

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHISM IN WEST MALAYSIA,
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE PRACTICE OF
MEDITATION AMONG YOUNG BUDDHISTS

BY :

LAU LEE SING

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SIPNOSIS

Tesis ini adalah satu kajian mengenai perkembangan Buddhisme di Semenanjung Malaysia, dengan rujukan utama kepada meditasi di kalangan belia. Sejarah Buddhisme di Semenanjung Malaysia dijelaskan secara ringkas untuk memberikan pembaca sedikit idea mengenai perkembangan Buddhisme di Semenanjung Malaysia. Selain daripada itu, penerangan dibuat atas perbezaan antara Buddhisme Mahayana dan Theravada. Ini menyediakan satu gambaran yang jelas tentang Buddhisme di Malaysia secara keseluruhannya.

Bab pertama berbincang mengenai tujuan kajian, metodologi and masalah-masalah yang dihadapi semasa kerja lapangan dilakukan.

Bab kedua memberi satu gambaran umum mengenai perkembangan Buddhisme di Semenanjung Malaysia.

Bab ketiga berbincang tentang aktiviti-aktiviti di kalangan Buddhis muda dan bagaimana mereka mempraktikkan meditasi terutama sekali di kalangan mahasiswa-mahasiswi. Tambahan pula, satu analisis yang deskriptif dibuat atas jenis-jenis meditasi dan *retreat* meditasi dibincangkan dengan lebih detail lagi dalam bab ini.

Bab keempat adalah berkenaan dengan keputusan kajian dan perbincangan yang selanjutnya. Vipassana (satu jenis meditasi) dan praktiknya di kalangan belia-belia Cina juga dijelaskan.

Bab kelima memberi satu kesimpulan kepada kajian ini.

SYNOPSIS

This thesis concerns the development of Buddhism in West Malaysia, with special reference to meditation among youths. The history of Buddhism in West Malaysia is explained briefly to give the readers some ideas regarding the development of Buddhism in Malaysia.

Explanation has also been made regarding the difference between Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism, to provide a more vivid picture of Buddhism in Malaysia. This thesis, as a whole, is divided into five chapters.

Chapter 1 describes the aim of the research, methodology and difficulties faced during the research.

Chapter 2 presents a general discussion of the development of Buddhism in West Malaysia.

Chapter 3 focuses on young Buddhist activities in the country, the practice of meditation among Chinese youths, especially the undergraduates. A descriptive analysis on meditation and meditation retreats is included.

Chapter 4 presents results of a survey. Vipassana meditation and its practice among Chinese youths is discussed in detail.

Chapter 5 gives a conclusion of this study.

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CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

Research regarding the development of Buddhism specifically in West Malaysia, is limited compared to research on Christianity and Islam. Studies on the movement of Buddhism with special regard to certain aspects or activities requires a lot of work and effort. This thesis may be considered a pilot survey as there are not many studies on Buddhism.

1.1 Aim of Research

This research was conducted to study the development of Buddhism in West Malaysia, with emphasis on the practice of meditation, especially vipassana meditation among young Buddhists.

As meditation is considered a very important practice in Buddhism, it is necessary to know more about its movement and the involvement of youths. Hopefully through the study, we can understand the reasons why more and more young Buddhists are becoming interested in meditation. Thus, attention is given to the practices of meditation among undergraduates in West Malaysia, namely students from University of Malaya(UM), University of Kebangsaan(UKM), University of Science(USM)and University of Technology (UTM). This is to give the readers a clearer picture of how the undergraduates practise meditation and how it is integrated in their way of living.

The discussion will be drawn on vipassana meditation and other types of meditation. Besides this, the writer will provide a picture of how meditation retreats are being conducted in the meditation centres. Details regarding the retreats will be given much attention so as to present a more specific information about meditation.

This research was made possible partly because of the writer's participation in the Buddhist activities on campus. This made the work much easier as a lot of material and information were collected easily without much time wasted. Many acquaintances were formed during the writer's participation in these Buddhist activities. These were people who were highly knowledgeable about Buddhism and meditation. They were a great source of information and support.

1.2 Methodology

Different kinds of methods were used to conduct this research. Both the anthropological and sociological methods were used. The data were analysed qualitatively as well as quantitatively.

Besides the participant-observation, other methods employed were interviews and library research.

A questionnaire survey was carried out during the research. This was done in order to get quantitative data on the practice of meditation among the undergraduates in the country.

1.2.1 Participant Observation

Since the writer is also a Buddhist, who is practising vipassana meditation, the use of Participant Observation was most suitable. The writer joined the meditation retreat in Kota Tinggi for ten days. As a participant as well as a researcher, more information which may have seemed insignificant was noted down in the analysis of the data. The writer's own experiences during the retreat was found useful.

Every participant on retreat had to note down what he or she observed during the walking and sitting meditation. Thus, all the notes of the writer were considered an important source of information. However, since every participant had to observe precepts during the retreat, no interview could be conducted because no talking was allowed. The writer could only observe and remember events. Only after the retreat could all the observations be written down.

1.2.2 Library Research

Books on the development of Buddhism in Malaysia were found in the university library. But most of the books are out-dated and the material about the present situation of Buddhism in Malaysia could not be found. The writer could only resort to Buddhist magazines such as 'Voice of Buddhism', 'World Fellowship of Buddhist' and other Buddhist annual report like the YBAM 10th

anniversary magazine. Besides these, the writer was able to read a few Buddhist magazines from other universities.

1.2.3 Formal and Informal interview

Interviews were conducted with a number students from UM, UKM, USM, UTM and TAR college. They provide information regarding the practice of meditation in their respective universities and colleges.

Formal interview were conducted with a meditation teacher in Selangor Vipassana Centre at Petaling Jaya. Interviews with the UM students who practised vipassana meditation and had gone on retreats were conducted in Mandarin as most of the respondents spoke Mandarin. The use of this language enabled them to tell the interviewer their experiences more accurately.

1.2.4 Survey

The questionnaire was conducted to obtain systematic data on the practice of meditation among undergraduates as they represented the majority of the young Buddhists. 137 respondents from UM, UKM, USM and UTM completed a questionnaire. There were more respondents from UM because comparatively there were more UM students who practised meditation. Meditation has become quite popular among UM students as more and more of them go on retreats.

1.3 Places of Observation

Three meditation centres in West Malaysia were chosen as places of observation. There were Malaysian Buddhist Meditation Centre(MBMC) Penang, Kota Tinggi Santisukharama Hermitage and Lunas Meditation Centre, Kedah. The writer visited these three centres and interviewed the monks in the centres. However, only general observation were made at these three centres. The writer was not allowed to do interviewing in the meditation centres because the 'yogis' were not supposed to talk freely during their retreat. Hence, most of the observations were limited to what the writer saw in the centres. An interview with Rev. Visuddhacara in MBMC was allowed and questions on meditation were discussed.

Photos were taken at these places. The writer took photos of 'yogis' while they were meditating. From the photographs, the reader can get a clearer picture of how the meditation is practised at the meditation centres. The reader can see the way the yogis meditate - their posture and facial expressions, etc.

1.4 Difficulties Faced

While doing this research, the writer experienced a few problems that could not be avoided. The writer, as one of the participants too, could not interview the other participants during the retreat because of certain precepts.

As for the administration of questionnaires, problem arose from the way the respondents answered the questions. Some of

them did not understand the questions and therefore had answered inappropriately. In addition, a lot of respondents could not answer the questions well in the open question section. This may be due to their weak command of the language because all the questions were asked in English and most of the respondents were educated in Chinese schools. A few of them answered the questions in Chinese.

CHAPTER 2 : DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHISM IN WEST MALAYSIA

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will concentrate on the history of Buddhism in West Malaysia. A detailed historical survey will be given as how various ethnic groups contributed to the development of Buddhism in Malaysia as a whole. Specifically, more attention will be given to the situation in West Malaysia as East Malaysia is comparatively new to Buddhism compared to West Malaysia.

