

Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 Background and Significance of Study

Thai Buddhism is based upon the Theravada tradition after the original teachings of the Buddha and his foremost disciples as recorded in the Pāli Tipiṭaka. Thais have followed the Buddha's teachings for many centuries. Thais also welcome foreigners to come and practice the Buddha's teachings. The supportive environments of Thai temples or meditation centres provide inspiration and opportunity for spiritual development. At the present time, many foreigners come to practice meditation in Thailand. Entering a temple for a meditation retreat is an increasingly popular activity for foreigners, and many temples across the country have developed programs specifically for international practitioners.

“The Vipassanā Meditation Center”, Wat Mahādhātu (Section 5), Bangkok offers a meditation class for international practitioners everyday called “The Insight Meditation Practice Program for a Good Life”. Group retreats can also be arranged by giving information at least two or three weeks prior the event. The vipassanā at Wat Mahādhātu uses techniques similar to those taught by Mahasi Sāyadaw and are based on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness described in the Mahā satipaṭṭhānasutta.¹ Concentration is developed on the rise and fall of the abdomen, then, awareness is directed at the body and sensations. Many foreign visitors per year take courses at this centre for meditation studies, and the number continues to grow. At the present time, many participants attended the retreat from different countries such as Canada,

¹ Pataraporn Sirikanchana, **A Guide to Buddhist Monasteries Meditation Centers in Thailand**, (Bangkok: Printing House of Thammasat University, 2004), p.21.

Germany, UK, US, Australia, France, Belgium, Norway, Russia, Korea, Japan, and so on².

“The Middle Way Meditation Retreat” at Suan Pa Himmawan is located near Phu Ruea National Park in the Northeastern province of Loei, Thailand. This centre has been placed in the top three of all international retreats worldwide.³ The meditation teaching of this centre uses Samatha-Vipassanā meditation following the Dhammakāya approach originated from Phramongkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro), the great late abbot of Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen. Its objectives are to develop individual meditation skill and to learn about meditation and self development. This meditation centre offers seven day retreats. It has had more than 720 participants from 71 countries in Europe, Asia, America, Africa and Oceania.⁴

Suan Mokkh: the Garden of Liberation in Surat Thani province has a meditation centre called “International Dhamma Hermitage (IDH)”, founded by the late Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu in 1989. The purpose of this Dhamma practice is to get free of the tyranny of the ego in order to live peacefully and usefully. The temple offers 10 day retreats for foreigners in English beginning on the first day of every month. About 100-150 people attend each monthly retreat. The course offered two interrelated subjects: Dhamma and meditation. Meditation instruction focuses on mindfulness of breathing (ānāpānasati).

Another temple that attracts some foreigners is Wat Pah Nanachat (WPN), the “International Forest Monastery” in Warin Chamrap, Ubon Ratchathani province, in the Northeast of Thailand. It was established by Venerable Ajahn Chah in 1975 as a place where his foreign disciples could live and learn the Buddha's teachings.

² Wat Mahādhātu (Section 5), **Wat Mahādhātu (Section 5) Meditation Retreat Report**, (Bangkok: Wat Mahādhātu. 2008), p.1.

³ Travel+ Leisure. **10 Top Meditation Retreats**. (on-line). source: <http://www.travelandleisure.com> (1 January 2010).

⁴ The Middle Way Retreat, **The Middle Way Meditation Retreat Summary Report**, (Patumthani: Wat Phra Dhammakaya, 2009), p.3.

Dhamma-Vinaya, as the Buddha referred to his teaching, includes a detailed code of conduct for Buddhist monastic followers.⁵ At this temple, no single meditation technique predominates. One approach is creative, using a variety of appropriate meditations and reflections from the Theravada tradition. Mindfulness of breathing forms the basis for the most formal meditation. This temple is primarily a training centre for foreigners who are preparing to take ordination. An interested layman first becomes a “pakhaow” or an anāgārika who wears a white robe and lives a homeless life. After three months, he can go forth as a novice and wear a yellow robe. Full ordination (upasampadā) can take place about one year later.⁶ In order to enter the meditation retreat here, one has to learn basic meditation before one comes because there is no formal instruction for beginners although the teacher will answer questions from participants.

According to the above information, there are many famous meditation retreats for foreigners in Thailand. However, there is no standard model for the retreats. Furthermore, there is no research about it, so this dissertation studies and analyzes in-depth the meditation programs for foreigners using four case studies: Wat Mahādhātu (Section 5), Bangkok, the Middle Way Meditation Retreat in Phu Ruea, the International Dhamma Hermitage (IDH) of Suan Mokkh, and Wat Pah Nanachat in Ubon Ratchathani. Subsequently, a suitable model for each retreat will be developed.

