



Daniel M. Stuart

Insight in Perspective

S. N. Goenka and the Emergence of
Global Insight Meditation and Mindfulness



Daniel M. Stuart

Insight in Perspective

Hamburg Buddhist Studies 20

Series Editors:

Steffen Döll | Michael Zimmermann



Numata Center
for Buddhist Studies

Daniel M. Stuart

Insight in Perspective

S. N. Goenka and the Emergence of
Global Insight Meditation and Mindfulness

projektverlag.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

Published with the support of the University of South Carolina, College of Arts and Sciences.

ISSN 2190-6769

ISBN 978-3-89733-606-3 (printed version)

ISBN 978-3-89733-632-2 (E-Book)

© 2024 projekt verlag, Bochum/Freiburg
www.projektverlag.de

Cover original design by Benjamin Guzinski; Julia Wrage, Hamburg

Cover image: View of the Great Dagon Pagoda in 1825, from a print after Lieutenant Joseph Moore of Her Majesty's 89th Regiment, published in a portfolio of 18 views in 1825–1826 (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shwedagon_pagoda.jpg)

Contents

Foreword	9
Acknowledgments	11
Introduction	13
I. The Birth of Insight?	29
1. The Ledi Sayādaw: Overdetermined Readings	29
2. In the Hands of All the People	40
3. The Mingun Jetavana Sayādaw and the Mahāsī Sayādaw: A Question of Beginnings	51
4. Sayāgyi Maung Po Thet: Layman Wizard	56
II. Sayāgyi U Ba Khin: <i>The Right Answer(s) to Practice with a Basis of Textual Theory</i>	71
1. Vocations and Avocations: Coming to a Life of Dhamma	72
2. <i>The Right Answer(s) to Practice with a Basis of Textual Theory</i>	79
3. Power in Practice: U Ba Khin, Mother Sayama, and the Role of the Teacher	87
4. Guru of Gurus: Special Individuals, the Rhetoric of Secularism, and the Limits of Universalism	96
III. S.N. Goenka: Faithful Student, Radical Teacher	115
1. Mission and Transmission in New Places and Spaces	118
2. Lineage, Authority, and Fissure: Insight into Persons and Cultures in Schismatic Perspective	129
a) <i>S.N. Goenka and Anagārika Munindra: A Long Friendship</i>	131
b) <i>Cultural Identity and “Situated Agency”: U Ba Khin’s Global Team and Their Role in the Development of the Insight Meditation Society</i>	141
c) <i>Joseph Goldstein, Sharon Salzberg, and Jack Kornfield: Constraints of Authority</i>	160
d) <i>Fallout in Asia: Mother Sayama Emerges from Burma</i>	171

2. S.N. Goenka Steps Out on His Own: A Bodhisattva for a Modern Global Public	194
a) <i>Foundations of Mindfulness</i>	195
b) <i>Institutions, Assistants, and Proxies: Channeling the Pure Stream of the Dharma</i>	198
c) <i>Publishing for Indian and Global Publics: The Vipassana Research Institute and the “Sārification” of a Tradition</i>	214
d) <i>Goenka and His Teachings: Calm and Insight</i>	227
IV. Conclusion	239
Appendices	249
Appendix 1: U Ba Khin’s Teacher’s Verses and Associated Texts	251
Appendix 2: The Body Scan Practice in the Ledi Sayādaw’s Early Meditation Manuals	257
Appendix 3: The Body Scan Practice and other Miscellany in Sayā Thetgyi’s Teachings from <i>A Treatise on the Shortcut to Knowledge and Vision of Insight Meditation in This Very Life</i> (<i>Diṭṭhadhammavipassanāññadassana Phrat’ lam “” kyam “”</i>)	267
Appendix 4: A Miscellany of Excerpts from Sayāgyi U Ba Khin’s Oral Teachings on <i>Vipassanā</i>	277
Appendix 5: Some Facets of the Role of Bodily Awareness in S.N. Goenka’s Teachings	285
References	293
A Note on Informants, Interviews, and Ethics Oversight	293
Abbreviations	294
Literature	294
Index	317

List of Figures

1. Image of the *Bodhipakkhiya-yantra* from the 1909 edition of the *Rogantara-dīpanī* (A Manual for Warding Off Pestilence)
2. Notice signed by Sayāgyi U Ba Khin on October 23, 1952, inviting people of all religions to learn meditation at the International Meditation Centre
3. Letter of S.N. Goenka's authorization to teach, dated June 20, 1969, and signed by U Ba Khin
4. *Vipassanā Newsletter* 2.1 (Winter 1975; published in Berkeley, California), providing contact information for the members of U Ba Khin's missionary team
5. Letter from U Ba Khin to Goenka, dated August 20, 1970, underwriting the narrative of Goenka as the first to revive the teaching of Vipassana in India in the modern period (as should be evident, the letter has been presented by the International Vipassana Organization only in part)
6. *Vipassana Newsletter* 1.2 (Summer 1974), advertising a 30-day *sati-patanna* [sic] course taught by Joseph Goldstein in California at the end of 1974
7. *Vipaśyanā* (*Sādhakoṃ kā māsik prerṇāpatra*) 4.6 (November 1974), advertising consecutive ten-day courses in Vārāṇasī in December of that same year, where S.N. Goenka made explicit mention of "a big confusion in the minds of Western students with these words of *satipaṭṭhāna* and *vipaśyanā* [...]"
8. *Vipassana Newsletter* 2.3 (Summer 1975): 4, providing news of the establishment of a *vipassanā* meditation center in Western Massachusetts
9. *Vipassana Newsletter* 2.3 (Summer 1975): 4, providing news of the establishment of a *vipassanā* meditation center in Western Massachusetts (cont.)
10. *Vipassana Newsletter* 4.2 (May 1977), making public the ouster of Robert Hover and Ruth Denison
11. *Vipassana Newsletter* 1.3 (Fall 1974), containing an article describing Robert Hover's attempts to gather data for the scientific study of *vipassanā*
12. Photo of the founders of the Insight Meditation Society, together with the Mahāsī Sayādaw and unnamed monks (1979), in Jack Kornfield's 1993 article "This Fantastic Unfolding Experiment"
13. Anagārika Sujata (left) with Anagārika Munindra (right) and an unidentified young woman during Munindra's visit to San Jose in 1977
14. *Vipaśyanā* (*Sādhakoṃ kā māsik prerṇāpatra*) 1.12 (May 1972), showing the health reports of a meditator, "Śrī Rāṭhījī," before and after practicing *vipaśyanā*
15. Announcement in the *Vipaśyanā* newsletter of Mother Sayama's first trip to India
16. Announcement in the *Vipaśyanā* newsletter of Mother Sayama's second trip to India
17. Announcement in the *Vipaśyanā* newsletter indicating the possibility of getting "special guidance" from Mother Sayama and U Chit Tin during a meditation course at Dhammagiri, Igatpuri, in April of 1979

18. *Vipassana Newsletter* of December 1978, announcing S.N. Goenka's first trip outside the Indian subcontinent since the beginning of his mission, along with the aspiration that he will be joined by Mother Sayama
19. *Vipaśyanā* 9.6/7 (January 2, 1980), listing a three-day short course to be taught in February of 1980 in Igatpuri, "under the protection and direction of Mother Sayama"
20. Announcement in the *Vipaśyanā* newsletter of the "auspicious presence" of U Chit Tin at Dhammagiri, Igatpuri, in February of 1981
21. Announcement in the February 1981 *Vipaśyanā* newsletter of a planned visit by S.N. Goenka and his wife to the original International Meditation Centre in Rangoon
22. *Vipaśyanā* 10.10 (March 20, 1981), announcing a short course to be conducted by Goenka, Sayama, and U Chit Tin
23. *Vipaśyanā* 10.12 (May 18, 1981), announcing S. N. Goenka's teaching schedule for his third set of courses outside of Asia
24. Notice in the *Vipassana Newsletter* of Autumn 1981, announcing the parting of ways of S. N. Goenka and his co-teachers at the International Meditation Centre
25. "Notice of Clarification" in the *Vipassana Newsletter* (IMC-UK), Spring 1982, responding to the "Notice of Change" issued in the Autumn 1981 *Vipassana Newsletter* (Berkeley, California)
26. Announcement of S.N. Goenka's first *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* meditation course, in the *Vipaśyanā* newsletter of October 1981
27. Second announcement of S.N. Goenka's first *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* meditation course, in the *Vipaśyanā* newsletter of November 1981
28. *Vipassana Newsletter* (Autumn 1981, Berkeley, California), announcing the first course in which S. N. Goenka presented formal teachings on the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*
29. Announcement in the January 1982 *Vipaśyanā* newsletter of plans to depute "Assistant Teachers" to conduct meditation courses at the request of local groups of "old students"
30. First formal announcement of the appointment of eight "Assistant Teachers" in the June 1982 issue of *Vipaśyanā*
31. *Vipaśyanā* newsletter 11.11 (May 8, 1982): 4, announcing the first Assistant Teacher courses to be taught in India by Indian Assistant Teachers beginning in May of 1982 in Igatpuri, Jaipur, and Kolkota
32. *Vipaśyanā* newsletter 11.12 (June 6, 1982), listing Assistant Teacher courses to be conducted in India, Canada, France, and the United States
33. January 1984 *Vipaśyanā* newsletter announcing the undertaking of various "research activities" on *vipaśyanā*
34. First announcement of the Vipassana Research Institute
35. A recent Facebook advertisement for "100% Tax Deduction" when donating to the Vipassana Research Institute

Foreword

In this monograph, Daniel Stuart undertakes a detailed exploration of what is regarded today as one of Buddhism's most prominent impacts on contemporary societies: the global insight and mindfulness movement. In the course of Buddhism's journey to modernity, no other phenomenon has wielded greater influence or offered more inspiration to practitioners—both within and beyond the Buddhist community—than its teachings on mindfulness. While the origins of these teachings can be traced back to the earliest Buddhist texts, the evolution of mindfulness meditation from a specialized practice of reclusive monastics to a universal and methodic instrument allowing the understanding and regulation of the mind and emotions is a truly remarkable development. This evolution merits closer examination not only within the context of Buddhist history, but also with regard to its broader societal impact.

The spread of insight and mindfulness meditation in the modern world can be viewed from two distinct perspectives. We may interpret its spread as the spiritualization of segments of society previously untouched by such practices, thus providing access to spirituality for persons who otherwise have no connection to it. Conversely, we may perceive it as the secularization of a once-sacred means to transcend the worldly realm, whereby it might be stated critically that mindfulness meditation has departed from the Buddhist ethical and soteriological framework within which it was originally situated.

Daniel Stuart's study on insight meditation and mindfulness has thus been eagerly anticipated. In the following pages, he delves into the historical intricacies of how Buddhist insight and mindfulness traditions have emerged as major spiritual forces of global dimensions, and how they have adapted to the diverse needs of individuals in varying contexts. Focusing on these developments, Stuart's approach challenges prevailing mainstream views by highlighting the—hitherto largely overlooked—historiographical nuances in the transition from Burma's colonial era to world-wide modernity. His analysis questions the idea that these traditions can be appropriately understood by categorizing them under what is called Buddhist modernism. He centers his work on the key figures who shaped these developments: the monk Ledi Sayādaw (1846–1923), the lesser-known lay teacher Sayāgyi Maung Po Thet (1873–1945), the renowned Sayāgyi U Ba Khin (1899–1971),

and the influential S. N. Goenka (1924–2013), who is credited as a principal architect of a global, non-sectarian mindfulness tradition.

Building on fifteen years of ethnographic research and engagement with insight meditation communities across India, Myanmar, North America, and Western Europe, Stuart presents fresh insights in his book. He utilizes previously unexplored archival materials in Hindi, English, and Burmese, offering a novel perspective on the emergence of modern insight meditation and mindfulness traditions. If Stuart's work succeeds in redirecting our gaze from the confines of our own knowledge systems, these insights will contribute to the establishment of a more balanced narrative of how the Buddhist traditions of mindfulness came also to permeate the Western world.

Michael Zimmermann and Steffen Döll

Acknowledgments

Many have helped me since the beginning of the project from which this book emerged. First and foremost, Mari Jyväskylä Stuart has been with me every step of the way. She has been an intellectual conversation partner, an erudite editor, and a source of emotional support. Much of what is good in the book is the result of her helpful interventions. I am also indebted to Alexander von Rospatt, who helped me develop this project in its beginnings and has remained in discussion with me about it for nearly twenty years. My conversations as a graduate student with Robert Sharf were additionally instrumental, particularly in catalyzing some of my more critical engagements with both my subject of study and the academic discourses within which my methodology developed. I also received guidance from and forged fruitful connections with many others along the way. Rupert Gethin, Peter Skilling, Mahesh Deokar, and Sean Kerr all provided constructive intellectual spaces for me to explore the ideas developed in the book. Sharda Sanghvi, Roberto Mannai, Joah McGee, Ken Pransky, Kory Goldberg, Anthony Scott, Erik Braun, Ann Gleig, Amy Langenberg, Willoughby Britton, Jared Lindahl, Matthew Drage, Pyi Phyoo Kyaw, and Oscar Carrera provided useful ideas, criticisms, edits, and source material for the book. Conversations with Stephan Atzert, Jagdish Shinde, Raman Khosla, Narendra Bokhare, and John Tresch pushed me to shift my perspectives on my identity as a scholar and on my writing process. Eviatar Shulman, Lauren Leve, and Douglas Ober offered space for thoughtful conversation and refreshing perspectives on academic life. I am also indebted to Cynthia Peck-Kubaczek for her astute editorial work. Finally, I am grateful to Michael Zimmermann and Steffen Döll for considering this volume for the Hamburg Buddhist Studies series and for ushering it through to publication. They made the review and editorial process constructive and smooth.

Daniel M. Stuart

Introduction

In the last several decades, a single narrative about the history of modern insight meditation or mindfulness—and its various derivatives—has come to dominate popular and scholarly imaginations. This narrative presents such meditation as the creation of a handful of modern reformers in Southeast Asia who were in large part responding to colonial and missionary pressures. It also posits the development of large-scale meditation groups, or “mass meditation,” as a defining factor in the emergence of this meditation movement.

This dominant narrative developed from arguments advanced toward the end of the twentieth century under the theoretical gaze of a minimally informed historical sociology, and it has been recapitulated repeatedly into the present with little modification in a wide variety of scholarly contexts.¹ When I began the research in 2008 for the project from which this book emerged, I already had over a decade of ethnographic engagement with some of the communities of insight meditation practitioners in Asia and North America that are the subject of this book. Because of my breadth of experience with these communities, I was somewhat hopeful that I could be part of a new generation of scholars which might draw productively and critically on the existent dominant academic narrative to generate a more grounded and historiographically informed account of the emergence of modern globalized insight meditation and mindfulness. This optimism softened in the course of my research, however, primarily as a result of my encounters with some of the key architects of the dominant narrative and their epigones.

A crucial turning point for me came in 2013 with the publication of Erik Braun’s book *The Birth of Insight*. In that book, Braun reenacted the received narrative while at the same time claiming to provide it with historiographical substance. More troubling than the book itself was the book’s uncritical reception, which demonstrated the ways in which not just research programs, but regimes of critique as well, often uncritically reproduce distorting yet entrenched academic stories. This monograph is an attempt to provide

¹ See, for example, Sharf 1995 and 2015; McMahan 2008, 2017 and 2020; Braun 2013; Wilson 2014 and 2017; Schedneck 2015; Gleig 2019; Cook 2010 and 2022; Cassaniti 2018; Pagis 2019; Gajaweera 2022; and Scott 2023.

historical resources for a counternarrative, a new historiography of the gaps, one that takes as its jumping off point a critical analysis of several historical moments that are at the center of the narrative of modern Buddhist meditation depicted in *The Birth of Insight*. In developing my counternarrative, I also carry out a more general critical assessment of the problems entailed in the ongoing reification of the received academic narrative of modern global insight and mindfulness meditation.

As is the case with most dominant historical narratives, there are elements of truth in the narrative of modern insight meditation that has won the day, and various scholars have thoughtfully engaged many important issues entailed in that story. However, this narrative also effaces key elements of how “insight meditation” and “mindfulness” became what they are today. It is likewise tacitly complicit in undercutting key methodological developments in the writing of history, developments that seek to attend to practices of everyday life and the lived agencies of colonized communities beyond the panoptic views of the colonizers and the scholarly discourses of elites.² In this book, I present old and new textual, archival, and ethnographic data to show how the received narrative might be nuanced by a fuller appreciation of historical, experiential, and cultural contexts that scholars have overlooked. I deploy post-colonial historiographical and anthropological perspectives to refigure—or finally make legible—key historical moments in the practice of twentieth-century lay-controlled Burmese insight and mindfulness meditations as they became global. In doing so, the contours of many of these practices as they are carried out today come into relief in new ways.

To understand why such a book is not only historiographically productive, but also epistemically necessary, I will here briefly review some of the developments in the scholarly literature that have led to the construction of

² See, for example, Ginzburg 2011 [1966] and 1980 [1976]; Guha 1988a, 1988b, 1999 and 2002; Spivak 2006 [1987], particularly 207–211; Bhabha 1994, particularly 171–197; Descola 2012 [2005]; Chakrabarty 2000; De la Cadena 2015; Clossey et al. 2016 and 2017ab; Maltese and Strube 2021. We might note here in particular how Braun deploys Guha’s paradigm-shifting work (Braun 2013: 155 [Guha 1988a: 40]) against its own purposes by invoking the notion of “autonomy”—which Guha uses to capture the role of the peasantry in colonial India beyond the scope of traditional historiographical practice—to characterize the Ledi Sayādaw’s elite scholastic project. In doing so, he also subverts what I consider to be one of the most relevant aspects of Guha’s theorization (Guha 1988b and Guha 1999), the move to include the agencies of gods and spirits—and by implication other non-human entities—in an understanding of social and political developments and movements. On this issue, see also Chakrabarty 2000: 11–16. Perhaps more to the point, see Clossey et al. 2016, 2017ab and De la Cadena 2015: 91–116.

the current entrenched narrative of modern Burmese-derived global insight and mindfulness meditations. We begin with a brief discussion of two anthropologists of Buddhism and meditation in Southeast Asia whose ethnographic works also had historiographical inflections. First, two important books by Stanley Tambiah—*World Conqueror & World Renouncer* (1976) and *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets* (1984)—set the stage for a dichotomizing mode of interpretation in the study of modern traditions of meditation. That is, Tambiah described a political divide in modern Thai Buddhist tradition between the development of meditation monasteries that owe their origins to Burmese-derived traditions of practice and traditional state-sponsored monasticism and forest hermitages.³ While Tambiah's thick descriptions and detailed analyses of twentieth-century Thai Buddhist practices portray with wonderful nuance many of the key dynamics of those traditions, their depiction of Burmese-derived traditions of insight meditation—which were at the center of a number of key developments in Thai Buddhism—lack robust historiographical grounding. The result of these otherwise excellent works is a tendency among those following in Tambiah's footsteps—both anthropologists and historians—to generalize his analyses and project them back onto earlier and little-studied Burmese meditation traditions.⁴ An additional effect of Tambiah's work is the synchronic deployment of his studies in constructing totalizing notions of “modern Buddhism” more generally.⁵ Such notions have had the (perhaps unintended) effect of leveling the complexity of many individual traditions of Buddhist practice, some of which made an indelible impact on the dynamic and diverse contours of Buddhism in modernity.

Another foundational ethnographic project was that of Gustaaf Houtman, who dedicated many years to the study of meditation traditions and politics in Burma. Houtman's 1990 PhD thesis, “Traditions of Buddhist Practice in Burma,” and his 1999 book, *Mental Culture in Burmese Crisis Politics*, contain perhaps the most complete account to date of the socio-political contours of Buddhist meditation in Modern Burma. Both the thesis and the book are highly idiosyncratic works of academic anthropology, and it is their idiosyncrasies that make them useful. Houtman sought to use the conceptual categories of Burmese culture and Burmese Buddhist tradition to delineate the structure of the political developments he observed in Burma while

³ See Tambiah 1976: 230–261.

⁴ See, for example, Jordt 2007a, 2007b, and 2012.

⁵ See, for example, Cook 2010.

carrying out fieldwork there in the 1980s. He did so with an eye to the central role of religious practice in history and politics, and he integrated his ethnographic work with an historical perspective on the way that Buddhist thought systems undergirded many religious, political and military developments. Most consequentially for the current work, Houtman made central to his historical analysis the study of the hagiographical literature on Buddhist meditation teachers. In doing so, he elucidated some key schematic distinctions between regimes of meditative practice in modern Burma and their political contours as articulated in religious literature.

My research has been influenced by both Tambiah's and Houtmann's rich works, and by many other scholars who have carried their research further. However, in my work on the history of the globally influential Burmese lay insight meditation traditions that are at the center of the present monograph, I have been struck time and again by the failure of many scholars to advance such trailblazing research in historiographically and analytically astute ways.

Perhaps most important for the concerns of this book, historical narratives describing the emergence of global networks of lay-controlled insight and mindfulness meditation emerging from Burma have remained schematic at best, despite Houtman's and others' in-depth historical and ethnographic contextualizations of the dynamics of Buddhist practices in twentieth century Burma and Southeast Asia. There are various reasons for this, perhaps the most obvious being that most scholars working on modern global insight and mindfulness traditions have paid little attention to the historiographical particularities of their emergence in colonial and post-colonial Southeast Asia. And those who have given attention to such particularities seem to have had little interest in the developments of later globalization.⁶

How has this happened? How is it that scholars of modern global Burmese-derived insight meditation and mindfulness traditions have paid so little attention to the historical contexts from which these traditions emerged in Burma? In part, this problem appears to have arisen due to a bifurcated division of labor. But I would additionally contend that the problem can be traced to a more general problem of scholarly practice.

In 1995, Robert Sharf wrote an influential article on the history of insight meditation, arguing that claims about Buddhist meditative attainment (and thereby all discussion of meditative experience) in the colonial and post-colonial periods could be reduced to modes of rhetoric, functioning primarily

⁶ On the notion of "late globalization," see Turcan 2016. On the entwinement of such globalization with "neoliberalism" and "late capitalism," see Carrol 2022.

in the service of political agendas and public identities. Participating in a larger Foucauldian trend in the humanities, this argument gave scholars in the fields of Religious Studies and Buddhist Studies license to ignore the nitty gritty of history—and actual human and meditative experience—and to narrate histories of modern Buddhism and Buddhist meditation simply as histories of competing discourses.

While Sharf has been critiqued to some extent, his narrative framing of the historical emergence of Burmese insight meditation appears to have won the day.⁷ A litany of scholars have uncritically cited Sharf's article, recapitulated his narrative, and used it to frame a wide range of particular modern Buddhist traditions and contexts.⁸ But even a cursory perusal of the article reveals that there is no historiographical substance in, and a dearth of evidence for, Sharf's arguments—particularly those pertaining to the history of Burmese insight meditation. As Gustaaf Houtman observes: “[Sharf] does not quite get to the historical and biographical contexts of these movements and their early beginnings to make the judgments he has.”⁹

Despite being cogently critiqued by those more cognizant of the historical and ethnographic contexts within which Burmese insight meditation developed, Sharf continues to advance the same old arguments with little added nuance.¹⁰ Perhaps more troubling is the way in which many among a younger generation of scholars appear to have followed along.¹¹ While thoughtful

⁷ One of the more notable critiques of Sharf was advanced by Janet Gyatso (1999). Unfortunately, while addressing some of Sharf's key theoretical failings, Gyatso does not fully address—and even at times appears to underwrite—the historiographical problems that are integral to his narratives of modern Buddhism. David Scott's (1992 and 1994) incisive work on the categories of “ritual” and “experience” as products of a latent coloniality in the field of anthropology might be productively deployed to assess Sharf's (1995) and others' use of both of these categories, particularly his reduction of all Buddhist meditation to “ritual.” In Scott's reading, the etic position of scholars such as Sharf “evidently consists in a place (*that of [their] own discourse*) from which it is possible to decipher the *true* meanings of other places and practices” while at the same time leaving uninterrogated the ideological contours of that etic position (Scott 1992: 314). For an extension of this troubled logic into current popular contexts, see Thompson 2020. For a recent example of theoretical work that constructively questions such academic positionality, see Dube 2021.

⁸ See, for example, McMahan 2008, 2017 and 2020; Braun 2013; Wilson 2014 and 2017; Schedneck 2015; Gleig 2019; Cook 2010 and 2022; Cassaniti 2018; Pagis 2019; Gajaweera 2022; and Scott 2023, among others.

⁹ Houtman 2014: 111–112.

¹⁰ See Sharf 2015.

¹¹ See, for example, Braun and McMahan [eds.] 2017.

ethnographic work—such as Ingrid Jordt’s 2007 *Burma’s Mass Lay Meditation Movement*—has detailed the contours of important monastic-led meditation traditions, little attention has been given to the historical influence of key lay teachers who were instrumental in building what have become the most influential networks of global insight meditation and mindfulness. Jordt’s book focuses on one lineage tradition of meditation, that of the renowned meditation monk Mahāṣī Sayādaw. This lineage and a number of other monastic lineages have been central in the formation of a movement of mass lay meditation in Myanmar in the post-colonial period. However, because Sharf’s narrative early on conflated the development of the Mahāṣī Sayādaw’s teachings with those of other monastic and non-monastic lineages—many of which have quite distinct contours and political agendas—even more nuanced work such as that of Jordt finds itself condensed within the reductive sociological historical schemas of scholars like Sharf.¹²

This issue becomes even more acute among scholars working largely outside Asian contexts in their engagements with the history of insight meditation and mindfulness. For instance, Joseph Cheah (2011), looking at the issue of race in North American Burmese traditions, schematically conflates the teaching approaches of the Mahāṣī Sayādaw with those of the great monastic exegete the Ledi Sayādaw and of the lay meditation master who is at the center of this book, Sayāgyi U Ba Khin.¹³ Others working on the transmission of insight meditation and mindfulness to North America (and elsewhere) have also failed to distinguish many of the historiographical and practice particularities of the meditation traditions that were the source of influential North American and European strains of Buddhist and secularized insight meditation teachings. Scholars such as Jeff Wilson, Ann Gleig, Michal Pagis, and Nalika Gajaweera, among others, all gloss over consequential distinctions of lineage history and practice emphasis in their sweeping analyses of North American insight traditions.¹⁴ Joanna Cook follows a similar playbook in her work on both Thai insight traditions and recent mindfulness interventions in the United Kingdom.¹⁵

¹² A recent dissertation by Anthony Scott (2023) excavates important historiographical source material for the background of the Mahāṣī Sayādaw’s lineage. The dissertation fails, however, to move beyond the entrenched narrative of which I write here.

¹³ Cheah 2011: 48. On this issue, see Stuart 2024: 284–285.

¹⁴ See Wilson 2014: 13–74; Gleig 2019: 17–49 and 138; Pagis 17–44; Gajaweera 2022.

¹⁵ Cook 2010: 26–50 and Cook 2023: 20–44. See also Shedneck 2015: 24–44.

What ties all of these works together theoretically is a commitment to narrating the history of insight meditation and mindfulness through the lens of “Buddhist modernism” or “modern Buddhism.” Perhaps the most accessible articulation of this framing of modern Buddhist meditation, and Buddhism more generally, is David McMahan’s 2008 book, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism*. McMahan’s analysis, particularly with reference to the history of insight/mindfulness meditation, owes much to scholars such as Donald Lopez and Robert Sharf.¹⁶ And like Sharf’s sociologically totalizing approach to modern Buddhist meditation, McMahan’s articulation of Buddhist modernism has been deployed reductively by most scholars working on the history of modern globalized traditions of Buddhist meditation.

I have discovered again and again in the course of my research that the globally influential meditation traditions at the center of my work, which are often understood to paradigmatically embody Buddhist modernism, do not in a final analysis hew to the contours of Buddhist modernism/modernisms, regardless of how one defines it/them and despite claims that the category provides analytical resources for understanding a diversity of modern approaches to Buddhism. This observation is important because it demonstrates the ways in which the deployment of scholarly paradigms can distort, level, or erase important historical realities and experiences when carried out without attunement to historiographical detail.¹⁷

This problem was already on my radar in 2008, when I formally began research on an ethnographically informed institutional history of the global meditation community established by the lay insight meditation teacher S.N. Goenka. But the depth and intractability of the problem did not become clear to me until 2013 with the publication of Erik Braun’s *The Birth of Insight*. In that book, Braun claims to provide historical resources for understanding the emergence of lay-oriented Burmese insight meditation traditions in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He additionally claims to show how such traditions then found their way historically into the global mainstream. He does so by presenting readers with a lively and engaging historical depiction of one of the most important personages in the history of modern

¹⁶ See Lopez 2002.

¹⁷ This issue is nowhere more apparent than in David McMahan’s attempts to analyze the specifics of one of the most influential meditation teachers of the twentieth century, S.N. Goenka. Goenka is one of the historical persons at the center of this monograph. In McMahan 2017 and 2020, we find a Buddhist-modernism reduction of Goenka’s identity and teachings carried out with no attention to Goenka’s historical formation or actual meditation teachings and practices.