In addition, this chapter will also emphasize on the present development of Buddhism in West Malaysia such as the situation of the missionary activities here. This is to give the readers a general picture of the present phrase of Buddhism and its events which are shaping Buddhism in this country.

Moreover, different schools of Buddhism in Malaysia will be discussed briefly . Hopefully doubts and confusion regarding the different approaches between Mahayana Buddhism and Theravada Buddhism would be clarified.

2.2 Historical Background

Buddhism is inseparable from the history of the Malay Peninsula. It is claimed that the oldest Malayan inscription dates from the 4 century A.D and it consists of two Buddhist verses. The first verse being famous throughout the old Buddhist world, the

second illustrating the first. In general, there are three main sources to know when Buddhism first appeared in Malaysia : Chinese records, Indian records and archaeological evidence.¹

The people who came to this area during the first millennium A.D and brought Buddhism with them, were the Indians . Many early Indians came to South East Asia because of trade. According to Dr. Quaritch Wales, the first Buddhist state in Malaysia was Langkasuka situated around present day Gunung Jerai in Kedah. ² It was supposed to have existed as early as the second century C. E . Bronze Buddha images also had been found around the area of Kedah Peak (Gunung Jerai) which belong to the fourth century C. E . Inscriptions belonging to the fourth century were also found in other parts of West Malaysia, especially in Cheruk Tekun opposite Penang and other parts of Province Wellesley. By the fifth century, Buddhism was very well-established in Malaysia. Buddha images were found at Kuala Selinsing, Kinta Valley, Tanjung Rambutan, Bidod, Sungai Siput and Pahang.

The earliest form of Buddhism practised in South East Asia, including Malaysia , was the so called Hinayana type (one of the schools in Buddhism) . But later with the rise of Sri-Vijaya, Mahayana became more well-known. Sri Vijaya was becoming one of the chief centers of Mahayana Buddhism. Starting about 1000 A.D., the great Buddhist kingdom of Sri Vijaya was formed, it came to control the Malay Penninsula and its power lasted for two centuries.

¹ Heinrich Dumoulin, *Buddhism in the Modern World*, Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc., London, 1976, p35-36.

² Benny Liow, *Buddhism in Malaysia, World Fellowship of Buddhists*, vol. xviii, no. 6, 1981, p8-9.

By the seventh century, Mahayana Buddhism became the more popular form of Buddhism practised in Malaysia. However, the popularity of Buddhism grew less by the twelfth century. This was because Buddhism was severely weakened in India with the revival of Hinduism. At the same time, Islam was spreading very fast in South East Asia. Thus, Buddhism began to become weaker in Malaysia. 1403 marked the year of Parameswara's conversion to Islam and the disappearance of Buddhism from Malaysia. By the end of the fifteenth century, Islam took over Buddhism as the religion of both the king and the people. Nevertheless, though Buddhism officially disappeared from Malaysia after the founding of Malacca, traces of Buddhism and Hinduism influences can still be found in the cultures of the local people. Theatres in Kedah, Perlis and Kelantan are strongly influenced by Buddhist stories. Buddhist remained because of being continuously subject to Buddhism influences from the north of the Peninsula adjacent to Thailand.³

However, it is apparent that Buddhism has for a long time been practised mainly by the Chinese population. This is because the coming of the Chinese immigrants to Malaysia after the seventeen century marked the second wave of Buddhism in this country. But, the Buddhism brought by the Chinese to Malaysia was by no means the pure teachings of Gotama Buddha. For centuries, the Chinese practised a mixed religion of Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism and certain Chinese folk beliefs.

Now, let us see in more detail the earlier development of Buddhism in certain states in West Malaysia.

³ *ibid.*, p9-12.

Some of the earliest Buddhist temples were all set up in Penang. The Kuan Imm Teng Temple has its origins traced to as early as the early 1800s. Another important Buddhist centre in Penang is the Triple Wisdom Hall, founded by Venerable Chuk Mor in 1957. This dhamma master teaches Ch'an meditation at the Triple Wisdom Hall, one of the very few centres where one can learn Mahayana teachings. The Penang Buddhist Association (PBA), one of the prominent Buddhist institutions in Penang has set for itself the aim of propagating the correct teachings of the Buddha. PBA adopted a non-sectarian attitude by inviting Mahayana and Theravada monks to preach.

Penang has long been known as the core of Buddhist activities in West Malaysia. There are many laymen who are exponents of the dhamma and monks who preach the real dhamma. In Province Wellesley, Mahayana groups are to be found in Butterworth, Bukit Mertajam and Central Province Wellesley.

In Perak, the most active Buddhist society is the Taiping Buddhist Society where dhamma activities are placed on the top of its priority list. In Selangor, Buddhist activities have existed for some time in Klang and Petaling Jaya. The Klang and Coast Buddhist Association is a relatively active Buddhist group with both English and Chinese sections. In Petaling Jaya, the Poh Lum Temples is another temple which interested many Mahayana followers. The Wisma Buddhist located at old Klang Road is an astounding achievement of Mahayana piety.

In Malacca, the two main Mahayana group are the Jasin Buddhist Society and the centre of Humanistic Buddhism. Malacca is

also the southern centre of the YBAM (Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia). In Johor, the major Mahayana groups are found in Muar, Batu Pahat and Johor Bahru. Mandarin is the medium of instruction in all these groups. But English-speaking lay groups are also found in Kluang, Kota Tinggi and Johor Bahru. All of these English-speaking groups follow mainly the Theravada tradition.

In Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan and Trengganu, both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism are being practised. In Perlis, the members of the Perlis Buddhist Society are divided into two groups in which the Mandarin-speaking members follow mainly the Mahayana tradition whereas the English-speaking are more influenced by the Theravada school. In Kedah, all the Buddhist groups in Kulim, Sg. Patani, Gua Chem Pedak, Pendang, Baling, Kerpan and Padang Serai follow Mahayana Buddhism. All the Buddhist societies on the East Coast are practically Mandarin-speaking and Mahayana inclined. These groups are found in Kota Bahru, Kuala Trengganu and Kuala Dungun. In Pahang, the main Buddhist Society is centred at Kuantan.

In Malaysia, there are about 200 Thai temples, with the majority of them located in Perlis, Kelantan and Kedah. Thai monks, though most of them are not able to preach in English and Mandarin, respected for their practices. For example : The Venerable Phra Khru Dhammabanchanvud, abbot of the Malaysian Buddhist Meditation Centre (MBMC) during the 1970's is a very respected Theravada monk. Under Ven. Phra Khru Dhammabanchanvud, meditation was made a way of life in the MBMC. Besides meditation, regular Sunday Dhamma Classes are still held continuously. Some lay

meditation teachers conduct vipassana classes in the tradition of the Mahasi Sayadaw method in MBMC.⁴

Besides the contribution to Buddhism in West Malaysia by the monks from Thailand, one can never forget the contribution of the Sinhalese. English-educated Buddhists in Malaysia will always be grateful to the missions carried out by the Sinhalese monks. The chief Reverend, Ven. Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda Nayaka Maha Thera, the present abbot of the Brickfields Buddhist Temple in Kuala Lumpur is a Sinhalese monk. He has contributed a lot to Buddhism in Malaysia. His sincerity, commitment and dedication are invaluable sources of inspiration to all the Buddhists in Malaysia. The other major Sri Lanka monk who has contributed much to the missionary work in this country is Ven. Gunaratana (1933- 1964). Ven. Gunaratana stayed at the Mahindarama temple and attracted many highly educated Buddhists in Penang and other states of Malaysia to the Dhamma.

2.3 Schools of Buddhism in Malaysia

Buddhism in Malaysia can be divided into three important schools. There are Mahayana, Theravada and Vajrayana school. Today, Theravada is dominant in Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand whereas the Mahayana school is more influential in China, Taiwan, Korea and Japan. Vajrayana school is more popular in Tibet and the other areas around it.