⁵ Wat Pah Nanachat (WPN), **The International Forest Monastery**. (on-line). source: <http://www.watpahnachat.org/index.php> (3 December 2010).

⁶ Pataraporn Sirikanchana, **A Guide to Buddhist Monasteries Meditation Centers in Thailand**, p 72.

1.2 Objectives of the Research

The objectives of this research are as follows:

- 1.2.1 To study Theravada Buddhist meditation.
- 1.2.2 To study Buddhist meditation retreats for foreigners in Thailand.
- 1.2.3 To develop a suitable model of Buddhist meditation retreats for foreigners in Thailand.

1.3. Statement of Problems

- 1.3.1 What is Theravada Buddhist meditation?
- 1.3.2 How do Buddhist meditation retreats for foreigners in Thailand function and what difficulties do they face?
- 1.3.3 What is the most appropriate model for Buddhist meditation retreats for foreigners in Thailand?

1.4 Scopes of Research

The scopes of this research are as follows:

- 1.4.1 The contents regarding meditation practice in this thesis are based on the Theravada Buddhist texts such as the Tipiṭaka, Visuddhimagga and so forth.
- 1.4.2 The contents regarding Buddhist meditation retreats for foreigners in Thailand are based on case studies of:
 - 1.4.2.1 The Vipassanā Meditation Center, Wat Mahādhātu
(Section 5), Bangkok,
 - 1.4.2.2 The Middle Way Meditation Retreat at Suan Pa Himmawan
(Phu Ruea), Loei province,
 - 1.4.2.3 The International Dhamma Hermitage (IDH), Suan Mokkh,
Surat Thani province,

1.4.2.4 Wat Pah Nanachat (WPN), the International Forest Monastery, Warin Chamrap, Ubon Ratchathani province.

1.4.3 The SWOT analysis of the Buddhist meditation retreats are done only for physical analysis such as accommodation, location, food and refreshments, and so forth. It will not be used for spiritual analysis.

1.4.4 Guideline Models for meditation retreats are focused on factors favourable for meditation practice (sappāya) and meditation retreat schedule. The models are not focused only one principle and meditation method.

1.5. Definition of Terms Used in the Research

1.5.1 “Abode” refers to all buildings and design of the centre. This includes sleeping quarters, meditation hall, cafeterias, gardens and so on.

1.5.2 “Foreigners” means people from countries other than Thailand; people of states or nations other than Thailand.

1.5.3 “Meditation Teaching” means the overall meditational framework used in meditation retreats that the temple or the retreat centre uses to teach the participants, such as mindfulness of breathing (ānāpānasati), light kasiṇa (āloka-kasiṇa), and the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (satipaṭṭhāna).

1.5.4 “Meditation Retreat” means the meditation retreat at Wat Mahādhātu (Section 5), the Middle Way Meditation Retreat, International Dhamma Hermitage (IDH), and meditation or ordination at Wat Pah Nanachat.

1.5.5 “The Middle Way Meditation Retreat” means the Middle Way Meditation Retreat program for Foreigners (beginners class) at Suan Pa Himmawan (Phu Ruea), Loei province, Thailand.

1.5.6 “SWOT Analysis” is abbreviation for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It is applied for physical analysis such as accommodation, location, food and refreshments of the meditation retreats.

1.5.7 “Suitable Buddhist Meditation Retreats” means appropriate meditation retreats centres or temple for meditation practice.

1.5.8. “Wat Mahādhātu (Section 5)” means “The Vipassanā Meditation Center” (V.M.C), Wat Mahādhātu Yuvaratransarit Ratchaworamahawihan (Section 5), Bangkok.

1.6. Review of the Related Literature

Many texts and much research deal with Buddhist meditation and meditation retreats for foreigners as indicated below.

Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa, in the “Path of Purification” (Visuddhimagga) (1956), (translated by Ñāṇamoli Bhikkhu) explains the tranquillity and the insight meditation very clearly. The 40 subjects of meditation⁷ for tranquillity meditation which comply of the ten meditation Devices (kasiṇa), the ten kinds of Foulness (asubha), the ten kinds of Recollections (anussati), the Divine Abidings (brahmavihāras), the Perception of repulsiveness in nutriment (āhāre paṭikūlasañña), Defining of the elements (catudhātuvavaṭṭhānam), and the Immaterial States (arupa)⁸ are explained. Then, the Insight meditation (vipassanā), the ground of vipassanā and its objects (ārammaṇas), its roots, and its practice are clarified in this text.

