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# THE VIPASSANA MEDITATION TECHNIQUE OF LUANGPOR PRAMOTE: ITS APPLICABILITY AND SPREAD IN THE INFORMATION AGE

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## ABSTRACT

In modern society, meditation has become a key approach for people to cope with stress and achieve self-improvement. This article delves into the adaptability and practical value of Luangpor Pramote Pamojjo's comprehensive meditation in contemporary society. The article first discusses the background and formation of his meditation system. Then it discusses how he characterizes the two temperaments of practitioners in the field of vipassana meditation considering the human condition in an age of digital communication and the intensification of consumerism. This involves the way contemporary people are either distracted or experience an intensification of "craving" (greed). By placing the meditation method of Luangpor Pramote in this contemporary context, this paper demonstrates the appeal of its doctrine to the characteristics of contemporary meditators.

**Keywords:** Vipassana Meditation; Comprehensive Meditation; Luangpor Pramote

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## Vipassana Meditation in Thailand

The modern meditation movement in Thailand can be considered to have started with the introduction of the Mahasi Vipassana meditation (*Vipassanā Bhāvanā*) method from Myanmar.<sup>2</sup> This tradition was founded by Mahasi Sayadaw (1904-1982) and was introduced to Thailand in 1952 by Phimontham (1903-1989), the abbot of Wat Mahathat.<sup>3</sup> Mahasi Sayadaw sent two of his disciples, U Āsabha and U Indavaṃsa, to Thailand, where they established the Mahasi Meditation Center in Thailand.<sup>4</sup> Vipassana meditation emphasizes the cultivation of mindfulness through awareness. Since this introduction various schools focusing on Vipassana and mindfulness have emerged within Thai Buddhism.<sup>5</sup> These groups emphasized the practice of insight meditation and the cultivation of mindfulness within Thai Buddhism, and played a crucial role in shaping the modern Thai meditation movement.<sup>6</sup>

Traditionally, the spiritual practices of monks and laypeople are completely different, for instance, monks focused on the study of the precepts, and the development of concentration and wisdom, while laypeople offered support and protection. But this relationship between the roles of monks and laypeople is changing. Recent studies show that an increasing number of ordinary believers are interested in meditation.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Jakkrit Ployburanin, *The Dynamic Meditation of Luangpor Teean Jittasubho Lineage: Emergence, Proliferation and Significance to Contemporary Thai Society* (PhD diss., Chulalongkorn University, 2019), 20.

<sup>3</sup> Joanna Cook, *Meditation in Modern Buddhism: Renunciation and Change in Thai Monastic Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 26–27.

<sup>4</sup> Zongkun Wen (溫宗堃), “The Rise of the Contemporary Vipassanā Meditation Tradition in Myanmar and the Scholarly Debate on ‘Dry-Insight Practitioners’ (Sukkhavipassaka)” (“當代緬甸內觀修行傳統的興起與巴利學界對於『乾觀者』的諍論”), *Universal Gate Buddhist Journal* (普門學報) 27 (2005): 221–68, accessed July 25, 2024, <https://tpl.ncl.edu.tw/NclService/JournalContentDetail?SysId=A05011208>.

<sup>5</sup> Cook, *Modern Buddhism*, 27.

<sup>6</sup> Ployburanin, *Dynamic Meditation*, 20.

<sup>7</sup> Prakirati Satsut, “Dharma on the Rise: Lay Buddhist Associations and the Traffic in Meditation in Contemporary Thailand,” *Rian Thai: International Journal of Thai Studies* 8 (2015): 176.

Because Vipassana meditation is suitable for both monastics and laypeople to practice, it flourished after its introduction, with various centers quickly established. At the same time, it was integrated with the traditional meditation practices from the northern Thai region. Vipassana meditation deeply inspired Phra Phimolatham,<sup>8</sup> who spared no effort in promoting this meditation method. This inter-sectarian cooperation had transformed the traditional Thai Buddhist practice models centered on the asceticism of the Thai Forest Tradition and had established a practice of Buddhism that is compatible with both monastic institutions and urban life. Against the backdrop of intense competition between the Mahanikaya (*Mahā Nikāya*) and Dhammayut (*Dhammayuttika Nikāya*) sects, the Thai government launched a nationwide campaign to promote Vipassana meditation.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, Five schools of Vipassana meditation eventually emerged: Triple Gem Meditation (*buddho*), Mindfulness of Breathing (*ānāpānasati*), Rising-Falling (inflating-contracting) meditation, Mind (*nāma*) and Body (*rūpa*) meditation, and Dhammakaya Meditation (*sammāarahang*).<sup>10</sup>

## **The Meditation System of the Forest Monks in Northeastern Thailand**

Vipassana meditation originated mainly from Myanmar and spread to Thailand, particularly through the Mahasi Sayadaw method, which is widely practiced by monks and laypeople.<sup>11</sup>

However, the local Thai Forest Monk tradition in northern Thailand has also preserved its meditation practices. The founder of this

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<sup>8</sup> Cook, *Modern Buddhism*, 26-27.

<sup>9</sup> Cook, *Modern Buddhism*, 30.