⁴ *ibid.*, p13-16.

The Theravada school was introduced in West Malaysia since the early era of Christianity. The Mahayana school was believed to have been started in the sixth century and it developed further when Srivijaya conquered the states in West Malaysia in the eighth century.

Vajrayana was first popular and influential in West Malaysia in 1976 after the visit of His Holiness the sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa, Rangjung Rigpe Dorje (1924-1981). After that, a centre was set up in Kuala Lumpur to spread the Vajrayana teachings. This centre is the Karma Kagyu Dhamma Society.

However, according to Devahuti, these three schools have other names as well. Mahayana is also known as the Great Vehicle and the Northern school whereas Theravada is known as Teaching of the Elders, the Lesser Vehicle, Hinayana and the Southern school. Vajrayana is also known as Tibetan Buddhism.

The followers of Theravada Buddhism consider its school as that originally taught by the Buddha. They consider Buddha as a common man who had striven hard to attain enlightenment. For the Theravadins, suffering is something very real and liberation from Samsara (circle of rebirth) should depend on one's own effort. A Buddhist's responsibility is to liberate himself / herself from Samsara.

Mahayana school first appeared in first century BC or 400 years after Buddha passed away. Mahayanists see Buddha as supra mundane, one who had extraordinary ability. Suffering is regarded as illusion. Its purpose is to follow the ways of Bodhisattva whose

duty is to save all the beings from sufferings. Liberation of oneself is considered the lesser importance.

Vajrayana was in fact based on the Mahayana school but it had been adjusted and thus creating different points of views. Vajrayana believes that liberation of oneself is to be achieved by the ability of the mind. They see everything as consisting of cause and effect. The Bodhisattva is considered as one who had attained perfection.

These three schools have different approaches regarding certain aspects in Buddhism. This does not mean that they are three different religions. They all believe in the fundamental characteristics of Buddhism. They all respect Sakyamuni Buddha as one who had attained enlightenment. They follow the main principles in Buddhism as The 4 Noble truth, Noble Eightfold Path and Three Characteristics of Living.

2.3.1 Differences between Mahayana and Theravada - the two main schools in Malaysia

From the very beginning European scholars were deeply impressed by the multifarious aspects of Buddhism. They took the Buddhist Holy scriptures in the "Pali Canon" as the original and authoritative one. As they found this type of Buddhism located in Ceylon, Southeast Asia, they named it "Southern Buddhism" whereas the Buddhist schools of East Asia were referred collectively as "Northern Buddhism". In other words, European scholars were the

ones who distinguished the 2 main branches of Buddhism : Theravada (the small vehicle) and Mahayana (the great vehicle).⁵

The terms "Southern Buddhism" and "Northern Buddhism" were given in accordance to the geographical situation as it is today. But both schools originated from India. Theravada Buddhism had retained the original basic teachings of the Buddha as they were set down in the Pali Canon. To know more about the distinction between Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism, we have to examine its apparent differences. The difference is mostly based on the interpretation of the main essence in Buddhism such as the various interpretations of the 3 Jewels- the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha.

The most important difference between Mahayana and Theravada teaching is, the former advocating the Bodhisattva Path while the latter the Arahant Path. Mahayanists claim that the Bodhisattva Path benefits oneself and others at the same time. The Arahant Path is selfish since it means cultivating the way for oneself only. Theravadins claim that the most important thing to do is to strive to liberate oneself from Samsara and then teach others. For Theravadins, the Arahant Path is not selfish but that the work of trying to liberate others, commonly be done after one has liberated oneself.

The Mahayanists teach that their Bodhisattvas and Buddhas can exist or not as they choose and take rebirth in any plane of existence (e.g. Earth Stone Bodhisattva in hell). This would imply that these beings can over-ride the law of Kamma (cause and effect)

⁵ Heinrich Dumoulin, op.cit., p35-36.

which again is contrary to the Buddha's explanation of existence. According to the Buddha, one attains the First Fruition (Sotapanna) will return only 7 times more; one who attains the Third Fruition (Anagami) will not return to this world but will take rebirth in the heavenly realm before entering Parinibbana. One who is liberated (Buddha, Arahant, Pacceka Buddha) will not return anymore to any form of existence. The belief in the Mahayana doctrines that the Buddha possesses three bodies is again absent in Theravada teaching.⁶

Mahayana doctrines advocate a way that on 'other power' besides oneself while Theravada doctrines say that no one can save but oneself. So Mahayanists pray to Amitabha Buddha relying on the 'vow power' of Amitabha Buddha to be reborn in the Pure Land. There is only one way to enlightenment, that is all beings will eventually become perfectly enlightened Buddhas. Theravada doctrine advocates however there are 3 ways to enlightenment - to become Buddhas, Arahant or Pacceka Buddhas.

Regarding killing, Mahayanists claim that one need not be bound strictly by the wording of precepts but should be guided by the spirit of it, according to circumstances. This is to say that killing is allowed under certain circumstances. Theravada doctrines teach that intentional killing is not allowed under any circumstances.

More rites and rituals are practised in Mahayana Buddhism than Theravada. Mahayana monasteries do their chantings to the beat of drums, bells, 'wooden fish', etc..., while Theravada monasteries do their chanting without all these instruments. One

⁶ Bhikkhu Hye Dhammavuddho, *Main Differences Between Mahayana and Theravada Teachings*, Penang, p1-16.

particular distinction in the recitation of sutras is that it is done in a single way by Mahayanists, but not by the Theravadas.

2.4 Contemporary Buddhism

The present day Buddhism in Malaysia is mostly made up of Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. Thus, there are Mahayana temples as well as Theravada temples. One significant feature of these 2 types of temples is the medium of instruction. In Mahayana temples, Mandarin and Hokkien are being used whereas English is the dominant language used in Theravada temples, with occasional dhamma talks delivered in Hokkien.

Generally, Malaysia is intermediary, in that although Mahayana is predominant, many Mahayana followers are also members of the Theravada sect. This is like historical situation where Mahayana had always tolerated Theravada though only as a lower stage of a Buddhist's development. Now, more and more Mahayanists have come under some Theravada monks though those Theravada monks use English as their medium of instruction.

To have a view of Buddhism in Malaysia, we have to have a basic grasp of the Buddhist activities in this country, especially missionary activities. The missionary movement has all along been very active. A few names appear as the pioneers of Buddhist missionary work in modern Malaysia. They are Ven. A. Pamaratana, Ven. Dr. Sumangalo, Ven. K. Gunatana, Ven. Chuk Mor and Ven. Dhammananda. They have all contributed to the development of Buddhism in Malaysia. Now, let us see in more detail the missionary

activities in the country with regard to the chief Reverend, Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda Naya Maha Thera.⁷

2.4.1 Missionary Activities In West Malaysia

Ven. Dhammananda, together with Ven. Sumangalo had provided the impetus for Buddhist students to establish Buddhist societies in the UM, UPM, UTM, Language Institute, Specialist Teachers Training College and the Royal Military College. In 1961, the Buddhist Missionary Society (BMS) was established by Ven. Dhammananda. Under BMS, many simple and readable English pamphlets on various aspects of Buddhism and daily practices were distributed. Ven. Dhammananda's pamphlets had a tremendous impact on the English-speaking public. Besides, he also had organized an annual novitiate programme in Malaysia for Buddhists interested in experiencing the life of a monk for a short period of time.

Ven. Dhammananda is a great spiritual leader who has served Malaysian Buddhism for over 47 year (he came to Malaysia in 1952). He has contributed a lot to the missionary work in Malaysia which has succeeded in captivating the minds of the young and educated. In short, we can say that he has indeed contributed a lot to a Buddhist revival in the country. Many younger Theravada ordained monks like Ven. Mahinda, Ven. Piyasilo and Ven. Sujivo were all inspired in some ways or other through the preaching on Buddhism by Ven.