Burmese Buddhism, the Ledi Sayādaw. The strengths of the monograph lie in the biographical details of the Sayādaw that Braun makes available to scholarship. I found myself troubled, however, by what is historiographically absent in the book, as well as by the book's focus on non-Asian voices in its depiction of the development of global insight and mindfulness meditation traditions originating in Burma.

For a scholar immersed in the study of the meditation-practice traditions that look to the Ledi Sayādaw as their progenitor, the book was disappointing precisely because it claimed to tell us something about those traditions while at the same time virtually obliterating them by rendering them caricatures of Buddhist modernism. Because *The Birth of Insight* so spectacularly reifies the received narrative discussed above, because it appears to provide that narrative historiographical substance in connection with colonial and post-colonial lay-focused global insight meditation traditions originating in Burma, and because it has been uncritically recapitulated quite significantly in recent scholarship, I have found it constructive to frame my monograph as a critical engagement with Braun's narrative of "the birth of insight."

In particular, I seek to reexamine two key moments in the history of insight meditation (Pali: *vipassanā*)—moments that Braun singles out as important—and recontextualize them within a broader and more complex narrative than has yet been written.

The first moment occurred in the second decade of the twentieth century, when the influential Burmese monastic exegete, the Ledi Sayādaw, authored an important treatise on *vipassanā*, the *Manual of Insight* (*Vipassanā Dīpanī*). According to Braun, this moment constituted "the birth of insight." The second moment occurred in the mid-1970s, when a group of young North American and European meditators began to establish insight meditation centers—primarily derived from Burmese practice traditions—outside of Asia. Braun points to a key fissure that took place during these years, when the Insight Meditation Society (IMS) in Massachusetts was founded, but does so without fully contextualizing the historical factors, cultural interests, and key persons at play.

Insight in Perspective demonstrates that these two moments are indeed consequential moments for the history and historiography of modern insight and mindfulness meditations. It also shows that the reasons for their significance have not been fully elucidated in modern scholarship. By exploring the historical background of one of the most influential traditions of global lay insight meditation—the practices, teachings, and institutional endeavors of S. N. Goenka—the present volume provides historiographical substance for a

redescription of the development of global lay-controlled insight meditation traditions and their subsequent mindfulness spinoffs.

In presenting this historical depiction of the development of the institution that S. N. Goenka and his many students built, I draw on fifteen years of formal ethnographic engagement with insight meditation communities in India, Myanmar, North America, and Western Europe. I also explore a range of archival materials in Hindi, English, and Burmese. While my main expertise is in South Asian languages and my understanding of literary Burmese sources is somewhat rudimentary, such sources have been central to my ability to uncover important historiographical insights neglected in previous scholarship. I have been very lucky to have had the wonderful support of two excellent native Burmese speakers and translators, Swe Swe Mon and Jenny Ko Gyi; without their help I would not have been able to carry out much of the work I did for this book. Though it was a challenging process, one of the most gratifying aspects of working on this project was getting enough of a grasp of Burmese to be able to engage with, in the original, the archival sources that were my object of study.¹⁸

These Burmese source materials are integral to this book because in the process of exploring the historical origins of Goenka's teachings, I reassess the Ledi Sayādaw's role in the development of Burma's movements of large-scale lay participation in insight meditation. I go on to show the ways in which his teachings on meditation were taken up by a small but influential lineage tradition of lay practice, spearheaded by one of the first known twentieth-century Burmese lay insight meditation teachers, Maung Po Thet (1873–1945).

Maung Po Thet, otherwise known as Sayā Thetgyi, was one of very few lay teachers in colonial Burma authorized by monks to teach meditation in the early decades of the twentieth century. While Maung Po Thet taught quite a few lay and monastic students—including many elites of the political class—at his small meditation center across the river from the capital city of Rangoon, he never himself participated directly in the incipient globalization of Burmese Buddhism and insight meditation that was just beginning during his lifetime. We have limited evidence of his teaching methods and who among his students went on to teach. One important student, who stands at the center of this book, became an influential actor in the internationalization,

¹⁸ My knowledge of Burmese remains limited, and I rely heavily on English translations made by others for much of what I present in this book. I have, however, spent many hours with the original Burmese of any material I cite.

and ultimately the globalization, of insight meditation. That student was the layman U Ba Khin (1899–1971), otherwise known as Sayāgyi U Ba Khin.

This book demonstrates that a detailed historiography of U Ba Khin, the lineage of meditation practice that he drew on and extended, and the small cult tradition of insight meditation that formed around him in post-colonial Burma allows for a reconfiguration of the received narrative of modern globalized insight meditation and mindfulness. As the first Accountant General of a newly independent Burma, U Ba Khin was at the center of political life in the capital. He both employed meditation and taught it to a range of Burmese and non-Burmese students, some of whom were not Buddhists. This set the stage for the possibility of secularizing the practice. What is more, because of his proficiency in English, he had contact with many international visitors in the course of his career as a meditation teacher. Understanding U Ba Khin's role in the dissemination of insight meditation is, therefore, a fundamental historiographical necessity if scholars are to fill in the current schematic historiography of globalized lay-controlled insight meditation emerging from Burma in the twentieth century.

U Ba Khin is important in his own right, but his influence on the developments of globalized insight meditation during the latter half of the twentieth century was primarily due to the work of his most famous student, S. N. Goenka. Goenka was one of the most influential Asian meditation teachers of the twentieth century. This book shows that we can only fully understand Goenka, his teachings and practices, and the massive global network of rhetorically secularized meditation centers that he and his students fashioned by first understanding his teacher, U Ba Khin. Such understanding also involves coming to terms with how U Ba Khin's practices and teachings reconfigured the teachings of Maung Po Thet—and the Ledi Sayādaw before him—in the context of the incipient globality of postwar Burma.

This monograph provides historiographical source material that contributes to such an understanding, while at the same time using such material to make a broader argument about the need for a more nuanced narrative of modern insight meditation, one that includes figures who don't quite fit into such a narrative, such as the Ledi Sayādaw, Maung Po Thet, U Ba Khin, and S. N. Goenka. I argue here that the Ledi Sayādaw has been mis-characterized in current scholarship, and that such mis-characterizations are largely the result of overdetermined readings, Buddhist-modernism interpretations that assume too much and rely too heavily on simplified arguments about reactions to British colonialism. I suggest instead that the Ledi Sayādaw is

best understood by taking stock of his ontological commitments, commitments that rely very much on his embeddedness in a non-modern conceptual world and a range of Burmese (Buddhist) cultural assumptions about the nature of reality. This does not mean that the colonial context should not be considered when interpreting the Ledi Sayādaw's thought and practice. Rather, it means that the Sayādaw's interpretations of Buddhism and Buddhist meditation in the context of colonialism make more sense when we properly assess his ontological positionality.

When we take the Sayādaw's ontological commitments seriously, including the literalism of his traditional text-based worldview, his multi-life outlook, and his claims about direct encounters with supernormal agents, a better understanding of his teachings on meditation emerges. In developing a historical narrative of the life and afterlives of the Sayādaw's teachings on meditation in colonial and post-colonial Burma, this book also demonstrates that once we properly contextualize the process of how his teachings and meditation methods were handed down and practiced by his lay successors, we may have to reassess the historical moment of "the birth of insight"—and perhaps relocate it in time.

What is more, in order to rethink the dynamics of the historical emergence of lay-controlled global insight meditation, it is necessary to carry out a full accounting of the contexts in which many of the young seekers who have now become household names in modern New Age and global insight meditation circles came of age. Yet many gaps remain in the historical record. I argue in this book that current scholarship has overlooked a consequential historical influence in not properly taking into account the role of S. N. Goenka. An account of the challenges Goenka faced streamlining his teachers' version of insight meditation for a mass audience and presenting it to Indian, Western, and global publics provides a complex historical picture of various tensions, incommensurabilities, and intercultural and intracultural dynamics that are paradigmatic for the broader processes of transmission that took place during the twentieth-century dissemination of such teachings.

By recovering the practice contexts of Sayāgyi U Ba Khin, and a matrix of fraught relationships that Goenka and other students of U Ba Khin faced as they carried out a mission to bring insight meditation to India, North America, Australia, and Europe in the 1960s and 1970s, I provide scholars with historiographical resources to better understand the development of global lay-controlled insight meditation traditions, as well as the layered constitutive forces that gave rise to modern scientific and medicalized mindfulness emergent at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning

of the twenty-first. This analysis reveals, in elaborate detail, a key set of historical strands in the ongoing, complex entanglement of traditional Buddhist worlds and the worlds of modern secular and scientific meditation. It also reveals how the scholarly procedures of most current scholarship on modern global insight meditation are complicit in a range of neo-colonial appropriations, distortions, and silencings that do epistemic injustice to modern Asian traditions of Buddhist practice.

Outline of this Volume

This volume is divided into three main parts, each with several subsections. In part I, I explore the Ledi Sayādaw's teachings on meditation and their connection to his ontological and cosmological commitments. I go on to contextualize the teachings in relation to what I have elsewhere called his "apropaic anticolonial politics."¹⁹ I set the stage for a demonstration of how centering the totality of the Ledi Sayādaw's cosmo-vision in an assessment of his scholarship and his teachings on meditation allows historians to fully comprehend later deployments of those teachings by the lay teachers who passed them down in the years following the Sayādaw's death. In so doing, I lay bare fundamental continuities in practice approach and ontological commitment that connect the Ledi Sayādaw to a so-called "reformer" such as S.N. Goenka. The final section of part I is dedicated to bringing to light the role of Maung Po Thet in carrying forward the Ledi Sayādaw's teachings on meditation in the context of a lay-controlled tradition of practice. Maung Po Thet was unique in his time, since most Burmese traditions of insight meditation remained and remain controlled by monastic teachers. And yet there has been very little scholarship on him to date. A treatment of newly translated source materials providing evidence of Maung Po Thet's practice regime along with an analysis of his biography reveals that he was widely known as a charismatic healer with access to supernormal powers. What is more, the practice modalities presented in his practice regime demonstrate crucial continuities between the practices outlined in the Ledi Sayādaw's meditation manuals and the more experimentalist approaches to practice of Maung Po Thet's most influential disciple, U Ba Khin. U Ba Khin, like his teacher, also became widely known in Southern Burma primarily due to his charismatic healing powers.

¹⁹ See Stuart 2024: 260–269.

Part II of this volume is dedicated to detailing the contours of U Ba Khin's practice modalities, his theoretical orientation, and his approach to teaching insight meditation. By situating the development of U Ba Khin's meditation-teaching model in the context of the political and social ferment of a just-recently-independent post-colonial Rangoon—when the fruitful tension of nationalist interests and cosmopolitan sensibilities gave rise to new conceptualizations of potential globalities—this section of the book paints a picture of a global tradition in the making. An exploration of the experimental modalities of U Ba Khin's meditation model, and his use of various supportive assistants—both human and non-human—to enact his teachings, allows for insight into how U Ba Khin was deeply embedded in a Burmese ontology that took for granted the porousness of human experience. I show how his theory of insight meditation—like that of the Ledi Sayādaw—represents a unique hybrid theory, incorporating traditional Theravāda Buddhist systematic thought with normative Burmese cultural understandings of the interpenetration of human, non-human, and supernormal entities in daily life. Finally, I elucidate the cult context of U Ba Khin's small meditation center in urban Southern Burma, which was the environment in which S.N. Goenka learned meditation before he went on to become one of the most influential global popularizers of modern insight meditation. Most consequentially, I demonstrate how U Ba Khin was conceptualized by his close students as a special bodhisattva on a mission to enliven the teachings of the Buddha and inaugurate a revival of the “pristine Dhamma” in a degraded social context. For this reason, the group that formed around U Ba Khin was particularly devoted to him and his teachings such that there was little separation between U Ba Khin as a personality and U Ba Khin's teachings on meditation. U Ba Khin was certainly well known among the elites of Rangoon, and he taught a range of international students in the course of his career as a meditation teacher. Still, this small cult of lay practitioners that developed in post-colonial Burma and drew in a global audience never had wide influence beyond Burma or even in Burma itself on a mass scale. On the other hand, one of U Ba Khin's non-Buddhist students, S.N. Goenka, would go on to take his teacher's peculiar experimentalist teaching and turn it into one of the most influential global meditation franchises of the twentieth century.

Part III is dedicated to demonstrating how this happened, and to unearthing historiographical source materials that reveal the complexities and challenges S.N. Goenka faced in the process of fashioning his delivery system for his teachers' meditation practices and teachings. I begin by describing the context of S.N. Goenka's mission to spread insight meditation in India as U

Ba Khin's proxy. U Ba Khin's goal was to depute a number of his students to teach in various regions of the globe so as to spread the forces of the pristine Dhamma around the world in an attempt to turn back the dark forces that had manifested in the world during the colonial period and World War II. Goenka's specific role in this mission was to teach in India, primarily to Hindi speakers, since that was the language in which he was most comfortable. A handful of other students—from North America and Western Europe—were deputed as well, primarily to teach to English-speaking publics. This section of the book explores how upon arrival in India, Goenka found himself in between cultural worlds, and at the nexus of a variety of cultural interests.

Looking to his teachers in Burma as authorities on matters of practice and doctrine, he also sought to draw in Indians with a range of traditional religious commitments. This meant that he had to walk a careful line in his teaching tactics, tailoring his message so as not to ruffle cultural and religious sensibilities. Presenting Buddhist meditation to an Indian audience was a very difficult task, since long-standing historical prejudices against Buddhism remained strong in the social imaginaries of the communities.²⁰ To deal with this problem, Goenka drew on the rhetoric of secular pluralism incipient in his teacher's reframing of insight meditation when he taught to his non-Buddhist students. At the same time, travelers from Western Europe, North America, and Australia came to know of his teachings and eagerly sought him out, encouraging him to also teach in English. Many of them were particularly interested in the practices he taught precisely because they were Buddhist, and many of them were also seeking the exotic, something outside of their cultural frames of reference. It was at the nexus of these various influences that Goenka found himself as he fashioned what eventually came to be one of the largest delivery systems of intensive insight meditation/mindfulness in the world today. By exploring the agonistic process involved in Goenka's fashioning of his global network of meditation centers—a process involving Goenka's disavowal of a number of his early North American students, his disavowal of one of his own teachers, and an increasing streamlining of the practices he learned in Burma in order to reach larger and larger audiences—I show how Goenka's story tells a much larger narrative about the fragmented cultural spaces in which insight meditation and mindfulness meditations have been transmitted in modernity. The complexities of Goenka's story, and that of his Burmese lay-controlled teaching

²⁰ On such trenchant animosities, see Ober 2023, particularly 19–64.

lineage, reveal the always-political challenges at the interface of the transcultural spread of religion, the growth of interest in Asian contemplative practices in modernity, and the forces of late post-colonial capitalism. An analysis of this interface allows for a reflection on how the past and traditions of the past continue to impinge on the present in ways that may not always be apparent if we don't dig under the surface of normative representations and normative scholarly paradigms.

I. The Birth of Insight?

1. The Ledi Sayādaw: Overdetermined Readings

In writing his narrative of modern Burmese insight meditation, Erik Braun has suggested that one of the Ledi Sayādaw's important Abhidhamma treatises, the *Manual of Insight* (*Vipassanā Dīpanī*), can be read as the *locus classicus* for modern techniques of insight or mindfulness meditation (*vipassanā*).²¹ He argues that modern meditation practice emerged from Ledi's Abhidhamma scholasticism, and that Ledi's historical position during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries means that his teachings on meditation—and thereby the development of all modern Burmese insight meditation traditions—developed in response to British colonial power. Braun lays out these conclusions as follows:

The creation of the potential for mass meditation depended on Ledi's efforts. He used a distinctive Burmese focus on the Abhidhamma as the quintessence of learning to present meditation as a sensible endeavor for a large group of people engaged with the world. The simplifying stress on the observation of materiality articulated through Abhidhamma categories, alongside an obviation of extended calming practices through powerful learning,²² made meditation understandable, accessible, and portable to any setting or situation. In short, mass meditation began in Burma as

²¹ Braun 2013: 141. Braun translates *Vipassanā Dīpanī* as *Manual on Insight Meditation*. I stick with *Manual of Insight* because it is the more common translation of the title and I see no consequential difference between the two translations.

²² See also Braun 2013: 139, where he suggests that Ledi's *Ānāpāna Dīpanī* or *Manual of [Meditation on] Respiration* “privileges the perspective of the meditator practicing insight meditation without deep calm and concentration,” and “gives preeminence to the ‘dry’ technique that was seemingly a secondary option in Buddhaghosa’s view.” Here Braun sets the Ledi Sayādaw’s interpretations up against Buddhaghosa’s classical treatise on meditation, the *Visuddhimagga* or *The Path of Purification*. This notion of what the Ledi Sayādaw “privileges” is misleading, however, and Braun himself alludes to this fact when he correctly notes: “This approach was only one option, for, again, Ledi does not discount the value of more advanced calming for those inclined to it.” (2013: 139) Oddly, all of these statements are in fact made based on a passage that—in line with the model of the *Visuddhimagga*—presents “dry” insight as the very last option for a meditator who is unable to attain absorption meditation (*jhāna*) (see Ledi Sayādaw 1999: 21–22).

nowhere else because of the Abhidhamma. Ledi used it as the lever to shift meditation from a rare pursuit to a practice poised to become a mass phenomenon.

This was the birth of insight, and it developed out of the meeting of Ledi's heritage of an elite, text-centered educational formation in Mandalay and the challenges of colonialism.²³

I quote Braun extensively here because in what follows, we will have to go part by part through these conclusions and reassess them. I focus particularly on rethinking what was involved in Ledi's conception of "powerful learning."²⁴ I suggest that, even though the Sayādaw acknowledges that certain individuals with developed knowledge may not necessarily need to practice deep concentration (*samādhi*) before engaging with insight practice (*vipassanā*), this fact does not necessarily *obviate* the practice of deep concentration or calming meditation (*samatha*) more generally. Rather, it opens up certain possibilities for access to practice. These possibilities only make sense when we take seriously the Ledi Sayādaw's karmic worldview, which assumes that certain individuals would be karmically ripe for such engagements, and his literal readings of the Theravāda *sutta* tradition.

This understanding of Ledi's outlook comes into stronger relief when we take into account the teachings/experiences of the two Burmese lay meditation teachers largely responsible for spreading his meditative teachings to the lay community in Burma. These teachers were Sayāgyi U Maung Po Thet and Sayāgyi U Ba Khin. A third lay teacher, S. N. Goenkaji, carried the teachings from Burma to India in the late 1960s. An analysis of how these teachers developed the Ledi Sayādaw's teachings opens out into a larger conversation about how different soteriological programs, and the various social contexts in which they have been enacted, have powerfully influenced the contours and modes of dissemination of modern Burmese insight practices and their derivatives.

Let us begin with the precise historical moment that Braun suggests marked "the birth of insight" and the key textual passage representative of

²³ Braun 2013: 145.

²⁴ The idea of "powerful learning" in the context of Burmese political culture was developed by the historian Michael Charney (2006). Charney's work is an excellent example of a robust historically situated intellectual history. However, it does not fully account for the role of religious practice in this history. While Braun's work on the Ledi Sayādaw might have generously complemented Charney's analysis by bringing broader worlds of Burmese Buddhist religious practice into that analysis, it instead deploys such work to restrict its analysis.

that moment—a passage from the Ledi Sayādaw’s 1915 treatise, the *Vipassanā Dīpanī* or the *Manual of Insight*:

Ledi’s simplification of practice reaches its apogee in the *Manual on Insight Meditation*. It not only suggests a preferential option for the dry approach but justifies this approach as the logical choice on the basis of Abhidhamma knowledge. In this work he says that “those whose perfection of knowledge is ripened” (*pāramī-ñāṇ ‘nu sū myā’*)²⁵ need not cultivate concentration. Except for a reference to *samatha* made in order to contrast its field of inquiry with the much wider arena of contemplation in *vipassanā*, Ledi mentions *samatha* only one other time in this, his final work on meditation, when he briefly explains the cultivation of supernatural powers (*samathābhiññā*).²⁶

Here Braun is engaging a particular question about the Ledi Sayādaw’s teachings on meditation: the question of whether the full realization of insight meditation—the attainment of enlightenment or awakening—can be attained independent of deep states of concentration or calm (*samatha*), or whether such attainments necessitate the initial development of powerful concentration, as is taught in traditional Pāli texts on meditation such as the *Visuddhimagga* (*The Path of Purification*).²⁷ But his treatment of this issue in this particular text also serves as the pivot in his more general argument about the development of meditation in early modern Burma, and its connection to later globalized forms of practice. It is particularly revealing that Braun—in a story about modern meditation for a book series devoted to the study of Buddhism and modernity²⁸—locates the “apogee” of the Ledi

²⁵ This is a misrendering of the Ledi Sayādaw’s Burmese. This phrase (*pāramī-ñāṇ ‘nu sūmyā’*) actually means “those whose perfection of knowledge is immature.” (See Ledi Sayādaw 1988: 96 [line 3].) It seems that Braun here refers to the wrong Burmese phrase to represent a phrase in an English translation of a Burmese passage he did not fully understand. He likely meant to translate the phrase *pāramī-ñāṇ ‘rhi khai’ pā*, which can be found a few lines above in the translation. (See Ledi Sayādaw 1988: 95 [line 20].)

²⁶ Braun 2013: 141.

²⁷ See Rhys Davids 1975 [1920 and 1921] (*Vism*) and Ñāṇamoli 1991 [1956].

²⁸ About his sources, Braun writes: “Most of Ledi’s writings at least touch upon meditation. In the analysis that follows I have focused on those that treat meditation extensively and enable me to describe his transformation of its place in Burmese Buddhism.” (Braun 2013: 125) It is noteworthy that most of the sources Braun points to in this regard are scholastic treatises with little practical information on meditation. It is unfortunate that Braun does not fully engage with the question of how the structures of Ledi’s scholastic presentation delimit what he can broach at the level of practice. Further, if one already has in mind a narrative of how Buddhist meditation

Sayādaw's teachings on meditation in a manual written for a European audience and published in English translation even before the Burmese (and Pāli) edition.²⁹ I find this problematic because it demonstrates a tacit coloniality in the particulars of Braun's scholarly interests—interests that in many ways remain constitutive for the field of Buddhist (modernism) Studies. But even if we set aside this issue of Braun's colonial engagement with his historical material and take seriously his analysis of this particular text, we come upon issues of interpretation.³⁰ It will help here to present in full my translation of the key passage in question from the Ledi Sayādaw's *Vipassanā Dīpanī* or *Manual of Insight*:³¹

Insight practice is not accomplished only upon obtaining seclusion from [surface level] obstructions (*palibodha*), as is the case with the practice of calm (*samatha*).³² The perfection of knowledge (*pāramī-ñāṇa*) is the

was transformed in Burma during the modern period, it is easy to choose sources that support the narrative as it has already been written, as opposed to actually engaging the sources on their own terms. It appears to me that this is precisely what happened in the process of Braun's research. By acknowledging but downplaying sources such as the *Rogantara Dīpanī*, the *Manual for Warding off Pestilence* (see below, pp. 39–49)—which contains no explicit teachings on meditation per se, but may tell us more about the broader contexts of meditation than any of the Ledi Sayādaw's manuals explicitly devoted to the topic of meditation—Braun distorts the historical picture of Buddhist meditation in Burma and elsewhere during the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth century.

²⁹ See Braun 2013: 128–130 and 134–135. The question of the Burmese edition and when it was first published has not been sorted out (see Braun 2013: 217n30). Apparently, the Burmese edition was actually a translation of a Pāli original which, to my knowledge, was never published and is apparently lost to history (Ledi Sayādaw [Nyāna trans.] 1915: i). More important to note, however, is that the basic idea Braun marks as pivotal in this key text was already laid out in the Ledi Sayādaw's 1901 treatise, the *Āhāradīpanī* or *The Manual of Nutriment* (see below, note 34).

³⁰ I would suggest that Braun's modernist Buddhist Studies gaze mimics what Kate Crosby calls the “colonial gaze” in her recent work (Crosby 2013 and 2020) on how a key esoteric tradition of Theravāda Buddhism has been historically marginalized (and largely overlooked by scholars). On a similar myopia in Burma studies more generally, see Brac de la Perrière 2009.

³¹ Adapted from Ledi Sayādaw (Nyāna [trans.]) 1915: 64.

³² On the standard analysis of ten “obstructions” (*palibodha*) that must be overcome to facilitate concentration meditation leading to insight (*samādhībhāvanā*), see Vism 90–97 (III.7; Nāṇamoli 2010 [1956]: 91–98) and Ledi Sayādaw n.d. [1904]: 33. The ten obstructions are as follows: “Dwelling, family, wealth, students, and building work as the fifth. Travel, relatives, illness, books, and supernatural powers.” (*āvāsoca kulam lābho, gaṇo kammaṇ ca pañcamam. addhānam nāti ābādhō, gantho iddhī ti te dasā ti*. [Vism 90]) These are primarily external obstructions, but the final item

decisive factor (*padhānataññ'*). For, if the perfection of knowledge is developed (*pāramī-ñāṇ' rhi khai' pā*), [the *insight* knowledge of impermanence] can be accomplished while listening to a discourse, or while carrying out the duties of a householder. This is so because for those whose knowledge is developed (*ñāṇ rhi sū tui'*), everything within and without one's body, within and without one's house, within and without one's village, is an object at the sight of which the [insight] knowledge of impermanence (*aniccañāṇ'*) may be nurtured and develop.

But for those whose perfection of knowledge is immature (*pāramī-ñāṇ' nu sū myā'*), this can be accomplished only with extraordinary striving, as [is necessary] in the practice of calm.³³

As we have seen above, Braun takes this statement to exemplify the Sayādaw's simplification of meditation, and to signal "the birth of insight," conditioned by the key historical factors of a powerful British colonial influence and the preëminence of Abhidhamma scholasticism. But we need to unpack what is being said in this statement—and what is left out of Braun's analysis—to properly understand how stressing those aspects of the historical

on the list is noteworthy because it is an obstruction that can be aroused through the practice of deep concentration, and it therefore becomes an impediment only to insight meditation, not calming practices.

- ³³ The original English translation of this passage, by the Ledi Sayādaw's disciple U Nyāna, runs as follows: "The Insight exercises can be practised not only in solitude as is necessary in the case of the exercise of Calm or *Samatha*, but they can be practised everywhere. Maturity of knowledge is the main, the one thing required. For, if knowledge is ripe, the Insight of Impermanence may easily be accomplished while listening to a discourse, or while living a householder's ordinary life. To those whose knowledge is developed, everything within and without oneself, within and without one's house, within and without one's village or town, is an object at the sight of which the Insight of Impermanence may spring up and develop. But those whose knowledge is yet, so to speak, in its infancy, can accomplish this only if they practise assiduously the exercise in Calm." (Ledi Sayādaw [Nyāna (trans.)] 1915: 64)

Since it is a somewhat tricky passage, I also provide here the original Burmese:

ဝိပဿနာအလုပ်သည် သမထအလုပ်ကဲ့သို့ ပလိဗောဓ ဆိတ်ငြိမ်ရာကြီးကိုရမှသာ ပြီးစီးနိုင်သည်မဟုတ်။ ပါရမီဉာဏ်သည်သာ ပဓာနတည်း။ ပါရမီဉာဏ်ရှိခဲ့ပါမူ တရားနာရင်း နှင့်ပင် ပေါက်ရောက်၍ သွားတတ်၏။ ယရာဝါသကိစ္စ အတွင်းမှာပင် ပေါက်ရောက်နိုင်၏။ အကြောင်းမူကား ဉာဏ်ရှိသူတို့မှာ ကိုယ်တွင်းကိုယ်ပြင်၊ အိမ်တွင်းအိမ်ပြင်၊ ရွာတွင်းရွာပြင် တွေ့မြင်သမျှသည် အနိစ္စဉာဏ်ပွားစီးဖို့ချည်းသာတည်း။

ပါရမီဉာဏ် နှသူများမှာမူကား သမထအလုပ်ကဲ့သို့ပင် အထူး အားထုတ်မှ ပေါက်ရောက်နိုင်ကြ၏။ (Ledi Sayādaw 1988: 95–96)

context may indeed lead us away from a proper understanding of Ledi's approach to meditation as well as the approach of those who came after him.