Dhammaratana, U., in “Guide Through Visuddhimagga” (1964), outlines the system with reference to the essential points. The same details can be understood without much difficulty. It is with this object in view that this text book has been written to serve as a guide through the Visuddhimagga.⁹ Despite the fact that, the Visuddhimagga uses old and complicated language, the Guide Through Visuddhimagga explains it and makes it easy to understand.

⁷ Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa, **Visuddhimagga: The Path of Purification**, by Ñāṇamoli Bhikkhu, 5th edition, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 199), p. xliii.

⁸ Peter Masefield, (tr.), **Vimānavatthu-aṭṭhakathā: Elucidation of the Intrinsic Meaning so Named the Commentary on the Vimāna Stories**, (Oxford: PTS., 1997), p.133.

⁹ Dhammaratana, U, **Guide Through Visuddhimagga**, (Kandy: The Dushan’s Printers, 1964), p.1.

Venerable Paravahera Vajiragñāna Mahāthera in his book “Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice” (1987) explains a suitable place for meditation. He explains that the early disciples selected nine types of places for habitation, considering the dwellings most suitable for the practice of meditation such as a forest, the root of a tree, a mountain, a hillside, a rock cave, a cemetery, the depth of a jungle, an open field, or a heap of straw.¹⁰ Furthermore, this book presents the theory of Buddhist meditation and presents the doctrine of meditation in the Tipiṭaka. It also describes the subjects and methods of meditation and gives further explanation of cutting off impediments, the search for a friend or teacher, choice of Kammaṭṭhāna, a suitable place for meditation, time and posture for meditation and so forth. Besides, the insight meditation also is clarified.

“The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the Direct Path to Realization” (2003) by Anālayo explains the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta in discourses and the division in commentarial traditions in connection with actual practice.¹¹ He also gives a practice-related perspective on the teaching and practice of insight meditation. The idea of concentration and the tranquilization effect on the insight progress is the focus of his discussion. It provides valuable insight on the role of internal factors in the progress of insight.

Ñāṇaponika Thera, in his book, “Heart of Buddhist Meditation, a Handbook of Mental Training Based on the Buddha's Way of Mindfulness” (2005) presents the Theravada teachings on meditation, including an explanation of the Mahasatipaṭṭhāna Sutta. The purpose of this book is to draw attention to the far-and deep-reaching significance of the Buddha’s “Way of Mindfulness” (satipaṭṭhāna), and to give initial guidance to an understanding of these teachings and their practical application. In addition, this book is issued in the deep conviction that the systematic cultivation of

¹⁰ Paravahera Vajiragñāna Mahāthera, **Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice**, (Petaling Jaya: P.K.S., 1987), p.113.

¹¹ Anālayo, **Satipaṭṭhāna, the Direct Path to Realization**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2003), p.3.

Right Mindfulness, as taught by the Buddha in his Discourse on satipaṭṭhāna, still provides the most simple and direct, the most thorough and effective, method for training, and developing the mind for its daily tasks and problems as well as for its highest aim: mind's own unshakable deliverance from Greed, hatred, and delusion.¹²

Phramaha Boonna Abhiboonno (Boonsak), in his thesis, "A Comparative Study of Meditation in the Visuddhimagga and the Vimuttimaggā" (2005), found that meditation in both texts has different procedures in practice but the result of the practice focuses on the same direction. Meditation in the Visuddhimagga helps clean the mind and keep the mind in one-pointedness. In the Vimuttimaggā, meditation helps control the change and restlessness of mind in one way and increases the bliss and peace of mind in the other. When it is practiced in full scale, it can help practitioners attain salvation, the highest goal of meditation practice.¹³

Sarah Shaw, in her book, "Buddhist Meditation, An Anthology of Texts from the Pāli Canon", (2006) gives a representative sample of the various kinds of meditation.

She outlines forty different meditation subjects¹⁴ such as, the ten (kasiṇa) practices, the ten kinds of foulness (asubha), the ten kinds of recollections (anussati), the four divine abidings (brahmavihāra), the perception of loathsomeness in food (āhāre paṭikūlasañña), the defining of the four elements (catudhātuvavaṭṭhānam), and the Immaterial States (arūpa).