⁷ ibid.,

Dhammananda. Today, they are all contributing to the growth of Buddhism in Malaysia in various ways.⁸

In Malaysia, moves have been made to co-ordinate the Buddhist activities. For example : the formation of the Joint Wesak Celebrations Committee of the temples in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor which coordinates all the Wesak celebrations. Besides this, Malaysian Buddhist Council has been formed to extend the work of the development of Buddhism, especially in giving contemporary relevance to the practice of Buddhism and to promote solidarity among the various sects.

The setting up of Buddhist societies in universities is a significant development of Buddhist revival in this country. Today, we can find Buddhist societies in each university such as UM, USM, UTM, UPM and even Tengku Abdul Rahman College and most teachers' colleges in the country. In all the universities and colleges, Theravada Buddhism has been more popular because of the availability of English Buddhist Publications and English Dhamma Talks by Theravada monks and lay preachers. Nevertheless, Mahayana Buddhism continues to be popular among the Chinese-speaking students. Among the Mahayana monks, bhikkhu Chuk Mor had contributed a lot to the development of Buddhism in Malaysia. He was an influential dhamma preacher and writer especially popular among the Chinese-speaking Buddhists. Young Mahayana monk like Sik Chi Chern is very active in spreading Buddhism to the youths. Chi Chern uses Mandarin in all his Buddhist activities and

⁸ Benny Liow, Venerable Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda Nayaka Maha Thera : His Contribution to Buddhism in Modern Malaysia, *Buddhism in Malaysia*, vol. 2, Buddhist Digest Publication Board, Penang, 1987, p6-13.

writing. In 1984, he began to organize Buddhist camps and Buddhist seminars for students from institution of higher learning. The response from the students was encouraging. Besides this, meditation camps were also organized by him. His influence among the Chinese-speaking undergraduates is great. Chi Chern always gives talk throughout the whole country and he is now a very popular Mahayana monk in Malaysia.

In schools too, Buddhism has made some progress. There are Buddhist societies in some schools in West Malaysia like St. Xavier's institution in Penang, The Infant Jesus Convent in Malacca and a few Buddhist groups are found in Perak schools.

2.5 Conclusion

Buddhism in West Malaysia has gone through its periods of disappearance and revival. As many realize the need to propagate a more refined form of the Buddha's teachings, devoid of superstitious and false beliefs, many Buddhist organizations are seriously committed to achieve this aim. The YBAM, a national Buddhist youth today is actively running the Buddhist activities. The development of Buddhism presently is becoming more encouraging as more people are willing to involve themselves in Buddhist activities. More missionary work is being carried out through the more experienced Dhamma teachers such as monks. In short, Buddhism in West Malaysia today is flourishing and its development will definitely bring in better prospects for Buddhism in Malaysia. To achieve the aim, young Buddhists particularly have to strive on more diligently.

CHAPTER 3 : BUDDHIST YOUTHS AND MEDITATION

3.1 Introduction

There are many signs that show a growing interest in Buddhism in Malaysia. There are more Buddhist societies and associations that are formed in the country and more activities are carried out in every society throughout the year.

In this chapter, attention will be given to the young Buddhist activities in West Malaysia. We will first see how YBAM (Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia), the national organization of all Buddhist youths in Malaysia organizes its activities. Then, emphasis will be given to meditation among Chinese youth. More young Buddhists nowadays are exposed to the practice of meditation than before. They know more or less what is meditation and some of them have become serious 'yogis'. They have been taught the methods of meditation, under the proper guidance of some meditation teachers. Thus, they go on retreats to experience life as a 'yogi' in the meditation centre.

In the following sections of this chapter, the writer will discuss how the meditation is conducted in the meditation centre. In addition, different types of meditations will be introduced briefly to give the reader a better understanding of the practice.

3.2 Young Buddhist Activities in West Malaysia

The Buddhist youth movement in Malaysia began with the formation of the Penang Buddhist Association Youth Circle by Rev. Sumangalo in 1955. Following it, there was a growth of youth circles mainly initiated by Rev. Sumangalo. In the first Pan Malaysia Buddhist Youth Convention in December, 1958 in Penang, the Federation of Malaysia Buddhist Youth Fellowship (FMBYF) was formed. In the first National Buddhist Youth seminar (1970), decision was made to form a new national youth body to replace FMBYF. The new body was named the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia (YBAM).

From then on, YBAM played a major role in encouraging, fostering and developing the practice of Buddha's teachings among youths. Many new groups have been encouraged to join in the effort of YBAM. Thousands of youths have been given opportunity to come into contact with the true doctrines and practice of Buddhism.

Many types of activities have been organized by YBAM. There are dhamma propaganda activities, education programmes, leadership training, cultural activities, publication projects and even international interaction activities with other countries. Under the dhamma propaganda activities, programmes like Dhamma Missionaries Training Course, Dhamma Study Class, National Dhamma Assembly have been carried out. Buddhist youth training camps are held annually to provide religious training for youths. Missionary activities are also carried out in jails, rehabilitation centres and educational institutions. YBAM educational programmes provide the

training of Dhamma teachers and teachers of devotional songs. Fellowship interactions are organized yearly for university undergraduates, college and school students. Besides these, YBAM has been working on publications of Buddhist magazines like 'Buddhist Digest', 'YBAM Bulletin'.

In addition, every youth section of each Buddhist society has lots of Buddhist activities. Normally, they organize dhamma classes under certain experienced lay Buddhists. In its contribution to the society, YBAM and other Buddhist organizations always have visits to old folks home and other welfare centres. Moreover, they play an important role in propagating the donation of blood, eyes and other body parts.

It is worthwhile to note that almost every Buddhist society has a meditation class or organizing meditation retreats. It is obvious that meditation has been regarded as an important practice. Young Buddhists have been given the opportunities to learn the methods of meditation.

3.3 Meditation Activities of Chinese Youths

Generally, people from all ages are interested in meditation. They practise meditation for various reasons. Usually, they are seeking peace of mind. They want to learn how to stop worrying and how to be calm and peaceful. In short, the stress of this modern world drives people to take up meditation.

Interest towards meditation had increased since 1970 following the activities organized by MBMC in Penang. More

organizations and centres were set up specifically to spread meditation. Meditation centres which are well-known in the Pennisular are MBMC, Santisukharama in Kota Tinggi and Lunas Meditation Centre in Kedah. One new centre was set up in Bukit Machang, Kelantan and this centre has been able to attract the local Buddhist society.

The development in learning and practising meditation nowadays can be said as a result of the influence from some Burma and Thai meditation teachers and a few local bhikkhus. Buddhist organizations are also giving emphasis on the practice of meditation. Moreover, more books on meditation are being introduced and published by local Buddhist societies.

Even young Buddhists are becoming interested in undertaking this practice. According to Venerable Sujivo, more young Buddhists come to practise meditation in the hermitage compared to old people. In the Buddhist Hermitage too, most of the 'yogis' are students. Usually, they go on retreats during their holidays.

The practice of meditation in institutions of higher learning has become more widespread in 1980's. Meditation classes are conducted every week in a few universities. Besides this, meditation camps and retreats are organized every year. Certain students have taken the initiative to join the meditation camps which are run by bhikkhus(monks) and local Buddhist organizations. For example: Buddhist Missionary Society Youth Section (BMSYS) organized a meditation retreat at the Buddhist Hermitage in Lunas, Kedah in 1992. 20 participants attended the retreat. It was guided

by Rev. Suvanno in the centre. Meanwhile, a meditation retreat under the guidance of Rev. Mahinda was jointly organized by Buddhist Gem Fellowship (BGF) and BMSYS from December 20-27, 1992.⁹

Interest in meditation among undergraduates is more or less influenced by the effort of bhikkhus like : Rev. Piyasalo, Sik Chi Chern and Rev. Sujivo whereby the students learn the technique of meditation from them. In addition, there are now more experienced lay Buddhists who are qualified meditation instructors in certain Buddhist centres. Brother James Ong (originally from MBMC) is presently a well-known meditation instructor in Selangor Vipassana Centre, Petaling Jaya. In the Buddhist Wisdom Centre (formed in 1987), there are a few lay Buddhists who can be considered as meditation instructors as they are all experienced enough.