Braun asserts a basic premise—or “fact” as he comes to call it—that meditation in early modern Burma emerged out of Abhidhamma learning. Moreover, he maintains that Abhidhamma categories were not only the basis for the simplification of meditation, but also entailed an obviation of calm meditation practices. My reading of Ledi's teachings on meditation does not entirely support this analysis. I argue instead that Ledi's simplification of meditation emerges from his knowledge of the *sutta* tradition, and that this knowledge ultimately obviates the need for Abhidhamma learning, at least at the introductory level of meditation practice. Further, the notion that Ledi's teachings render unnecessary the cultivation of calm meditation is simply not borne out historically, as evidenced by the fact that the lay teachers who followed in Ledi's footsteps all had experience with and taught calm meditation, some at a very advanced level. The real questions for the Ledi Sayādaw and those who followed in his footsteps were: Is it reasonable to assume that people today can accomplish Buddhist awakening? If so, *how much* calm meditation is necessary so that particular individuals might be able to develop insight?³⁴ In more recent mass meditation contexts, and

³⁴ In his 1901 treatise, the *Āhāradīpanī* or *Manual of Nutriment*, Ledi presages the ideas about practicing insight as a lay person found in the *Vipassanādīpanī* (I am grateful to Roberto Mannai for drawing my attention to this reference):

“The task of insight meditation is profound and subtle. Proper guidance of a competent teacher is sorely needed. It is the duty of the teacher to give suitable instructions and teachings in contemplation. However, mere instructions and teachings cannot fully accomplish the function of meditation. After full realization of the clear instruction of the teacher how to contemplate, development should be carried out daily. Entering a quiet place in a forest or a mountain, a monk should contemplate with strenuous energy for months and years. A layman should contemplate at home together with household affairs for months and years. These are the duties of a meditator. Tranquility meditations such as mindfulness of respiration (*ānāpānāsati*) are easy to teach. But practicing to attain a sign (*nimitta*) is difficult. It cannot be accomplished at home while [one is] engaged in household affairs and business. It can only be attained by practicing in solitude with intense effort. However, insight meditation is the task of knowledge and it can be carried out while one is working in a paddy field, while on a journey by bullock-cart or by boat, while carrying out business, and while engaging in household affairs. At the time of the Buddha, there were few who were accomplished in tranquility meditation. There were many who practiced meditation at home while engaging in normal household and business affairs.

It is true. There were only a few lay disciples who succeeded in tranquility meditation, but the monks who did so were numerous.” (Adapted from Ledi Sayādaw [U Tin

within lineages outside of the Ledi Sayādaw's, calm meditation does indeed get quite radically de-emphasized.³⁵ Examining the details of this process within one of the most predominant forms of global insight meditation allows us to more fully appreciate the historical dynamics of modern Buddhist meditation and the various historical influences that occasioned such developments.

But let us first look at the question of the role of Abhidhamma learning and its connection to meditation in Ledi's understanding. In two key passages—and in a number of other additional contexts—the Ledi Sayādaw makes explicit how Abhidhamma learning is secondary in the context of meditation practice. The first passage comes from the *Manual of Insight*, and follows immediately upon Braun's key passage, presented above. Ledi writes:

During meditation practice, momentary deaths (*khaṇika-anicca*) reflected in the characteristic of impermanence [manifest] as transformation (*vipariṇāma*) and transfiguration (*aññathābhava*) occur innumerable times even during the wink of any eye. These [momentary events] are only relevant in *Abhidhamma* discussion. But in insight meditation, all that is needed is consideration of the *santativipariṇāma* and the *santati-*

Shwe (trans.) 2018 [1986]: 76 [Ledi Sayādaw 1996 (1901): 306–307]; see also Braun 2013: 221, n. 81)

It is easy to overlook here how the Ledi Sayādaw makes clear that introductory forms of calming meditation are indeed a requirement for development in insight meditation of the sort he prescribes for householders in this passage (see below, note 45). It should also be noted that the Ledi Sayādaw goes on here to draw implicitly on the narratives of the *sutta* tradition to argue for why it is reasonable to consider it possible for lay people to attain the first stages of awakening. Perhaps more tellingly, he additionally enacts a literal interpretation of the Buddha's first discourse, the *Dhammacakkappa-vattanasutta*, to insist that the number of awakened deities in the world far exceeds the number of awakened humans. This is a primary argument for justifying the notion of the continuous integrity of the *sāsana*, and such cosmological arguments are central to the Ledi Sayādaw's conception of why it remains possible for humans to attain awakening in the current age.

³⁵ This de-emphasis of calming practice at the initial stages of practice is particularly prominent in the teachings of the Mahāṣī Sayādaw. It is noteworthy that Erik Braun attempts to draw a direct line between the Ledi Sayādaw and the Mahāṣī Sayādaw by quoting historically unsubstantiated claims gleaned in recent ethnographic interviews—by the anthropologist Ingrid Jordt—about the Mahāṣī Sayādaw learning meditation from the Ledi Sayādaw's famous disciple, the Mohnyin Sayādaw. (See Braun 2013: 161 and Jordt 2007: 23.) I have not been able to substantiate these accounts, and it seems most likely that there was some confusion on the part of either the ethnographer or her subjects as to the identities of the Mohnyin Sayādaw, Ledi's famous disciple, and the Mingun Jetavana Sayādaw, Mahāṣī's equally famous teacher.

aññathābhava, that is, [awareness] of the transformation and the transfiguration of the continua, things which are visibly evident to, and personally experienced by, every man alive.³⁶

Here Ledi makes clear the distinction between the context of “discussion on *Abhidhamma*” and the context of meditative practice, pointing out that the detailed theoretical discussions entailed in *Abhidhamma* learning are not necessary for the enactment of insight meditation practice.³⁷ What is more, most of the categories he emphasizes for such practice are drawn directly from *sutta* contexts and ultimately render unnecessary the need for *Abhidhamma* learning. This becomes even more clear in a second passage, first presented in a treatise written by the Ledi Sayādaw in 1894 and recapitulated in teachings he gave at the very end of his life. The *Lakkhaṇādīpanī* (1894)

³⁶ Adapted from Ledi Sayādaw (Nyāna [trans.]) 1915: 64–65. This idea can also be found in an important treatise associated with the Ledi Sayādaw’s important lay disciple, Sayāgyi Maung Po Thet: *A Treatise on the Shortcut to Knowledge and Vision of Insight Meditation in This Very Life* (Htun Thein et al. [eds.] 1953: 65–66 [cf. Ledi Paññāsīha 2012: 165–169]). Notably, in referring to this idea and related ideas, the author of that treatise does not cite the *Vipassanādīpanī*, but instead cites three of the Ledi Sayādaw’s earlier works, the *Lakkhaṇādīpanī* (1898), the *Vijjāmaggaḍīpanī* (1898), and the *Bhāvanādīpanī* (1904).

³⁷ It is perhaps also worth noting that the Ledi Sayādaw expressed strong criticism of intellectualist *Abhidhamma* scholarship:

“The *Abhidhamma* scholar skilled in the traditional methods of classifying the thought-processes by hearing repeated lectures on genesis (*uppāda*), stasis (*thiti*), and dissolution (*bhaṅga*) of the past subconsciousness (*atītabhavaṅga*), arresting subconsciousness (*bhavaṅgupaccheda*), and the five sense-door adverting consciousness (*pañcadvārā-vajjana*), which by logical reasoning sees them according to their true nature. However, this discernment is not insight knowledge, but is far removed from it. Nevertheless, some people believe and teach that proper insight meditation can be carried out only with a thorough knowledge of those momentary processes of nature. Of course, they are quite ignorant of the important and proper facts and they speak in accordance with their own opinion only.

Here is an allegory. The *Abhidhamma* scholar is like a great pharmacist of Rangoon or Mandalay. He has on display all sorts of costly drugs in his shop. [...] He has more than a hundred kinds of drugs for a single disease that he himself may be suffering from, but he cannot be cured of that disease as he lacks proper medical knowledge. The meditator who has profound knowledge of contact, feeling, or volition is like the physician who can cure hundreds of patients with a powerful medicinal root.

The *Abhidhamma* scholar who lacks insight knowledge is akin to the pharmacist who has a large amount of expensive yellow orpiment and realgar. The meditator who has profound knowledge of the nutrient of contact and the other nutrients is similar to a fakir who can convert yellow orpiment into gold or silver. However, thanks to the work of *Abhidhamma* scholars, the *Abhidhamma* Piṭaka still exists now. The work of those scholars has been very helpful in this dispensation.” (Ledi Sayādaw 2018: 34)

is one of the Ledi Sayādaw's early foundational works on meditation, while the *Ledi Nibbān* is a treatise that postdates the *Manual of Insight* by at least six years (it must have been authored after 1921, when the Sayādaw was requested to preach on the topic).³⁸ These manuals contain a wealth of information on meditation and provide a detailed analysis of insight meditation, with various practical approaches suggested. Both treatises—which bracket his career elucidating the details of meditation—contain a passage in which the Ledi Sayādaw makes clear the subsidiary role of Abhidhamma learning in his meditation teachings:

Any person who wants to gain insight into these three characteristics of existence will have to make all the physical and mental phenomena, on which the three characteristics depend, clearly comprehensible in his own body. By making the phenomena clearly comprehensible, he can observe the three characteristics. [...] For the person who aims to contemplate the body along the divisions of the three characteristics, the Abhidhamma method is not necessary. The Abhidhamma method is only necessary for those who want to fulfill the perfection of the virtue of discernment⁴⁰ (*paññāpāramī*) and those who want to cultivate⁴¹ analytical knowledge⁴² (*paṭisambhidāññāna*). When too many qualities have to be factored into an analysis, one cannot progress. If too many phenomena have to be taken into account, it becomes difficult to identify clearly the distinctions between them, and they cannot be identified and comprehended.

Applying the three characteristics to a parameter that cannot be identified and comprehended is not meditation (*bhāvanā*). Only after clearly knowing their qualities and then contemplating the phenomena can we speak of meditation.

Even the Buddha delivered the Abhidhamma method only twice, once in the Tāvātimsa realm of the celestial gods and once to Mahāthera Sāriputta while sojourning in the sandalwood forest. There is no instance of anyone being liberated through the expounding of the Abhidhamma method exclusively. In delivering this method while in the Tāvātimsa realm, to bring liberation to *devas* and *brahmas*, the Buddha also taught discourses (*sutta*) at times.

A person who employs the *Buddhānussati kammaṭṭhāna* (meditation object of the virtues of the Buddha) cannot attain meditative absorption

³⁸ See Ledi Sayadaw 2001; Ledi Sayadaw 1954: iii.

³⁹ Ledi Sayādaw 2006: 213 [Ledi Sayādaw 1954: 44].

⁴⁰ Ledi Sayādaw 2006: 215 translates *paññā* as “knowledge.”

⁴¹ Ledi Sayādaw 2006: 215 has “hone.”

⁴² Ledi Sayādaw 2006: 215 translates *ñāna* (*ñāṇ* ‘ဉာဏ်’) as “intellect.”

(*jhāna*) because the object of contemplation is too extensive and sublime. The same goes for those who take up the *Catudhātuvavatthāna kammaṭṭhāna* (the meditation object of distinguishing the four elements), as it is too sublime and too profound.

Venerable Sāriputta had to practice for fifteen days to attain arhatship, as his method of contemplation was extensive and involved many factors as objects of contemplation. Meanwhile, Venerable Moggallāna's approach involved only a fair number of factors, and he achieved the same goal within seven days.

In the case of King Pakkusāti attaining liberation, he divided the elements into six groups. When he contemplated the four primary elements along the lines of the three characteristics, he dealt with all derivative materiality (*upādarūpa*). When he contemplated consciousness along the lines of the three characteristics, he dealt with the mental concomitants (*cetasika*). The contemplation of space (*ākāsa*) was added as an accessory as it is quite distinct.⁴³

This statement makes it abundantly clear that for the Ledi Sayādaw—throughout his career as a meditation scholar—basic meditation practices undertaken by the average person need not necessarily have involved Abhidhamma learning. Rather, such learning and its enactment within meditation was primarily for those advanced in wisdom and working to cultivate forms of knowledge unique to highly developed individuals. I would suggest that it is precisely within this traditional context of interpretation that we should understand the Ledi Sayādaw's statements in the *Manual of Insight*. As far as I can tell, he does not suggest that all lay people can easily practice insight meditation unobstructed while living a lay life. Rather, he is suggesting this as a real possibility for karmically developed individuals with a proper stock of perfections (*pāramī*).⁴⁴ He is also making

⁴³ Adapted from Ledi Sayādaw 2006: 215–16 (Ledi Sayādaw 1954: 45–46). See also Ledi Sayādaw 2002: 132–134 (Ledi Sayādaw [U Tin Shwe (trans.)] n.d.: 21–22). This passage is cited in Htun Thein et al. (eds.) 1953: 10–12.

⁴⁴ My interpretation here is supported by another important treatise on meditation—authored by the Ledi Sayādaw in 1901—the *Anattadīpanī* or the *Manual on Not-self*. (On this text, see Braun 2013: 125; 123–33; 135). At the beginning of this treatise, the Ledi Sayādaw expresses two ideas, the first about the use of practices of bodily awareness for the development of calm, and the second about the relationship of such practices to the development of *vipassanā* or insight meditation. He writes: “*Iriyāpa-thasampajañña* and *asammohasampajañña* (constant cognizance of postures and undeluded constant cognizance), as already described, are suitable to all people (*sūsūnānā* 'amyā') of the present time. People nowadays find it difficult to observe even *indriyasamvarasīla* (restraint of the sense faculties), let alone to establish

an experiential distinction between the phenomenology of two different modes of practice. So, when Braun argues that the Ledi Sayādaw “suggests a preferential option for the dry approach” to insight practice, and that he “justifies this approach as the logical choice on the basis of Abhidhamma knowledge,”⁴⁵ he not only misunderstands the context of Ledi’s interpretive approach, but also imputes an inaccurate historical assumption—based on what happens in other lineages and in other historical contexts under very different historical circumstances—onto Ledi’s nuanced treatment of traditional Buddhist historical attitudes.

So in sum, far from justifying his approach to meditation as “the logical choice based on Abhidhamma learning,” the Ledi Sayādaw appears to have pointed to the obviation of Abhidhamma learning in basic meditation practice contexts by recourse to *sutta* learning. And, indeed, this is also to some extent what happened among various teachers who followed in Ledi’s tradition of practice. But to overemphasize this development would be a historical oversimplification. Rather, we have to understand how Abhidhamma learning served various purposes in the broader context of the Ledi Sayādaw’s teachings.

kāyagatāsati (awareness of bodily states).” (Ledi Sayadaw 1995: 461 [translation adapted from Ashin Sumaṇa 2021].

He then goes on to discuss how one might circumvent such practices in the case of being developed in wisdom (*paññā*): “Insight is based on wisdom. For a person of powerful wisdom knowledge (*ñāṇ’paññā thak’san’so puggil’*), it is not necessary to devote his practice entirely to the development of *kāyagatāsati*. A correct cognizance of *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (suffering), and *anattā* (no-self) will suffice. For those who cannot comprehend in this way, it is suggested that they should first practice *kāyagatāsati* to develop calm and serenity before insight meditation (*vipassanā*) practice.” (Ledi Sayadaw 1995: 462–463 [translation adapted from Ashin Sumaṇa 2021])

Similarly, a passage in Ledi Sayādaw’s *Kammaṭṭhān’ kyaṃ’ krī’* (*The Great Treatise on Meditation Objects*) suggests that he generally interpreted approaches to meditation along karmic and cosmic lines: “If the yogi can develop purity of mind (*cittavisuddhi*), it is excellent. But if they cannot do it, those who do not specifically strive to cultivate access concentration (*upacārabhāvanā*) and absorption concentration (*appanābhāvanā*)—that is purity of mind—are called *sukkhavipassaka* yogis or *suddhavipassaka* yogis. The present era includes the era of the *sukkhavipassaka* (*sukkhavipassakakhet’*). Therefore, when the yogis have attained purity of morality, they should cultivate right contemplation of the four great primary elements (*dhātu*).” (Adapted from Ledi Sayādaw n.d.[a] [U Hla Maung trans.]: 481)

On the “era of the *sukkhavipassaka*” and its pedigree in earlier Burmese monastic scholasticism, see note 80.

⁴⁵ Braun 2013: 141.

2. In the Hands of All the People

It is here that the Ledi Sayādaw's emphasis on study groups and collective chanting comes to the fore. This is an aspect of the social history of Ledi's time that Braun has noted and made central to his understanding of Ledi's broader social influence. In this respect, it appears that Braun has once again presented a partial picture in his framing of the role of learning and chanting within the broader outlook of the Ledi Sayādaw's social program. To better understand the Sayādaw's approach, I would like to look in some detail at one of his works that has received little attention, perhaps precisely because it sits somewhat uncomfortably within the standard narrative of Ledi as a rationalized modernizer. This work is the *Rogantara-dīpanī* or *The Manual for Warding Off Pestilence*.⁴⁶

It is noteworthy that Braun devotes several pages of his book to discussing the implications of this work, while at the same time providing nearly no information on its contents.⁴⁷ This is puzzling, but when one reads through the entire book it becomes clear why Braun feels the need to both address this and de-emphasize its importance. The *Rogantara-dīpanī* is an expansive treatise containing information on a wide range of apotropaic tools, such as recitation formulas,⁴⁸ ritual methods for the empowerment of specific material talismans to ward off invisible evil forces,⁴⁹ the curative radiation of loving kindness,⁵⁰ alchemical recipes for curing diseases,⁵¹ stories of the use of mediums to gain information about the behavior of supernormal entities,⁵²

⁴⁶ Ledi Sayadaw 1909; Ledi Sayadaw 1955 [1909]; Ledi Sayadaw (U Tin U [Myaung] [trans.]) n.d.

⁴⁷ Braun 2013: 78–84.

⁴⁸ Ledi Sayadaw 1909: 79–83; Ledi Sayadaw 1955 [1909]: 51–52; Ledi Sayadaw (U Tin U [Myaung] [trans.]) n.d.: 28–29.

⁴⁹ Ledi Sayadaw 1909: 8–11, 62–66, 83–103; Ledi Sayadaw 1955: 6–7, 40–42, 53–66; Ledi Sayadaw (U Tin U [Myaung] [trans.]) n.d.: 4–5, 21–23, 29–40.

⁵⁰ Ledi Sayadaw 1909: 65; Ledi Sayadaw 1955 [1909]: 42; Ledi Sayadaw (U Tin U [Myaung] [trans.]) n.d.: 22.

⁵¹ Ledi Sayadaw 1909: 83–103; Ledi Sayadaw 1955: 53–66; Ledi Sayadaw (U Tin U [Myaung] [trans.]) n.d.: 29–40.

⁵² Ledi Sayadaw 1909: 46–47; Ledi Sayadaw 1955: 28–29; Ledi Sayadaw (U Tin U [Myaung] [trans.]) n.d.: 13. On the role of mediums in modern Burmese Buddhist practice, see Brac de le Perrière 2012a and 2012b, and Patton 2016. It is noteworthy that the examples given by the Ledi Sayādaw in the *Rogantara-dīpanī* involve female mediums, and that he recounts his direct engagement with them: “The woman related this story to us. She would, however, remain anonymous lest she should be considered

critiques of modern skeptics and their lack of belief in supernormal beings,⁵³ and social organizational advice for how to ward off evil spirits responsible for causing harm and illness in the community.⁵⁴ This final aspect of the text is particularly important because in engaging with such ideas, the Ledi Sayādaw makes clear that his social program for organizing scriptural recitation groups and for encouraging state-sponsored exams cannot be separated from his understanding of a larger set of relationships between the role of evil subtle forces—such as ogres, spirits, and demons (*bhīlū*", *yakkhā*, *rakkhasā*)—at work in Burma and the presence of foreign, non-Buddhist influence. I argue here that the ideas and practices found in the *Rogantara-dīpanī* are key aspects of the Ledi Sayādaw's project of "religion-making."⁵⁵ They are not new inventions or contrivances, but traditional practices being deployed to address the specific challenges of new historical contexts.

In attempting to understand the Ledi Sayādaw and the world in which he lived, it is simply not enough to mention that he *believed* in a world populated by spirits, and that he did not have a "'disenchanted' perspective that robbed his universe of unseen forces."⁵⁶ Rather, it is necessary to stress that Ledi fully occupied such a world, claimed to actually see such forces, and strongly opposed modern skeptics who doubted the reality of such a world. The *Rogantara-dīpanī* is not simply a treatise about the power of "recitation of

crazy. This is quite understandable because communication by supernormal beings by temporarily taking possession of humans is ridiculed these days as mere fantasy. [This skepticism] is to the advantage of the demons (*bhīlū*"). (This strange account related here is further evidence that propitiation of *devas* is sound practice, considering the fact that even a friendly supernormal force (*sūrai*) can be of help to human beings.)" (Translation adapted from Ledi Sayadaw [U Tin U (Myaung) (trans.)] n.d.: 16)

⁵³ Ledi Sayadaw 1909: 108–109, 112–113; Ledi Sayadaw 1955: 69–70, 72; Ledi Sayadaw (U Tin U [Myaung] [trans.]) n.d.: 41–42.

⁵⁴ Ledi Sayadaw 1909: 35–37, 54–62, 62–66; Ledi Sayadaw 1955: 21–23, 33–40, 40–42; Ledi Sayadaw (U Tin U [Myaung] [trans.]) n.d.: 12–13, 18–21, 21–23.

⁵⁵ On the notion of "religion-making" and for examples of various "religion-making" projects in colonial contexts, see Dressler and Mandair (eds.) 2011.

⁵⁶ Braun 2013: 83. On the contested notions of "enchantment" and "disenchantment," and their uniquely "modern" construction, see Yelle and Trein (eds.) 2020 and Ogden 2018. Ogden incisively suggests: "Enchantment can best be understood by looking at the historical moment of the accusers, rather than at the historical moment of the accused. And it can only be fully defined by reference to a particular set of secularists who say they see it." (Ogden 2018: 8) In his rendering of the Ledi Sayādaw, Braun enacts the historicist vision of this "particular set of secularists." On the troubling category of the "secular" and its history in South Asian contexts, see Needham and Rajan (eds.) 2007.

protective *suttas*, called *parittas*, as well as the recitation of ritual texts called *kamma vā* (the Burmese term for the Pāli word *kammavācā*).⁵⁷ It is a treatise that provides scholars with a clear view into the very complex world from which the Ledi's meditation emerged, and within which it was constructed.

In the context of this critique, it is helpful to reflect on the words of the anthropologist Philippe Descola, writing in 2005 on the distortive way in which non-Western traditions have been misrepresented—in a perhaps well-intentioned ignorance—in modern scholarship:

To be sure, we do not apprehend other cultures as completely analogous to our own, for this would hardly be likely. But we see them through the prism of no more than a limited part of our own cosmology, as so many singular expressions of Culture, which stands in contrast to a unique universal Nature. We thus regard them as cultures that are very diverse but that all fit into the canon of what this double abstraction means to us. Because it is deeply rooted in our habits, this ethnocentrism is very difficult to eradicate. [...] By turning modern dualism into the standard of all world systems, we are forced into a kind of well-meaning cannibalism, as we repeatedly incorporate non-moderns' objectivization of themselves into our own objectivization of ourselves. Primitive peoples were long reputed to be radically "other" and consequently were used as foils to civic morality or as models of now-vanished virtues. But now they are regarded as almost transparent neighbors, no longer the "naked philosophers" praised by Montaigne but preliminary sketches of citizens, proto-naturalists, quasi-historians, and nascent economists: in short, precursors who fumble at a way of apprehending things and human beings that we ourselves are believed to have discovered and codified better than anyone else. Of course, that is one way of expressing respect for them, but amalgamating them into categories to which we belong is also the surest way of wiping out their distinctive contribution to the intelligibility of the human condition.⁵⁸

I quote Descola at length because what he writes here aptly characterizes what Braun has done to the Ledi Sayādaw and his world by choosing to indelibly bleach into oblivion the rich and colorful fabric of religious practices, experiences, and prescriptions that can be discerned from a broad

⁵⁷ Braun 2013: 82. It is noteworthy that despite what Braun suggests, the *Rogantara-dīpanī* makes no mention of the recitation of *kammavācā* texts for the warding off of pestilence. It does, however, discuss how to properly read powerful *paritta* texts, which should be read after the manner of the recitation of *kammavācā* texts. See, for example, Ledi Sayadaw 1909: 31 and 65–66; Ledi Sayadaw 1955 [1909]: 19 and 42; Ledi Sayadaw (U Tin U [Myaung] [trans.]) n.d.: 11 and 23.

⁵⁸ Descola 2012 [2005]: 81.

reading of the Ledi Sayādaw's works. Braun is also not alone in this. He is participating in a well-worn trend, exemplified even more recently in the research work of his thesis advisor at Harvard University, Janet Gyatso. In her book *Being Human in a Buddhist World*, published to much acclaim, Gyatso weaves modern naturalist assumptions into the fabric of the "Buddhist World" of medieval Tibet.⁵⁹ It appears that Braun's work has been carried out under the influence of this theoretical regime. Unfortunately, the work lacks the doctrinal and practical contextualization that would be required to properly enact it.⁶⁰ I myself have no problem rendering the Ledi Sayādaw as an empiricist of sorts. The question is: what kind of empiricism did the Ledi Sayādaw practice? In what kind of world and through what kind of practices was his empiricism articulated, if indeed we would like to characterize him in this way?⁶¹ By effacing some of the non-modern or less

⁵⁹ Gyatso 2015. On Gyatso's naturalism, see Gentry 2019. Gentry offers a gentle, if pointed, counterpoint to Gyatso's particular dichotomizing mode.

⁶⁰ We might also point here to historicist approaches such as Michael Charney's intriguing analysis of the Ledi Sayādaw's beef boycott. Arguing against the interpretation of Ledi's boycott activity as a form of "proto-nationalism" or normative Buddhist moral commitment, Charney suggests instead: "Viewed another way, as I have suggested here, it could be asserted that rather than simply being interpreted as a moral condemnation of beef-eating, it was the ecological appeal of the Leidi *hsayadaw*'s message that found a receptive home among Lower Chindwin cultivators and encouraged a kind of proto-environmentalism. The Leidi *hsayadaw*'s attempt to win popular support, by bringing Buddhism to the people, was a pioneering move. He initiated this effort by manufacturing (since it was certainly exaggerated) an economic or, again, an ecological crisis to gain moral leadership at the popular level. This suggests that at least part of the local population was aware of, and concerned about, the fragility of their life on this changing landscape." (Charney 2007: 239) Here the Ledi Sayādaw is either a proto-environmentalist or a savvy political activist deploying specific local concerns toward his social agendas.

⁶¹ We might reflect here on Kenneth Zysk's (2017 [1985]) historical delineation of two types of traditional Indian medicine, the "magico-religious" and the "empirico-rational." What is noteworthy about this historical delineation is Zysk's attempt to render such an analysis in Kuhnian, paradigm-shifting, terms. He thus points to the emergence of empirico-rational medicine in early South Asia—exemplified in śāstric sources that emerge when writing becomes common—as a radical reorientation of medicinal practice. At the same time, he notes that the "magico-religious [...] never completely disappeared, but was gradually superseded by a system of medicine based on empirico-rational principles and practices." (Zysk 2017 [1985]: xi) This analysis relies on a number of assumptions about what textual sources can tell us about on-the-ground practices, and the inevitability of empirico-rational progress accompanied by the supersession of the magico-religious. Ethnographic research on global medicine today would suggest that such assumptions are perhaps overdetermined, and the historian also might perform an alternative analysis by which one emphasizes

modern aspects of his “empiricism,” we may lose track of precisely what made the Ledi Sayādaw something of an empiricist. As a helpful theoretical intervention in this regard, Michael Sheehy has recently demonstrated how tensions around such questions continue to play out in the ongoing interface of traditional Buddhist cosmo-visions and modern empiricist naturalisms.⁶² This analysis reveals how taking Buddhist practice contexts into account in such encounters forces a complexification of any reflection on the relationships between “Buddhist” worlds and their others.

In looking at some of the more esoteric aspects of the Ledi Sayādaw’s world, it becomes clear that the Abhidhamma is important as much for its ritual power (and its status as the formal marker of the continued existence of the *sāsana*) as for its “logic.” What is more, for the Sayādaw, the scholarly logic of the Abhidhamma is not entirely distinct from the apotropaic empiricism of treatises like the *Rogantara-dīpanī*, despite some of the modernist rhetoric that might suggest the contrary.⁶³ Indeed, the “logic” of the Abhidhamma, the taxonomic sensibilities in its account of the cosmos, and the power entailed in its recitation cannot be separated.⁶⁴

The *Rogantara-dīpanī* serves as an important source for such an understanding of this broader context of Ledi’s teachings on meditation. It

continuities over ruptures. We might additionally consider how traditional “magico-religious” models of healing possibly served as frames for or even foundational conceptual figurations of “empirico-rational” developments, just as Newton’s physics emerged from his “alchemy.”

⁶² Sheehy 2021.

⁶³ Braun (2013: 78–84) repeatedly emphasizes Ledi’s focus on the “logical appeal” of Buddhism. But this emphasis is overdetermined by the modernist narrative and does not properly attend to the differences between rhetorical tactics and practices on the ground. For the now-classical theory of the constitutive intertwinement of various modalities of Burmese Buddhist practice—encapsulated in the hermeneutically useful categories of the “apotropaic,” the “kammatic,” the “nibbānic,” and the “esoteric”—see Spiro 1982 [1970].

⁶⁴ The reification of the doctrinal “logic” of the Abhidhamma in the modernist narrative bolsters the overdetermined emphasis on doctrine as a primary force within that narrative. See, for example, Braun 2013: 85: “By presenting Buddhism as one system of teaching among others, Ledi played an important part in recasting Buddhism as a religion encapsulated in doctrine. In the *Purification of the Sāsana*, Ledi defines a religion as ‘various teachings and various sayings,’ thereby emphasizing Buddhism (along with others) as quintessentially a system of beliefs.” While this is no doubt the case to a certain extent, such a partial representation of Ledi’s treatises conforms too easily to modernist (and Protestant Buddhism) narratives and does not properly take into account how Buddhism was understood more broadly in practice for the Ledi Sayādaw.

also reveals how the Sayādaw's agonistic engagement with other religious traditions cannot simply be understood in connection with doctrine. An analysis of the Ledi Sayādaw's understanding of practice—be it meditation practice, rituals of recitation, or talismanic healing methods—opens a broader field of understanding for scholars than the modernist narrative allows. In this alternate narrative, these practices all involved participation in a massive cosmic battle taking place within every arena of life, from the every-day, to the political, to the cosmic. We can properly understand the Ledi Sayādaw's teachings on meditation—and those of his successors, particularly U Ba Khin—only when we understand them within this larger frame of reference.