<sup>10</sup> Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakaram, *A Study Guide for Samatha-Vipassanā Meditation: Based on the Five Meditation Techniques* (Rajchaburi: The National Coordination Center of Provincial Meditation Institutes of Thailand, 2012), vii.

<sup>11</sup> Sāra, Venerable Paññā, Asst. Prof. Dr. Sanu Mahattanadull, and Dr. Veerachart Nimanong. "Insight Meditation in Myanmar and Thailand Based on Venerable Mahāsi Sayadaw's Teaching." *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Universities (JIABU)* 11, no. 1 (2018): 11.

tradition is Ajahn Mun.<sup>12</sup> In Thailand, he is recognized as a key figure in the revival, promotion, and popularization of the Dhutanga (*Dhutāṅga*) practices. Through his lifelong efforts, Dhutanga monks and their mode of practice have become a defining characteristic of local Buddhism, and this continues today.<sup>13</sup> According to the account in the biography, Ajahn Amaro was a practitioner of Vipassana meditation. However, his practice of both Samatha and Vipassana was carried out simultaneously and in parallel<sup>14</sup> The Thai Vipassana meditation tradition emphasizes key practices, including the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), concentration (*Samadhi*), and both sitting and walking meditation, which are integral to the system.<sup>15</sup>

Ajahn Chah was one of the most renowned Thai meditation masters following Ajahn Mun. His meditation practice emphasized observing the phenomena of the body and mind as they truly are, advocating for a direct, simple yet profound way to perceive the essence of things. He taught his disciples to maintain acute awareness of their physical and mental states, neither evading nor resisting any arising feelings or thoughts. Ajahn Chah placed great importance on practicing meditation in daily life, believing that it should not be confined to specific times or places but integrated into every aspect of daily living, including walking, standing, sitting, and lying down. He advocated for cultivating inner peace and wisdom through the awareness of daily behaviors and experiences. Ajahn Chah's teachings attracted a large number of followers, not only in Thailand but also internationally, especially in the United States, where Jack Kornfield and Ajahn Sumedho were trained in this tradition, introducing more people to the Thai Buddhist meditation practices.<sup>16</sup> Ajahn Chah trained many

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<sup>12</sup> Mahā Boowa Ñāṇasampanno, *Venerable Ācariya Mun Bhūridatta Thera: A Spiritual Biography*, trans. B. Dick Sīlaratano (Forest Dhamma Publication, 2010), 444.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>15</sup> Sāra et al., “*Insight Meditation in Myanmar and Thailand*,” 11.

<sup>16</sup> Jack Kornfield, *Modern Buddhist Masters* (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 2007), 35-37.

outstanding disciples who continued to pass on and promote his meditation methods, ensuring the continuation and expansion of his influence.

Another renowned meditation master was Luangpor Teean, the founder of the “Dynamic Meditation” tradition. He is regarded as the originator of this practice. The core of Luangpor Teean’s Dharma lies in “maintaining mindfulness in action”, which means that practitioners can cultivate inner peace and wisdom by continuously focusing on the present moment, whether walking, standing, sitting or lying down.<sup>17</sup> This approach breaks the limitation of traditional meditation being confined to specific occasions or postures, enabling ordinary people to practice at any time and anywhere. His teachings have not only had a profound impact on Thailand but have also gradually spread around the world.

### **Luangpor Pramote’s Background**

Luangpor Pramote is a master who has significantly advanced the large-scale “Vipassana Awakening Movement” in contemporary Thai Buddhism. Born in 1952 in the central Thai province of Ayutthaya, he began his spiritual practice at the age of seven under the guidance of his father, learning the “Samatha Meditation” from the meditation master Ajahn Lee (1907-1961), which involves breath meditation and recitation of the Buddha’s name.<sup>18</sup> After obtaining a master’s degree in Political Science from Chulalongkorn University, he worked in the Thai government starting in 1975. In early 1982, he visited Luangpu Dune in Surin Province and began studying “Vipassana Meditation.” After Luangpu Dune’s passing, he studied with several other meditation masters, including Ajahn Po (1921-1999), Ajahn Thate (1902-1994), Ajahn Sin (1909-1992), Ajahn Boonjan, Ajahn Suwa (1919-2002), and sought advice from Ajahn Mahaboowa (1913-2011). These teachers all followed the forest meditation system of Ajahn Mun (1870-1949). Luangpu Pramote is also a close friend of Elder Kankorn (1936-2014) and Luangpor Khamphong, who are associated

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<sup>17</sup> Jakkrit Ployburanin, *Dynamic Meditation*, 39.