According to Bro. James Ong, more and more young people are interested in meditation as compared to 20 years ago. This is probably due to the presence of more meditation teachers in Malaysia now. Besides Rev. Sujivo in Kota Tinggi, there are Ven. Visuddhacara from MBMC, Rev. Suvanno from Buddhist Hermitage Lunas, Rev. Mahinda who has been giving meditation talks to young Buddhists, Sik Chi Chern, who is a popular Ch'an master among Chinese-speaking youths and other lay Buddhists who have become meditation teachers.

From the survey, it is obvious that more undergraduates had gone on retreats during their holidays. Out of 137 respondents, 112 of them had gone on retreats and they are practising vipassana

⁹ Report from *Voice of Buddhism*, vol. 30, no.2, Buddhist Missionary Society, Petaling Jaya, 1992, p32.

meditation. The Buddhist society of each university has organized meditation retreat for its members. This promotion through the society is important because more students have come to know about meditation and they are thus encouraged to join the meditation retreats.

3.4 Vipassana in Malaysia

The history of vipassana in Malaysia began more than 20 years ago when Luang Por (Phra Khru Dhammabarchanvud), a Thai monk arrived in Penang around the very early 1970's. Luang Por could first only speak Thai but later mastered sufficient Hokkien to teach the Dhamma and impart vipassana to the laity. The first batch of lay meditators (about 10 people) started the MBMC. The teaching of vipassana meditation was started by the second batch of lay meditators. Bro. James Ong was then conducting interviews for the 'yogis'. This was around the middle 1970's onwards.

MBMC Youth Section was started during the time of the third batch of lay meditators. Rev. Sujivo appeared in the meditation scene after the third batch of serious meditators. This was towards the late 1970's. It was during this time that 3 months long meditation courses were conducted twice yearly. The Youth Section was very active then and came up with a regular series of periodicals on the dhamma.

Although it was unfortunate that Luang Por was not able to stay on in Malaysia, the Burmese Sayadaws were beginning to come into scene. Permission was given by Luang Por to invite the Burmese

meditation teachers to MBMC. Most Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw visited MBMC in 1980. When Sayadaw passed away in 1984, Sayadaw U Pandita came to Malaysia in 1985. He is Ven. Sujivo's meditation teacher while the Venerable was practising vipassana and samatha at the Mahasi Yeiktha, Burma. Sayadaw U Pandita had conducted numerous retreats in Penang, Klang and Kota Tinggi for the benefits of Malaysian 'yogis'.

Today, vipassana is spreading widely in West Malaysia. Even in East Malaysia, it has been spreading since Ven. Sujivo made a trip to East Malaysia in 1989. Considering the present development of vipassana meditation, we can conclude that vipassana meditation is now flourishing.

3.4.1 Vipassana Meditation

The results of the survey (see next chapter) show that vipassana is the most popular meditation practised by the respondents. Therefore, emphasis will be given more to vipassana meditation. First of all, we need to have a basic understanding of what is vipassana meditation.

Vipassana is a Pali term which is a combination of two words, 'vi' and 'passana'. 'Vi' means the 3 characteristics of mentality and physicality, i.e. anicca(impermanence), dukkha(suffering) and anatta(non-self). 'Passana' means right understanding or realization through deep concentration which is attained by means of mindfulness of the mental and physical processes. Vipassana is a meditational approach taught by the

Buddha to liberate the mind from unwholesome states and overcoming suffering. With regular practice of vipassana, one can gradually gain mastery over our mind. This comes about through the gradual understanding of the nature of existence, the nature of our body and mind. Vipassana is essentially the observations of what goes on in our body and mind. It involves the application of mindfulness to observe mental and bodily processes.

3.4.2 Method of Vipassana Meditation

There are now three main retreat centres teaching the Mahasi method in West Malaysia. They are the MBMC in Penang, Santisukharama Meditation Hermitage in Kota Tinggi and Lunas Meditation Centre in Kedah. Noting the rising and falling of the abdomen is a method introduced by Mahasi Sayadaw. Meditators are instructed to observe the abdominal movement. When we breathe in, the abdomen rises; when we breathe out, the abdomen falls. In this way, we feel the inward and outward movement of the abdomen. They must observe this inward and outward movement or the rising and falling of the abdomen, making a mental note of 'rising, falling, rising, falling'. But it should be pointed out that noting rising and falling of the abdomen is not the only object that Mahasi Sayadaw taught. Eventually, 'yogis' are to note all objects that may rise from the six-sense such as hearing, sensations (pain, itch), mental states like greed, anger, restlessness, boredom, frustration, impatience, etc. During sitting meditation, when there is no other more prominent object to note, a 'yogi' can revert to the rising and

falling of the abdomen. He can also note sitting posture and touching points of the body. So when the rising and falling is not clear, 'yogis' can note sitting and touching. Furthermore, even those who wish to note the sensation of touch at the nostrils may do so. Nobody at all disputes that one can do vipassana by noting the breath at the nostrils. It is only the teachers having practised and they have felt that the rising and falling is grosser and thus an easier vipassana object to note.

In sitting meditation, one note the rising and falling of the abdomen while in walking meditation, one ought to be aware of the process of walking. Walking meditation has different characteristics from the sitting practice. When doing walking meditation, one ought to keep the eyes downcast on the ground around 4 or 5 feet ahead. One is advised not to close the eyes. The hands are placed in the front or the back either in a clasped or folded position.

3.4.3 Distinguishing Between Samatha and Vipassana Meditation

Samatha means concentration, calmness and tranquility. When the mind is deeply concentrated on the object of meditation, it becomes calm and tranquil. Samatha meditation is different from vipassana meditation in both the purpose and result. The purpose of samatha meditation is to attain deep concentration, such as jhana, appana or upacara concentration (fixation-concentration, absorption concentration or access concentration). The purpose of vipassana

meditation is to attain not only some degree of concentration but also the understanding of bodily and mentally processes as they really are.

In samatha, when the mind is deeply concentrated on the object of meditation, all the defilements such as lust, greed, hatred, desire and so on are not present in the mind which is absorbed in the object. The mind then feels calm, tranquil, happy and through the attainment of deep concentration such as jhana. However, it does not enable a meditator to rightly understand the bodily and mental phenomena as they really are.

The result of samatha is the attainment of deep concentration, while that of vipassana meditation is the attainment of the cessation of suffering through the understanding of the mental and physical processes and their true nature. Just as the purpose and the result of the 2 kinds of meditation are different, the way of practising also differs. When we practise vipassana meditation, we must have only a variety of object. In the practice of samatha meditation, we bring our mind to the object of meditation and focus our attention on it as much as possible. When the mind begins to wander, we do not observe the wandering mind, but instead bring it back to the object of the samatha meditation.

On the other hand, when the mind becomes distracted and wanders during vipassana meditation, we do not bring it back to the primary object but follow and observe it as it really is. We observe it as long as it exists. Only after that process has disappeared will the mind return to the abdominal movement,

which is the main object. This is the main and most significant difference between the two types of meditation.

From the survey, it is noted that some respondents who are practising vipassana, are also practising metta meditation. Metta meditation or loving-kindness meditation is particularly suitable for one who has an angry temperament and finds difficulty in forgetting and forgiving. One of the objectives of this meditation is to gain concentration or one-pointedness of mind. When the mind is fixed on one object, it settles and becomes calm and tranquil. The principle then is to make the mind one-pointed, fixed on its object of meditation. In the case of loving-kindness, the object is the feeling of love, the wishing of well-being for all beings. There are various formulas one can use in radiating metta and obtaining this one-pointedness of mind. One of the formulas is reciting the four lines below and radiate the feeling of love that arose.

