitious plans of administrative reforms keeping in line to the standard expected by the Temple's educated goers, done by the Temple, in the simple way, they can be grouped in convergence with the concept derived

¹¹³ Tawandhamma Foundation, *Journey2Joy*, op.cit., p.32

¹¹⁴ Stanley Tambiah, *Sangha and Polity in Modern Thailand: An Overview*. In *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Thailand*, 111-133, Chambersburg: Conococheague Associate, Inc., 1978, p.112

¹¹⁵ Rory Mackenzie, *New Buddhist Movements in Thailand: Towards an Understanding of Wat Phra Dhammakāya and Santi Asoke*, (USA: Routledge, 270 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016, 2007) p.72

from the Buddha's Teachings on Patirupadesa-4: How to build the kind of quality temple that can attract people to come and practice the Dhamma at the temple for their own benefit, for the good of the general public, and for Buddhism's growth.

Patirupadesa-4 as applied to Dhammakāya Temple:

1. The Temple: The grounds of Dhammakāya Temple are beautiful, cool, pleasant, clean, and tidy. It is a place that makes people feel comfortable and relaxed.

2. Food: Dhammakāya Temple's refectory prepares food for everyone attending the temple and serves it to them in a speedy fashion. The refectory staff also tends with care and respect to the food offered to the monks by the laypeople.

3. People: Dhammakāya Temple's personnel are well-trained, courteous, friendly, and service-minded. They study the Dhamma and practice meditation regularly. They are the model of goodness and decency.

4. Dhamma: When people attend Dhammakāya Temple, they must not return home empty-handed in that they must have the opportunity to study the Dhamma in such a way that they can apply it in their daily life. Dhamma courses are made easy to be accessible through choices of IT technology: TV, Internet, Mobile, etc.

It is, however, important to be fully aware of being lured by the passionate eloquence about things the Temple has attractively re-engineered and make them a pleasure to look at, into assuming that they are the essence to the Temple's successful factors instead of seeing them being merely on the periphery of the core value, as the matter of fact all such things are parts of the 'action plan' mapped out by experienced hands to play the role of building the precursors enabling Dhammakāya Meditation conveniently accessed, widely known, practiced and accepted... and successfully rocketing to popularity.

The truth is Dhammakāya Meditation is the real gem; it is the process to obtain the knowledge of Vijjā Dhammakāya and because of Vijjā Dhammakāya, Venerable Candasarō, Venerable Dhammajayo and Khun Yay Chandra had completely transformed to be the charismatic meditation masters serving as an inducement for others to emulate the achievement as such transformation had been nothing short of a miracle. Dhammakāya Meditation effectiveness proven by experiment strongly inspired the first group of Khun Yay Chandra's disciples to disseminate the know-how, followed by being forced by situation to start a new temple as a center of operation. Dhammakāya Meditation brought the success first to the life of Venerable Dhammajayo then to Dhammakāya Temple. Dhammakāya Temple, if without Dhammakāya Meditation, is no different from being a general Theravada Buddhist monastery under the supervision of Mahānikāya sect.