<sup>18</sup> *Dhamma End to Suffering*, accessed May 2, 2025, <https://www.dhammaendtosuffering.org>.

with the Luangpor Dune meditation system. All these teachers emphasize mindfulness as the core of their practice. Following Ajahn Po's advice, he began teaching as a layperson in 1983. On June 30, 2001, at the age of 49, he ordained as a monk at Bodhivamsa Monastery in Surin Province. After six years of monkhood, he began regularly teaching meditation at the "Peaceful Dhamma Garden" in Chonburi Province.<sup>19</sup> Although he studied with many teachers, he considers Luangpu Dune as his primary teacher.<sup>20</sup> Luangpu Dune, from the northeastern region of Thailand, is a forest monk whose teachings are a continuation of Ajahn Mun's tradition, which is well-known in the forest monk tradition of Ajahn Mun.<sup>21</sup>

Luangpor Pramote's major works include *Introduction to Meditation*, *The Practice of Direct Liberation*, *The Path to Enlightenment*, *The Light of the Dharma*, *The Only Way*, *The Path to Liberation*, and *The Core Teachings of Luangpu Dune*. Additionally, his book *The Key to Alleviating Suffering* is available in Chinese, published by China Religious Culture Publisher.

## The Temperaments of Practitioners in Contemporary Society

According to the Visuddhimagga, there are actually fourteen categories of temperaments, but according to Buddhaghosa, they can be summarized as six.<sup>22</sup> These are the six factors that determine the strength and weakness of the forces at the time of karmic formation. For example, when a person accumulates the karmic force that leads to rebirth, if the force of greed is strong and the force of non-greed is weak,

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<sup>19</sup> Venerable Pramote, "The Path to Liberation (1): Let's Have a Chat [我們先聊聊]," trans. Lin Chong'an, *Insight* 106 (2014): 15–17, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://www.anshin999.tw/forest/forest/magazine/106.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> Luang Por Pramote Pamojjo, *A Meditator's Guide*, trans. Jess Peter Koffman, ed. Phra Korakot Kittisobhaṇo and Jess Peter Koffman (2009–2010), 61, accessed April 16, 2025, [https://www.shineling.org/cloud-library-en/#flipbook-df\\_15768/1/](https://www.shineling.org/cloud-library-en/#flipbook-df_15768/1/).

<sup>21</sup> Luangpor Pramote, "Teaching on Meditation," *YouTube video*, August 25, 2024, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1xZwq\\_7R1t4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1xZwq_7R1t4).

<sup>22</sup> Buddhaghosa, *Path of Purification*, 96.

then the weaker force of non-greed cannot overcome greed. If the forces of non-hatred and non-delusion are strong, they can overcome hatred and delusion. So, a person, even though they have a tendency towards greed, can have a gentle and calm temperament and possess a fleeting understanding like lightning.<sup>23</sup> To judge what kind of temperament a practitioner belongs to, one can observe the posture, the action, eating, seeing and other behavioral states.<sup>24</sup>

Buddhism does not hold that the intensity of such ‘proclivities’ remains constant in a person. For instance, the *Abhidharmakośa-Bhāṣya* analyzes that afflictions intensify or adhere as the environment and mental state change. The term used here is *anuśayana* (grows or adheres).<sup>25</sup> The English translation does not precisely present this complexity. If we combine the original Chinese text,<sup>26</sup> we will find that the ‘proclivity’ is constantly strengthened by the changes in the environment. For instance, an environment that promotes greed will make greed stronger, which also intensifies annoyance. Therefore, under a certain environment that strongly promotes certain tendencies, people will correspondingly exhibit some common characteristics.

Due to being in a highly developed commodity and information society, modern-day meditators cannot be compared with those of the last century. We are now consumers of information. Due to the popularity of the Internet and mobile phones, the gap between urban and rural areas in terms of the amount of information they access is getting smaller and smaller. From the perspective of communication studies, this exactly confirms the “global village” concept proposed by Marshall McLuhan.<sup>27</sup> This has led

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 99-101.

<sup>25</sup> Gelong Lodro Sangpo, trans., *Abhidharmakośa-Bhāṣya of Vasubandhu: The Treasury of the Abhidharma and its (Auto) Commentary*, vol. 3 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2012), 1687–88.

<sup>26</sup> 《阿毘達磨俱舍論》卷19, 〈分別睡眠品〉, T29, no. 1558, p. 102b21-c12, CBETA 2025.R1.

<sup>27</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 93.

to a universal decline in attention spans, with resulting distraction. The average focus duration has dropped to 8 seconds. This overstimulation of the mind leads to the need for meditation practices appropriate for this speculative temperament (*vitakkacariyā*, *Visuddhimagga* [Vism. III, 74]).<sup>28</sup> Also, global consumerist ideology has become pervasive. This trend leads to a unhealthy focus on gratifying the body and exacerbates the proliferation of greedy temperament (*rāgacariyā*, Vism. III, 74).<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, escalating societal pressures are evident. Data from the Gallup Report indicates an annual average increase of 14% in workplace stress indices,<sup>30</sup> a phenomenon that potentially activates the hating temperament (*dosacariyā*, Vism. III, 74).<sup>31</sup>

Within the six temperamental categories (*carita*) expounded in the *Visuddhimagga*: the faithful temperament aligns with the greedy temperament (*mohacariyā* Vism. III, 75); the intelligent temperament (*buddhicariyā*) correlates with the hating temperament (*dosacariyā*, Vism. III, 76); and the speculative temperament corresponds to the deluded temperament (*mohacariyā*, Vism. III, 77).<sup>32</sup>

Traditional meditation often tries to distinguish the temperament of the meditator to determine the suitable meditation ‘subject’ for him to practice. Instead of the six temperaments in the *Visuddhimagga*, Luangpor Pramote believes that for Vipassana meditators, it is only necessary to distinguish between two types, namely Craving temperament (*taṇhā-carita*) and View temperament (*ditthi-carita*).<sup>33</sup> On this basis, we can examine the behavior of people in the current society. Because the most

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<sup>28</sup> Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa, *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)*, trans. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, 4th ed. (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2010), 96.