"May all beings be free from harm and danger,
May they be free from mental suffering,
May they be free from physical suffering,
May they take care of themselves happily."

The 'yogis' need to recite these lines over and over again and the mind will start to concentrate on its object of love and wishing well for others. The mind would become concentrated, one-pointed and one would experience calmness and tranquility.¹⁰

¹⁰ Bhikkhu Visuddhacara, *Curbing Anger Spreading Love*, MBMC, 1992, p49-50.

3.4 What Is Retreat

A retreat is referred to a temporary withdrawal into seclusion for religious exercise. Meditation is conducted intensively within a certain period in a suitable place. The place must be quiet, convenient and well furnished with requisites. All the participants who are on retreats will be under guidance of a learned meditation teacher to ensure that they are properly guided. In a vipassana meditation retreat, the yogis have to keep the 8 precepts during the retreat. The observation of the 8 precepts enable one to have more time to devote to meditation. The observance of the 5 precepts are abstention from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, telling lies and taking any intoxicants. The sixth precept means abstention from taking food after noon (from 12.00 noon to dawn the next morning). Although one must refrain from any kind of food during these hours, one is allowed to take drinks. To observe the seventh precept, one must refrain from dancing, singing, listening to music and adorning oneself with ornaments. The eighth precept is refraining from high and luxurious bed. The 'yogis' are not supposed to talk and read during the retreat. As mindfulness is a very important aspect in vipassana meditation, talking and reading are considered hindrances in building up mindfulness. Besides all these rules, one must be serious in his/her practice and be patient. The longest allowable sleeping hours per day is 6 hours. The meditators should adhere strictly to their instructor's advice and they should report to their instructor everyday regarding their practice as whether they have

shown any improvement and they may have some doubts that need to be clarified by the instructor.

In a vipassana meditation retreat, one must not do any act or move quickly. One has to slow down all movements as much as possible, so that he can catch every physical process and apply mindfulness to every minute, movement or action of the body. In a retreat, one ought to do nothing else except to be mindful of all the bodily or mentally process. Talking is allowed when it is necessary and one should talk softly and slowly in order not to disturb the concentration of the other meditators. One must be mindful of all daily activities. Eating, bathing, washing and drinking should be done mindfully and the subtle movements must be carefully observed. The purpose of slowing down activities is to build up mindfulness. Mindful concentration will pave the way for insight to arise. When mindfulness becomes continuous, naturally the concentration becomes deeper and insight will arise by itself.

In a retreat, the meditators are doing both sitting and walking meditation. They normally do one hour sitting and another hour of walking meditation. In sitting meditation, those with some experience in the meditation practice should sit for at least 45 minutes without changing their position. For a beginner, he should try to sit for at least 20 to 30 minutes without changing position.

Below is a model time table for daily meditation during the retreat (vipassana retreat).¹¹

¹¹ Venerable Sujivo, *Guidelines for Vipassana Meditation - Instruction by Sayadaw U Janakabhivamsa*, Buddhist Gem Fellowship, 1992, p109.

Time	Programme
0400 hours	wake up
0430 hours	walking
0530 hours	sitting
0630 hours	walking
0700 hours	breakfast
0800 hours	walking
0900 hours	sitting
1000 hours	walking
1100 hours	lunch
1200 hours	rest
1300 hours	sitting
1400 hours	walking
1500 hours	sitting
1600 hours	walking
1700 hours	drinks served
1730 hours	walking
1830 hours	sitting
1930 hours	walking
2000 hours	dhamma lecture
2130 hours	sitting
2230 hours	private meditation

3.6 Conclusion

It seems that more Buddhists societies now have included meditation as one important aspect of their annual activities. Meditation has been introduced to the Chinese youths as more experienced monks and bhikkhus are available to teach meditation in the country. Young Chinese Buddhists particularly are beginning to appreciate meditation as they know it is really beneficial to them in daily life.

In next chapter, we will analyse the practice of meditation among undergraduates from a few local universities. The presentation of tables in quantitative form will provide a clearer picture of their practice of meditation.

CHAPTER 4 : RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the quantitative results of the studies on meditation among undergraduates : types of meditation that are practised; the meditation teachers; meditation retreats; purpose of undertaking meditation; benefits of meditation; frequency of their meditation retreat and frequency of their practice in daily life.

137 undergraduates from UM, UKM, USM and UTM responded to the questionnaire (see Appendix A). It should be noted that 62% of the respondents are from UM. (See Table 1)

Table 1
Numbers of Respondents from Four Universities

University	Number of Respondent
UM	85 (62%)
USM	19 (13.9%)
UTM	15 (11%)
UKM	18 (13.1%)
Total	137 (100%)

The survey shows significantly that most of the respondents are becoming interested in meditation because they have incorporated meditation in their daily life and thus meditation has become integrated as a part of their way of life.

4.2 Meditation Teachers

This study reveals that the most popular meditation teacher is Reverend Sujivo. 73 or 62.9% of the respondents have Rev. Sujivo as their first meditation teacher and Rev. Visuddhacara as their second.

Table 2
Meditation Teacher A

Meditation Teacher	Fre.	%
Sujivo	73	62.9
Mrs. Tan	13	11.2
Nanaponika	7	6.0
Visuda	5	4.3
Chi Chern	5	4.3
Hor Tuck Loon	3	2.6
Mae Chi Koon	2	1.7
Chee Koon	1	0.9
Cirasaddho	1	0.9
Mr. Lim	1	0.9
Suvanno	1	0.9
Mrs. Ong	1	0.9
Cheah Ah Bee	1	0.9
Sin Guan	1	0.9
Total	116	100

Table 3
Meditation Teacher B

Meditation Teacher	Fre.	%
Visuda	13	24.5
Nanaponika	11	20.7
Chi Chern	6	11.3
Cirasaddho	5	9.4
Sujivo	4	7.5
Hor Tuck Loon	3	5.7
Mae Chi Khoo	2	3.8
Mahinda	2	3.8
Suvanno	1	1.9
Mrs. Tan	1	1.9
Chee Koon	1	1.9
Ng Sian Bee	1	1.9
Sin Guan	1	1.9
Victor Wee	1	1.9
Danatami	1	1.9
Total	53	100

Therefore, the result of the survey shows that Rev. Sujivo is the most popular and well-known meditation teacher among the respondents. Rev. Sujivo is a Buddhist Theravada monk who has devoted his life to the meditational aspects of the Buddha's teachings. Rev. Sujivo donned the robes shortly after his graduation from the University of Malaya (with an honours degree in Agricultural Science) in 1975. He practised under several meditation teachers during his monastic training. Venerable has conducted numerous retreats in various towns throughout West Malaysia. He presently resides in Santisukharama Hermitage, Kota Tinggi. As Rev. Sujivo

uses English as the main medium of instruction, it was presumed that most of his pupils are from English-speaking groups. However, the respondents who are under his guidance are mostly Mandarin speakers. Generally, it has been assumed that English-speaking groups follow mainly the Theravada tradition whereas Mandarin-speaking Buddhists are Mahayanists. The present situation has shown that this is not so. As there are more Mandarin-speaking Buddhists interested in Theravada tradition of meditation, Buddhism in Malaysia is entering a new phase whereby meditation is being practised diligently by the youths.

Besides Rev. Sujivo, there are other meditation teachers such as Rev. Visuddhacara (presently teaching vipassana in MBMC, Penang), Sayadaw Nanaponika (a Theravada monk from Nepal), Rev. Cirasaddho (an American monk), Rev. Suvanno who resides in Lunas Meditation Centre, Kedah, Rev. Mahinda and some other lay Buddhists who are also meditation instructors. Table 2 & 3 indicate that meditation teacher comprises both monks and lay Buddhists. Therefore, there is a likelihood that some present lay meditators would eventually become qualified teachers of meditation and this would further the spread of meditation in this country.