A few key passages from the *Rogantara-dīpanī* provide helpful data in this regard, and on the Ledi Sayādaw's worldview or cosmo-vision. These statements allow us to discern a context for his emphasis on textual learning and community practice and lay bare his approach to notions of ritual efficacy and modern skepticism.

The *Rogantara-dīpanī* contains numerous statements about the importance of scriptural learning and scriptural recitation, and the power of such textual practices to ward off evil. In one revealing passage, the Ledi Sayādaw ties these apotropaic practices to his larger social program of textual learning. He writes:

There are certain *suttas* which have the specific effect of warding off evil, for instance the *Āṭānāṭiya Sutta* in the Dīgha Nikāya, the *Mahāsamaya Sutta*, and also another well-known composition, the *Uppātasanti Gāthā* by an Arahat named Sīlavanta. In this country, because there is a tradition of memorization and recitation [of shorter protective texts], and because there are many such long discourses and verses that cannot be committed to memory, now [these texts] have gone into disuse.

(That is why we have recommended to hold scriptural examinations especially for protective *suttas* which would bring into vogue again those time-honoured scriptures.)⁶⁵

While here the Ledi Sayādaw refers to only a handful of scriptures, elsewhere in the *Rogantara-dīpanī* he provides a great variety of lists of scriptures that

⁶⁵ Adapted from Ledi Sayadaw (U Tin U [Myaung] [trans.]) n.d.: 28 [Ledi Sayadaw 1909: 79–80; Ledi Sayadaw 1955: 51] with the input of Swe Swe Mon and Pyi Phyo Kyaw. I would note here that these texts have been preserved as and classed as protective devices across traditions for millennia. On the *Mahāsamayasutta* and the *Āṭānāṭiyasutta* and their parallels being included in ancient groupings of protective texts, see Skilling 1992 and 1997. On protective texts within Pali Buddhism specifically, see Crosby and Kyaw 2022.

have ritual efficacy and can be used to ward off evil forces. In particular, Ledi emphasizes the use of the traditional eleven classical *parittas*, which include the *Paṭṭhāna Pāli* of the Abhidhamma.⁶⁶ He additionally presents formulae of his own composition to be recited on various occasions.

This passage reveals how the Ledi Sayādaw's social program—involving recital groups and scriptural examinations for monastics and laypersons—cannot be separated from a grand cosmological outlook, in which the forces of good and evil are working against one another in a cosmic battle in the midst of the everyday lives of humans. Evil forces must be checked at every turn, and one of the most powerful ways to check them is to make sure that the *pariyatti sāsana*—the foundation for the *paṭipatti* and *paṭivedha sāsanas*—is strong. Memorization and recitation of scripture, therefore—and this includes Abhidhamma scriptures—is a foundation for meditation because it provides a ritual context and cosmological cover for the development of practice more broadly, be it the practice of ethical cultivation (*sīla*), the practice of calm meditation (*samatha*—*samādhi*), or the practice of insight meditation (*vipassanā*—*paññā*). What the Ledi Sayādaw was eager to ensure was that Buddhist practice did not end with mere scriptural study and memorization.⁶⁷

We also cannot separate these practices from the more talismanic apotropaic practices discussed in detail in the *Rogantara-dīpanī*. For example, the text contains an entire section entitled “Charms, Magical

⁶⁶ “There are various ways in which the local populace may take concerted action for protection. The important thing is to make the whole area to resound with the uttering of the Dhamma. Elderly persons should organize recital groups or associations by wards and arrange for recitals of *parittas*, and certain scriptural texts such as *Paṭṭhāna Pāli*, *Satipaṭṭhāna Pāli*, *Dhammacakka Pāli*, etc., so that the glory of the Buddha's Teaching (*Sāsana*) may be re-established. The fact that such recitals have fallen silent is an indication of the weak hold of the Teaching on the people and demons will get a chance to destroy [us]. The weak hold of the Buddha's teachings in the towns and villages is because of the lethargy of the elders of those towns and villages.” (Ledi Sayadaw [U Tin U (Myaung) (trans.)] n.d.: 16 [Ledi Sayadaw 1909: 48; Ledi Sayadaw 1955: 29]) On the centrality of the *Paṭṭhāna Pāli* in Burmese Buddhism both historically and into the present, see Kyaw 2014.

⁶⁷ He followed the traditional Buddhist idea that one first hears or learns the wisdom of the teachings via scripture (*sutamayā paññā*), then reflects on them to produce conceptual wisdom (*cintāmayā paññā*), and then puts them into meditative practice to produce the wisdom of meditative cultivation (*bhāvanāmayā paññā*). On the latter two categories of wisdom in connection with *vipassanā* practice, see U Tin Shwe (trans.) 2016: 16, and Ledi Sayādaw (U Tin Shwe [trans.] n.d. (c): 21.

Diagrams, and Medicines,”⁶⁸ in which a variety of ritual formulae, alchemical recipes, and *yantras* or ritual diagrams are prescribed for warding off specific supernormal forces or diseases.⁶⁹ Below is the *bodhipakkhiya-yantra* (*bodhipakkhiya 'an'*) or the magical diagram invoking the *bodhipakkhiya dhammas*, a list of thirty-seven traditional positive psychological factors that form the core of Buddhist doctrine⁷⁰:

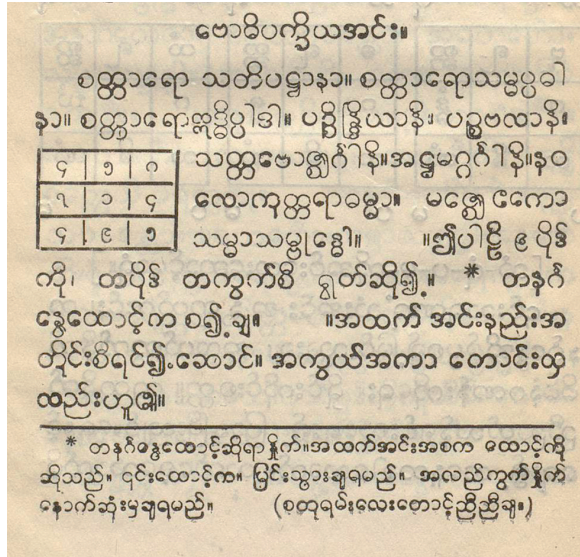


Figure 1: Image of the *Bodhipakkhiya-yantra* from the 1909 edition of the *Rogantara-dīpanī* (A Manual for Warding Off Pestilence)

This image from the original 1909 edition of the *Rogantara-dīpanī* reveals how the classical (Abhidhamma) Buddhist doctrine of the *bodhipakkhiya* mental factors cannot be separated from an apotropaic context, and that apotropaic concerns likewise cannot be entirely separated from traditional doctrinal concerns.⁷¹ The Ledi Sayādaw goes to great pains to make this clear

⁶⁸ This heading is not found in the original 1909 publication, but is present in the 1955 edition.

⁶⁹ Ledi Sayadaw 1909: 83–103; Ledi Sayadaw 1955: 53–66; Ledi Sayadaw (U Tin U [Myaung] [trans.] n.d.: 29–40.

⁷⁰ Ledi Sayadaw (U Tin U [Myaung] [trans.] n.d.: 34. See Ledi Sayadaw 1909: 89–90; Ledi Sayadaw 1955 (1909): 58.

⁷¹ The instructions for utilizing this magical diagram are as follows:

“In writing the words in each diagram begin from the Sun House, i.e. the top left corner, and proceed after the *Myin-nthwar* method. In the center put the number

in his work, and we should understand such relationalities likewise to extend to the context of meditation. In many meditation contexts, experiences of supernormal realities coincide with the enactment of traditional ritual practices such as the recitation of protective verses, and supernormal obstacles can be *a* if not *the* primary concern in the development of the stages of the path of meditative practice.

The *Rogantara-dīpanī* also shows how the Ledi Sayādaw saw the ritual practices mentioned above as an important part of a new social order—from another perspective, a return to one of old—that he was attempting to help cultivate during his lifetime. In promoting recitation groups and exams on scriptural learning, he hoped to bring large groups of people together in a physical show of Buddhist solidarity that would help drive away the dark cosmological forces on the horizon.⁷² For the Ledi Sayādaw, such gatherings were not simply for the sake of Buddhist learning or publicly glorifying scripture as emblematic of the *sāsana*. Rather, the Sayādaw's repeated emphasis on the power of Buddhist groups coming out in force—in the form of marching bands, youth brigades, or mobs carrying swords, spiky sticks and torches—to rout out dark forces among them must be understood within the context of both the decline of Buddhism under colonialism and a more general Buddhist cosmological vision of an ongoing cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil. But combating such forces can be done in various ways. The Ledi Sayādaw writes about cosmopolitan contexts in the following way:

In big cities like Rangoon and Mandalay there are too many nooks and corners where demons can lurk. Besides, there are too many foreigners, so that concerted action may not be practicable. Therefore, as the first step,

indicative of your birthday. Write those words neatly on local bamboo-pulp paper. Burn them and take the ashes with water daily. After taking them as many number of times as one's age, it gives protection against evil spirits. The more the number of times taken, the greater one will become.

In case of danger, prepare those diagrams (on a sheet of tin or brass), tie it with red thread consecrated with seven repetitions of the *Twenty-eight Buddhas Charm* and the *Invocation of the Powers of the Seven Buddhas* and put them with consecrated threads around children's neck and wrists. Gold or silver sheets may also be used." (Ledi Sayadaw [U Tin U (Myaung) (trans.)] n.d.: 34 [Ledi Sayadaw 1909: 89–90; Ledi Sayadaw 1955 (1909): 58])

⁷² For a more socially oriented reading of the Ledi Sayādaw's religious education program, see Turner 2014, especially 45–109. See also Dhammasami 2004 on the broader socio-political contexts of such programs.

offering of food to the demons must be made including the kind of food they relish. A proclamation with a great gong must be made as follows:

“O demons who are staying in this town or ward: beginning from tomorrow, the townsfolk will give you a grand feast at such and such hour, for demons staying in such and such ward, and they are invited to come and partake of the offerings at such and such place.”

The offerings should be repeated for three days. Then only should the demons be driven away.

(If the local government officials take strong measures against demons as they do with thieves and dacoits, the danger of demons will soon be wiped out from this country)

Present public health measures such as environmental cleanliness and tidiness, crude-oil painting of houses, sprinkling of disinfectants, quarantine measures, inoculation etc., undertaken by the local administration, also helps a good deal.⁷³

This passage shows how the Ledi Sayādaw conceptualized the need to placate demons with offerings in cases when “concerted effort” may not be possible on account of a cosmopolitan context in which the larger community might not be invested in a Buddhist onto-epistemic system. At the same time, he advocates for the local government to directly engage in controlling destructive supernormal forces. Finally, by discussing the role of basic sanitary practices and their possible connection to the presence of demonic forces, he demonstrates an awareness of overlapping influences and interpretive frameworks: modern bio-medical practices of sanitation are reconciled with traditional conceptions of supernormal forces as agents of disease.

This complex of epistemologically layered prescriptions presents us with a very dense context, one that reveals just how difficult it is to historically recover the world of experience in which the Ledi Sayādaw lived. It remains challenging to interpret this material, but one thing is clear from such engagements: Ledi’s teachings were not simply a “mind science” through which traditional ritual practices were subverted and a rationalized center was constructed around doctrine and meditation.⁷⁴ The process of Ledi’s

⁷³ Ledi Sayadaw (U Tin U [Myaung] [trans.]) n.d.: 13 [Ledi Sayadaw 1909: 36–37; Ledi Sayadaw 1955 [1909]: 22–23].

⁷⁴ On such characterizations of the Ledi Sayādaw’s project, see Crosby 2013 and 2020. In these books, Crosby draws uncritically on Braun’s narrative of modern Burmese *vipassanā*. For representations of the now-entrenched, but certainly not unproblematic, binaries of modern scholarship on Burmese religion and meditation, see Schober 1995, Houtman 1999, and Foxeus 2016. Houtman (1999) is perhaps the most sophisticated in productively—but somewhat bewilderingly—problematizing the binaries.

rationalization—and the rationalization of the modern Burmese Buddhist state more generally in history—cannot be separated from his traditional Buddhist cosmological logic. And by extension, teachings on meditation cannot be separated from it either.

Indeed, in one final passage from the *Rogantara-dīpanī*, the Ledi Sayādaw makes a strong statement about the problems of modern rationality. He writes:

There are people who are skeptical of religious treatises (*bhāsā kyaṃ* “*myā*”). They believe only what they have experienced for themselves. They are ignorant of the truth of the afterlife. They forget that when it comes to capacities for knowledge and wisdom, there are an infinite number of things in the world that are not able to be known or seen, that is, by the average person (*pakati so sū tui*). So, religion (*bhāsā*) is not something to be thrown overboard. The quest for true religion (*hut’ mhan’ so bhāsā*) is the purpose [of a life]. This is because future well-being (i.e., in the here-after) outweighs present well-being. Once you are misdirected now, thousands of future existences will be at stake. Beware!⁷⁵

The new social order brought with it novel and challenging ideas about traditional Buddhism, a skepticism that Ledi clearly found worrisome. Note here that Ledi is quick to point out that the “average person” is not able to verify the truths of religion. Elsewhere in his works, he makes it clear that he is one of the exceptional few who has, through his own direct experience, understood the truths of the Buddhist religion. And here he is clearly advocating for those of average intelligence to demure to the learned, so that they might save themselves from ignorance. This attitude stands in stark contrast to what has become the paradigmatic mantra of the modern Buddhist, as exemplified in evocations and translations of the *Kālāma Sutta*.⁷⁶ But before we turn to more recent modernizations of Buddhism in a process of post-colonial translation, let us first explore some of Ledi’s contemporaries and successors in Myanmar, and how their histories further complicate the modernist narrative—and the Ledi Sayādaw’s role in it—that so many have accepted today.

⁷⁵ Adapted from Ledi Sayādaw (U Tin U [Myaung] [trans.] n.d.: 42 (Ledi Sayadaw 1909: 112–113; Ledi Sayadaw 1955 [1909]: 72).

⁷⁶ On this oft-cited teaching of the Buddha, see U Ba Khin 1954: 4–5; Kornfield 1977: 1; Bodhi 2012: 73–74.

3. The Mingun Jetavana Sayādaw and the Mahāsī Sayādaw: A Question of Beginnings

I have shown above that the narrative of Ledi Sayādaw's legacy as a teacher of meditation must be rendered more complex by an understanding of the traditional and epistemologically layered social contexts in which he lived and practiced. Most importantly, I have suggested that it is misleading to insinuate that the Ledi Sayādaw's simplification of meditation emerged from an emphasis on Abhidhamma learning, and that it entailed the obviation of the practice of calm meditation. Rather, I argue, the Ledi Sayādaw's teachings on meditation ultimately prioritize *sutta* categories and displace the need for Abhidhamma learning for the great majority of practitioners—particularly at basic levels of practice. It appears that, throughout his career, the Ledi Sayādaw maintained that when it comes to meditation, the Abhidhamma is of use only to a very specific category of karmically advanced practitioners working on developing their perfection of wisdom. This does not mean that he did not justify many of his scholastic arguments by recourse to Abhidhamma knowledge. The Abhidhamma was clearly the water in which he and his fellow scholar-monks swam. Rather, it means that the Ledi Sayādaw's project to spread meditation must be understood not simply through the interpretive lens of intellectual and/or political history.

I suggest instead that scriptural study and Abhidhamma learning served a more basic apotropaic function within the Ledi Sayādaw's social program. Traditions of mass meditation do not emerge in Burma from traditions of Abhidhamma learning, though certain aspects of Abhidhamma theoretics certainly contributed to structuring many of the basic ontological assumptions of Burmese Buddhist traditions. More salient at the level of community building, solidarity with a unified Buddhist identity gets shored up when people work collectively on the project of the preservation of scriptural learning and practice, which is understood to be represented in its essence by Abhidhamma treatises such as the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*. The practice of meditation provides an opportunity for individuals to build upon this basic apotropaic foundation and enact other aspects of the *sāsana*. This is how the Ledi Sayādaw, among others, conceptualized the relationship between textual learning and practice.

In what follows, I will attempt to outline how a particular set of traditions of practice in the Ledi Sayādaw's lineage developed in the years following his demise, and how new historical and social contexts conditioned how it evolved. But before going into the details of the Ledi Sayādaw's key

successors, we must first make a brief detour to discuss another lineage of practice, that of the renowned Mahāsī Sayādaw, who was responsible for building a large movement of lay meditation practice in Myanmar during the mid-twentieth century.

In his narrative of the development of insight meditation in Burma, Erik Braun is at pains to explain why the Ledi Sayādaw—who he claims is the fountainhead of the mass insight meditation movement—never advocated for group meditation contexts, never set up a lay meditation center, and never explicitly championed what we have come to call a movement of “mass lay meditation.” To explain this, Braun falls back on his narrative about the importance of the role of Abhidhamma learning in the development of meditation. He writes:

The fact that meditation emerged out of Abhidhamma learning explains why Ledi spent so much time promoting study groups but did much less to organize explicit meditation practice in a group setting. [...] neither his organization nor his monasteries were sites specifically for lay meditation, let alone on a group level. [...] Ledi’s ideal of meditation was one in which it was an individual pursuit. It was his students and other monks a generation later, discussed in the next chapter, who would found numerous “meditation centers” (*rip’ sā*) strictly for practice and make meditation a social reality on a collective level.

My reading of the historical evidence available allows for a different understanding of the landscape of meditation in Burma than Braun suggests, one that makes the Ledi Sayādaw just one important player in the development of insight meditation at the beginning of the twentieth century. I contend that once we properly acknowledge this broader field of teachers and practitioners, we can come to see that Ledi’s historical role is important for reasons other than those that Braun suggests.

A key historical event must be emphasized here. This event took place in 1911, four full years before the Ledi Sayādaw authored his now-famous *Manual of Insight*. It was in this year that the very first meditation center for lay people was established in Myanmar, by the venerable Mingun Jetavana Sayādaw (1868–1955).⁷⁷ The Mingun Jetavana Sayādaw’s disciple, the

⁷⁷ Houtman 2014: 95 and Houtman 1990b: 43. The Mingun Jetavana Sayādaw’s teachings are considered to go back to the little-known The-Lon Sayādaw (1786–1861), but it was Mingun who first taught groups of lay meditators and established a center where they could congregate and practice together. See U Hla Myint 2019 for a recent English translation of the Mingun Jetavana Sayādaw’s biography, written by his close disciple Tikkhācāra not long after his teacher’s death in 1955. See pages 206–218 of that biography for information on the The-Lon Sayādaw’s practice and his connection

Mahāsī Sayādaw, can be credited with developing his teacher's method, setting up a large network of lay meditation centers, and being tasked by the government to teach foreign visitors from 1950 onwards.⁷⁸ So, if the institutions of mass lay meditation had already begun by 1911—under a teacher with no explicit connection to the Ledi Sayādaw—why should we look to Ledi in attempting to discern the historical moment of “the birth of insight”?

One might answer this question in a number of ways. How we do so hinges on how we define the referent of insight meditation. Is “the birth of insight” the birth of an idea, the idea that true Buddhist realization is possible even in this degraded age? If so, then “the birth of insight” in Burma happened in the middle of the eighteenth century, when pioneering monks such as Waya-zawta claimed that they had attained key stages of Buddhist liberation and promised such stages to those who followed their teachings.⁷⁹ Can “the birth of insight” be marked by a scholarly project? If so, the pioneering meditation-oriented treatises of the eighteenth-century monastic *vipassanā* practitioner Medawī (Medhāvī; 1728–1816)—otherwise known as the Ton‘ le“lum” (Catugiri) Sayādaw—may have been a crucial historical turning point.⁸⁰ If “the birth of insight” was the birth of a movement, on the

to the Mingun Jetavana Sayadaw. (I am grateful to Tony Scott for having drawn my attention to this important source.) See also Htay Hlaing 2013 for an English translation of the The-Lon Sayādaw's biography, excerpted from Htay Hlaing 1993. Jake Davis (2004: 110–11) notes the connection between the The-Lon Sayādaw and the Mingun Jetavana Sayādaw's practice.

⁷⁸ The German monk Nyanaponika Thera studied meditation with the Mahāsī Sayādaw in 1952, and from this experience was born one of the first Western-language books on practical Burmese Buddhist insight meditation: *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* (Nyanaponika Thera 1954).

⁷⁹ Pranke 2010: 455.

⁸⁰ See Medhāvī 1938. Already by 1757, Medawī explicitly identified himself in writing as a *vipassanā* practitioner, “one who has taken up the burden of *vipassanā* (*vipassanādhura*) among the two types of practitioners, those who take up the burden of books and those who take up the burden of *vipassanā*” (Medhāvī 1938: 411). Medawī's conceptual framework of *sāsana* decline—which focused on the ongoing existence of the Buddhist dispensation as marked by the ongoing existence of various types of soteric attainers declining in five successive thousand-year periods—also possibly served as an historical touchstone for conceptualizations of Burmese Buddhist practice organized around traditional Buddhist soteriological categories. Medawī's scheme of *sāsana* decline is as follows: “The *sāsana* is the word of the Blessed One. As long as the *sāsana* as the word of the Blessed remains, that long is the era (*khet*‘) in which the path and the fruit are obtained. Because the path and the fruit are obtained for five thousand years, it is known as the ‘great occasion’ (*mahāsamaya*). [...] [The first] thousand years is the Era of Those Whose Fluxes are

other hand—a Burmese Buddhist movement of mass lay meditation—then the Mingun Jetavana Sayādaw’s establishment of the first meditation center for lay people is perhaps the best marker of that key moment, and his disciple Mahāsī Sayādaw’s institution building marks its growth to maturity.⁸¹ It is notable that the Ledi Sayādaw plays no obvious role in any of these pivotal moments.⁸² His exegetical activities, his personal interest in meditation, his training of a number of key students, and his dynamic preaching can be seen simply as representative aspects of a broader range of developments—most of them poorly understood and poorly theorized—that took place across Burmese society from the middle of the eighteenth century into the early decades of the twentieth century.

But I would here like to entertain another possibility: that the moment of “the birth of insight”—or at least the birth of the referent most significant in modern historical developments—should be understood beyond the history of Burmese Buddhism proper in the early twentieth century. I would suggest that the true “birth of insight” took place elsewhere and much later, in 1969 in India, when the non-Buddhist insight meditation master S. N. Goenka—a lay teacher in the lineage of the Ledi Sayādaw—brought a derivative form of the Ledi Sayādaw’s teachings to India and made it his life’s mission to teach basic Buddhist *vipassanā* meditation practices to his brethren on the Indian subcontinent. I suggest that the true historical referent of what we now call insight meditation in modern global frames of reference emerges in contexts of mass lay participation that likewise entail both lay leadership and an explicit “non-sectarian” (*sampradāyiktāvihīn*, in S. N. Goenka’s terms)

Destroyed by Obtaining Penetrative Discrimination (*patisambhidāppattakhīṇāsava khet’*). [The second] thousand years is the Era of Those Whose Fluxes are Destroyed as Dry Insight Practitioners (*sukkhavipassaka khet’*). [The third] thousand years is the Era of Non-returners (*anāgām’ khet’*). [The fourth] thousand years is the Era of Oncereturners (*sakadāgām’ khet’*). [The fifth] thousand years is the Era of Stream-enterers (*sotāpan’ khet’*). This *sāsana* of five millenia is indeed known as the era in which it is possible to attain the path and the fruit.” (Medhāvī 1938: 253) This appears to be an interpretive elaboration of *Moh* 201. For the Ledi Sayādaw’s version of this scheme, see Ledi Sayādaw 2002 [1919]: 56–58, which appears to be an interpretive elaboration of *Manorathapūraṇī* I 87. On the authoritativeness of the *Manorathapūraṇī* scheme for twentieth-century Burmese Theravāda, see Nuīṇ’ ṇaṃ to’ buddhasāsanā aphvai’ 1958:147.

⁸¹ On some of the complexities of the history of this lineage, see Scott 2023.

⁸² See note 35 above on Braun’s attempt to suggest a link between the teachings of the Ledi Sayādaw and the Mahāsī Sayādaw via one of Ledi Sayādaw’s famous disciples, the Mohnyin Sayādaw.

reframing of the Buddha's teachings. Such a reframing did not take place under the Ledi Sayādaw, it did not take place under the Mingun Jetavana or Mahāsī Sayādaws, and it did not take place under the Ledi Sayādaw's lay student Sayā Thetgyi or Sayā Thetgyi's most influential student Sayāgyi U Ba Khin—though U Ba Khin perhaps got the closest to it in the Burmese context. But such a development did come about when S.N. Goenka found himself in India tasked with presenting the teachings of the Buddha to an audience that was extremely hostile to Buddhism.⁸³

I contend that it is only in understanding this crucial historical moment in post-colonial India that we can fully account for the importance of the Ledi Sayādaw's role in the history of insight meditation and its global spread.⁸⁴ It is precisely the contours of S.N. Goenka's reframing that provide us with the historical information we need to understand the epistemological mess that we find ourselves in today with globalized and medicalized Mindfulness.⁸⁵ But to properly understand the connection between the Ledi Sayādaw and S. N. Goenka, we must explore the role that two key intervening figures—Sayāgyi U Po Thet and Sayāgyi U Ba Khin—played in developing the Ledi Sayādaw's teachings in twentieth-century Burma such that S. N. Goenka eventually found himself on a mission to spread the teachings abroad in 1969.

⁸³ Strictly speaking, the key first moment might have been S.N. Goenka's initial attempt to teach meditation to his community of Burmese-born Hindu Indians in Mandalay in January of 1967. At that time, Goenka first attempted, under the direct guidance of U Ba Khin, to publicly translate his teacher's traditional Burmese *vipassanā* meditation into a "non-sectarian" (*sampradāyiktāvihāra*) idiom. (Ko Lay 1980: 595)

⁸⁴ "Largely through the teachings of Goenka, who returned from Burma to India, the Ledi Sayadaw *ānāpāna* method is internationally the more widely practiced among laity. It has been adapted to quick and short courses that specialise in teaching lay people with little time off." (Houtman 2014: 8)

⁸⁵ If we are interested in Burma's mass lay meditation movement (see Jordt 2007), we should be concerned primarily with the teachings of the Mingun Jetavana Sayādaw, the Mahāsī Sayādaw, the Mohnyin Sayādaw, the Mogok Sayādaw, and other monastic teachers.

4. Sayāgyi Maung Po Thet: Layman Wizard

It is a historical fact that the Ledi Sayādaw did not himself train large numbers of lay people in meditation.⁸⁶ But he did differ from some of his monastic contemporaries in that he explicitly charged one key *lay* disciple with the duty of teaching insight meditation to other lay people, and even certified that this disciple was qualified to teach monks. This was an extraordinary development in its time. That disciple was the farmer Maung Po Thet (1873–1945), who later came to be known as Sayā Thetgyi. There is something of a shroud of mystery around Maung Po Thet and his methods of teaching. The historical record simply does not contain much that helps us reliably understand who he was and how he taught his inflection of the Ledi Sayādaw’s method of meditation.⁸⁷

The best historical source for understanding his teachings appears to be a work titled *A Treatise on the Shortcut to Knowledge and Vision of Insight Meditation in This Very Life* (*Diṭṭhadhammavipassanāññadassana Phrat’ lam “kyam”*). This book is an anonymous work authored by one of Sayā Thetgyi’s close disciples. Part meditation manual and part scholastic treatise,

⁸⁶ Houtman 2014: 6. It should be noted that we do have descriptions of the Ledi Sayādaw giving Dhamma discourses to large numbers of lay people, and he clearly taught *about* meditation in those contexts. For example, he writes in 1901 in his *Āhāradīpanī* or *Manual of Nutriment* that “[w]hile I, the abbot of Ledi Forest Monastery, was observing my rains retreat (*vassa*) at the top of Shwetaung-oo mountain [...]. I used to instruct all male and female precept-keepers from Monywa and Ahlone [who came to the monastery on uposatha days] on the four kinds of meditation on nutriment and the five kinds of meditation on the aggregates according to the Nidānavagga Saṃyutta and Khandhavagga Saṃyutta together with three profound knowledges (*pariññā*) during the three months of the rainy season to practice constantly throughout life. These explanations were written into a book, called the *Āhāradīpanī*, for the benefit of good people [...].” (Adapted from Ledi Sayādaw [U Tin Shwe (trans.)] 2018 [1986]: 77 [Ledi Sayādaw 1996 (1901): 307–308]) It is difficult to know whether this passage should be taken as anything more than a description of the Sayādaw giving public Dhamma discourses on the topic of meditation. In fact, scant evidence exists to demonstrate that in such contexts, the Sayādaw provided detailed guidance in meditation of the sort that came to be available at meditation centers in the last decade of his life and into the present.