<sup>29</sup> Buddhaghosa, *Path of Purification*, 96.

<sup>30</sup> Gallup, *State of the Global Workplace 2023*, 27.

<sup>31</sup> Buddhaghosa, *Path of Purification*, 97.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Luangpor Pramote Pamojjo, *Words of Wisdom*, comp. and trans. Luangpor Pramote Pamojjo’s followers (Bangkok: Prima Publishing Company Limited, 2016), 64–65, [https://www.shineling.org/cloud-library-en/#flipbook-df\\_15859/1/](https://www.shineling.org/cloud-library-en/#flipbook-df_15859/1/).

devoted followers of Ven. Luangpor Pramote are not limited to Thailand, many participants come from China and Southeast Asia and the West.

It's hard to say that it is completely in line with the most subtle temperaments of people in a certain region. However, meditation addresses the common problems of people. And, in our commodity society and digital society, the problems faced by people of different ethnic groups and regions are more or less the same. As mentioned above, the concept of the global village is not only reflected in the close connection among people from all over the world, but also in the convergence of their temperaments in some respects. Of course, the two temperaments proposed by Luangpor Pramote is not a rejection of the six temperaments of Samatha meditation. This is only in reference to the practice of Vipassana meditation. It is only on this basis that we can consider the contribution of Luangpor Pramote in terms of the temperaments of the contemporary human beings. But before discussing its value, let's first explore the characteristics of his meditation.

### **Characteristics of Luangpor Pramote's Meditation**

Luangpor Pramote strives to respect the Buddhist tradition and make full use of modern digital tools to create a layered online and offline community for learning Buddhism. His meditation is completely based on the meditation system of forest monks in northern Thailand and then absorbs the insight meditation from the Burmese tradition and the Chinese Zen tradition to form a unique meditation system.

### **The Influence of the Forest Monks Tradition in Thailand**

From the previous discussion on the lineage, it is clearly shown that Luangpor Paem was a disciple of many of Luangpor Mun's students, with Luangpor Dun being his most direct teacher. Ajahn Mun learned the method of maintaining inner calm by repeating the name of the Buddha: internally repeating "buddho." This method is also advocated by Luangpor Pramote, who teaches inhaling while reciting "Bud" and exhaling while

reciting “Dho.”<sup>34</sup> This practice of concentration clearly follows the tradition of Ajahn Mun. In his teachings, Luangpor Pramote particularly emphasizes the importance of maintaining precepts, which is evidently influenced by the Dhammayuttika tradition, as previously mentioned, where monks found that strict adherence to the precepts significantly aids in meditation. Therefore, we can consider Luangpor Pramote to follow a path that combines the Dhammayuttika tradition with the Lao tradition (Northern Thai Forest Monastic Tradition). Thus, the “Dhammayuttika tradition” has diverged into two paths: one focusing on the study of the Pali Canon, mostly producing scholarly monks, and the other focusing on meditation, resulting in many world-renowned meditation masters. This is particularly evident in Luangpor Pramote’s teacher, Luangpor Dune. According to Kamala, during the 1919 rainy season retreat, Luangpor Dune began listening to Ajahn Mun’s sermons. Later, he decided to study the scriptures at Wat Kau but found his interest lay not in academics but in meditation. After the rainy season ended, he returned to the life of an ascetic.<sup>35</sup> He had studied under numerous renowned masters within the forest monk tradition, including Luang Pu Dune Atulo, Luang Pu Thate, Luang Ta Maha Bua, Luangpor Phut, Phra Ajarn Boonchan, and Luang Pu Suwat, among others. These teachers placed great emphasis on the rigorous practice of right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*).<sup>36</sup> And the teachers he followed were all from the Forest Meditation System of northern Thailand.

***The core of meditation is to cultivate mindfulness.***

Regarding liberation, the two Buddhist meditation paths leading to deliverance are the vehicle of serenity (*samathayāna*) and the vehicle of insight (*vipassanāyāna*).<sup>37</sup> In Buddhism, the path to liberation aims to transcend the cycle of birth and death. There are at least two paths

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<sup>34</sup> Pamojjo, *A Meditator’s Guide*, 61.

<sup>35</sup> Tiyanich Kamala, *Forest Recollections: Wandering Monks in Twentieth Century Thailand* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 63.

<sup>36</sup> Pamojjo, *A Meditator’s Guide*, 35-36.