According to Rev. Visuddhacara, there are not sufficient number of Buddhist meditation teachers to meet the increasing numbers of 'yogis', whether samatha or vipassana. There is a great shortage of meditation teachers but there are so many people who want to learn meditation but they cannot find suitable teachers to teach them. That is why monks from Thailand, Burma, Nepal have often been invited to teach meditation here. For example : Sayadaw

Nanaponika from Nepal has conducted a few retreats during his temporary stay in Malaysia. Sayadaw stayed at Santisukharama, Kota Tinggi and MBMC when he came to Malaysia. Rev. Cirasaddho, too is an American monk who is well-known for his metta meditation. He has also conducted metta meditation sessions in Subang Jaya Buddhist Association during his stay in Malaysia.

As there are not many meditation teachers in Malaysia, some young local monks have gone to Thailand, Burma to learn the technique of meditation. When they have enough practice and experience, they would come back and teach meditation here. Rev. Sujivo, for example was under Venerable Sayadaw U Panditabhivamsa of the famed Mahasi Buddhist Meditation Centre in Rangoon, Burma. Today, Rev. Sujivo is a well-known meditation teacher and exponent of vipassana meditation in the country.

4.3 Types of Meditation

Respondents were asked whether they have been to retreats and which type of meditation they are practising. The results are as below : (See Table 4)

Table 4
Types of Meditation and Retreat

Type of Meditation	Retreat		Total %
	Yes	No	
Vipassana	112(93.3%)	8(6.6%)	120
Samatha	14(82.3%)	3(17.6%)	17
Metta	48(98%)	1(2.04%)	49

112 or 93.3% of the respondents who have gone on retreats are now practising vipassana meditation. There are 8 respondents who had never been to retreats but are also practising this type of meditation (See Table 4). They could have been given some instructions by some lay meditators. This shows that they have been introduced to the methods of vipassana before.

From the questionnaire, it is worthwhile to note that respondents from USM are under guidance of Mrs. Tan, a serious meditator in Penang. Those student 'yogis' from USM have never been to any retreats but they somehow got to learn vipassana meditation. Lay Buddhists also play an equally important part in spreading the practice of meditation. According to a 'yogi' from USM, vipassana meditation is promoted among the students in USM

through the Buddhist society and through the encouragement of some senior 'yogis'.

The second popular form of meditation among the undergraduates is metta meditation or loving-kindness meditation (See Table 4). 48 or 98% of the respondents are practising metta meditation. It has been mentioned in chapter 3 that metta is a special kind of meditation which builds up the feelings of loving-kindness or compassionate love towards living beings. Like vipassana meditation, metta meditation is believed to bring lots of benefits to the practitioner. The Buddhist texts mention 11 benefits that one could obtain through the practice of metta;

- i) One sleeps easily
- ii) One is dear to all being
- iii) Devas(spirit) guard him etc,etc.

Moreover, metta has become popular because it is also taught by the teachers of vipassana meditation. Most of them stress the importance of combining these two methods of meditation because both of them have a complementary function of keeping the mind wholesome and concentrated. Rev. Visuddhacara said that a 'yogi' should strike a balance between metta and vipassana because only vipassana gives one wisdom and metta, as a samatha object, only produces tranquility.

Samatha meditation is the least popular meditation among the undergraduates. 14 or 82.3% of the respondents who have gone on retreats are practising samatha (See Table 4). They are usually under the guidance of Sik. Chi Chern, Chee Koon. The tables show a general pattern of meditation among the Chinese youths, that is those

who are practising vipassana meditation are mainly followers of Theravada monks like Rev. Sujivo, Rev. Visuddhacara, Rev. Cirasaddho, Sayadaw Nanaponika; and those who are practising samatha meditation are more prone to the Mahayana tradition, therefore they are usually under Sik Chi Chern and Chee Koon. However, this is not true to say that Theravadins are only practising vipassana and Mahayanists are samatha meditators. Theravadin monks practise some samatha meditations to complement the training of their mind as a whole. Some of the more popular methods of meditations that are practised by them are meditation on the 32 parts of the body; meditation on death and some kasinas (universal, a contemplation device & concept based thereon). Rev. Sujivo himself practises the white kasina.

The three tables show a very significant point. Vipassana meditation is the most popular meditation among the respondents, followed by metta and samatha meditation. But, the difference between vipassana meditation and metta meditation is large. We can, therefore sum up that vipassana meditation is the most popular method of meditation practised by Chinese youths .

4.4 Analysis of Meditation Retreat According to the Frequency of Meditation

In the questionnaire, the respondents were asked how often they meditate in their daily life. The table shows us the data of how often they meditate daily.

Table 5
Retreat and Frequency of Meditation

Frequency of Meditation

retreat	very frequent	frequent	sometimes	seldom	hardly	Total %
yes	7	33	38	30	14	122 91.7
no		1	4	6		11 8.3
Total %	7 5.3	34 25.6	42 31.6	36 27.0	14 10.5	133 100.0

Only 7 or 5.3% of the respondents meditate very frequently. However, 34 or 25.6% of them meditate frequently. 42 or 31.6% of them meditate sometimes and 36 or 27.0% of them seldom meditate. 14 or 10.5% of the respondents hardly meditate. It should be noted here that in the questionnaire, it is stated very clearly that very frequent means twice a day; frequent means once a day; sometimes is a few times a week; seldom is a few times a month and hardly means once or twice a year (See Appendix A).

Referring to Table 5, we find that there are 122 respondents who have gone on retreats and they are still practising meditation after they came back. Though 11 of them have not gone on retreats, they meditate too in their daily life. Out of these 11 respondents, one of them meditates very frequently, four of them meditate

sometimes and six of them seldom meditate. We can conclude that meditation has become quite common now among the youths. Youths today have come to realize the importance of meditation. Perhaps, they believe that meditation can help them to deal with their problems in life. According to Brother James Ong, 'yogis' meditate because they have problems. Since life is full of obstacles, people are becoming aware of meditation as a way to help them face their problems .

4.5 Further Discussion and Analysis

Chinese youths are becoming quite active in the Buddhist societies. Most of the respondents attended meditation course through the Buddhist societies (See Table 6).

Tabel 6
Sex of Respondents to Meditation Course

Sex	Yes	No	Total %
Male	48	8	56 42.4
Female	69	7	76 57.6
	117	15	132

117 or 88.6% of the respondents have attended meditation courses that are organized by the Buddhist society in campus. In

addition, these respondents have also been to retreats (See Table 7). There are 121 respondents out of the total 132 who have gone on retreats. It means that about 91.6% of the respondents have experiences of retreats.

Table 7
Sex of Respondents to Meditation Retreat

Sex	Retreat		Total %
	Yes	No	
Male	49	8	57 43.2
Female	72	3	75 56.8
	121	11	132

Most of the respondents have gone to Santisukharama Hermitage in Kota Tinggi. A Kota Tinggi retreat is organized by the Buddhist society of UM every year. Only the respondents from USM have their retreat in MBMC, Penang. USM students only go on retreats in Kota Tinggi during the long vacation. Moreover, not many of them are practising meditation. According to a 'yogi' from USM, vipassana meditation has only recently become popular among USM students two years ago.

In UKM, it has been only more than a year ago that vipassana meditation was introduced to UKM students. This is mainly through the encouragement of the seniors who came back from retreats. There are not many UKM students who can be considered as serious

'yogis'. In fact, there are only 20 to 30 of them. UKM students had organized a few retreats to Kota Tinggi and the response of the students is quite encouraging.