⁸⁷ Biographical sources on Sayā Thetgyi’s life are all fairly recent and do not present their historical sources clearly; evidence of his teaching approach comes down to us through his students, who had their own ways of engaging with his teachings. See Htun Thein et al. (eds.) 1953, Htay Hlaing 1987 [1977], Houtman 1990b, Ledi Paññāsīha 2012, Byles 1962, and U Than 2005. U Htay Hlaing’s presentation of Sayā Thetgyi’s life and teachings is particularly rich, and it is unfortunate that this work is not available in English translation.

it details the normative structure of Sayā Thetgyi's meditation teachings and provides scriptural warrant for them.⁸⁸ The text draws extensively on the canonical *sutta* tradition, the *Visuddhimagga*, the Abhidhamma and commentarial traditions, and the works of the Ledi Sayādaw and his disciples. This breadth of engagement with the Buddhist scholarly tradition indicates that the book's author was a person of wide learning. Unfortunately, it remains unclear when this book was written, and its publishing history is likewise murky. While the book may have been in circulation while Sayā Thetgyi was alive, the versions available in print today possibly contain material from a time post-dating his death. The three versions available to me are all in general agreement, however, and the material found in them probably does not postdate 1948.⁸⁹ Additional useful information on Sayā Thetgyi's life has been compiled in U Htay Hlaing's 1977 biography, *The Non-returner Sayā Thetgyi: His Life, His Teachings, and His Good Acts*.

⁸⁸ Htun Thein et al. (eds.) 1953 (see also Tin U 1989 and Htay Hlaing 1987 [1977]: 133–292). It is worth noting that the treatise prefaces its normative depictions of Sayā Thetgyi's teachings with a depiction of the meditation methods of a monastic teacher, the Saddhammapāla Kammaṭṭhāna Sayādaw (see Htun Thein et al. [eds.] 1953: 19–33). It remains unclear exactly how this monastic teacher and Sayā Thetgyi may have been connected, but the book notes that the Saddhammapāla Kammaṭṭhāna Sayādaw was initially a disciple of the Mingun Jetavana Sayādaw. The book also ends with a depiction of the meditation methods of another monastic teacher, the Rve-u-doṅ' Sayādaw, and a scripture-oriented Dhamma teaching of an additional monastic teacher, Mrui'-mi Sayādaw, reprinted from a Dhamma periodical (see Htun Thein et al. [eds.] 1953: 189–197). Further, appended to the treatise in all the editions known to me is the *Vipassanā Lak' khvai*, an Abhidhamma handbook of the Sai-phrū Ledi Sayādaw, U Nandiya. An important scholar disciple of the Ledi Sayādaw, U Nandiya apparently wrote the treatise at the request of Sayā Thetgyi in 1908 CE [1270 ME] while Sayā Thetgyi was still in the process of developing his meditation practice (see Ledi Pañṇāsīha 2012: 123). These multiple monastic framings may have been a deliberate attempt on the part of the author and editors to ensure a monastic imprimatur for Sayā Thetgyi's teachings.

⁸⁹ One account suggests that a book with the title *Diṭṭhadhammavipassanā* and associated with Sayā Thetgyi was in circulation by 1938 (Htay Hlaing 1987 [1977]: 295). It remains unclear, however, whether this is the same book that is now in print as *Diṭṭhadhammavipassanāñāḍassana Phrat' lam''' kyam'''*. U Htay Hlaing's 1977 reproduction of the book—which generally agrees with the 1953 version of *Diṭṭhadhammavipassanāñāḍassana Phrat' lam''' kyam'''* available to me—appears to draw on a 1948 edition that is described as a seventh printing of the book (Htay Hlaing 1987 [1977]: 137). Elsewhere, U Htay Hlaing suggests that the book was printed seven times within Sayā Thetgyi's lifetime (Htay Hlaing 1987: 5), though this assertion is difficult to substantiate, and it remains unclear what the form of the book would have looked like in those printings.

This source presents challenges to the historian, however, and I will therefore draw on it only minimally in what follows.

Based on information provided in *A Treatise on the Shortcut to Knowledge and Vision of Insight Meditation in This Very Life*, we might suggest that the most distinctive and transformative aspect of Sayā Thetgyi's teachings was his "shortcut" approach.⁹⁰ He taught short seven-day courses in which he first prescribed the meditation object of the breath to catalyze deep states of concentration, and afterwards prescribed *vipassanā* discernment—a direct encounter with the three characteristics (impermanence, suffering, and not-self) of mind and matter by way of awareness of sensations within the body.⁹¹ This latter practice is catalyzed when—in the presence of the teacher—a meditator brings a highly concentrated attention to a small spot at the fontanel area of the head and allows the awareness of sensations at that part of the body to spread naturally throughout the body.⁹² Finally, a

⁹⁰ "By following Sayāgyi's method, there is a high likelihood of attaining insight knowledge within seven days." (Htun Thein et al. [eds.] 1953: 148 [translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart])

⁹¹ It seems quite clear that in his normative model of teaching, Sayā Thetgyi was not light on calming/concentration practice, as will be clarified further below in the narrative of his own path to attainment. For example, *A Treatise on the Shortcut to Knowledge and Vision of Insight Meditation in This Very Life* contains the following discussion of preparatory calming practice: "The more mature the concentration (*samādhi*) becomes, the more [signs] the meditator experiences. At times he may see and speak with *sammā devas*, tree guardian spirits, *weizzā* masters, yogīs with alchemical mastery, hermits with psychic powers, and hungry ghosts. However, when he encounters such experiences, he is not surprised. It feels just like meeting with normal people. They do not frighten him, and some of them encourage him [in his practice]. At that time, the meditator who practices [only] calm meditation enjoys such experiences with deities without carrying on properly with meditation. He overestimates himself, taking himself to be a deity or a *weizzā* master. [Getting caught up like this] for a long time, he comes to talk like a crazy person. In this way, the main aim of meditation gets lost. So, in teaching meditation that involves insight emerging from calm, it is good to stop the practice of calm when *samādhi* becomes very powerful and begin insight." (Htun Thein et al. [eds.] 1953: 37–38 [translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart]; cf. Ledi Paññāsīha 2012: 143–144)

⁹² See, for example, Htun Thein et al. (eds.) 1953: 43–44: "At this point, and only when the teacher is present, [the practitioner] should feel (*ve'*), in an area around half an inch or an inch in size at the fontanelle of the head, some coolness or warmth. When [the verb] "*ve'*" is used, this does not refer to something that is visible to the eyes. One feels [the cold or heat] as though by touching something. Once it is felt, one should simply remain aware (*si*) [of it] without letting the mind go elsewhere. If [one can do this continuously] for quite some time, the small spot—be it warm or cool—

meditator becomes able to observe the impermanence and the inter-relatedness of the aggregates and sense spheres comprehensively in a process of interactive flux. This mode of discernment then leads into the progressive development of the seven purifications (*visuddhi*) through sixteen insight knowledges and the attainment of the nibbānic state.⁹³ The following description of this attainment in the treatise is exemplary of the approach to practice that gets handed down to Sayā Thetgyi's most influential disciples:

In observing the appearance and disappearance of *rūpa* and *nāma* (matter and mind), when the disappearing [aspect] becomes very rapid, a meditator sees only the disappearing of *rūpa* and *nāma*. Seeing only the disappearing [aspect] is called *bhaṅgañāṇa*. Coming to see these [disappearances] as dangers is called *bhayañāṇa*. Coming to see these as defects is called *ādinavañāṇa*. Becoming disenchanted [with them] is called *nibbidāñāṇa*. [These identifications] are simply names for what appears in knowledge and in the mind of the one meditating. This [whole process] is called *vipassanāñāṇa*. By observing the [successive] disappearance [of *rūpa* and *nāma*], the matter-mind formations (*rūpanāmasaṅkhāra*) become hot. [...]

When [the matter-mind formations] become hot, the whole body may become so hot that it is unbearable. And the mind will remain disenchanted by seeing it as suffering. The knowledges of danger (*bhaya*), fault (*ādinava*), and disenchantment (*nibbidā*) appear all together at the same time in the meditator deeply seeing. Continuing to observe in this way, the matter-mind formations become almost unbearably hot and painful—like the sensations [experienced] when contracting a disease (*vedanā*)—and then numb. It is similar to being boiled in hot water. [This is how] one abides in equanimity with feelings (*vedanupekkhā*). One encounters various kinds [of feelings]. They are of such variety that they are innumerable and cannot be described. [...]

When matter and mind are constantly degrading in this way, [the experience of which is] so difficult to bear, a meditator might think as

can be felt to move in a gentle flux. Keeping the mind in that place with whatever appears, the small round spot [of sensation] at the fontanelle will spread out to cover the head, tending to flow downward. Be aware [of it] and follow [it] as it flows downward and, in this way, let it gradually spread to cover the entire body. When it has covered the entire body in this way, or before the body is entirely covered, subtle vaporous waves of heat or subtle vaporous waves of cold will appear at certain parts of the body, fluctuating slowly like cloud formations.” For what follows on this description, see Appendix 3.1 (cf. Ledi Paṇṇāsīha 2012: 147–148).

⁹³ It is here worth noting that in its descriptions of the attainment of the nibbānic state, the treatise draws particularly on U Tiloka's *Paṇḍitavedanīya dīpanī kyaṃ*” (Htun Thein et al. [eds.] 1953: 126–128).

follows: “Should I give up meditation to free myself from such constant degradation of mind and matter, or should I continue striving?” This quality (*sabho*) of desiring to be free [from the constant degradation of matter and mind] is called *muñcitukamyatāñāṇa*. [...]

If one continues observing, after a while, the unbearable qualities (*sabho*) of the feeling (*vedanā*) will spread uniformly throughout the entire body. Then one will find only a single mass of heat. Although it is hot, since the heat is spread uniformly throughout the body, one can endure it. This is called knowledge of re-observation (*paṭisaṅkhāñāṇa*) by way of the purification of knowledge and vision of the path (*paṭipadāñāṇadassanavisuddhi*). When the unbearable [feelings] are [thus] uniform in the mind (*cit'*), one should remain attentive to impermanence, suffering, and not-self as appropriate. Attending in this way, the feelings of heat and boiling increase uniformly. Although they increase, they are no longer unbearable. [...]

The mind remains powerfully fixed in meditation, as in a state of one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*). One endures the hot and intense feelings that spread throughout the body. This is still equanimity with feelings (*vedanupekkhā*). In this way, when one observes formations (*saṅkhāra*) with an equanimous mind (*upekkhācit'*), there is no movement or shifting of the mind. It does not take up any other objects. It remains just passively observing what is happening. This is called *saṅkhārupekkhāñāṇa* (knowledge of equanimity with formations). In this way, while one continues to observe formations in a state of equanimity, without warning one passes beyond (*lvan'mrok'*) the formations being observed—being known and seen. The six senses cease, and only *nirvāṇa* remains.

[...] The knowledge that arises just before attaining *nirvāṇa* is called *anulomañāṇa* (knowledge of conformity). The knowledge of attaining *nirvāṇa* is called *maggāñāṇa* and *phalañāṇa* (*mag'ñāṇ'phuil'ñāṇ'*): knowledge of the path and knowledge of the fruit [of the path]. One should [then] say: “well done!” (*sādhū*). [...]

This is the path of practice by way of suffering (*dukkhapaṭipadā*). Two people cannot have the very same experience. This person experiences it in one way while that person is able to experience it in another way.⁹⁴

These modes of practice are described in the book in vernacular language, but they are also presented in a fairly formal and scripturally structured account along the lines of the *Visuddhimagga*. While this treatise contains many practice details, it is clearly schematic and should not be read as a comprehensive account of Sayā Thetgyi's meditation methods.⁹⁵ What is

⁹⁴ Htun Thein et al. [eds.] 1953: 107–111. See Appendix 3.6 for the complete account.

⁹⁵ For example, the section of *A Treatise on the Shortcut to Knowledge and Vision of Insight Meditation in This Very Life* outlining Sayā Thetgyi's teachings does not

more, the text's focus on providing extensive scriptural and narrative warrant for Sayā Thetgyi's teachings suggests that it should be treated with care when being interpreted as a descriptive account of practice. Nonetheless, it certainly contains descriptive accounts of meditative practice, even if such accounts are structured prescriptively.

I should also briefly mention what is not found in this important source: Neither the *Vipassanādīpanī* nor the *Paramattha saṃ khīp'* of the Ledi Sayādaw—the two textual sources given the most importance by Erik Braun in his analysis of the historical moment of the “birth of insight”—are mentioned.

appear to contain any instruction on giving direct attention to the heart-base (*hadayavatthu*) in order to access the *bhavaṅga* consciousness and catalyze the awareness of karmic seeds to be eradicated. This instruction is central to the basic practice models of both U Ba Khin and Goenka. It is very likely that this instruction was given to U Ba Khin by Sayā Thetgyi. And we do indeed find the basics of this instruction in U Htay Hlaing's biography of Sayā Thetgyi, in a record of his teachings to an elderly lay woman:

“1. Keep your mind continuously on an area the size of a coin at the fontanelle of the head. 2. Otherwise, remain sharply focused on the xiphoid process of the sternum (*raṇ' nāvan' chī*) at the center of the chest, also known as the heart-base (*hadayavatthu*). 3. If sounds come to the ear, you can bring the mind to the ear. But you should not change the site of attention frequently (*khaṇ' khaṇ' lai*). Keep the mind continuously at a clearly defined spot, the size of a coin, within the body.” (Htay Hlaing 1987 [1977]: 104)

The application of such an instruction in practice can be found in an evocative description of the method of the Sadhammapāla Kammaṭṭhāna Sayādaw, presented at the outset of *A Treatise on the Shortcut to Knowledge and Vision of Insight Meditation in This Very Life*:

“At the end [of an hour of sitting still in meditation], close your eyes and look at the concave of your chest (*raṇ' khyuiṇ'*). This is the seat of the *bhavaṅga* consciousness (*bhavaṇ' nerā*), [the heart-base]. Bring the mind there, to the concave of the chest. Do not think about anything, do not plan, abandon whatever you have heard. If you do not abandon it, it will be very difficult to see the true Dhamma. Keep your mind steady at the *bhavaṅga*. [...] When you bring the mind to the *bhavaṅga* for a long time, you will automatically come to know the nature of arising and vanishing, as well as the constant changing of the five aggregates of body and mind within the body. [...] At any one time, make an effort for at least one hour. If you can stay longer, it is better. [...] Now realize that as you meditate, and the nature of suffering becomes gradually more and more apparent even to the point that it is almost unbearable, the freedom from birth in the lower realms is nearer and nearer at hand. While contemplating patiently in this way, you will discern and understand the truth of suffering and thereby close the door to the lower realms.” (Htun Thein et al. [eds.] 1953: 20; cf. Appendix 3.8 [This translation is slightly adapted from an unpublished translation made available by the Venerable Sāsanadhaja (Simon Feichter).])

Beyond this basic understanding of Maung Po Thet's teaching approach, a number of key aspects of his story provide scholars with insight into who he was, and how his background and credentials led him to become one of the Ledi Sayādaw's prize pupils. A few facets of Sayā Thetgyi's biography also allow us to further discern some of the problems in Braun's arguments about the role of Abhidhamma learning and the de-emphasis of calm meditation practice in the development of traditions of lay insight meditation in early twentieth-century Burma. Sayā Thetgyi's identity as a lay farmer, without any formal scholastic training, also provides narrative material for key strands of anti-intellectualism—in contradistinction to the powerful intellectualism represented by the exegetical practices of the Ledi Sayādaw—that become paradigmatic in later post-colonial spiritual teaching contexts. Finally, and most importantly, Maung Po Thet is perhaps best known for being the teacher of the great meditation master and Burmese civil servant, Sayāgyi U Ba Khin. U Ba Khin became important in the development of insight meditation in the twentieth century because a number of his non-Burmese disciples went on to spread his teachings beyond Burma and around the world. The best known of these disciples was S.N. Goenka.⁹⁶

In order to understand Maung Po Thet's background in the years leading up to his meeting with the Ledi Sayādaw, I draw on the account of the well-known Burmese scholar and insight practitioner U Ko Lay. As U Ko Lay recounts, Maung Po Thet spent seven years studying calm meditation under one of the Ledi Sayādaw's disciples, the Se-kkhya-ton⁴ Sayādaw (1871–1937), otherwise known as U Tiloka.⁹⁷ U Ko Lay describes Maung Po Thet's practice background as follows:

It was to this U Tiloka that Sayā Thetgyi went first. You understand that. Sayā Thetgyi went first and he worked seven years with him. [...] And he worked on only *samatha* work. [...] They work for the *abhiññāya*, for the supernormal psychic power, supernormal psychic power. They fly through air, they see the previous lives, all this, supernormal psychic power. And Sayā Thetgyi got that supernormal psychic power to a certain extent; not flying through the air, but knowing the other people's mind.

⁹⁶ This historical trajectory—available only in retrospect—drives the biographical treatments of both Sayā Thetgyi (Htay Hlaing 1987 [1977]) and Sayāgyi U Ba Khin (Ko Lay 1980). On U Ba Khin's biography, see Houtman 1990b: 195–233 and 1997.

⁹⁷ On the connection between Sayā Thetgyi and U Tiloka, see Houtman 1990b: 217 and Htun Thein et al. (eds.) 1953: 41 and 147. On U Tiloka more generally, see Houtman 1990b: 292–3 (after Htay Hlaing 1993 [1973]) and Tiloka 2009.

That definitely he learned from there.⁹⁸ Then after seven years, *weizzā-dho* (*vijjādhora* [Pāli: *vijjādhara*]) U Tiloka told him to go to Ledi Sayādaw: “I haven’t finished my work. I cannot fly through air yet. But you don’t wait to go to Sayādaw.” So Sayā Thetgyi went to Ledi Sayādaw and worked under him for seven years. [...] He was quite a rich landowner. He worked with his laborers and all that. After every harvest season, he went to work with *weizzā-dho* U Tiloka, and with Ledi Sayādaw, too, he worked.

It was Ledi Sayādaw who taught him to concentrate here, on the forehead, for *vipassanā*, for sensation, and to go through all that.⁹⁹ It was Ledi Sayādaw who taught him *vipassanā*. According to records, wherever we could find [them], among the layman, he was the only person Ledi Sayādaw taught *vipassanā*. [...] So, we came across accounts like that about his monk disciples. But none other than Sayā Thetgyi from amongst laymen. [...] And when Ledi Sayādaw saw him, that he’s got to this level of attainment, he asked him to start teaching people: “You give [it to] one thousand persons before you die. Teach this method to one thousand.” And that is what Sayā Thetgyi did.¹⁰⁰

It is noteworthy that the most important lay student of the Ledi Sayādaw began his practice of meditation with an extensive period of practicing traditional calm meditation. Moreover, it is consequential that one of the Ledi Sayādaw’s key early monastic disciples, U Tiloka, was considered to be a *weizzā-dho* or *vijjādhara*, a master of supernormal powers, a wizard.¹⁰¹ U

⁹⁸ See also Ko Lay 1980: 80.

⁹⁹ Here U Ko Lay likely means to say “fontanel” rather than “forehead.” I have not been able to locate this specific aspect of Sayā Thetgyi’s practice modality in the Ledi Sayādaw’s works, though there are many of them that remain unexplored. U Htay Hlaing’s biography appears to suggest that this particular aspect of the practice—which remains central to the teachings of Sayā Thetgyi’s students—came to him as an experiential revelation (1987 [1977]: 34–35). However, it is difficult to know just how seriously we can take this account considering its retrospective stance and framing. The presence of the body scan practice in the Ledi Sayādaw’s *Anattadīpanī*—with the beginning point at the soles of the feet (see Appendix 2.1–3)—suggests that Sayā Thetgyi’s focus on the energy center at the top of the head as one point of departure for concentration may have been more of an adaptation of the practice than an unexpected revelation.

¹⁰⁰ Ko Lay 1995: 1:43:18–1:47:50. See also Ko Lay 1980: 79–80. Against this account of U Ko Lay, U Htay Hlaing (1987 [1977]: 53) records that the Ledi Sayādaw told Sayā Thetgyi to teach “at least six thousand people” (see also Ledi Paññāsīha 2012: 126–127).

¹⁰¹ On the binary of *vijjā* (*weizzā*) and *vipassanā* traditions—a binary that I think some scholars have overly reified—see Pranke 2010 and Foxeus 2016. For engagements with *vijjā* traditions more broadly, see Patton 2018 and 2014, Rozenberg 2010, and 2015, Brac de la Perrière 2012ab, and Foxeus 2011.

Tiloka is said to have worked for decades on *samatha* practice and the development of supernormal powers—beginning in 1897—before returning to the Ledi Sayādaw in 1926 to take up the work of insight meditation or *vipassanā*.¹⁰² What is more, the fact that Sayā Thetgyi was himself considered to have developed supernormal powers to some extent, even before practicing insight meditation under the Ledi Sayādaw, complicates and renders problematic Braun’s narrative about the elimination of calm meditation within the development of movements of mass lay meditation in Burma going back to the Ledi Sayādaw.¹⁰³ We must understand instead that within this narrative of practice, it is precisely his background with the practice of *samatha*, and precisely his access to supernormal power, that made Sayā Thetgyi a successful disciple of the Ledi Sayādaw and a candidate to carry his teachings to the lay community.¹⁰⁴ The following analysis of Sayā Thetgyi’s path to becoming a meditation teacher—from *A Treatise on the Shortcut to Knowledge and Vision of Insight Meditation in This Very Life*—additionally hints at this idea:

Sayāgyi got this [meditation] method because he was mature in the perfections such that he could become a teacher. Still, it took him

¹⁰² Houtman 1990b: 292 and Ko Lay 1995: 1:40:00–1:43:16.

¹⁰³ U Chit Tin’s narration of Sayā Thetgyi’s account of the Ledi Sayādaw’s teaching to him is telling in this regard: “Regarding the training in Sila, Samadhi and Pañña our message is to lay emphasis on Samadhi. Sayagyi U Ba Khin had said: ‘For a good experience of Anicca (Impermanence), Samadhi must be good. If Samadhi is excellent, awareness of Anicca will also be excellent.’ Sayagyi’s Teacher, Sayā Thetgyi, recounted: ‘My Teacher, Ledi Sayadaw, frequently reminded me, “Maung Thet, work on your Samadhi diligently. If the Samadhi Sasana (teachings of Tranquility) is well established, then the Pañña Sasana (teachings on Insight) will also become established.”’” (Chit Tin 1982: 57)

¹⁰⁴ A telling note on the development of absorption concentration and supernormal power within Sayā Thetgyi’s teachings can be found in *A Treatise on the Shortcut to Knowledge and Vision of Insight Meditation in This Very Life*. It follows upon the discussion of the dangers of too much *samatha* on the path to developing *vipassanā*, presented above in note 91: “A question will arise here. How to broach it? Will those striving for *jhāna* (concentrated absorption) and *abhiññā* (direct knowledge of supernormal powers) work in this way [foregoing the complete development of calm in order to practice insight]? If so, should one not attain *jhāna* and *abhiññā*? One should answer that those who want to attain *jhāna* and *abhiññā* should not delight in and be satisfied by [simply] seeing and talking with deities. They must continue their practice so that they attain *jhāna* and *abhiññā*.” (Htun Thein et al. [eds.] 1953: 38–39 [translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart]; cf. Ledi Paññāsīha 2012: 144)

four[teen] years to find this method.¹⁰⁵ Why did it take such a long time? He did not know the method of the pure Dhamma (*tarā''acac'*) and he did not know the fast method to encounter it. It is easy once one knows the pure Dhamma and the way to encounter it. [...] One endowed with concentration (*samādhi*) can see it everywhere at any time. [...] It can only be seen by concentration. Therefore, the Buddha taught the threefold training: morality, concentration, and wisdom. People miss out when they do not pay proper attention to concentration.¹⁰⁶

When we turn to look at the teaching methods of Sayā Thetgyi's key disciple, Sayāgyi U Ba Khin—whose methods are better known than those of Sayā Thetgyi—we will see that it is precisely the great supernormal power of these lay teachers and their natural karmic capacities that in the end renders unnecessary the need for their students to engage in extended practices of calm meditation before engagement with insight practice.

Information from U Htay Hlaing's biography of Sayā Thetgyi also provides insight into his identity as a meditation healer, one whose *vipassanā* teachings could rival the healing power of run-of-the-mill wizards (*weizzādho*).¹⁰⁷ The biography has several sections devoted to the power of Sayā Thetgyi's *mettā* or "loving kindness" and the various kinds of healings Sayā Thetgyi effectuated through his *vipassanā* teachings. It also makes it clear that his fame as a meditation teacher was connected to his renown as a healer.¹⁰⁸ One particularly striking narrative involves Sayā Thetgyi's ability to cure the ailments of U San Tun, the father of the first prime minister of independent Burma, U Nu:

One day, U Nu's father, U San Tun, also came to practice at Sayāgyi's meditation center. However, he was very old and could not walk properly due to motor paralysis and heart disease. Only because of his perfections and wholesome qualities did he seek to practice. Sayāgyi gave a special, unique, teaching to U San Tun. [He did] not just [teach him] breath meditation. When he sat to meditate, Sayāgyi set out a small white *kaṣiṇa* (white circular) bowl and had him look at it. When walking, however, he would observe the cycle of in and out breathing like others. Within a week,

¹⁰⁵ Note the difference between the account of U Ko Lay above and that found in U Htay Hlaing's edition of the book (Htay Hlaing 1987 [1977]: 253), both of which describe an overall period of fourteen years of seeking.

¹⁰⁶ Htun Thein et al. (eds.) 1953: 148–149 (translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart). Cf. Ledi Paññāsīha 2012: 179–180. For a broader contextualization of this passage, see Appendix 3.7.

¹⁰⁷ Htay Hlaing 1987 [1977]: 92.

¹⁰⁸ Htay Hlaing 1987 [1977]: 40–42 and 91–97.

U San Tun's illness was cured, not simply due to his perfections and wholesome qualities, but because he was able to know and see the workings of matter and mind and attained incomparable joy.¹⁰⁹

This story and others like it, along with the narrative of his own search, provide some contextualization for Sayā Thetgyi's meditation teachings. One key take-away here is that an integral link between early Burmese monastic traditions of meditation and the development of a community of lay teachers cannot be separated from a narrative involving traditional models of extended periods of calm meditation leading up to the practice of insight. We also find in this link an explicit connection to healing therapies associated with traditional modes of *samatha* practice.

The personality of Maung Po Thet, therefore, represents a certain kind of continuity with the Ledi Sayādaw's traditional approach to teaching—rooted in classical textual models of practice—while at the same time pushing into new territory in the context of lay practice and teaching. In particular, the Ledi Sayādaw's charge to Maung Po Thet to teach meditation to a large number of people indicates that he may indeed have had an outlook that prioritized lay involvement in meditation. U Htay Hlaing's biographical account of the moment of Sayā Thetgyi's authorization suggests that the Ledi Sayādaw encouraged Sayā Thetgyi to teach not just one thousand—as U Ko Lay suggests in the discussion referenced above—but “at least six thousand people, so that they might realize the Dhamma.”¹¹⁰ The question remains, however: Just what kind of vision did the Ledi Sayādaw have for the future of lay meditation practice when he gave Maung Po Thet such a charge, since the Ledi Sayādaw himself “never taught the unordained on any scale”?¹¹¹ It remains unclear whether the Ledi Sayādaw's vision of lay meditation might coincide with the historical developments of the latter half of the twentieth century. (When we come to look at the teachings of S.N. Goenka, and their development in the last decades of the twentieth century, we might entertain a karmically conditioned answer, posited by Goenka himself, to this question.)

Despite the force of his teacher's authorization, Sayā Thetgyi apparently had a difficult time finding enough people who were interested in learning meditation such that he might fulfill the charge. In the initial stages of his teaching career, he had to pay his farm workers to attend his meditation courses, and exactly how many students he might have taught cannot be

¹⁰⁹ Htay Hlaing 1987 [1977]: 97.

¹¹⁰ Htay Hlaing 1987 [1977]: 53 (Paññāsīha 2012: 126–127).

¹¹¹ Houtman 2014: 6.

confirmed. The author of *A Treatise on the Shortcut to Knowledge and Vision of Insight Meditation in This Very Life* estimated that Sayā Thetgyi and his various students that went on to teach—both monastic and lay—taught between 4,000 and 5,000 students to meditate.¹¹² As discussed above, however, it is unclear when exactly this estimation was made, since we cannot be sure when the book was first published or when it took the form in which it has come down to us. Still, if we take these numbers seriously, it would mean that at the time of publication of *A Treatise on the Shortcut to Knowledge and Vision of Insight Meditation in This Very Life* in the form that we have it, Sayā Thetgyi had not yet been able to fulfill the Ledi Sayādaw's assignment.