<sup>37</sup> Pamojjo, *A Meditator’s Guide*, 6.

to achieve liberation. The first is the “Eight Liberations” path, which corresponds to “liberation of the mind”; the second is the “Path of Dependent Cessation,” which corresponds to “liberation through wisdom”.<sup>38</sup> The insight and wisdom liberation mentioned here refer to the practice of Vipassanā, which emphasizes the development of awareness and mindfulness. Vipassanā is a profound understanding of the objective nature of psychological phenomena, guiding us to continually reflect on the true nature of phenomena. It is based on the three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*). Correct understanding and practice of Vipassanā aim to fully grasp the true nature of phenomena, thereby ending suffering.<sup>39</sup> Just as Luangpor Pramote said, we must engage in the practice of Vipassana to understand the reality of the body and mind that we identify as our own. Genuine freedom and the cessation of suffering do not come from attempting to keep the mind continuously happy or at peace, but rather from recognizing the nature of the body and mind as impermanent, filled with dissatisfaction, and not belonging to us, ultimately leading to release.<sup>40</sup>

Luangpor Kham Suwanno (1936-2014) proposed that mindfulness (*sati*) can lead to ethics (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). However, his teachings sparked some controversy, with his view that ethics should be prioritized. Later, he received support from Luangpor Pramote, who believed that developing awareness is the true core and ultimate practice. Awareness naturally leads to ethics, concentration, and Dhamma.<sup>41</sup> Most of the time, we are lost in the mind, lost in the world of thoughts; we may either become fixated on concentration or get entangled with the objects of awareness, causing the knower and the known to become tightly fused. Therefore, we need to be reminded not to become distracted or overly fixated in order to strive for “right understanding.”

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<sup>38</sup> Yao-ming Tsai, “Inquiry into the Reasoning of Liberation of Buddhist ‘Eight Levels of Liberation.’” *ALETHEIA* 24 (2013): 202.

<sup>39</sup> Saitanaporn, *Buddhist Deliverance*, 1.

<sup>40</sup> Pamojjo, *A Meditator’s Guide*, 8.

<sup>41</sup> Ployburanin, *Dynamic Meditation*, 246.

In other words, we should constantly maintain correct awareness of body and mind. Luangpor Pramote's practice is based on the "Three Trainings" with a focus on developing wisdom, while also emphasizing that in the absence of strong concentration, momentary concentration supported by awareness can enhance wisdom. He considers awareness to be the most important aspect of meditation; having awareness means one is practicing and diligent, while lacking awareness indicates negligence. True practice requires awareness.<sup>42</sup>

In terms of specific meditation methods, Luangpor Pramote primarily employs the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*) meditation and advocates for choosing different methods based on individual temperaments. For example, those with a tendency towards greed are advised to focus on the body (*kāyānupassanā*), while those with sharp sensitivity are encouraged to focus on sensations (*vedanānupassanā*). He also suggests, when conditions allow, to directly observe the mind (*cittānupassanā*).<sup>43</sup> This is consistent with Ajahn Mun's teaching that 'to understand the mind is understand the Dhamma'. Realizing the true nature of the mind is the achievement of liberation and Nirvana (*Nibbāna*).<sup>44</sup>

This belongs to the lineage of the Dhammayut that integrates the Laotian tradition. At the same time, he integrated many different insight meditation methods, such as the "tranquility meditation method" of observing breathing and chanting the Buddha, the "insight meditation method" of Luangpor Dou's "reading the mind", the "mindfulness cultivation" practice of Luangpor Teean's moving meditation, Chinese Zen thought, etc. He learned from the strengths of many schools and formed his own unique "awareness meditation" that is integrated into life. This kind of awareness meditation is not limited by time and space and can be practiced anytime and anywhere. Its core is to let awareness arise, know the mind, and the so-called "direct observation of the mind" greatly simplifies

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<sup>42</sup> Luangpor Pramote, *The Key to Relieving Suffering* (Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House, 2019), 215.

<sup>43</sup> Pamojjo, *Meditator's Guide*, 19.

<sup>44</sup> Ñāṇasampanno, *Venerable Ācariya Mun*, 80.

the meditation sequence and method of the Four Mindfulness. This Zen method embodies the straightforwardness of Chinese Zen tradition of ‘gradual practice and sudden enlightenment’. When awareness is strong enough, you will see the “Three Dharma Seals”, let go of attachments, and wisdom will arise automatically. The attainment of liberation through Vipassana meditation relies precisely on the momentary concentration (*Khanika Samadhi*)<sup>45</sup> advocated by Mahasi Sayadaw.

### The Influence of Chinese Zen Buddhism

Although Thailand had embraced Mahayana Buddhism as early as the 8<sup>th</sup> century, it had largely disappeared by the time of the Sukhothai Kingdom (1238-1438).<sup>46</sup> However, some influence of Mahayana Buddhism persisted through indirect channels. Another period of Mahayana Buddhism’s arrival in Thailand was brought by modern Vietnamese and Chinese Buddhists.<sup>47</sup> The exchange between Chinese Zen Buddhism and Thai Buddhism primarily relied on waves of Chinese immigration and the establishment of Mahayana Buddhism among the Chinese community in Thailand. From the 13th century until around World War II, there were three significant waves of Chinese immigration to Thailand.<sup>48</sup> The migration of people facilitated the integration of culture and religion, particularly fostering the development of Zen Buddhism.