Alexander Wynne, in his book, "The Origin of Buddhist Meditation", (2007) identifies that Buddha was taught meditation by Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta. He also explains that the Buddha must consequently have been trained in a meditative school whose ideology was provided by the philosophical portions of

¹² Ñāṇaponika Thera, **Heart of Buddhist Meditation, A Handbook of Mental Training Based on the Buddha's Way of Mindfulness**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2005), p.7.

¹³ Phramaha Boonna Abhiboonno (Boonsak), "A Comparative Study of Meditation in the Visuddhimagga and the Vimuttimaggā", **M.A. Thesis**, (Graduate School: Mahamakut Buddhist University, 2005), p. abstract.

¹⁴ Shaw, Sarah, **Buddhist Meditation, an Anthology of Texts from the Pāli Canon**, (New York: Routledge, 2006), p.xii.

early Upanishads. This hypothesis is confirmed in the Parayanavagga, where the Buddha teaches an adapted practice of Alara Kalama's goal to some Brahmins, and appears to be fully conversant with the philosophical presuppositions of early Brahminic meditation. In addition, he argues outlined as follows: the Buddhist list of four formless spheres (space, consciousness, nothingness, neither perception nor non-perception) was inherited from the two teachers of the Bodhisatta; Formless meditation is related to element meditation; therefore element meditation was borrowed from the same non-Buddhist source as was formless meditation, i.e. the milieu of the two teachers; the doctrinal background to element meditation and formless meditation is provided by the list of six 'strata' (dhātu-s); the list of six 'strata' is based on early Brahminic cosmogonies; Brahminic cosmogonies provide the doctrinal background to meditation in early Brahminism, the most basic presupposition of which is the early Brahminic identification of man and cosmos; therefore, element meditation and formless meditation were borrowed from a Brahminic source in which meditation was the practical counterpart of cosmological Speculation; viii) the Brahminic source is probably the two teachers, a fact suggested by the correspondences to the goals of the teachers ('nothingness' and 'neither perception nor non-perception').¹⁵

Pataraporn Sirikanchana, in "A Guide to Buddhist Monasteries and Meditation Centers in Thailand" (2004), explains the details of Wat Mahādhātu (Section 5), Wat Phra Dhammakaya, International Dhamma Hermitage (IDH) of Suan Mokkh, and Wat Pah Nanachat. She presents the main concepts of their meditation teaching. She also reports about living at a temple or a meditation centre, the practicalities of living, the meditation techniques, and she presents the better known temples and monasteries while providing practical information about their activities

¹⁵ Alexander Wynne, in his book, "The Origin of Buddhist Meditation", (New York: Routledge, 2007), p.44.

such as, their address in Thai, the teaching methods, the meditation instructors, daily routine activities, food, accommodation, and other information.¹⁶

Rory Mackenzie, in “New Buddhist Movements in Thailand: Towards an Understanding of Wat Phra Dhammakāya and Santi Asoke” (2007) researched new Buddhist movements which emerged in Thailand in 1970s. He explained about the inception and development of the Wat Phra Dhammakaya movement and also explains the Dhammakaya meditation. In addition, he found that students are confident in the veracity of their models of spiritual purification. He also describes this highly progressive movement as having a strong focus on meditation.¹⁷

Phramaha Narong Cherdsungnoen’s dissertation, “A Study of Sati (Mindfulness) in Buddhism: Theory and Practice in Thai Tradition” (1993), presents a study of mindfulness both in practice and history, starting from early Buddhism in India to early Buddhism in Thailand. The details focus on the rise and development of Satipaṭṭhāna practice in the Thai tradition, from Araññavāsi in Sukhothai, Varatatana in Ayudhya, Ñānasamavara in Early Bangkok Period, and Dhammayuttikanikāya. In addition, this dissertation provides a brief survey of three meditation schools in Thailand: Suan Mokkhabalāram, Chaiya of Buddhādāsa; Vipassanā Meditation Center of Wat Mahādhātu and Wat Nong Pah Pong of Ajahn Chah.¹⁸

Jeffrey Scott Bowers, in his published MA thesis, “Dhammakāya Meditation in Thai Society” (1995), presents the movement and the environment of meditation in Thai society by explaining the Dhammakāya meditation technique, and the modern movements utilizing it to better understand the importance to these movements. The

¹⁶Pataraporn Sirikanchana, **A Guide to Buddhist Monasteries Meditation Centers in Thailand**, p.12.

¹⁷ Mackenzie, Rory, **New Buddhist Movements in Thailand: Towards an Understanding of Wat Phra Dhammakāya and Santi Asoke**, (Oxon: Routledge, 2007), p. x.