UTM students too had organized retreats to Kota Tinggi. However, those who have gone on retreats are not really serious meditators. They do not practise meditation regularly after their retreats. Some of them joined the retreat only once and never on any retreats after that. Besides vipassana, some UTM students also practise samatha meditation. Those who do that normally join activities that are organized by YBAM whereby they are introduced to the method of samatha meditation.

From the study, it reveals that the respondents learn both samatha and vipassana meditation. What seems significant is they usually learn samatha meditation in the campus (either through meditation courses or through activities of YBAM) but they come to know about vipassana meditation only after they have gone on retreat in Kota Tinggi or MBMC.

The respondents were also asked their purpose of understaking the practice of meditation. The answers they gave were basically the same. They want to purify their mind, to gain wisdom, mindfulness and concentration. The table below shows the results of the survey.

Table 8
Purpose of Undertaking the Practice

Purpose	Fre.	%
mindfulness	29	22
purification of mind	22	16.6
peace & calm	19	14.4
experience meditation	18	13.6
method	12	9.1
happiness	8	6.1
achieve nibbana	6	4.5
self-discovery	4	3.0
improve health	3	2.3
practice of dhamma	3	2.3
suffering	2	1.5
concentration	2	1.5
know the nature of life	2	1.5
understanding phenomena	1	0.8
curiosity	1	0.8
total	132	100

22% of the respondents answered that their main purpose of undertaking meditation is to build up mindfulness. 16.6% of them want to purify their mind and 14.4% of them wish to experience peace and calm. It is obvious that the purpose of practising meditation is mainly concerned with spiritual peace. It seems that most of the respondents have come to know the importance of purifying the mind. This signifies an awareness among the youths the importance of controlling the mind.

From the study, we know first that there is a tendency towards the practice of meditation among Chinese youths. It is proved

quantitatively that vipassana meditation is becoming more popular than the other types of meditation among undergraduates in this country. Most of the respondents have gone on meditation retreats and they are practising it in their daily lives. The survey also shows that local bhikkhus(monks) like Rev. Sujivo, Rev. Visuddhacara, Rev. Suvanno are among the popular meditation teachers in the country besides some other monks from Thailand, Burma, Nepal and America. Moreover, there are quite a number of lay Buddhists who have much experience in meditation so that they are able to instruct the beginners.

4.6 Why is Meditation Becoming Popular Today Among Chinese Youths

Various types of meditations were taught by the Buddha for various people at various stages of spiritual development. Meditation for older children and adults appears to be meditation on the breath. This meditation is highly recommended to everyone by the Buddha. Its main effects are mainly improving concentration and the calming of the mind which incidentally is the basic exercise for vipassana meditation. It is especially suitable for nervous people. Many emotional, psychological problems have been overcome as a result of the regular practice of this meditation. Vipassana meditation is suitable for those people who already have a certain degree of mental calmness and concentration.

In short, the benefits of meditation is the main reason of its popularity among Buddhists. In the study, the respondents were asked regarding the benefits they get from meditation.

Table 9
Benefits of Meditation

Benefit	Fre.	%
purification of mind	66	51.2
peace & calm	29	22.5
self-improvement	19	14.7
dhamma	11	8.5
nibbana	3	2.3
better health	1	0.8
	129	100

51.2% of the respondents feel that one important benefit of meditation is purification of mind followed by peace & calm (22.5%) and 14.7% of them hold the view that meditation can benefit them in certain ways like self-improvement and self-discovery. Of course, there are other benefits such as improvement of health, understanding the dhamma and attaining nibbana. The study shows that most of the respondents are very much aware of the benefits of meditation. Therefore, meditation has become a practical aspect of the Buddha Dhamma.

CHAPTER 5 : CONCLUSION

Malaysian Buddhism has undergone great changes. YBAM has grown from its initial membership of 17 to its present size of 230 organizations. More and more Buddhist activities are being carried out for the benefit of not only the Buddhists themselves but for the other members of the society as well. Buddhist societies always organize visits to old folks home, orphanages and other welfare centres. Free medical service is another contribution of the Buddhist organizations.

Buddhism has prospered tremendously especially during these few years. However, there are certain problems faced by the Buddhist community even though its present development in the country has been good.

One problem faced by all Buddhists in the country is the shortage of monks which tend to inhibit the progress of Buddhist education. The Theravada Buddhist Sangha are more lacking in fully-ordained and full time monks compared to Mahayana Buddhist Sangha. Ven. Mahinda and Ven. Piyasalo, both Straits-born Chinese are among the English-speaking Buddhist monks who have been actively involved in missionary work. The other local Buddhist monks, originally from the MBMC are Ven. Sujivo, Ven. Aggacitta and Ven. Visuddhacara who are meditation monks.

Presently there is only a handful of local young Chinese, Sinhalese and Thai monks of high calibre. Besides this, there is no central body to co-ordinate the various Buddhist organizations and their activities. Although YBAM has taken the responsibility in co-

ordinating the activities and policies of Buddhist Youth Organizations in Malaysia, it cannot take on the role of doing the same to the parent-organization, but can assist in the formation of such a central body.

Regarding meditation, there are many misunderstandings about it. In fact, the most vital aspect of the practice of Buddhism is meditation. The most common misconception includes the idea that Buddhist meditation means making one's mind blank. There is also a general fear that meditation is something mysterious and magical. If one practises it wrongly one may go mad. Many people are plunging into meditation these days without a good teacher or a real understanding of what it is all about. They are convinced that meditation is the short cut to worldly release and to attain instant happiness. These false views in meditation have been generated by certain people who themselves are not exactly meditation teachers.

Therefore, the young Buddhists today have an important role to play. If they have a clear understanding of the Buddha Dhamma and practise meditation under a good meditation teacher, they will eventually become meditation teachers which will certainly help to meet the demands of the increasing number of 'yogis'. Many seminars and training courses are thus being organized particularly for youths, to train them to become lay dhamma preachers. For example: Dhamma Teachers' Programme and other leadership training programmes such as National Leadership Seminar, Leadership Consultation & Management Courses are held from time to time in view of the shortage of experienced Buddhist workers providing leadership role in the organizations.

Meditation has a significant impact on youths. It makes them understand the Buddha's teaching at a deeper level, especially the three characteristics of life mainly unsatisfactoriness, impermanence and non-self. Youths have come to know that there is a sense of urgency to practise hard in order to be freed from this mundane life and to attain a greater happiness and satisfaction. Youths who practise meditation are less likely to drop off from Buddhism because they have truly tasted the essence of the Buddha's teaching whereas those who do not meditate only understand the teaching on the intellectual level.

In Buddhist organizations and societies, the practice of meditation has produced more youths who are willing to be committed in the activities because with meditation, there is more zeal towards Buddhism.

It is worthwhile to note that before 1980's, the Buddhist organizations usually organized general Buddhist activities such as dhamma talks, chanting classes, social welfare work, blood donation, etc without much emphasis on meditation. An exception is MBMC which was actually built under the influence of a Thai monk (Luang Por). After 1980's, vipassana meditation became more popular and therefore some centres were set up by local youths for practising vipassana meditation, for example : Buddhist Wisdom Centre and Selangor Vipassana Centre.

This study has shown that there is an encouraging response towards meditation among youths. Young people today know there is an acute need to seek some peace of mind so as they can cope with life. They are now more prone to meditation than compared to the

past. The number of 'yogis' will increase in the future and there will be greater demand for meditation classes in time to come.

UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA

YOGI IS A TITLE OF RESPECT FOR ANYONE WHO PRACTICES

YOGA. IT IS NOT A RELIGION. IT IS A WAY OF LIFE. IT IS A WAY OF

THINKING AND FEELING.

YOGA IS NOT A RELIGION. IT IS A WAY OF LIFE.

IT IS A WAY OF THINKING AND FEELING. IT IS A WAY OF

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Malaysian Buddhist Meditation Centre



Walking Meditation



Sitting Meditation