In 1862, Master Xu Xing from Chaozhou, Guangdong, built Wat Long Lian in Bangkok, which belongs to the Linji (臨濟) Zen lineage. He was officially recognized by the Thai King as the first “Chinese Senior

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<sup>45</sup> Charles S. Prebish and Kenneth K. Tanaka, *The Faces of Buddhism in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 163.

<sup>46</sup> Sheng-Yin Shi (釋聖因), “‘Folk-Buddhism’ Beliefs and Cultural Studies of Contemporary Thai-Chinese: A Case Study of the Nine Emperor Gods Festival Ceremony” [當代泰國華人之『民俗佛教』信仰與文化研究—以九皇齋節儀式為例], *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Studies* [中華佛學研究] 23 (2022): 80.

<sup>47</sup> Jing Hai (淨海), *Nan chuan fo jiao shi* (南傳佛教史) [*A History of Theravāda Buddhism*] (Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House, 2002), 245-46

<sup>48</sup> Duan Lisheng (段立生), *Tai guo fo jiao shi* (泰國佛教史) [*A History of Thai Buddhism*] (Shanghai: Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press, 2022), 107-108.

Monk,” establishing the foundation for the promotion of the Chinese Buddhist community in Thailand.<sup>49</sup> The sixth-generation Chinese Senior Monk, Master Pu Jing (1902-1986), founded the first legally recognized monastery for transmitting the Chinese Bhikkhu ordination in 1947 — Wat Pho Yen (普仁寺).<sup>50</sup> This allowed the ordination of Thai Chinese monks and the issuance of ordination certificates, making the Chinese Buddhist community a localized and legitimate Buddhist organization in Thailand. The current seventh-generation Chinese Senior Monk, Master Ren De (仁得), continues to lead the Chinese Buddhist community, overseeing novice education, translation of scriptures, and other activities.<sup>51</sup>

Pattana Kitiarsa explored the interaction and mutual influence between Chinese and Thai Buddhism. His book highlights how Thai Buddhism has been influenced by Chinese Buddhist practices, especially through the integration of Taoist elements and ancestor worship into Thai popular religious practices.<sup>52</sup>

Another monk who played a crucial role in integrating Zen thought into Thai Buddhism was Venerable Buddhadasa (1906–1993). In 1947 and 1969, he translated the Zen classics *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* and *The Essentials of Mind Transmission* by Huang Po into Thai. This introduction of Chinese Zen thought into Thailand led to its dissemination and interaction with Theravada Buddhist meditation practices.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, Chen Mingde, a scholar teaching at Rajabhat University, translated Chinese texts such as the Diamond Sutra and Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra into Thai.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Shi, “*Dangdai Taiguo Huaren*,” 81.

<sup>52</sup> Pattana Kitiarsa, *Mediums, Monks, and Amulets: Thai Popular Buddhism Today* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2012), 21.

<sup>53</sup> Yuxian Li, “Buddhadasa and the Buddhism Reform in Thailand,” *Journal of Nantong University* (Social Science Edition) 29, no. 2 (2013): 77.

<sup>54</sup> Jing, *Nan chuan fo jiao shi*, 246.

In modern times, many scholars in Thailand are enthusiastic about translating and introducing Zen texts. Various Zen-related works have been published in Thailand, including Ananda's new translation of the Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch, Song Chai's translation of Master Linji's Teachings, Pai Le's compilation Zen as It Is, Ku Bacha's translation of The Wisdom of Zen, and Dan Moqiang's compilation Records of Zen Masters, among over 20 others.<sup>55</sup>

In the Zen thought system, the "Buddha-nature theory" is a mainstream concept, primarily based on the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (大涅槃經) and the *Śrīmālādevī Siṃhanāda Sūtra* (勝鬘經), which explore emptiness and Buddha-nature (佛性論). The core idea is that all sentient beings possess a Buddha-nature, and since they have Buddha-nature, they attain the dharmakāya in the 'fruit stage'. Renowned Thai monks such as Buddhadasa, Luangpor Sao, and Luangpor Teean have all incorporated the concept of Buddha-nature into their theoretical and meditation systems.<sup>56</sup>

In the teachings of Luangpor Pramote,<sup>57</sup> the names of Zen masters such as Huang Po and the Sixth Patriarch are frequently mentioned, as well as ideas from Mahayana Zen Buddhism, such as emptiness and non-attachment. The inclusion of reverent recitations to the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng in the morning and evening chants at the Liberation Garden Temple further demonstrates the significant place and influence of the Sixth Patriarch in his heart.

Luangpor Pramote said, When we practice to the point where we can see that it is merely various states and phenomena, without any beings, people, us, or them involved, at that moment, we will fully realize the Four Noble Truths.<sup>58</sup> This easily brings to mind the most famous passage from the Mahayana text The Diamond Sutra, which states, "No self, no

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<sup>55</sup> Duan, *Tai guo fo jiao shi*, 114.

<sup>56</sup> Lei Xiaoli (雷晓利), "Thai Meditation School and Chinese Buddha-Nature Theory" [ "泰国禅修学派与中国佛性论" ], *The World Religious Cultures* [世界宗教文化], no. 1 (2018): 33-36.