Sayā Thetgyi's challenges in garnering students presents scholars with a key historical *explanans* for why the development of a truly lay-controlled movement of meditation in Burma was constrained and remains so to the present day. That is, traditional Buddhism takes as its focus the monastic ideal and monastic institutions. So, despite rhetorically appealing statements by monastic teachers—such as the Ledi Sayādaw and more recently the renowned Sayādaw U Paṇḍita—in which lay meditators are likened to monks,¹¹³ the social proclivities of traditional Burmese Buddhists have made it virtually impossible for lay teachers to achieve the kind of success possible for monastic teachers, or practice institutions controlled by monastics.¹¹⁴ To this day, the only truly lay-oriented and lay-controlled tradition of practice that has made real headway in terms of building a network of meditation centers in Myanmar is tellingly that of the non-Burmese and non-Buddhist lay meditation master S.N. Goenka.

This lay-versus-monastic distinction coincides with another key difference between the personalities of the Ledi Sayādaw and his lay disciple Sayā Thetgyi. The Ledi Sayādaw's great popularity relied not only on his identity as a monastic, but also on his identity as a great scholar—a master of *pariyatti*—and an author of a wide range of exegetical treatises. Being a farmer, Sayā Thetgyi was not a scholar, and there is no historical evidence that he had any training in scholarship. But he was known to consult the scholastic manuals of his monastic teachers, to avidly recite scripture daily, and to employ Pāli in common formulas in the initiatory rituals of his

¹¹² Htun Thein et al. (eds.) 1953: 147.

¹¹³ Ledi Sayadaw 2017 [1971]: 79 (see also Braun 2013: 145) and Sayadaw U Paṇḍita 1993 [1991]: 176.

¹¹⁴ Houtman 1990b and 2014.

meditation students.¹¹⁵ As noted above, this aspect of his character fits well with a certain anti-intellectual bent that becomes a key element of modern secularizing Buddhist discourses as they go fully “global” in the twentieth century. Such anti-intellectualism was a key aspect of S.N. Goenka’s rhetorical tactics to spread insight meditation practice beyond Burma, and many of his students took such rhetorical moves seriously.¹¹⁶ While Sayā Thetgyi was almost certainly not an anti-intellectual in the sense that many contemporary modern meditation practitioners have become today, and he was known to be knowledgeable in Buddhist doctrine, his narrative identity in history nonetheless becomes a container for the projection of such anti-intellectualism back into an earlier period of history.

This anti-intellectualism—which stands in stark contrast to the reverence for traditions of textual learning embodied in the person of the Ledi Sayādaw—emerges from meditation teaching contexts in which the role of a powerful teacher with practical meditative knowledge comes to trump intellectual forms of knowledge. The narratives of the personalities of the lay teachers who followed in the Ledi Sayādaw’s footsteps—none of whom had a college education or a formal monastic education—allowed for this anti-intellectualism to find a strong and enduring narrative foothold such that it seamlessly becomes a key factor in the rhetoric of modern globalized insight meditation communities. I will argue below that this development is once again largely the result of the work of S.N. Goenka and his missionary community in post-colonial India. It will also become clear, however, that despite his lack of education, Goenka also set himself up as something of a pundit of the

¹¹⁵ See Htun Thein et al. (eds.) 1953: cha-cya. U Ko Lay records the standard initiatory ritual recitation that Sayāgyi U Ba Khin recited when he was first initiated into *vipassanā* meditation by Sayā Thetgyi: *samsāravatṭadukkhato mocanattāya, vījanattāya ca, vipassanākammaṭṭhānaṃ yācāmi*. (“For the sake of liberation from, and for the sake of overcoming the suffering of the round of the flow of existence, I request the meditation subject of *vipassanā*.”) (Ko Lay 1980: 79)

¹¹⁶ Many of S.N. Goenka’s rhetorical tactics present a rather strong version of anti-intellectualism. The classic example of this is Goenka’s story about “swimology,” told on the final day of his ten-day course. In that story he emphasizes how book learning is useless when it comes to not drowning on a sinking ship: “[W]e may study all the ‘logies’ of the world. If we don’t study swimology, then what is the use of all these ‘logies’? And even swimology, you may like to read books, you may like to listen to discourses, but you won’t touch the water. How will it help? All theories, theories, theories and no practice. You have to swim this ocean of misery and go to the other shore which is free from all misery. The practical aspect of Dhamma is swimology. Learn how to swim this ocean of misery.” (Goenka 1991 [1985], Day 11: 44:30–45:05)

Theravāda Buddhist tradition.¹¹⁷ And his own teacher, Sayāgyi U Ba Khin (Sayā Thetgyi's most important and influential disciple), also came to present himself as something of an authority on traditional Buddhist learning. We find some clear continuities here with the figure of Sayā Thetgyi, particularly with respect to emphasis on the importance given to the role of a meditation teacher. Sayā Thetgyi's anonymous disciple describes the special qualities of a genuine meditation teacher at the outset of *A Treatise on the Shortcut to Knowledge and Vision of Insight Meditation in This Very Life*:

Does one have to find a teacher? It is true that [we have] the *Tiṭṭaka*. But it is very hard at the present time to find a person who can realize the exact and precise teaching of the *Tiṭṭaka*. This means one needs to find a [Dhamma] teacher—whether monk or lay person. [...]

Although one who wants to meditate seeks out a teacher, it is impossible for a person who is only skilled in *pariyatti* to teach meditation. One should instruct others in meditation after practicing and realizing [the Dhamma] for oneself as well as obtaining much Abhidhamma knowledge. If not, when the student says during his meditation practice, “Teacher, I have seen such and such things,” the teacher does not understand and is unable to determine [how to instruct the student], as he himself has no experience of it. He may feel shame when he has to say that he does not understand well [what the meditator is experiencing]. So, he speaks only by his own thinking. This is indeed unbeneficial for both meditator and instructor. [...]

If a teacher follows the teacher's duties and the [meditation] student follows his duties, practicing will be effective in a faster way. A teacher must have compassion towards his student as with his own children. From the side of the student, because the teacher is included in the group of five infinitely great persons, he must pay respect to him in a special way. Queen Sāmāvatī let her slave sit on the throne [as her slave was a *sotāpanna* and Dhamma teacher] and listened to a Dhamma talk with joined palms. [...] Mahānāga Thera and Poṭṭhila Thera paid respect to [their] student and requested instruction in meditation. Moreover, a hunter became a *paccekabuddha* when the *bodhisatta*—as the golden peacock king—preached the Dhamma. [...] Considering this, [a meditator] should have no shame in paying respect to a teacher. A teacher should not consider his student a cause of exhaustion. [He] should be patient [in instructing his students], thinking of them as his beloved children. With patience, he guides [the student] until [they] comprehend [the object]—

¹¹⁷ On Goenka's very brief time in the realm of higher education and his role as an organizer in Hindi education in Burma, see Stuart 2020: 20 and 32–33.

observing another method if the first one does not work—so that the meditator attains success.¹¹⁸

It is precisely in the tension around setting up an identity as a practical and powerful uneducated lay meditation teacher on the one hand, and the need to perform authoritative knowledge of traditional Buddhist learning on the other, that we find the early gestational stages and primary social dynamics of the birth of modern insight meditation proper.

This tension is paradigmatically embodied in the personality of Sayāgyi U Ba Khin, and below we will see how his teaching methods and intellectual activities negotiated these counterpoints. An analysis of U Ba Khin's approach to insight meditation reveals the practical, intellectual, and soteriological dynamics that gave rise to one of the most influential modern insight meditation traditions in history. This analysis allows us to properly discern key moments in the process through which a small mid-twentieth-century cult of Burmese lay insight meditation practitioners influenced the primary social and ideological forces behind a wide swathe of contemporary global insight and mindfulness meditation traditions of the present day.

¹¹⁸ Htun Thein et al. (eds.) 1953: 14–15 (translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart).

II. Sayāgyi U Ba Khin: *The Right Answer(s) to Practice with a Basis of Textual Theory*

While we know very little in concrete historical detail about Maung Po Thet's actual teaching methods and understanding of meditation, we are on somewhat firmer historical ground when it comes to his key disciple and linchpin in the history of modern insight meditation, Sayāgyi U Ba Khin. In what follows, I will present some aspects of U Ba Khin's story, his social context, his teaching methods, his cosmological outlook, and his engagement with traditional Buddhist learning. I will take as my focus a key short treatise on the relationship between textual learning (*pariyatti*) and meditation practice (*paṭipatti*) that U Ba Khin wrote early on in his teaching career, in 1952.¹¹⁹ I will also draw on published accounts and reports of his students about their experiences with him. I want to emphasize how U Ba Khin's explicit engagement with the teaching of both traditional practices of calm meditation—as laid out in key Pāli commentarial texts such as the *Visuddhimagga*—and with states of realization brought about through *vipassanā* insight meditation further problematize Braun's narrative about the Ledi Sayādaw's simplification of meditation as an obviation of the practice of calm meditation. I will additionally show how U Ba Khin set the stage for the development of a globalized insight/mindfulness franchise spearheaded by his student S.N. Goenka. It is impossible to understand Goenka's success in spreading insight meditation without understanding the early and intimate cult context of U Ba Khin's International Meditation Centre in mid-twentieth-century Rangoon, where Goenka came to maturity as a practitioner.

An appreciation of U Ba Khin's teaching methods allows us to see that his particular approach to engaging with his students provided a context in which calm meditation was given a certain amount of emphasis while at the same time being de-emphasized in specific contexts. But this de-emphasis did not happen simply as the outcome of the logic of Abhidhamma theory, as Braun has argued was the case with the Ledi Sayādaw. Rather, it came about because U Ba Khin apparently found mechanisms for harnessing supernatural forces to aid him in bringing his students to states of realization,

¹¹⁹ U Ba Khin 1962 [1952] and 2003 (?) [1952].

breakthroughs that traditionally and phenomenologically would have otherwise necessitated high states of deep calm. But even in acknowledging and enacting such possibilities, U Ba Khin likewise taught his advanced students to develop their concentration skills to a very high level, and to tap into fields of supernormal power themselves. In the end, we cannot separate Sayāgyi's mastery of such abilities from the trajectory of his teachings into the post-colonial period through his students whom he deputized as missionaries to spread his teachings around the world.

Let us begin by outlining the contours of Sayāgyi U Ba Khin's story, and how he fits into the broader field of insight meditation teachers and communities in mid-twentieth-century Burma.

1. Vocations and Avocations: Coming to a Life of Dhamma

U Ba Khin was born in 1899 in Rangoon (now Yangon) and grew up and came of age during the height of British colonial influence. He was educated mostly at English-medium schools—first at a Methodist elementary school (1907–1914) and then at the prestigious St. Paul's High School¹²⁰—which made him a capable communicator across linguistic barriers. This set him apart from his predecessors, the Ledi Sayādaw and Sayā Thetgyi, who were bound to Burmese-speaking contexts or had to make use of translators to communicate beyond them. As U Ba Khin's parents had passed away before he completed high school, he did not go on to higher studies and instead entered the workforce, first working for a local newspaper and then as a clerk in the Office of the Accountant General in 1917.¹²¹ He passed the Indian colonial government accountancy exams in 1926 and worked his way up to a position of deputy supervisor in the office of the Auditor General by 1934. Being the only Burmese in an office primarily made up of Indian civil servants, U Ba Khin was promoted to the position of special supervisor when Burma established its own Accountancy Department, and at the beginning of 1941 he received another promotion, becoming an accountant officer for the

¹²⁰ Houtman 1997: 313 (Ko Lay 1980: 67–68); VRI 1994 [1991]: 8; Chit Tin (ed.) 1999: 26–27.

¹²¹ Houtman 1997: 313 (Ko Lay 1980: 68); VRI 1994 [1991]: 8; Chit Tin (ed.) 1999: 27–28.

Railways' Board.¹²² Finally, on the day of Burma's Independence in 1948, U Ba Khin became the first Accountant General of an independent Burma.¹²³

I provide these details of U Ba Khin's biography because the narrative of Sayāgyi as a brilliant man of little education, a government servant devoted to his work who reached the pinnacle of his capacities as a senior officer in the newly independent government of Burma, is inseparable from the narrative of Sayāgyi as a great meditation practitioner and meditation master. Gustaaf Houtman has made this inseparability clear in his treatment of U Ba Khin's biography. But we can also see this in other representations of U Ba Khin, particularly those of his meditation students who went on to teach.¹²⁴ And, in many ways, this aspect of U Ba Khin's character—his tireless work ethic, boundless energy, and full engagement in the world—has come to represent the paradigmatic modern insight meditator. And it is precisely this paradigm that Braun had in mind when he located “the birth of insight” in the Ledi Sayādaw's statement, “insight exercises can be practised not only in solitude as is necessary in the case of the exercise of Calm or *Samatha*, but they can be practised everywhere[,] [...] while listening to a discourse, or while living a householder's ordinary life.”¹²⁵ U Ba Khin is indeed a perfect representation of the Ledi Sayādaw's ideal lay meditator, but perhaps not as Braun would have it. That is, the Ledi Sayādaw makes clear that he is referring in this context to exceptional individuals with highly developed karmic backgrounds, not to the mass of laymen in general, many of whom would not qualify to be classified in this way.¹²⁶ We will see in what follows that U Ba Khin's story, and his cosmic/karmic identity according to his followers, make him more exceptional than even the most developed of practitioners. Through an understanding of U Ba Khin's story and his teaching methods, we can likewise further problematize Braun's arguments about the elimination of the practice of calm meditation (*samatha*) in traditions of practice that can be traced back to the Ledi Sayādaw.

¹²² Houtman 1997: 314 (Ko Lay 1980: 68–72); VRI 1994 [1991]: 8–9; Chit Tin (ed.) 1999: 27–28.

¹²³ Houtman 1997: 317 (Ko Lay 1980: 85); VRI 1994 [1991]: 9; Chit Tin (ed.) 1999: 27–28.

¹²⁴ E.g. Coleman 2000 [1971]: 41–42; Kornfield 2007 [1977]: 241–42; VRI 1994 [1991]: 11–12; Chit Tin (ed.) 1999: 26–28.

¹²⁵ Ledi Sayādaw (Nyāna trans.) 1915: 64 (see above, pp. 31–32).

¹²⁶ See note 34, however, where I present a passage from the *Manual of Nutriment* in which the Ledi Sayādaw does not mention the karmic background of common lay practitioners who are able to practice insight meditation in daily life.

U Ba Khin's first encounter with insight meditation—through Sayā Thetgyi—occurred somewhat late in his life, at the age of 38. The events leading up to the encounter are described in his biography partly in his own words:

“[I] unexpectedly started *vipassanā* meditation practice at the very outset,” Sayāgyi [U Ba Khin] once said. It was thus: [...] On the first of January of 1937 he got to U Aye Maung's house to receive meditation instructions. In meeting with U Aye Maung in person, he carefully and exactly questioned him as to the details of how to practice meditation. He was taught to practice *ānāpāna* and was instructed to focus on and observe the in-breath and out-breath. He followed [the instructions] and practiced as instructed at U Aye Maung's House. He said that a brilliantly luminous sign (*nimitta*) appeared to him as he focused on the in-breath and out-breath. That sign was very stable, and it was in his command for further levels of meditation practice. Even U Aye Maung himself found it extraordinary to see this occurrence.

He decided to go and receive instruction from Sayā Thetgyi, as the sign [continued to] appear to him while practicing *ānāpāna* alone at home. It was on eighth of January 1937 that he went to Sayā Thetgyi after taking a long leave from his office. [...]

As requested, Sayā Thetgyi willingly accepted him as a meditation student. That night itself he was given instruction in the practice of *ānāpāna* so as to establish concentration (*samādhi*) firmly. “There were 4–5 meditators, including Inn Ma Gyi Thein Taung Tawya Sayādaw, U Yugandhara” [U Ba Khin] said, recollecting. It was said that U Yugandhara had practiced the forty meditation subjects under the Ledi Sayādaw's instruction for years. The following day, Sayā Thetgyi gave instructions on *vipassanā* to Sayāgyi U Ba Khin together with Sayādaw U Yugandhara in his Dhamma Hall.¹²⁷

This description of U Ba Khin's first encounter with breath meditation—in this context a form of *samatha*—and his extraordinary facility with it, even before going to learn insight meditation, alludes to his innate meditative prowess and karmic uniqueness. It also presents the reader with a clear reason why U Ba Khin—in apparent contradistinction to Sayā Thetgyi and the Ledi Sayādaw—did not need to spend much time establishing himself in traditional practices of concentration. He already had the power of concentration naturally built into his constitution. This fact gets narratively solidified in the additional details provided about U Ba Khin's initiation into *vipassanā* under Sayā Thetgyi. That he was initiated into the practice of insight after not even one day of work with the meditation object of the breath, and that his

¹²⁷ Ko Lay 1980: 77–79 (translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart). Houtman (1997: 314–15) summarizes this story.

initiation was in the company of a monastic who had “practiced the forty meditation subjects under the Ledi Sayādaw’s instruction for years” are clear narrative markers indicating his innate mastery of concentration. Far from indicating a context in which there is an obviation of the need for *samatha*, this narrative implies the opposite. Here, it is U Ba Khin’s innate mastery of concentration that allowed him to enter deeply into insight meditation in a very short time during his first meditation course with Sayā Thetgyi.

The notion of the great depth of U Ba Khin’s meditative prowess gets more strongly solidified in a later narrative, from 1941, a narrative that also provides him with an explicit monastic imprimatur. On a work trip, he found himself waylaid in the small town of Kyaukse, where the Webu Sayādaw—rumored to be an *arhat*—lived. In an encounter with the Sayādaw, U Ba Khin impressed him so much by his powerful presence that the Sayādaw encouraged him to immediately begin teaching meditation.¹²⁸ This incitement, along with continued visits to Sayā Thetgyi and his rise to the post of Accountant General, set the stage for U Ba Khin’s career as a meditation teacher.

It is in the context of U Ba Khin’s development as a meditation teacher that we see the emergence of a peculiar practical theory on the relationship between calm and insight—not evident in the theoretical approaches presented by his predecessors. This theory entails the notion of a meditation center as a special protected space in which obstructing forces are kept at bay,

¹²⁸ U Ba Khin told the story of this meeting as follows:

“In 1941, July, I met with Webu Sayādawgyi. Our meeting was not arranged by someone. It was extraordinary. [...] We sat at the place where slippers were left and said: ‘Sayādaw, we are guests from Yangon and we pay respect to you.’ Then the Sayādaw opened the door and we met with the Sayādaw for the very first time. I paid homage by contemplating ‘*anicca*.’ Sayādaw asked: ‘What is your wish?’ I answered: ‘I wish for *nibbāna*.’ ‘How will you go to *nibbāna*?’ ‘By *vipassanāñāṇa*. Now I am practicing it.’ ‘*Sādhu, sādhu, sādhu*. From whom do you learn and practice?’ ‘From Sayā U Thet who lives near Yangon.’ ‘Have you gone to any other places to practice?’ ‘No, except sometimes I go to Sayāgyi’s home.’ [...] People from there were surprised. The Webu Sayādaw had no habit of talking for a very long time. But with this man, the Sayādaw talked for a long time. Sayādaw said: ‘You have *pāramī*. So, you must undertake *sāsana* work (*sāsanaṃ prū*). *Sāsana* work is making people follow and practice the noble eightfold path. Doing “*sāsanaṇuggaha*” things with the support of lay devotees is not called *sāsana* work. You must do *sāsana* work. If you wish, do it now. Don’t delay! If you delay, some people who might meet with you now will lose the chance to get the teachings from you.’” (U Ba Khin n.d. [1962?] 2.2:9:54–1:40 [translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart])

On the special psychic connection between U Ba Khin and the Webu Sayādaw, and their ongoing relationship in the years that followed this meeting, see Chit Tin (ed.) 1999: 74–84 (particularly 77) and 99–109.

the central role of U Ba Khin's powerful presence as a teacher in supporting his students' development of concentration, the proper karmic background of a student, and the harnessing of supernormal forces to push students to liberatory states. It is in this theory—and the enactment of a range of associated practices—that we can find explicit and perhaps unexpected reasons for the ostensible attenuation of calming practices, or rather for the replacement of the full development of preliminary calming practices with specific teaching techniques involving the harnessing of supernormal forces.

This theory has been somewhat obscured and can only be partially recovered through a close reading of a number of witness accounts and other contemporaneous sources. I begin here with another passage from U Ko Lay's biography of Sayāgyi U Ba Khin, which details how Sayāgyi developed his teaching methods in the context of a work association and eventually established a meditation center:

Like before, now Sayāgyi's work in instructing meditation was not capricious work. The Vipassanā Research Association was well-established on the full moon day of Waso in 2495 BE (1313 ME [July 18, 1950 CE]) at the office of the Accountant General. *Vipassanā* meditation is practiced based on morality (*sīla*) and beginning with concentration (*samādhi*), [and is carried out] only after the establishing of concentration. In the context of this method, Sayāgyi and his close disciples studied, explored, investigated, and made invention—by using the approaches of scientific research (*lokadhāt' paññā sutesananaññ'*)—[in the process of] assessing whether it conforms with the *Visuddhimagga* and whether or not it is precise and complete with respect to the 37 factors of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhayatara'*; Pāli: *bodhipakkhīyadhamma*). From such research, the right method of practice (*paṭipatti*) that can be carried out in a short period based on the threefold training—of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*—was discovered. From this, by practicing according to these methods, it was seen that the vibrational force of wisdom (*vijjādhāt'*) arises as soon as one attains the right insight knowledge (*vipassanāñāṇa*), which can eradicate craving (*samudayataṇhā*) and defilements (*kilesā*). This supernormal power of *vijjādhāt'* enacts the cleaning of defilements rooted in the aggregates. So, Sayāgyi was able to prove in practice that people with perfection (*pāramī*) are able to attain happiness, both in body and mind, along with the peace and happiness (*santisukha*) [of *nibbāna*].

Apart from having the experience of seeing the true nature (*sabhāva*) of the supernormal power (*sattithū'*) of the *vijjādhāt'*, the method to maintain this force was also discovered according to the research. Further, as soon as one practices to reach real insight knowledge (*vipassanāñāṇa*), at the same time the nature of destructive forces (*phyak'chī'so dhāt'sabhāva*) is discovered. Thus, the methods to protect and prevent

from them were recorded as per the research. These records are written in a very systematic way. They are complicated and profound matters, [and] not all the records are allowed to be read. As only the facts needed to be known by most of the people are allowed to be read, I have presented [here] some parts of the experiences of Mr. Jan Van Amersfoort and Mr. Venkataraman.¹²⁹

At the time that Sayāgyi became the Accountant General, half of the high-ranking Indian officers were still left [in the office]. Sayāgyi taught the Dhamma not only to the local Buddhist staff, but also to these officers. [...] [N]ot only the staff in his office, but their family members and relatives got interested in learning meditation from Sayāgyi. Then, the shrine room at the top floor of Account General's office was not large enough to fit all of them. It was therefore considered necessary to have a meditation center large enough for the staff and their family members.¹³⁰

I would like to emphasize four aspects of this description. The first is that *vipassanā* as taught by U Ba Khin always involved a prerequisite basis of not only moral precepts, but also the establishment of calm or concentration. Though U Ba Khin emphasized something of a shortcut approach to developing insight, it was not at the expense of the establishment of concentration. Rather, in his conception, he provided a context in which supportive teaching aids created conditions that emulated the effects of powerful calming practices.

Second, it is asserted here that U Ba Khin came to be able to provide such a context through experiment. His approach to practice was not only confirmed against traditional textual models but was likewise an explicit innovation on what had previously been practiced by his predecessors. U Ko Lay's language here is notable, and it follows U Ba Khin's own way of talking and writing about meditative experience: meditation practice involves the manipulation of a range of concrete elemental forces (*dhāt'*; Pāli: *dhātu*) of both mundane and supramundane varieties. These forces are subtle, difficult to discern, yet real, and can be experienced by people of virtue and perspicacity.¹³¹ And in the process of researching these elemental forces

¹²⁹ Ko Lay 1980: 87. J. Van Amersfoort came to Sayāgyi U Ba Khin as a student in December of 1952; Venkataraman worked in the Accountant General's office with U Ba Khin.

¹³⁰ Ko Lay 1980: 86–88 (translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart).

¹³¹ The term *vijjādhāt'*, pronounced in Burmese as *weizzādhāt'*, has layered meanings in the Burmese context. It refers in the passage above to the wisdom of *vipassanā*, the wisdom of seeing the three characteristics. At the same time, it invokes associations of other forms of *weizzā*, those associated with a range of esoteric traditions involving

through approaches comparable to modern scientific (*lokadhāt' paññā*) methods, U Ba Khin innovated a powerful new engagement with these age-old practices. The deployment of the language of *dhāt'* or *vijjādhāt'* is particularly telling here, and it indicates that we should understand U Ba Khin's teaching as participating conceptually in a broad spectrum of Burmese *vijjā* or *weizzā* traditions.¹³²

This brings us to a third key element of the passage, the idea that success in meditation is not simply a matter of an individual's internal processes, but also involves the prospect of destructive forces (*phyak'chī*"so *dhāt' sabhāva*) from which a meditator must be protected at pivotal moments of practice. In U Ba Khin's teaching model, the teacher—sometimes using the aid of various psychically powerful helpers—and the atmosphere of the meditation center were fundamental for creating a protective force-field around a meditator so that the immediate vicinity might remain free of destructive external forces. This atmosphere served as a primary condition for a practitioner to engage directly with his or her internal defilements and eradicate them in a breakthrough to *nibbāna* or the unconditioned state. (We will discuss the details of this complex set of teaching practices further below)

alchemy, mediumship, and the development of spiritual power oriented towards immortality and world-conquest. On these traditions, see Patton 2018, Rozenberg 2010 and 2015, Brac de la Perrière 2012a and 2012b, Foxeus 2011 and 2013, and Pranke 2010. On the way in which the notion of *dhāt'* is understood within such *weizzā* traditions and other modes of mediumship, see Patton 2018: 73–78 and Foxues 2011: 196–236 and 454 (and throughout). It becomes clear from an assessment of U Ba Khin's teachings and teaching practices that his way of thinking about *dhāt'*, or "forces" as he often referred to them in English, should likely not be understood without reference to the broader context of Burmese *weizzā* traditions, a range of other local cult practices (see Brac de la Perrière 2012a and 2017a), and a broader set of Burmese Buddhist onto-epistemic categories.

¹³² About this aspect of U Ba Khin's theory and practice, the Indologist Hans Gruber writes: "In its notion of purity or 'vibrations' as a fine-material substance affecting the material surroundings and other people, the Body Sweeping is influenced by Hindu teachings of purity. In its interpretations of the process of purification in the body (e.g. as 'layers after layers of the old stock of *sankhāras* get eradicated', implying the *sankhāras* as actual heaps of substance in the body), it is influenced by a Jain substantialist notion of Karma." (Gruber n.d.) There is no evidence whatsoever that such influences played a direct role in the development of U Ba Khin's or Goenka's practices, but there is significant evidence that the historical Buddha's theory of action was likely influenced or informed by a "Jain substantialist notion of Karma." For an unsatisfying attempt to explain away this likely influence, see Anālayo 2017: 325–330. (See also note 131 above.)

Finally, it must be stressed that U Ba Khin developed himself as a meditation teacher in the context of a work association directly affiliated with the government office over which he presided. Two aspects of this historical context are noteworthy. First, the establishment of U Ba Khin's meditation center was the direct result of a larger post-colonial project of public and state-sponsored Buddhism. Such a project mirrored and participated in a social imaginary about the intimate connection between state authority and the spiritual authority of the Buddha that goes back to the basic thought structures of early Indian Buddhism.¹³³ Perhaps even more important, however, was the serendipitous fact that many of the staff of his department were Indians and non-Buddhists. Since he considered it his job to teach meditation to all under his employ, he was obliged to find approaches to teaching that were accommodatory to those of other traditions.

U Ba Khin's socio-historical context, and his engagement with various theoretical and practical aspects of meditation during the formative years of his teaching in the late 1940s and early 1950s, set up a unique amalgam of conditions. These factors might be understood as the key building blocks of the "modernist" insight meditation and mindfulness traditions that exploded onto the global scene during the last quarter of the twentieth century.¹³⁴ The rest of this book will be devoted to evincing the role of U Ba Khin and his students in the formation of many such traditions. But before we can lay out that complicated set of historical developments, it is important to fully come to terms with U Ba Khin's context—the theoretical, practical, and personal underpinnings of his teachings in mid-twentieth-century Burma.

2. The Right Answer(s) to Practice with a Basis of Textual Theory

On July 6, 1952, two years after the formal establishment of his Vipassanā Research Association, U Ba Khin finished a short authoritative book—the only technical treatise on meditation he ever wrote or published—outlining his theoretical and practical understanding of Buddhist meditation, its basis in his and his students' experiences, and its correlation with traditional Buddhist textual models. This book is a key marker in the development of

¹³³ On the formation and ongoing relevance of these political dynamics into current times, see Walton 2017.