¹⁸ Phramaha Narong Cherdsungnoen, “A Study of Sati (Mindfulness) in Buddhism: Theory and Practice in Thai Tradition”, **PhD. Thesis**, (Department of Buddhist Studies: University of Delhi, 1993), p. abstract.

*In present day, he is Assoc. Prof. Dr. Phra Sudhivorayan, Depart of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Nakorn Ratchsima province.

meditation institutes eventually became Wat Phra Dhammakaya and Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām, and, although it shares students with Wat Paknam, they have their own goals and objectives. By examining the technique and the movements, and what they offer to their students, a more complete understanding of Thai society in general can be gained.¹⁹

An Analysis of Phra Mongkol-Thepmunī's (Sodh Chandasaro) Buddha Dhamma Propagation (2003) by Mae Chee Amphai Tansomboon, acknowledges that Phra Mongkol Thepmunī taught directly in accordance with the Buddha's Dhamma-Vinaya. His teaching is an integrated meditation technique starts from concentration meditation (Samatha) then follows by Insight meditation (Vipassanā). He said "To stop is to succeed"²⁰ both in meditation and in everyday life. Stopping the mind still at the centre of body permits climbing a ladder of increasingly pure spiritual bodies and mental states from the mundane through celestial and Noble State (Dhammakāya) to Nibbāna. This was his rediscovery of the Dhammakāya meditation technique which had been long lost to Theravada Buddhism. The method is not detailed in the Tipiṭaka but is simply a meditation technique for practicing the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (satipaṭṭhāna).

"Foreign Buddhist Monks under the Lineage of Phra Ajahn Chah: A Case Study of Wat Pah Nanachat, Ubon Ratchathani" (2002), by Pratibha Pabbhasrawong found that it is Phra Ajahn Chah's emphasis on practice and teaching which attracted foreign monks. They appreciated his methods of teaching, his style and method of investigating and practicing Dhamma. Phra Ajahn Chah motivated them to prove the results of the practice by themselves. The result of his approach was increasing interest, spiritual awakening among foreign monks and the growing number of foreign

¹⁹ Bowers, Jeffery Scott, "Dhammakaya Meditation in Thai society", **M.A. Thesis**, (Graduate School (Thai Studies): Chulalongkorn University, 1995), p.1.

²⁰ Mae Chee Amphai Tansomboon, "An Analysis of Phra Mongkol-Thepmunī's (Sodh Chandasaro) Buddha Dhamma Propagation. **M.A. Thesis**. (Graduate School: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 2003), p iii.

visitors. Wat Pah Nanachat has brought great harmony as well as increased interaction among the monks, lay people and the community. Therefore, the growth of Wat Pah Nanachat is intimately propagating Buddhism in Thailand as well as abroad.²¹

Sudarat Bantaokul, in her thesis, *Vipassanā Ñāna (Insight knowledge): “An Analytical Study of Solasañāna (The Successive stages of Sixteen knowledges) in Theravada Buddhism”* (2003), shows the development of the sixteen stages as an approach to understanding the Buddhist view of reality. The characteristic of intrinsic nature and the three universal characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and non-self are described. The aim of this study is also to distinguish between the knowable and knowledge. It also explains the causes and conditions of the arising and weakening of insight knowledge.²²

Phassarapha Phaisarnariyasap, in her thesis, “Most Venerable Mun Bhuridattha Thera’s Method of Citta Bhāvanā “Buddho” Practice” (2006), studies the practice of meditation in Theravada Buddhism and critically analyzes Venerable Mun Bhuridattha Thera’s method of practice and biography. Venerable Mun Bhuridattha Thera taught his followers Sila, Samādhi and Paññā. His method of teaching consisted of Pariyattisaddhamma, Patipattisaddhamma, and Pativedhasaddhamma. Venerable Mun Bhuridattha and his disciples spawned a lineage spanning three generations of teachers and students, who still practice the method of meditation outlined in the *Mahāsatiṭṭhānasutta* concerning contemplation of the body. In addition, his teachings have had an impact on Thai society and the Buddhist world.

Tassanee Wongsyuen in “An Analytical Study on Meditation Practice with Mindfulness Regarding the Body (*Kāyagatāsati*) in Theravada Buddhism” (2007),

²¹Pratibha Pabbhasrawong, “Foreign Buddhist Monks Under the Lineage of Phra Ajahn Chah: A Case Study of Wat Pah Nanachat, Ubon Ratchathani”, **M.A. Thesis**, (Graduate School: Thammasat University, 2002), p. abstract.