<sup>57</sup> Pramote, *Key to Relieving Suffering*, 44.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

person, no being, no life span.” This sutra is precisely the one relied upon by the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng for his enlightenment in Zen Buddhism.

Regarding the Buddha-nature theory, Luangpor Pramote also believes that anyone can attain Nirvana and that one’s nature is inherently pure, similar to the Zen view that everyone has the potential to achieve Buddhahood. Regardless of whether one is a monk or layperson, man or woman, as long as one upholds the precepts and diligently practices, enlightenment is possible. As he taught in a live presentation on August 25, 2024,<sup>59</sup> “Search for the mind, and you will not find it even if you search through the creation and destruction of the universe.” This has its roots in Zen tradition. The Second Patriarch Huike asked the First Patriarch Bodhidharma, “My mind is not at peace; please help me find peace.” Bodhidharma replied, “Bring me your mind, and I will put it to rest.” Huike remained silent for a long time and said, “I cannot find my mind even if I search for it.” Bodhidharma then said, “I have already put your mind at rest.”<sup>60</sup> This means that the mind is also impermanent; in Mahayana Buddhist terms, the mind is empty. Listening to Venerable Luangpor Pramote’s meditation guidance over time, one finds that, besides quoting classic sayings of Venerable Luangpor Dune, he frequently mentions figures such as Buddhadasa and Luangpor Teean. Through his engagement with these teachings and his admiration for Zen masters like Hui Neng and Huang Po, Luangpor Pramote has clearly been influenced by Chinese Zen thought.

### **The Value of Luangpor Pramote’s Meditation for Modern Meditators**

Luangpor Pramote can be regarded as a monk who bridges the past and the future. As we previously discussed, his Vipassana meditation not only fully inherits the local Thai tradition but also incorporates the ideas of Vipassana meditation from Myanmar and the Chinese Zen tradition. But

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<sup>59</sup> Pramote, “*Teaching on Meditation*,” 12:30.

<sup>60</sup> Daoyuan, *Jingde chuandeng lu* (Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp), in *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* (T), vol. 51, no. 2076 (Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1935), p. 219b21–23, CBETA 2025.R1.

he also makes full use of digital technology to connect with his followers.

### **Meditation methods suitable for the two temperaments**

There are six types of temperament in Samatha meditation. But in Vipassana meditation, Ven. Luangpor Pramote reduces these to two types: Craving temperament (*taṇhā-carita*) and View temperament (*ditthi-carita*). As already mentioned, due to the fact that modern people receive and process much more information than ancient people did, and because consumerism is rampant, the two types of behavior are particularly prominent from the perspective of Vipassana meditation. People are more careful about their bodies and are also better at and more accustomed to thinking.

Luangpor Pramote's meditation practice is primarily Vipassana, which is particularly suited for urban individuals who excel in analytical thinking, thus gaining widespread acclaim. Currently, the Venerable's teachings are supported by both monks and lay disciples, including Ajahn Kae, lay Ajahn Pasan, Ajahn Sunawa, and Ajahn Thanu Song, among others.<sup>61</sup> Luangpor Pramote can now be regarded as a charismatic monk with a substantial following in contemporary Thai Buddhist faith.<sup>62</sup>

He divided the Four Foundations of Mindfulness into two groups: those who work with their mind would correspond to the View temperament, and those who work with their body or are overly focused on their feelings would correspond to the Craving temperament.<sup>63</sup> In meditation practice, people who possess a View temperament should observe the mind, to be sensitive to its good and bad changes. The very wise can also observe the Dharma, to deeply understand the deeper aspects of phenomena. People should choose the appropriate mindfulness method based on their personality type, such as observing the mind or the body depending upon their lifestyle, career or tendencies.

Intellectuals in cities tend to think a lot, so it is difficult for them to achieve deep concentration, but they can practice Vipassana, meditation,

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<sup>61</sup> Pramote, "*The Path to Liberation (1)*," 17.

<sup>62</sup> Ployburanin, *Dynamic Meditation*, 182.

<sup>63</sup> Pamojjo, *Words of Wisdom*, 64-66.

especially the mind-viewing technique, which helps them in their jobs that are often very analytical and lead to mental distraction.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, a meditation method that emphasizes mindfulness over deep concentration is more suitable for modern practitioners. While those who have a tendency toward materialism should instead focus on observing their bodies and controlling their craving.<sup>65</sup>

Based on the classification of temperaments in Vipassana meditation and the characteristics of modern meditators, Luangpor Pramote proposed an innovative approach, which embraced many specific methods, whether it is reciting the Buddha's name, observing ones breathing, or concentrating on the rise and fall of the abdomen, or even chanting mantras. All these are regarded as meditation objects (*kammaṭṭhāna*), and the purpose of observing the meditation object is not to cultivate concentration but to 'give the mind a home', to cultivate awareness, and to develop momentary concentration, which would thereby lead to the recognition of the three marks of existence: suffering, impermanence, and non-self.<sup>66</sup> This fully demonstrates the targeted nature of his method. Of course, Luangpor Pramote also advocates that professional monks should practice the dual cultivation of samatha and vipassana to develop powerful Insight Wisdom (*Vipassanā-nāṇa*).