¹³⁴ It is noteworthy that in his influential book, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism* (2008), David McMahan barely takes note of these developments, though he does mention U Ba Khin and Goenka in passing.

the insight meditation traditions of the twentieth-century, and it remains puzzling why so few are aware of it.¹³⁵ This work is particularly important because it marks a point in time when a lay meditation master, with the status and confidence to speak openly about his experiences, presents himself publicly and in print to the Burmese Buddhist community as a master of meditation at the level of theory and practice. U Ba Khin explains the aims of the work in the opening *āsisa* (benedictive intention) of the book:

In writing “*Pariyatti ‘akhrekham nhañ’ paṭipatti ‘aphre mhan’* (*The Right Answers to Practice with a Basis of Textual Theory*)” the main intention is for everyone involved in *paṭipatti* (meditation practice) to [be able to] measure their experience against the right answers to such practice—which are worthy of recognition and are complete in [both] *sabhāyuttī* (the logic of [the] quality [of experience]) and *āgamayuttī* (the logic of the scriptures). It is not suitable for venerable monks, who must abide by disciplinary rules, to speak openly about [such] things [related to meditation]. So, we ourselves provide some clues based on what our team, the Vipassanā Research Association (*vipassanā dhāt’paññā ‘aphvai’*), has experienced in the study of *paṭipatti*. [This is done] so that [the] right or wrong [of experience] can be analyzed through an intention [in conformity] with the Dhamma (*dhammadhiṭṭhān’*). This is only what we believe and our opinions. We ourselves do not take this as perfect, and we are ready to correct it if we find any mistakes.

By revealing things that can and should be known only by those who are mature in the field of *paṭipatti*, we greatly desire reasonable and beneficial criticisms from noble individuals who have practiced and are practicing corresponding meditation subjects. I intend to acknowledge, and give additional explanations based on, these criticisms.¹³⁶

This opening statement is revealing of the novel context in which U Ba Khin was operating. It also helps us to understand the constraints placed on earlier monastic teachers, such as the Ledi Sayādaw, in their public presentation of meditation. While Braun has argued that the Ledi Sayādaw found himself in a context of “situated freedom” as the result of colonial engagements, I think we have to question just how much of such “freedom” we can ascribe to that context.¹³⁷ In my reading of the Ledi Sayādaw’s works, I find it difficult to

¹³⁵ I am grateful to Joah McGee for making me aware of its existence, and to Jenny Ko Gyi and Sāmaṇerī Akiñcanā (Friedgard Lottermoser) for helping me to understand its contents.

¹³⁶ Jenny Ko Gyi (trans.) n.d.: 2 (U Ba Khin 1962 [1952]: 1–2; U Ba Khin 2003 (?) [1952]: 1–2).

¹³⁷ Braun 2013: 162. Braun (2013: 154) speaks of the Ledi Sayādaw’s activities as a form

see more than a very traditional scholar, one who is greatly constrained by the scholastic format of his works. It is historically irresponsible, therefore, to read his treatises as direct evidence of what he practiced or what he specifically taught others to practice without querying the nature of the sources and without paying explicit attention to cues in the texts that point to such contexts. Those of us familiar with the broader history of Indian Buddhism know well that from an early period in India many practitioners and scholars took interpretive liberties that went far beyond those in the treatises of the Ledi Sayādaw in colonial Burma.¹³⁸ Understanding these distinct early contexts allows us to see just how constrained the Ledi Sayādaw was by the formal scholasticism of the Burmese Theravāda context, even if he broke the mold to some extent. If we are to properly engage the Ledi Sayādaw and his work, we must take the formal conservatism of his treatises into account against the specter of a world of practice and experience that often remains out of the public eye.¹³⁹ U Ba Khin raises the issue of this monastic conservatism, and the publicly elided world of practice, as he steps into the limelight with his much more radical—and much more public—revelations about personal meditation experiences. His status as a layman, as Gustaaf Houtman pointed out several decades ago now, provides him with a different kind of “situated freedom”—if we would like to continue to use such a concept—and one that is not necessarily new in the history of Buddhism more broadly.¹⁴⁰

So, in many ways, U Ba Khin’s 1952 work is the historian’s first chance to see, in the context of a formal written treatise, forthright and unconstrained (or less constrained) theories on modern Burmese insight meditation practice

of “improvisation,” which was conditioned by his Buddhist worldview. From my perspective, he appears to have been quite conservative in his improvisation, sticking closely to a traditional script. His lay successors were more creative in their activities, as they were less constrained by formal monastic and scholarly exigencies.

¹³⁸ On the question of the *sukkhavipassaka* or “dry insight meditator” in this regard, see, for instance, Wen 2009 and 2012.

¹³⁹ This is one reason that many of the Sayādaw’s works not devoted to meditation, such as the *Rogantaradīpanī*, become helpful sources for understanding the cultural and contextual framings of his practice models. It is also noteworthy that some of the key pieces of evidence we have for the Ledi Sayādaw’s personal experiences in meditation come to us by way of one of his disciples, U Wunnita, who returned lay life and was therefore—as a newly minted lay person—able to circumvent certain norms of monastic practice that discouraged monks from sharing such information with non-monastics.

¹⁴⁰ “The Ma-ha-si’s dilemma between scriptural learning and practice may have been a typical monk’s dilemma, which BK [U Ba Khin], being a layman, did not suffer from.” (Houtman 1990b: 217)

based directly and explicitly on the personal experiences of specific practitioners, some of whom were not Buddhists.¹⁴¹ While U Ba Khin was not college-educated, he was a talented writer who had penned novels as a young man.¹⁴² In writing this short treatise on meditation, he was now able to put such talent to use for the sake of teaching the Dhamma. *The Right Answers to Practice with a Basis of Textual Theory* is a short but comprehensive treatise on the three trainings of morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and discernment (*paññā*). While its main aim is to outline how these elements of Buddhist practice come together to bring about the liberation of *nibbāna*, and it strongly emphasizes the idea that discernment is ultimately the aspect of practice that is liberatory, the majority of the work is devoted to a detailed analysis of calming practices.

There is much of interest in this short work, but here I want to focus on U Ba Khin's analysis of the relationship between liberatory wisdom and calming concentration practices. In this key early work, U Ba Khin takes an unequivocal stance that strong concentration is a practical and scripturally sanctioned prerequisite for liberatory wisdom. He does so by recourse to the classic and authoritative Abhidhamma manual, the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*:

In the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha* (*Abhidhammattha lak'san' "aṭṭhakathā*), in the chapter on mind, the [supramundane] path and fruition states that accompany the first, second, third, fourth, and fifth absorption meditations (*jhān'*; Pāli: *jhāna*) are explained. It can thus be deduced that the path and fruition states cannot take place without absorption meditation. Those who have attained the fruitions of the non-returner and the *arahat* can enter into absorption in all eight attainments (*samāpatti*).¹⁴³

Here, in what appears to be a purely theoretical engagement, U Ba Khin follows the *Abhidhammasaṅgaha* commentarial tradition in maintaining that absorption meditation or *jhāna* is integral for the attainment of any stage of enlightenment. Similarly, in his analysis of the field of concentration, he

¹⁴¹ After receiving a pre-print copy of Sayāgyi U Ba Khin's work, the Webu Sayādaw admonished him: "[As] discussion on points of training (*anusāsanaṭṭakā*) is quite capacious, you must remain heedful [when engaging in such talk]." (U Ba Khin 1962 [1952]: 4) It is also worth pointing out that, according to his biographer, Sayā Thetgyi was more restrained in his public persona. He made efforts to conceal his teaching practices, avoided questions about them, and did not allow anyone to have access to the records he kept about his students or their identities. (Htay Hlaing 1987 [1977]: 8)

¹⁴² Houtman 1997: 314 (Ko Lay 1980: 72–75).

¹⁴³ Jenny Ko Gyi (trans.) n.d.: 14 (U Ba Khin 1962 [1952]: 21; U Ba Khin 2003 (?) [1952]: 19).

allows for only two types: 1. Access/semblance concentration (*upacārasa-mādhi*), and 2. Absorption concentration (*appanāsamādhi*).¹⁴⁴ We find no reference whatsoever in U Ba Khin's work to momentary concentration (*khaṇikasamādhi*).

U Ba Khin also follows the same commentarial tradition in maintaining the primacy of discernment or wisdom (*paññā*) in the process of liberation, and in this context his engagement appears to be more than just theoretical. He distinguishes two types of absorption meditation: 1. Absorption meditation attained purely through application to calming meditation subjects (*samathānuyogaṭṭhāna*), which does not necessarily involve *paññā*, and 2. Absorption meditation accomplished simultaneously with the supra-mundane liberatory path state (*maggasiddhijhāna*), which emerges from practices oriented toward the cultivation of *paññā*.¹⁴⁵ This distinction is

¹⁴⁴ U Ba Khin 1962 [1952]: 18; U Ba Khin 2003 (?) [1952]: 16.

¹⁴⁵ In the Pāli commentarial literature, we find the term *maggasiddhijhāna* as opposed to *maggasiddhijhāna*, and the former is also the form that is found in the Ledi Sayādaw's *Paramatthadīpanī*. U Ba Khin also adds a third, parenthetical, category of absorption: *Upapattisiddhijhāna*: absorption meditation accomplished when one is reborn in a Brahma realm in a future existence as the result of the practice of absorption meditation in one's current life. Both of these categories can be found treated in tandem in the Ledi Sayādaw's famous commentary, the *Paramatthadīpanī*:

"In this regard, absorption meditation accomplished simultaneously with the path state is defined as absorption meditation accomplished by pure *vipassanā* practitioners precisely upon their attainment of the path state. It is of two types: that which is associated with the accomplishment of the lower path states, and that which is associated with the accomplishment of the path state of arhatship. The absorption of the five hundred monks who came [to the Buddha] in the *Mahāsamayasutta* was associated with the accomplishment of the lower path states. The absorption of the elder Ānanda was associated with the accomplishment of the path state of arhatship. That [absorption] which arises even for unassuming non-returns as they are dying suddenly—for example—due to having their head cut off with a sword, also leads to the accomplishment of the path state. One who has cultivated the eight attainments gets reborn in one or another brahma-world of the fine material sphere and those attainments are simply a natural part of that sphere. This is [absorption] accomplished as a result of birth." (Ledi Sayādaw 1998a [1901]: 50)

In his commentary on this section of the work, Ledi Sayādaw explains the category of "pure *vipassanā* practitioners" (*suddhavipassanāyānika*) as those whose *vipassanā* practice is "pure" because it is not "mixed with calming absorptions" (*samathajhānena asamissam*) (Ledi Sayādaw 1998b [1914]: 50). As the narrative contexts provided as examples indicate, this category of attainer refers to those who happen by circumstance to attain states of awakening without having the support of absorption as an immediately preceding condition, even though they may have accomplished absorption previously. It should not be confused with the "dry insight practitioner" (*sukkhavipassaka*), who attains

important because it separates the pure *samathayānika* practitioner from the *vipassanāyānika* practitioner, while at the same time maintaining the integral importance of *samatha* and *jhāna* practices in the process of the development of liberatory insight. Laying out this fundamental relationship in the context of practice—after a detailed analysis of his and his students' practical knowledge of various modes of calming/concentration practice—U Ba Khin explicitly connects the capacity to attain deep states of calm to the process of insight meditation¹⁴⁶:

In this great noble dispensation (*sāsana*), discernment/wisdom (*paññā*) is the main thing. Since calming [practice] (*samatha*) is not [in itself] reliable [for the purpose of liberation], we might even reply that the Buddha taught calming only because/to the extent that it was necessary.

The aforementioned answer(s) to modes of practice involving concentration (*samādhipaṭipatti*) were not obtained merely through the development of calming. It is to be assumed that progress in discernment by way of insight knowledge (*vipassanāññānapaññātarā*) had been developed [in such cases].

Those [of my students] who are believed to have attained absorption meditation as the accomplishment of the path state (*maggasiddhijhāna*) progress from the first absorption meditation of the fine material sphere to the fourth absorption meditation of the immaterial sphere in a matter of hours. These answers have been obtained [through experience].

The aforementioned answers were not obtained from only one person/source. It has been found that the answers are the same for both one who has studied the Pāli Tipiṭaka and its commentaries in the field of [Buddhist] textual theory (*pariyatti*) and one with a modern [secular] education who has just entered into Buddhism.¹⁴⁷

Drawing directly on the experiences of his small community of students, U Ba Khin here clarifies a key aspect of his practical stance on the relationship between calming and insight. He is unequivocal that calming is necessary but subsidiary in the process of developing liberatory discernment. The particular idea that emerges here, however, is that the attainment of the supramundane path state can itself—in certain karmically determined contexts—bring about the capacity for worldly absorption meditation. A practitioner can attain the absorption of *jhāna* in a process of cultivating the discernment of insight

awakening without having previously accomplished *jhāna* in the current life.

¹⁴⁶ Jenny Ko Gyi (trans.) n.d.: 16–22 (U Ba Khin 1962 [1952]: 25–38; U Ba Khin 2003 (?) [1952]: 23–34).

¹⁴⁷ Jenny Ko Gyi (trans.) n.d.: 21 (U Ba Khin 1962 [1952]: 37–38; U Ba Khin 2003 (?) [1952]: 34–35).

knowledge. U Ba Khin's take on this issue gets further complicated by the fact that in the 1962 edition of his treatise, for reasons that are not clear, he slightly modified his position. He characterized the kind of absorption accomplished as a result of the attainment of the path state as supramundane—as opposed to mundane—which brings his position closer to the classical tradition of the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*.¹⁴⁸ In this model, the attainment of the supramundane path state becomes an absorption, and one that a practitioner accomplishes in a process of cultivating the discernment of insight knowledge.

Further, in his somewhat idiosyncratic explanation of the connection between supramundane states and the absorption of *jhāna*, U Ba Khin must also make a special effort to explicitly and experientially distinguish between mundane and supramundane results. He does this in the last section of his short work, a section entitled *Absorption Meditation and the Fruition State* (*jhān'-nhan'-phuil'*):

Absorption meditation and the fruition state are to be understood distinctly. It has been found that an individual established in [the capacity to attain] the fruition state (*phalaṭhān'pugguil'*)—if he is not a dry insight individual (*sukkhavipassakapugguil'*)—can enter into the fruition state and into absorption meditation. Mundane absorption meditation (*lokīyajhān'*) and the supramundane fruition state (*lokuttarāphuil'*) are indescribably different. The person established in the [capacity to attain] the fruition state therefore has no desire to enter absorption meditation. If he does enter into absorption meditation, it is for honing discriminating knowledge (*patisambhidāñāna*), as a basis for developing the direct knowledges (*abhiññā*: supernormal powers), or in order to enter the attainment of cessation [of perception and feeling].

To especially note: In the attainments of absorption meditation, the mental impulsion of absorption meditation arises upon the taking up as object of the conceptual counterpart sign, which is not without color and

¹⁴⁸ In 1952, U Ba Khin defined *maggasiddhijhāna* as follows: “Absorption meditation through the accomplishment of the path state: This is mundane absorption (*lokī jhān' samāpat'*) that one is able to attain simultaneously upon the attainment of the path state (*mag'*) and because of wishes made in past existences.” (U Ba Khin 2003 (?) [1952]: 18). It appears that this somewhat unique category and definition was revised in the 1962 edition to come more into conformity with the classical tradition: “Absorption meditation through the accomplishment of the path state: This is the supramundane absorption (*lokuttara jhān' samāpat'*) that one is able to attain simultaneously upon the attainment of the path state and because of wishes made in past existences. (This refers to one who attains supramundane absorption [*lokuttara-jhānalābhī*] together with the attainment of the path state)” (U Ba Khin 1962 [1952]: 20–21)

shape. One also emerges from absorption meditation taking the conceptual sign as object. One experiences the bliss of absorption meditation upon emerging from absorption meditation.

At the time of entering the attainment of the fruition state, one does not take as object a conceptual counterpart sign, as one does not attend to one. There is simply attainment upon attending to *nibbāna* as the object by way of the three characteristics. The mental impulsion of the fruition state arises after one experiences the sparkling lightning-like mind element (*manodhāt'*), which has the characteristic of purity, as it is free from the subsidiary defilements (*upakkilesa*).¹⁴⁹ At the time of emerging from the fruition state, the characteristic nature (*sabhāvalakkhaṇa*) of what one experiences is vastly superior to the peace of absorption meditation. With great force, the peace and bliss (*santisukha*) of the stillness of *nibbāna* is experienced for oneself.¹⁵⁰

This passage is a powerful public testament to the experiential knowledge of U Ba Khin and his students. It marks the culmination of his short treatise and lays bare his ability as a teacher to clearly distinguish all modes of Buddhist meditative practice as they are experienced.

At the beginning of this practical analysis, U Ba Khin notes that an individual capable of attaining the fruition state is also capable of attaining mundane absorption if he is not “a dry insight individual.” This is the only reference in U Ba Khin’s work—devoted in large part to the details of calming practices—to such an individual. The label *sukkhavipassaka* is applied in traditional Buddhist commentarial literature to an individual who attains Buddhist awakening without having previously attained the mundane absorption meditations of the fine material sphere—or higher attainments.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ This intriguing sentence is found only in the recent reprint of U Ba Khin’s book (2003 (?) [1952]). After consulting with Sāmaṇerī Akiñcanā (Friedgard Lottermoser) (private communication, Oct. 25, 2017)—who has consulted the earliest edition and all other extant editions over many years of working to translate this short book—I have confirmed that the recent reprint is likely a facsimile of the book’s original 1952 edition. This means that this short and important passage, along with another similar one (U Ba Khin 1962 [1952]: 41; U Ba Khin 2003 (?) [1952]: 37), was deliberately removed from the second 1962 edition for reasons that are unclear. We might speculate that the specificity of these passages was felt to be misleading for a more general audience. (Sāmaṇerī Akiñcanā has suggested that while a meditator would likely be unable to observe such a process themselves, a developed practitioner might be able to observe it in others.) On the *manodhātu* as *bhavaṅga* consciousness, see Ledi Sayādaw 2006: 213 (Ledi Sayādaw 1954: 44) and U Tiloka 2009: 374.

¹⁵⁰ Jenny Ko Gyi (trans.) n.d.: 24–25 (U Ba Khin 2003 [?] [1952]: 39–40; U Ba Khin 1962 [1952]: 42–43).

¹⁵¹ On the concept of the *sukkhavipassaka* in the broader history of Buddhism, see Wen

The invocation of such an individual here appears somewhat at odds with U Ba Khin's earlier theoretical stance that "the path and fruition states cannot take place without absorption meditation (*jhāna*).” To better understand this apparent contradiction in U Ba Khin's theorization, we must enter the realm of his distinct teaching practices, practices that come to form the foundation of one of the most influential global insight meditation traditions of the post-colonial and late capitalist periods.

3. Power in Practice: U Ba Khin, Mother Sayama, and the Role of the Teacher

We have seen that U Ba Khin, in presenting his method of meditation to the Burmese public in 1952, took a fairly strong stance on the idea that the establishment of the capacity for absorption meditation or *jhāna*—deep states

2009 and 2012. Ledi Sayādaw refers to the “dry-insight practitioner” three times in his *Paramatthadīpanī*. The first instance comes in a detailed discussion of the practice of absorption, where the category is mentioned briefly in order to suggest that the awakening state of such an individual is in fact an absorption: “When those who are dry insight practitioners give rise to the path state, that state is at the level of the first absorption [of the fine material sphere].” (Ledi Sayadaw 1998a [1901]: 67) It should be noted, based on the context of the passage, that here the “first absorption” likely refers to that state in the taxonomy of four absorptions found in the *sutta* tradition as opposed to the taxonomy of five absorptions found in normative Abhidhamma analyses. The second instance notes that the mind-object for such an individual at the time of death would be the mind-matter continuum as opposed to a sign (*nimitta*) based on one's previous absorption meditation object (Ledi Sayadaw 1998a [1901]: 155). The third instance—perhaps most tellingly—is found in a discussion of different levels of liberated beings. In this case, one key focus is on how those who may become stream enterers without *samathajhāna* in one existence would be able to attain such *jhānas* in a later existence and then be reborn in a high deity realm on the way to final *nirvāṇa* (Ledi Sayadaw 1998a [1901]: 171). Examples of such individuals from the time of the Buddha are given: 1. Sakka, the king of the gods during the time of the historical Buddha; 2. Anāthapiṇḍaka, an important male lay donor-disciple of the historical Buddha; and 3. Visākhā, an important female lay donor-disciple of the historical Buddha. Finally, in his *Great Treatise on Meditation Objects* (1904), the Ledi Sayādaw equates the *sukkhavipassaka* with the individual “liberated by wisdom” (*paññāvimuttapugguī*) after first noting that “the one who does not strive for absorption first, and practices only the approach to the path state by way of insight—without the basis of absorption—will attain absorption at the time of the arising of the path state if they have mastered absorption (*jhān 'samāpat*’) in a recent past life. The path and the fruit attained in this way are also the liberated-by-mind (*cetovimutti*) path and fruit, and that individual is also the individual liberated by mind (*cetovimuttapugguī*).” (Ledi Sayādaw n.d. [1904]: 231 [Cf. Hla Maung n.d.(a): 264])

of calm—is necessary before the practice of *vipassanā* might be engaged efficaciously.¹⁵² But what did this mean in practice? We know that as early as 1952 a number of his students had mastered the traditional practices of absorption meditation. But how did U Ba Khin bring his work with such practices into his *vipassanā* teachings? What did it mean in practice that he insisted on the importance of deep states of concentration for the attainment of liberatory insight while at the same time underlining the unreliability of the *samatha* path in the absence of *paññā* or insight knowledge?¹⁵³

There is, in fact, very little public data available to answer this question. This lack of available data is the direct result of a public esotericism practiced at the International Meditation Centre, to which U Ko Lay refers when he states that the experiences of U Ba Khin's students involve "complicated and profound matters, [and] not all the records are allowed to be read." But some information is in the public record. Drawing on U Ba Khin's own discourses, reports from his students with whom I have had contact, and little-noticed accounts about his teaching methods, I will show here how U Ba Khin's method of *vipassanā* relied heavily on the teaching context of the pure vibrational field of the meditation center, instruction closely tailored to individual students, and the harnessing of supportive supernormal forces. He used these contextual factors to create a situation that obviated the need to attain mundane absorption meditation prior to the development of insight knowledge and its full actualization in supramundane absorption.

Let us begin by returning to U Ba Khin's insistence on the necessity of the establishment of concentration or *samādhi* before the explicit cultivation of *vipassanā*. In a discourse presented to his Burmese students on the first day of a ten-day retreat in the early 1960s, U Ba Khin lays out his position:

In short, morality is the foundation. Bodily and verbal actions are included in morality. Concentration is regarded as mental action – controlling the mind: The job of not allowing the mind to go somewhere else and placing

¹⁵² See also IMC (ed.) 1961 [1960]: 27.

¹⁵³ For example, in a letter dated June 25, 1953, U Ba Khin warns his student J. Van Amersfoort—apparently a *phalaṭhān* individual but not a *sukkhavipassaka* (?), despite the fact that the report of his initial attainment did not explicitly involve discussion of *jhānic* attainment (IMC [ed.] n.d. (~1954): 1–15)—against cultivating *jhāna*: "The only note of warning which I should like to give you is not to make an attempt to sink into a state with a light (*Patibhāga-nimitta*) before you. This will take you to a *Jhanic* state and lead you in a wrong direction." (Chit Tin [ed.] 1991 [1985]: viii–ix) It seems that U Ba Khin felt it necessary for his students to be guided in and out of *jhāna* under the watch of a teacher. See below, note 191, for U Ba Khin's analysis of why Amersfoort was able to enter upon attainment so quickly.

it only at one point is known as the work of “*samādhi*.” With this concentration, one can proceed to *vipassanā*. No Buddha preached that there is *vipassanā* without establishing concentration.

Yes, to confirm this fact, there is a chariot example in a *sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*.¹⁵⁴ [...] There is no shortcut.

Therefore, in our meditation center we pay priority to concentration. I do not know about other centers. In some centers, they directly begin with *vipassanā*. I do not think it is found in the Buddhist texts. According to the real teaching of the Buddha, there is *samādhi*. In the Buddha’s teachings, there is the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, which is the preaching of events that happened near the time of the Buddha’s *parinibbāna* (final *nirvāṇa*). This *sutta* repeatedly describes how concentration can be attained after the fulfillment of morality, discernment can be attained after the fulfillment of concentration, and *vimuttirasa* (the taste of liberation) can be attained after the fulfillment of wisdom. Therefore, concentration is very important. Concentration is calmness of mind and drawing the mind into the body is *kāyagatāsati* (awareness of bodily states).¹⁵⁵

Important here is that U Ba Khin feels the need first to justify his own stance using scripture and second, to criticize others who have a different approach, one that lacks a proper scriptural basis.¹⁵⁶ It is not far-fetched to assume that U Ba Khin is here referring to the practice methods of the well-known monk Mahāsī Sayādaw, whose meditation center in Rangoon was not far from U Ba Khin’s. The Mahāsī Sayādaw taught a practice involving less calming and a more immediate engagement with the cultivation of *vipassanā* discernment in the early stages of practice.¹⁵⁷ Such debates were part of the landscape of the back and forth of mid-twentieth century insight meditation teachers; Gustaaf Houtman many years ago outlined their basic contours as publicly enacted. Here, however, I want to focus on the teaching practices of U Ba Khin, which do not appear to have come into the light during the public debates on such issues. For, while U Ba Khin emphasized the necessity of developing concentration, he also emphasized how difficult and arduous such

¹⁵⁴ See MN 24.

¹⁵⁵ U Ba Khin n.d. [1962?] 1.1 (Day 1): 21:35–24:45 (translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart).

¹⁵⁶ On the existence of positive scriptural support for the *sukkhavipassaka* concept across Buddhist traditions, see Wen 2009 and 2012.

¹⁵⁷ As Gustaaf Houtman (1990b: 184–188) notes, the disagreement over how much concentration is necessary in the development of insight knowledge led to a range of debates in various contexts. The Mingun Jetavana and Mahāsī Sayādaws were primary targets of criticism for those who were proponents of more concentration. On this issue, see Scott 2023.

development is. At the same time, he claimed that under him such practices could be, as U Ko Lay put it, “carried out in a short period.”

As noted above, this claim was based on his experience with his own teacher, a sense of the power of his innovative teaching techniques, the atmosphere of his meditation center, and the force of his personal presence. Soon after the above statement about the importance of concentration, U Ba Khin goes on to explain the importance of a teacher in its development (my emphasis):

The Buddha said “*yathābhūtañānāya satthā pariyesitabbo*.” For the sake of *yathābhūtañānāya* (“knowledge of things as they are”), one needs to go to a teacher. Without a teacher, it doesn’t work. There is a difference between self-practice and practice with a teacher. Well, amongst the teachers, the Lord Buddha is the noblest one. There are people who take refuge under the Buddha and realize the essence of the Dhamma. You should learn from them. This can be called a legacy. In my case—perhaps [because of] the perfections (*pāramī*) from [past] lives—I can help those who come and meditate here to attain a certain level of concentration. So, we only need to check whether the meditation process here agrees with the Buddhist texts or not. The meditation process that agrees with the texts can work well. Right?¹⁵⁸

Here U Ba Khin makes known to his students, at the very beginning of their retreat, that their ability to practice concentration leading to insight relies on his help as a teacher whose credentials are based on his karmic background. Were we to read or hear this statement on its own, without further knowledge of U Ba Khin’s teaching techniques, it might appear a simple explanation of how a teacher helps a student by providing them with information about how to practice a technique of meditation. But the last line here—and further information about how he taught—suggests that U Ba Khin is insinuating something more than that. That U Ba Khin feels the need to justify his teaching methods—his abilities to help his students attain certain levels of concentration—through scripture also indicates that his approach may have been considered by some to be somewhat unorthodox.¹⁵⁹ To get a sense of exactly what methods he is referring to here, it is instructive to take recourse

¹⁵⁸ U Ba Khin n.d. [1962?] 1.1: 26:00–27:06 (translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart).

¹⁵⁹ Indeed, in a short BBC documentary on Buddhism in Burma for the 1954 series *Men Seeking God*—which included a segment on Sayāgyi U Ba Khin’s International Meditation Centre—the narrator of the series, Christopher Mayhew, states: “Some older monks I met had some reservations about the methods at this centre. [...]”

to the diary of the American John Hislop, who recorded his experiences of a retreat with U Ba Khin in 1960 (my emphasis):

Then, when I was directed to give my attention to the fontanel area of the skull, the area was calmly held in the attention without interfering thought movements of any type, then that “door” in the top of the head so easily and quickly opening to the burning heat — the sensation of “Anicca”, and the quick awareness of Anicca in other parts of the body.

All this could not be my unaided doing. So I asked U Ba Khin this morning how come my mind suddenly became so tranquil, collected, and one-pointed, and if I had not had help. *He said, yes, that the awakening to the sensation produced by the complete instability of matter could not occur without Samādhi of a high order, so he requested the devas and brahmās of this place who were liberated through the teachings of the Buddha and who gladly help by smoothing the circumstances if they can “tune in”—these sentient beings he asked to extend their beneficial influence to a man about to receive the Dhamma of the Buddha.*¹⁶⁰ Then I

¹⁶⁰ U Ba Khin would recite the following “teacher’s verses” at the beginning of group meditations in order to invoke the grace of the higher powers that guided him in his work (cf. Goenka 2006: 2 and 66–67 and Appendix 1):

“May the element of the Dharma, the element of awakening, and the element of *nirvāṇa* of all the Buddhas—with their infinite merit, infinite good karma, infinite knowledge, and infinite power that can extend throughout and subdue the entire universe—come and be present in this place.