²²Sudarat Bantaokul, “Vipassanā-Ñāna (Insight knowledge): An Analytical Study of Solasañāna (The Successive stages of Sixteen know ledges) in Theravada Buddhism” **M.A. Thesis**, (Graduate School: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 2003), p.2.

mentions that the Buddha taught the subject of meditation on mindfulness relating to the body both to monks and lay people to enable them to train their minds in concentration by focusing on the thirty-two states to realize the non-beauty, the dirt and the changing state of all aggregates.²³ The practice of the subject of meditation on mindfulness relating to body is suitable for the behaviour of every person, both Thais and foreigners.

Phramaha Phaiboon Vipulo (Lurtristhanakul), in “A Study on the Concept of Senāsana in Buddhism” (2008) aims to study senāsana in Buddhism. Its objectives are to find meanings, purposes, factors, and types of senāsana, and to analyze them as the four basic necessities, the items of making merit, and the senāsana for meditation practice of laymen in nowadays. The findings are: there are two types of senāsana in Buddhism. Natural senāsana: for examples, tree shades, forests, and caves. These natural resources are used as meditation practices and Buddhism dissemination places for monks. Constructed senāsana, for examples, monks’ lodgings, chanting halls or Vihara, and crematorium. The public shares in building senāsana for monks in order to provide facilities and help to societies. This is a connection of human beings in sharing their duties.

In addition, the value in supporting Buddhism by public means members of the public shows their making merit, and their contributions through their donations and helps in settings buildings. These actions are led and coordinated by monks with the priority purposes on developing society and also accelerating other developments. The values on observing precepts according to Vinaya means monks learn rules or Vinaya and they do not violate those rules because they observe rules for senāsana laid by Saṅgha as their highest standards, which is specified both in building by themselves or by others. The values on art and culture conservation values, means

²³ Tassanee Wongsyuen, “An Analytical Study on Meditation Practice with Mindfulness Regarding to the Body (Kāyagatāsati) in Theravada Buddhism”, M.A.Thesis, (Graduate School: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 2007), p.iv.

senāsana are always decorated by Buddhist art. They show the noble wisdom, races, culture, ways of life, and Thai art inheritance. The Values related to attainment means senāsana in Buddhism are related to Buddhist attainment. Where they are in quiet, simple, serene, Suan Mokhapalaram, Wat Nhongpaapong, Wat Padaraphirom, they facilitate meditation practice. They lead to the essence of Buddhism, with the true knowledge and practice.²⁴

Phramaha Wichai Yatijayo (Rithwirule), in his thesis, “A Study of Nark Monastery Development to Meditation Centre in the Scripture” (2008) presents the Nark Monastery development model to meditation Centre in the Scripture. This participating qualitative and developed research aims to study the meditation centre Management Model in the Scripture; Tipiṭaka, Atthakatha and other scriptures concerned, to examine the regulation of the monastery under the Saṅgha Committee to become the meditation centre and to explore the management model, components and suitable factors of Nark Monastery to be an effective meditation centre in the Scripture, the Saṅgha (Committee and International Buddhist office of the Buddhism.

The results of study indicate that there are many factors for the success of the development of Nark Monastery Meditation Centre Model as follow: the readiness of Nark Monastery, community, and monks to support a meditation centre. A consideration of development planning should concern abode, resort, food, climate, and understanding of Nark Monastery members (persons); the clarification of meditation curriculum and policy of the Nark Monastery (speech); the plan of Nark Monastery development has to facilitate the scriptures and encourage an efficiency of the monastery’s education management (position); faith and confidence of meditators in and for the Meditation Centre. In addition, the contribution of this study also demonstrates that attitude of people in community around monastery and collaboration with monastery members shows significant support in the success. Additionally, this research can

²⁴ Phramaha Phaiboon Vipulo (Lurtristhanakul), “A Study on the Concept of Senāsana in Buddhism”, **MA thesis**, (Graduate School: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 2008), p. abstract.

conclude that the appropriate meditation centre must merit seven advantageous conditions; suitable abode, suitable resort, suitable speech, suitable person, suitable food, suitable climate and suitable posture, and good friend. Nark Monastery Centre is a success in all characteristics; seven advantageous conditions and good friend in the Scripture, the Saṅgha Committee and International Buddhist office of the Buddhism regulation.²⁵