### **The Use of Digital Media to Connect with Followers**

Christopher Helland uses the term 'religion-online' to refer to traditional religions which use digital technology to promote and disseminate their teachings.<sup>67</sup> He distinguishes this from what he calls

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<sup>64</sup> Nissara Horayangura, "*Living the Dhamma: Integration of Buddhist Practice into the Lives of Bangkok Laypeople*" (master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 2006), 63-64, <https://doi.org/10.14457/CU.the.2006.1649>.

<sup>65</sup> Pamojjo, *Meditator's Guide*, 19.

<sup>66</sup> Pamojjo, *Meditator's Guide*, 24-25.

<sup>67</sup> Christopher Helland, "Online-Religion/Religion-Online and Virtual Communitas," in *Religion on the Internet: Research Prospects and Promises*, ed. Jeffrey K. Hadden and Douglas E. Cowan (New York: JAI Press, 2000), 207.

‘online-religion’ which has no traditional religious structures. In the case of religion-online, the Internet is used to promote traditional forms of religion based on vertical concepts of control, status, and authority.<sup>68</sup> As Hoover and Echchaibi pointed out, traditional religions and traditional religious authorities are clearly building a strong online influence, which helps to maintain their traditions and belief systems.<sup>69</sup> Heidi Campbell believes that online religious practices exhibit a series of common features shaped by the network structures and functions of information and communication technologies. These involve promoting the construction of online communities, narrative-based identities, transformation of authority models, integrative forms of practice, and multi-site real experiences. These components all reflect digital culture, but focus on religious aspects, eliminating the dichotomy between online and offline religions, and instead recognize the integration of the two.<sup>70</sup> As mentioned by Campbell, traditional religions use the Internet to break through the limitations of time, space and region, and live broadcasting makes it possible for multiple remote locations to receive teachings. In the case of Luangpor Pramote, his Dharma talks and teachings, while reaching a small number of people who can personally attend in the meditation hall, reach a large number of followers through online platforms.

Buddhism is now popular throughout the world and widely spread through the Internet through religious networking. Mass communication technology since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century also seems to have led to the rise of meditation practice in Thai society. To explain this fact, the spread of the Internet and other IT devices has had a huge impact on lifestyles, including the way of collecting information and communicating.

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<sup>68</sup> Christopher Helland, “Digital Religion,” in *Handbook of Religion and Society*, ed. David Yamane (Cham: Springer, 2016), 178.

<sup>69</sup> Nabil Echchaibi and Stewart M. Hoover, eds., *The Third Spaces of Digital Religion*, Routledge Research in Religion, Media and Culture (New York: Routledge, 2023), 2.

<sup>70</sup> Heidi A. Campbell, “Understanding the Relationship between Religion Online and Offline in a Networked Society,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80, no. 1 (March 2012): 21, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfr074>.

Social media has played an important and progressive role in promoting Buddhism through various channels such as websites, Facebook, YouTube, and Dharma blogs. The Dhamma propagation team of Luangpor Pa Muen has an official website (dhamma.com),<sup>71</sup> featuring multiple languages including Thai, English, Chinese, Japanese, French, and Vietnamese. Additionally, there is a Chinese website called “Shineling (shineling.org)”.<sup>72</sup> The team also has channels on various new media platforms. There are as many as 12 platforms and channels listed on their official website, not including the WeChat live streaming channel in China. It is estimated that the total number is around 20.



Illustration 1: Media Platforms<sup>73</sup>

Venerable Luangpor Pramote fully realized the needs and expectations of Buddhists in modern society. He used simplified meditation strategies and meditation methods that were closer to life to encourage more people to join the meditation practice. At the same time, he built a large number of network communication systems, extending his Dharma teaching path through platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Web, and WeChat, making it possible for people from different countries and regions to listen to the Dharma talks and practice at the same time.

<sup>71</sup> *Dhamma.com*, accessed April 25, 2025, <https://www.dhamma.com>.

<sup>72</sup> *Shineling.org*, accessed April 28, 2025, <https://www.shineling.org>.

<sup>73</sup> *Dharma to end Suffering [導向離苦的法]*, accessed April 28, 2025, <https://www.jietuoyuan.com/media/>

## **Discussion and Summary**

Luangpor Pramote's meditation method combines the essence of several traditions. He not only inherited the practice methods of traditional Thai forest monks but also absorbed the mindfulness training of Myanmar insight meditation, and the methods of Chinese Zen, so that his meditation method has a deep traditional foundation and yet is flexible enough to adapt to the needs of contemporary people.

He accurately identified the spiritual issues of modern people and the demands of meditation and innovatively employed the method of "developing awareness" to address the complex temperament of meditators in modern society. He also comprehensively utilized modern digital technology to create an online and offline interactive community to serve his followers, attracting many followers from Thailand, China and other Southeast Asian countries. So far, this model has undoubtedly been successful. As for the future development prospects and the future direction of his Dharma propagation team, it still requires further exploration of how it integrates traditional wisdom with people's actual needs in this digital age.

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