Pornthep Rungkhunagorn studies “Effects of Ānāpānasati Training on Serenity, Meaning and Purpose in Life, and Genuineness of the Beginning Practitioners in Monthly Ānāpānasati Training Program at International Dhamma Hermitage” (2009). The purpose of this research is to study the effects of ānāpānasati training on serenity, meaning and purpose in life and genuineness of beginning practitioners in the monthly training program at International Dhamma Hermitage, Suan Mokkh, Chaiya, Surat Thani. The research was quasi-experimental research. There were one experimental group and one control group. Research design was pre test-post test control group. The samples were 46 Thai people who were assigned by purposive sampling either to an experimental group and a control group, each group comprising 23 persons. The experimental group participated continuously for seven days in ānāpānasati training in the monthly ānāpānasati training program at international Dhamma Hermitage. The control group did not participate the training and lived normally. The instruments used in this study were the Serenity test, the Meaning and Purpose in Life test, and the Genuineness test. The instruments were given to each of samples before and after training program. The analysis of t-test and analysis of covariance were used for data analysis.

The results indicated that firstly, the post test level of serenity and the post test level of genuineness of the experimental group were higher than their pre test

²⁵ Phramaha Wichai Yatijayo (Rithwirule), “A Study of Nark Monastery Development to Meditation Centre in the Scripture”, **MA thesis**, (Graduate School: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 2008), p. abstract.

level at .05 level of significance. Secondly, the post test level of meaning and purpose in life of the experimental group was not higher than its pre test level at .05 level of significance. Thirdly, the post test level of serenity and the post test level of genuineness of the experimental group were higher than the post test level of the control group at .05 level of significance. Finally, the post test level of meaning and purpose in life of the experimental group was not higher than the post test level of the control group at .05 level of significance.²⁶

Joanna Cook, in her book, “Meditation in Modern Buddhism – Renunciation and Change in Thai Monastic Life” (2010) explains that in contemporary Thai Buddhism, the burgeoning popularity of vipassanā meditation is dramatically impacting the lives of those most closely involved with its practice: monks and Mae Chee (lay nuns) living in monastic communities. She also recommends that for Thais, meditation should become a central focus of life and a way to transform the self. This ethnographic account of a thriving Northern Thai monastery examines meditation, and explores the subjective signification of monastic duties and ascetic practices, drawing on fieldwork done both as an analytical observer and as a full participant in the life of the monastery. In addition, she analyzes the motivation and experience of renouncers, and shows what effect meditative practices have on individuals and on community organization. The particular focus on the status of Mae Chee – part lay, part monastic – provides a fresh insight into social relationships and gender hierarchy within the context of the monastery.²⁷

From the above information, we can see that there is no research about the suitable Buddhist meditation retreats for foreigners in Thailand so this dissertation

²⁶ Pornthep Rungkhunagorn, “Effects of Ānāpānasati Training on Serenity, Meaning and Purpose in Life, and Genuineness of the Beginning Practitioners in Monthly Ānāpānasati Training Program at International Dhamma Hermitage”, **M.A.Thesis** (Graduate School: Chulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 1999), p. abstract.

²⁷ Joanna Cook, **Meditation in Modern Buddhism – Renunciation and Change in Thai Monastic Life**. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp.2-10.

will study the meditation programs for foreigners and propose a suitable model for the meditation retreats. This research is based on the case study of Wat Mahādhātu (Section 5), the Middle Way Meditation Retreat, the International Dhamma Hermitage (IDH) of Suan Mokkh, and Wat Pah Nanachat.

1.7 Research Methodology

The research methodology is shown in the following items.

1.7.1. Gathering data from primary source such as Tipiṭaka and Theravada texts,

1.7.2. Collecting data from (secondary) sources such as academic research, dissertations and thesis, journals, temple journals, newspapers, college and university libraries, CD, and the Internet;

1.7.3 Participants observation by the researcher and in-depth interviews (15 people for each retreat) separated into three groups as: project president (1 person), project coordinators, and staff (4 people) and participants (10 people).

1.7.3.1 Wat Mahādhātu (Section 5) on 1-12 July 2009, and 1-7 March 2010.

1.7.3.2 The Middle Way Meditation Retreat on 23-29 December 2008, and 10-16 May 2009,

1.7.3.3 The International Dhamma Hermitage (IDH), on 1-10 December 2008, 31 October -11 November 2009,

1.7.3.4 Wat Pah Nanachat on 21-23 December 2008, 16-18 May 2009.

1.7.4. Critical analysis of the meditation retreats;

1.7.4.1 Analysis of the meditation teaching

1.7.4.2 Analysis of factors supporting the meditation retreat

1.7.4.3 SWOT analysis: (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats).

1.7.5 Developing a suitable model for the retreats.

1.7.6 Evaluation and feedback of the developed model by seminar with Wat Mahādhātu (Section 5), The Middle Way Meditation Retreat, The International Dhamma Hermitage (IDH), and Wat Pah Nanachat.

1.7.7 Conclusions and recommendations.

The research process is shown in the following chart.

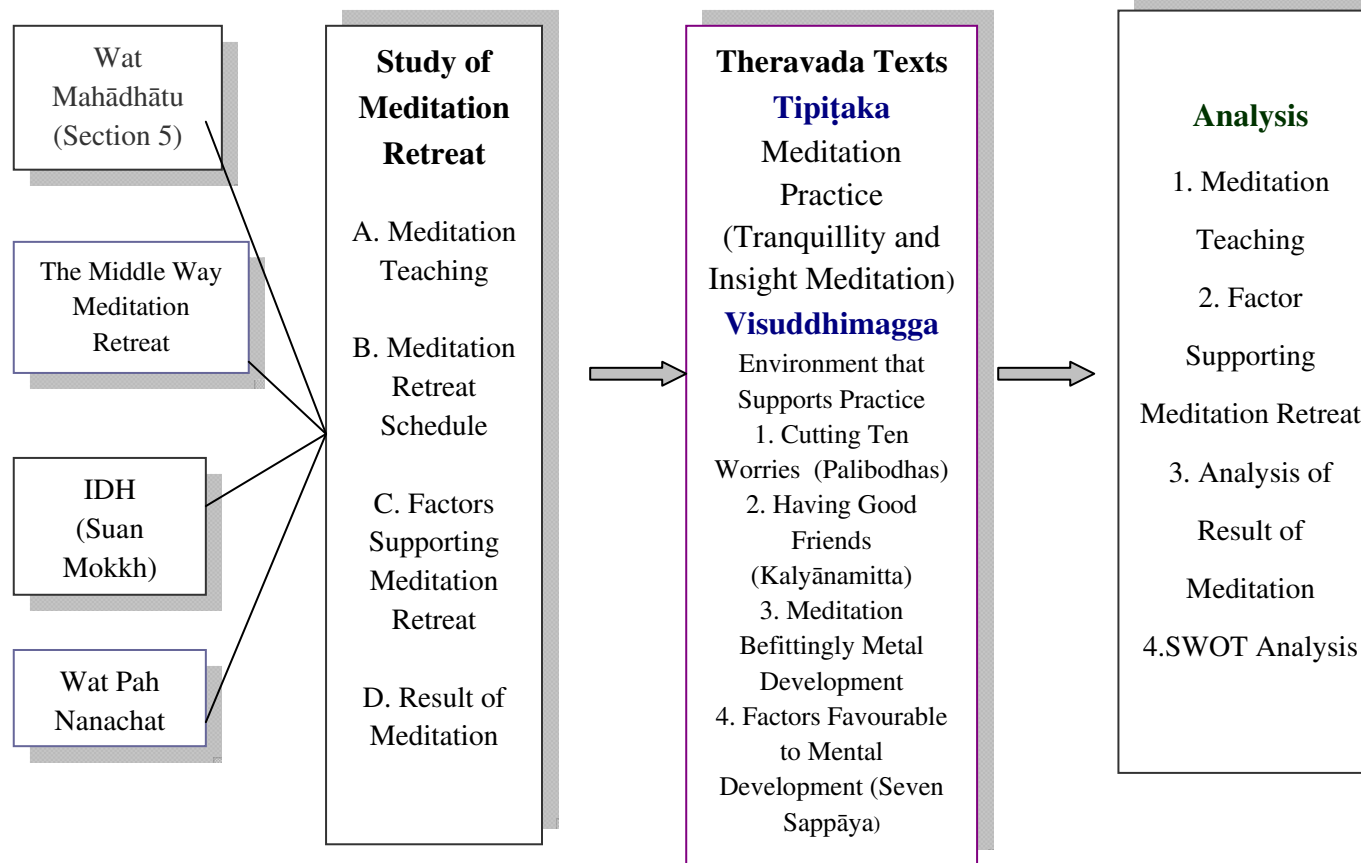


Figure 1: The Research Process

1.8 Expected Benefits

- 1.8.1 Have a clear understanding of Theravada Buddhist meditation.
- 1.8.2 Acknowledge the benefits and the obstacles of Buddhist meditation retreats for foreigners in Thailand.
- 1.8.3 Obtain a suitable model of Buddhist meditation retreats for foreigners in Thailand.