Let [these forces] be enshrined over the head of this disciple of the Buddha.

Let [these forces] encompass this disciple of the Buddha. [...]

May the element of the Dharma [...] of the ten [features] of the Buddha’s teachings—the four paths, the four fruits, *nirvāṇa*, and the scriptures [...] May the element of the Dharma [...] of the *saṅgha*, the eight types of true noble disciples—those established respectively in the four paths and the four fruits—come and be present in this place.

Let [these forces] be enshrined over the head of this disciple of the Buddha.

Let [these forces] encompass this disciple of the Buddha.”

For the original Burmese of these verses and other associated parallel textual materials, see Appendix 1. These verses have a direct referent in verses composed by the Ledi Sayādaw invoking the power of the seven Buddhas of the past; the language of these verses can be traced to associated passages in the Ledi Sayādaw’s *Rogantaradīpanī* (see above, pp. 39–49), a source that is particularly informative because it contains prescriptions for chanting Pāli verses as well as glosses of those verses in Burmese. A number of the Burmese glosses found in the *Rogantaradīpanī* overlap in part with U Ba Khin’s teacher’s verses (Appendix 1.2).

We can also see some continuity between the way that U Ba Khin deployed such verses in meditation contexts and the way that the Ledi Sayādaw prescribed such verses as therapeutics:

“[...] We have known an instance of a plague victim recovering due to the forceful and repeated recital near his head of the Thirteen Powerful Forces of the Universe. A plague patient should be surrounded by men with swords in hand while a group of

asked him about the easy opening of the fontanel “door” in the head, and he said, yes, this was by virtue of the same grace. The head area still burns strongly.¹⁶¹

This record—describing the moment when Hislop first entered upon the cultivation of *vipassanā* meditation after four days of calming practice—helps us to properly frame U Ba Khin’s theories on the role of concentration in the development of insight. Here we see the practical context in which such theories are enacted. The main thing to note here is U Ba Khin’s own explanation as to why Hislop was able, after obtaining mere semblance concentration (*upacārasamādhi*), to so directly and powerfully engage in the process of the discernment of *vipassanā* insight knowledge. U Ba Khin makes clear that such discernment “could not occur without *samādhi* of a higher order.” It was in fact his own intervention as a teacher—or rather his ability to facilitate the intervention of powerful supernormal forces directly connected to the historical Buddha himself—that allowed for Hislop to practice *vipassanā* without the aid of absorption meditation.¹⁶² One key

reciters including monks and laity read aloud the above mentioned Suttas, Parittas and Charms. The reciters should concentrate all their mental energies on the patient, their minds intent on bringing the utmost good to the patient, thinking, ‘Let all the words I am uttering enter into the patient’s body.’ [...]

We have known an instance of a plague patient being saved by emphatic and spirited recital of the *Āṭānāṭiya-Sutta* at his head. The efficacy of these scriptural modes of assistance is very evident with those who have strong faith in the Triple Gem. However, those taking recourse to them as an expediency may also do definite good if they carry out the recitals with a strong will, saying to themselves, ‘I will not stop reciting until this patient recovers.’ It may be useful to remember that the demons, on being thus cornered, will try to shake the will of the reciters by making the patient assume various stances. It is a battle of wits then. The reciters must prove themselves stronger.” (Slightly adapted from Ledi Sayādaw [U Tin U (Myaung) (trans.)] n.d.: 29 [Ledi Sayadaw 1909: 81–83; Ledi Sayadaw 1955 (1909): 52]).

¹⁶¹ Chit Tin 1985: 10-11.

¹⁶² U Ba Khin speaks most explicitly about the protective role of a teacher in a discourse on the last day of one of his ten-day retreats in the early 1960s:

“You will find out that meditation by yourself does not work. However you try to calm your mind, only the time will be gone, and your mind will not be calm. Yet, if you practice with teachers who have the ability to protect you, you will get *samādhi*. For this reason, the Buddha said: *yathābhūtañāyā satthā pariyesitabbo*.

Yathābhūtañāyā – for *yathābhūtañāna* (knowledge of things as they are), *satthā* – teachers, *pariyesitabbo* – should be approached. Without a teacher, there is no way. The guidance and protection from a teacher are very important. There are pulling forces in the environment, and they disturb concentration. If a teacher protects [a meditator] from these forces and disturbances, a meditator who is working for *samādhi* can get concentration. After getting calmness of mind, there is *cittavisuddhi*

aspect of such interventions was the invocation of spiritual guides through the chanting of powerful verses of protection (see Appendix 1).

It is to this method of teaching that U Ko Lay refers when he writes—in the passage quoted above—that “Sayāgyi and his close disciples studied, explored, investigated, and made invention,” and that “the right method of practice (*paṭipatti*) that is able to be carried out in a short period [...] was discovered. [...] [T]he vibrational force/power of wisdom (*vijjādhāt*‘) arises as soon as one attains the right insight knowledge (*vipassanāñāṇa*) [...] This supernormal power of *vijjādhāt*‘ enacts the cleaning of defilements rooted in the aggregates.” But this might not be possible to discern if one did not have access to accounts such as Hislop’s.

Of additional importance is that U Ba Khin did not work entirely alone as a teacher. He also made use of particular students, those known to have supernormal powers, to aid him in his teaching. One of these students was the Indian *jhāna* adept Venkatarāman, who can be seen on film entering into the meditative absorption of cessation under U Ba Khin’s direction in the BBC documentary *Men Seeking God*.¹⁶³ But the most important and powerful of his helpers, a woman who had worked closely with him in his teaching since her first course with him at the beginning of 1953 and who inherited his mantle after he died, was Daw Mya Thwin (1924–2017)—later known as “Mother Sayama.”

Mother Sayama was known as a powerful meditator with strong concentration skills and a range of supernormal powers who had reached the third stage of Buddhist awakening, that of non-returner (*anāgāmin*). She

(purity of mind), and the characteristic of *cittaekaggata* (one-pointedness of mind) appears. At that time only, *vipassanā* meditation should be practiced.” (U Ba Khin n.d. [1962?] 7.1: 19:30–20:47 [translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart])

Goenka wrote about the supportive activities of the teacher in the following way in a letter to U Ba Khin and Mother Sayama reporting on his very first *vipassanā* course in India: “I felt myself fortunate enough to have been chosen for this meritorious job, to work as your transformer to induct the powerful *nibbāna-dhātu* from your power house and shower it on the candidates in front of me.” (*Vipassana Newsletter [VRI Edition]* 30.13 [November 2020]: 2)

¹⁶³ Mayhew 1954: 10:28–12:52. U Ko Lay (1980: 98–99) describes Venkatarāman’s role in assessing the quality of the land for the International Meditation Centre: “According to the daily record of U Chit tin, it was recorded as follows: ‘Victory land for the *Sāsana* (*sāsana*‘ *’aon*‘ *mre*) is found.’ [...] Sayāgyi found the land for the *Sāsana*. [...] Today [January 15, 1952], at 1:00 pm, I went [there] together with Sayāgyi and group [...] When Mr. Venkatarāman took the meditation object, the four guardian deities of the *Sāsana* urged him to buy the land because it is a victory land.”

became integral to U Ba Khin's teaching approach, and his close confidants claimed that he would regularly have her use her psychic abilities to judge the past-life backgrounds of prospective students. In this way, U Ba Khin could determine whether students had the required *pāramī* or past-life karmic credentials to be ripe for the attainment of Buddhist liberation.¹⁶⁴

We will explore the implications of this conceptual framework—and Sayama's relationship with U Ba Khin—further when discussing U Ba Khin's cosmic identity and historical developments among his students after his death. But first I want to return to John Hislop's record of his retreat with U Ba Khin. In a detailed description of U Ba Khin's attempt to create the conditions for his "breakthrough" to the nibbānic state, Hislop explains how U Ba Khin and Sayama worked together (my emphasis):

Now, actually, the day before that, Guruji had decided to try to see if we could "cut the thread" of *Samsāra*, but at noon I had received a letter from [a friend in India] and the mind which had become lightly balanced picked up so much "outside influence" from the letter that I had burned with great intensity the rest of that day and night so the attempt had to be postponed until I had burned clear again. [...]

At any rate, the day of the attempt he came down to my cell #4 about half an hour before the time to tell me of the decision and to instruct me, I was not to think about the size of the "spot". I was just to concentrate on the center and when the time was "ripe" he would tell me to concentrate harder. Then harder still. Then he would say that the moment was here, to concentrate harder still, with an appreciation of *Anicca* in the consciousness, then to exert a strong mental pressure on the spot for several seconds with the strong desire to escape from the suffering of existence and from the endless successions of births and deaths (*Samsāra*), then to suddenly relax the mental pressure and hold the mind empty—just let the mind go blank. To anticipate and expect nothing. *At the attempt there would have to be his closest and most advanced and powerful helper to create a "shield" around me with the help of the (she is a woman). Their part in the process would be devas and brahmās who are the custodians of this power from the Buddha. The shield would be from the forces which always rush in to prevent escape from Samsāra. Then also, they would need to exert a second type of great effort.*

This second effort would be in this fashion: The arising of mind and matter units is continuous, one following so closely after the other that for all practical purposes the series of "becomings" and "extinctions" is an unbroken stream or "process" or "thread". With their power, Guruji and helper would intercept between two of these instants and make a small gap

¹⁶⁴ WAI231.

in the mind-matter process for a “fraction of a second” for the “break through” attempt. Now, of course, “I” could not “break through” because “I” am the mind. The “break through” would be if I was able to cooperate with them in making the gap in the stream of my *Samsāra* and then suddenly relaxing the mind to stillness so that “something new” the unconditioned could “fill” or “replace” the mind which I had suddenly given up. As you can see, an extremely subtle and delicate process but of tremendous significance. For the person who “cuts the thread” is a “first Stream-winner” and he can never again be reborn lower than human status, and he will have no more than seven births before final and complete illumination, and he is now free to work out complete freedom even in this life. *In the time of Buddha his power was so tremendous that he was in this fashion able to “clear a line” or “smooth the path to salvation” for many hundreds of thousands of humans and devas and brahmās. Now, so far as is known, this is the only place in the Buddhist world where it can be done in a short time. There is no other extraordinary lay teacher like Gurugi, and even in those monasteries where there exists a practical master of meditation, the monks spend most of their lives developing Samādhi and Anicca and Dukkha (awareness of intrinsic suffering) and the master is not willing to spend his energy on making “break throughs.” [...]*¹⁶⁵

Though Mother Sayama’s name has been omitted from this account, it is without doubt that she is U Ba Khin’s “helper” here. In this remarkable description, additional details emerge on the practical context for U Ba Khin’s theories about the necessity of calming/concentration in the process of Buddhist liberation. While Hislop does not make it explicit, it can be inferred here based on what U Ba Khin said to Hislop previously that he considered it to be his and Sayama’s job to create conditions that otherwise would have been possible only through the practice of powerful states of calm. Such states function as a protective “shield,” from what U Ko Lay above calls “destructive forces,”¹⁶⁶ and they also allow a meditator to more clearly

¹⁶⁵ Chit Tin 1985: 26–27.

¹⁶⁶ In a discourse held on the first day of one of his ten-day courses, U Ba Khin describes the Buddha’s access to *jhāna* as having the power to drive away such forces, which are personified as the Māra:

“When we have strong concentration as foundation, is it true that we have to move on to *vipassanā*? To attain concentration is an arduous task. Our Lord Buddha made a solemn resolution under the Bodhi Tree, when sitting at the Golden Throne, that he would not get up from the throne until he attained Buddhahood. Then, early in the night, [forces came] to destroy his concentration, and his mind began wandering here and there. This is called ‘the disturbance by Māra.’ Even the Buddha himself got confused and felt lost, and he was not able to attain concentration at that time. [...] Well, later, after he overcame the disturbance of the Māra, there was concentration in

observe the minute moment to moment arising and passing of the mind stream.¹⁶⁷ In this way, it can be seen that U Ba Khin's teaching methods—in his conception of what he was doing—not only involved the supernormal power of his own presence and his ability to harness higher supernormal forces, but also at times the additional supernormal power of Mother Sayama's presence, along with their collective ability to manipulate the mind stream of their students and push them to a liberatory “break through.” It seems that in the context of this lineage of practice—directly linked to the Ledi Sayādaw—the harnessing of such teaching powers is what made it possible to render unnecessary long periods of calming practice.

4. Guru of Gurus: Special Individuals, the Rhetoric of Secularism, and the Limits of Universalism

We have seen above that the Ledi Sayādaw—a champion of lay study groups and the teacher of one of the first lay *vipassanā* meditation masters of modern Burma, Sayā Thetgyi—wrote eloquently about the possibility that “if the perfection of knowledge is developed, [the insight knowledge of impermanence] can be accomplished while listening to a discourse, or while carrying out the duties of a householder. This is so because for those whose knowledge is developed, everything within and without one's body [...] is an object at the sight of which the [insight] knowledge of impermanence may be nurtured and develop.” Erik Braun has taken this statement—and Ledi's historical context—as a key marker in the development of modern insight meditation, in particular the development of “mass meditation.” But it is important to emphasize that while large-scale meditation groups did indeed become part of the landscape of Burmese Buddhism in the twentieth century, particularly after Burmese Independence when the government sponsored such activities, they were largely the purview of monastic teachers that had no direct links to the Ledi Sayādaw. Such teachers also taught meditation in ways distinct from those today known to go back to Ledi.

him. Well, after he got the *samādhi* – calmness of mind – *paññā*, *vipassanāñāṇa* was attained and he achieved enlightenment (*arahatta phala*).” (U Ba Khin n.d. [1962?] 1.1: 20:45–21:38 [translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart])

¹⁶⁷ Hislop notes that his teachers could psychically “see” the activity of his mind stream: “Well, the time came. It was evening. It had to be dark so Guruji and helper could see the proper moment and coordinate their effort with my effort.” (Chit Tin 1985: 27)

Braun has attempted to draw a link between one of Ledi's important monastic students, the Mohnyin Sayādaw, and the Mahāsī Sayādaw, the monk best known for popularizing meditation and building it into a mass movement in post-independence Burma.¹⁶⁸ But it seems that there is no concrete historical evidence for such a link.¹⁶⁹ By ending his work with this historical fudge, Braun reveals a major problem in his argument. That is, while the Ledi Sayādaw was no doubt influential in contributing to changes in social attitudes about the role of meditation among the laity, it is not clear that the Mingun Jetavana Sayādaw's (the Mahāsī Sayādaw's teacher) establishment of a meditation center in 1911 was necessarily the result of the developments Braun has focused on in his analysis of the Ledi Sayādaw's particular historical formation. Rather, the Ledi Sayādaw's direct influence on the development of popular forms of mass meditation involved a more protracted process. It came to fruition in contexts beyond the borders of Burma many years after the so-called Burmese mass meditation movement emerged. While the Ledi Sayādaw's monastic students—such as the Mohnyin Sayādaw—clearly played a part in the broader development of such trends in Burma, it is not clear that they were central in the broader process of laicization and internationalization that have made insight meditation the global cultural commodity it is today.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Braun 2013: 161 (Jordt 2007: 23).

¹⁶⁹ That no such direct link exists has been confirmed by Tony Scott, who is currently researching the history of the Mingun Jetavana Sayādaw. It is the case, however, that there are a number of connections between the Mohnyin Sayādaw and the Mingun Jetavana Sayādaw, including that their meditation centers were adjacent to one another in modern Yangon, and that the Mohnyin Sayādaw was the person who requested the Mingun Jetavana Sayādaw to write his controversial commentary on the *Milindapañha*. I am grateful to Tony Scott for sharing this valuable information with me.

¹⁷⁰ A good example of why monastic students, such as the Mohnyin Sayādaw, may not have been at the forefront of this process can be seen in a short treatise, entitled *Diṭṭhā Vipassanā*, authored by the Mohnyin Sayādaw in 1955 and translated into English the same year. Mohnyin writes at the beginning of the book that he was “requested by Venerable Bhadanta Indriya of Mohnyin Monastery [...] and many of my disciples who are residing in the various parts of the Union of Burma and practising Vipassanā according to my instructions to write a book on ‘Insight Exercises’ suitable for the Buddhists in foreign countries.” He goes on to say that he wrote the book “[...] with the main object of allowing the beginners to practise the exercises, in accordance with the Dhamma as expounded in the *Dumātikā* of the *Dhammasaṅgani* (Enumeration of Phenomena), which was taught by the Omniscient Buddha in *Tāvātimsa* to millions of *Brahmās* and *Devas* [...]” In going through this treatise, however, it remains difficult to imagine that this book might have been used as a meditation manual for beginners, particularly those in foreign countries. This is a case—similar to the case of

For this reason, it is imperative that we come to terms with the historical roles of Sayā Thetgyi and Sayāgyi U Ba Khin in the development of insight traditions in Burma, since it is the tradition of practice handed down through these two lay meditation masters—heirs of the Ledi Sayādaw’s teachings—that ultimately had the most influence on globalized insight meditation in the second half of the twentieth century.

So, where do these laymen fit within the landscape of a developing movement of mass lay meditation in mid-twentieth-century Burma? Interestingly, both of them had very few students, and neither developed modes of practice that might be taught to large groups of students. Sayā Thetgyi, like his teacher before him and many others of his generation, did not speak English and taught only to devout Buddhists. The same can be said for most of the Ledi Sayādaw’s monastic disciples. U Ba Khin, on the other hand—as shown above—spoke English and had contact with a wide range of people invested in various religious traditions. He was likewise explicitly invested in teaching to non-Buddhists. It might even be argued that the reframing of Burmese insight meditation as a practice that can be engaged by people of all traditions, regardless of their religious commitments, finds its earliest and most explicit formulation in U Ba Khin’s Vipassana Research Association. This approach becomes explicit in a letter written by U Ba Khin to his community in October of 1952 not long before the founding of his meditation center¹⁷¹:

most of the Ledi Sayādaw’s *dīpanī*s—in which the nature of the literary format largely removes from view the teaching contexts in which such practices are enacted. What is more, Mohnyin’s approach appears interestingly out of step with Ledi’s suggestions, discussed above, that basic practices of meditation for an average person need not, and often perhaps should not, involve discernment in line with such Abhidhamma categories.

¹⁷¹ This document was downloaded from the Vipassana Research Institute website at www.dhamma.org/en/os/subkletters.htm (accessed Sept. 15, 2018). It appears that the document as it is presented here may not contain the entirety of U Ba Khin’s communication.

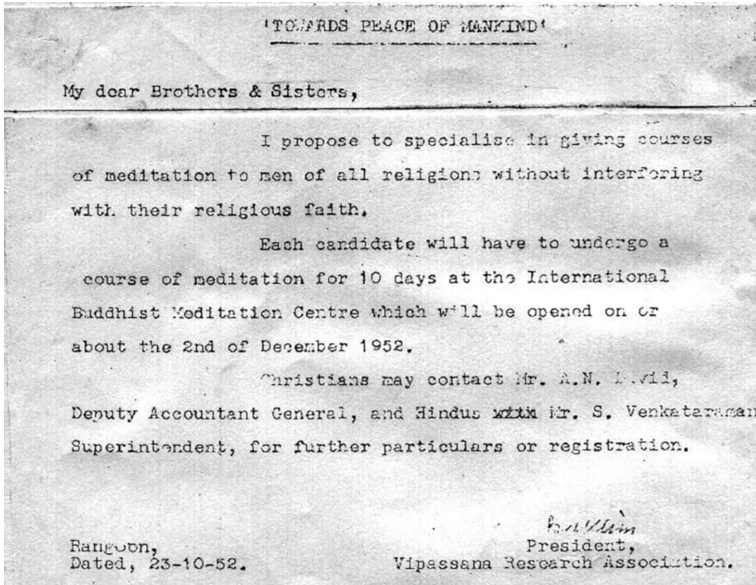


Figure 2: Notice signed by Sayāgyi U Ba Khin on October 23, 1952, inviting people of all religions to learn meditation at the International Meditation Centre

The phrase “without interfering with their religious faith” signals a new kind of project, one that clearly emerges out of U Ba Khin’s work with his non-Buddhist students. We have seen above that U Ba Khin claims to have proven that “the answers [to practice] are the same for both one who has studied the Pāḷi Tipiṭaka and its commentaries in the field of [Buddhist] textual theory (*pariyatti*) and one with a modern [secular] education who has just entered into Buddhism (*yakumhapani’ buddhabhāsāvaṇi*).”¹⁷² Here we find what appears to be the classic universalist stance of a “Buddhist Modernism”¹⁷³: Buddhist insight meditation practices are effective for all, across religious and secular divides.

But counterpose the language in the letter above, written in English, to the language of U Ba Khin’s work on the practice of meditation, written in Burmese. While the letter advertises a set of practices that will not interfere in a given candidate’s faith, the book speaks of a candidate “entering into Buddhism” or “becoming a Buddhist” upon taking up the practice.¹⁷⁴ This

¹⁷² U Ba Khin 1962 [1952]: 38; U Ba Khin 2003 (?) [1952]: 35.

¹⁷³ See McMahan 2008.

¹⁷⁴ On the notion of *buddhabhāsā* and its currency as an emergent property of colonial Buddhism in Burma, see Houtman 1990a and Kirichenko 2009. We must be careful here, however, not to overly reify the distinction between the categories of *sāsanā* and

issue gets even more explicitly highlighted when U Ba Khin speaks to his Burmese disciples about one of his American students, the Black Christian theologian Dr. Leon E. Wright. He says: “Leon E. Wright is a Doctor of Divinity, with a Religion PhD from Harvard University. He is also a professor of Christian theology. After he realized the Dhamma from me, he renounced all these, and now he gives lectures and classes about Buddhism (*buddhabhāsā*).”¹⁷⁵

The subtle difference in the language here is telling. It points to the true roots of a range of epistemological and experiential problems that emerge historically because of the way that modern insight practices have been framed, appropriated, and repurposed. Much ink has been spilled over the last thirty odd years on this issue, and here is not the place to review the various scholarly works that have attempted to come to terms with this process.¹⁷⁶ But I might simply point out that none of the works I am aware of properly account for the key role of U Ba Khin and his students in this process. Because U Ba Khin was an English speaker who taught initially to a number of Burmese-born non-Buddhists and then to a diverse range—if still a small number—of foreigners from abroad, he is a key historical touchstone for such epistemological shifts in Asia in the context of expanding Burmese Buddhist (counter-)missionary urges.¹⁷⁷

The point I want to drive home here is that while U Ba Khin explicitly engaged the issue of not “interfering” with people’s faith and allowed that Buddhist meditation could be amenable even to those with a modern (non-Buddhist) education, he was saddled with the language of “Buddhism” (*buddhabhāsā*) and never conceptualized or articulated his teachings outside of that frame of reference. His was an accommodating stance, one that in the end is hard not to read as a sleight of hand. And it remains a question just

buddhabhāsā. On this point, see Brac de la Perrière 2017b.

¹⁷⁵ U Ba Khin n.d. (1962?) 3.2: 18:24–19:05 (translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart). On Leon E. Wright’s key role in bringing U Ko Lay—U Ba Khin’s close confidant and biographer, eventual Pāli scholar, and founder and Vice Chancellor of Mandalay University—to the feet of U Ba Khin to study meditation after an encounter in the United States, see Houtman 1990b: 221–223.

¹⁷⁶ See, for example, Bond 1988; Houtman 1990b and 1999; Sharf 1995 and 2015; Davis 2004; McMahan 2008, 2017 and 2020; Wilson 2014 and 2017; Braun 2013; Schedneck 2015; Cassaniti 2018; and Gleig 2019 among various others.

¹⁷⁷ While I focus here primarily on Burma, South Asia, and the Euro-American Anglo-sphere, U Ba Khin’s role in influencing Southeast Asian practice traditions and politics is also beginning to be visible. See, for example, Ford 2017: 70–85 and 159–184; Shedneck 2015: 37–39 and 50–58.

what U Ba Khin meant when he suggested that he could teach Buddhist meditation “without interfering” in the religious faiths of his candidates.

To understand his method, we might look at some of the specific accommodatory approaches that U Ba Khin implemented so as not to interfere with his candidates’ professed faiths. One example is in his teaching of concentration. In a pamphlet published in 1960, we find the following explanation of how to develop concentration using awareness of the breath:

To develop the power of concentration to one-pointedness. This is developed by focusing one’s attention to a spot on the upper lip just beneath the nose synchronizing the inward and outward motion of respiration with

- (a) the silent sound of “Amen” in the case of Christians,
- (b) “Aum” in the case of Hindus,
- (c) “Allah” in the case of Mohammedans and
- (d) “Sat-Nam” in the case of Sikhs.

This is done till the wavelength of respiration becomes finer and finer and the Mind gets settled down to a point and the candidate secures what may be called the one-pointedness of the mind.¹⁷⁸

This approach allowed students to choose a verbal meditation object that fit with their own religious leanings. It is an approach that I have not seen used in other Burmese Buddhist contexts of the period. I want to signal here that this approach also differs from that of U Ba Khin’s student S.N. Goenka, in his teaching contexts in India. We will explore the implications of the choices Goenka made below. But in the context of U Ba Khin’s teaching, we might question further just how far this accommodatory approach might have reached, since U Ba Khin also maintained the idea that his candidates would become Buddhist through their practice of *vipassanā*. One indicator of the problem of claiming non-interference can be seen in John Hislop’s diary. Before coming to learn meditation from U Ba Khin, Hislop had practiced Hinduism, and he later went on to be one of the most prominent American disciples of the famed (to some infamous) Sathya Sai Baba.¹⁷⁹ So, it is instructive to note a key teaching moment that Hislop recorded on his course with U Ba Khin. Describing his development of concentration, Hislop writes:

U Ba Khin decided last night that the mind was sufficiently one-pointed to start *Vipassanā* meditation. During my practice, certain incidents come into the field of eyes-closed-vision that apparently are standard pointers

¹⁷⁸ IMC 1961 [1960]: 23.

¹⁷⁹ See Hislop 1979, 1985, 1998.

of progress that are experienced by everyone. They sound quite inconsequential: a jagged flash or streak of light like a lightning flash; changing clouds of light and dark; expanding white and colored lights, small flashing lights like stars—he says they indicate that for a moment the mind was calm and its inherent brightness flashed through. I also saw a small cross-legged figure wearing a necklace of blue stones that seemed as bright as stars. U Ba Khin seemed to recognize it and mentioned some name; he said it was a Hindu spirit from the Himalayas come to bid me farewell.¹⁸⁰

Aside from providing an interesting experiential account of the various kinds of signs or *nimittas* that might appear to a meditator in the process of cultivating a one-pointed mind, the final aspect of this narrative provides us with a broader theoretical context for how U Ba Khin understood what was entailed in the process of purification of mind.¹⁸¹ In interpreting the vision of a cross-legged figure wearing a necklace of blue stones as a deity coming to bid Hislop farewell, U Ba Khin reveals the karmic framework within which he operated. That is, in his perspective, the practice of Buddhist meditation involved a process of uprooting karmic defilements that connect a being to *samsāra*, the world of suffering. Certain religious connections, such as connections to the worship of specific Hindu deities, are part of the repertoire of such karmic defilements. In this account, then, Hislop is reporting on the process of naturally relinquishing aspects of his religious commitments in the process of Buddhist meditation. And in the conception of the tradition, this is a necessary outcome of the practice. If we take this theoretical stance of U Ba Khin seriously—and I think we should—it appears somewhat obfuscatory for him to claim that he teaches meditation to people “without interfering with their religious faith.” Yet the rhetoric of non-interference—and the

¹⁸⁰ Chit Tin 1985: 7.

¹⁸¹ On the phenomenology of experiences of light in meditation from a modern naturalist standpoint, see Lindahl et al. 2014. On different traditional Theravāda approaches to how to discuss the appearance of signs in meditation, see the *Visuddhimagga* (Ñānamoli 2010 [1956]: 278): “And when the sign has appeared in this way, the bhikkhu should go to the teacher and tell him, ‘Venerable sir, such and such has appeared to me.’ But [say the Dīgha reciters] the teacher should say neither ‘This is the sign’ nor ‘This is not the sign’; after saying ‘It happens like this, friend,’ he should tell him, ‘Go on giving it attention again and again’; for if he were told ‘It is the sign,’ he might [become complacent and] stop short at that (see M I 193f.), and if he were told ‘It is not the sign,’ he might get discouraged and give up; so he should encourage him to keep giving it his attention without saying either. So the Dīgha reciters say, firstly. But the Majjhima reciters say that he should be told, ‘This is the sign, friend. Well done. Keep giving attention to it again and again.’”

possibility of a secularized insight meditation—becomes central to how the teachings get presented from this time onward. And this rhetoric becomes a paradigmatic element of S.N. Goenka’s presentation of meditation to his non-Buddhist brethren in India, and to his students from around the world.¹⁸²

Another account that points to the limits of U Ba Khin’s accommodatory approach comes from John Coleman, a student of U Ba Khin who eventually went on to teach *vipassanā* in the United Kingdom and other parts of Europe. Coleman writes about corresponding with U Ba Khin by mail after doing a private retreat at a local Christian monastery in the United Kingdom:

The old man was predictably horrified when he heard about my visit to a Christian monastery for a period of Buddhist meditation. Surely there would be a conflict of forces, he wrote.¹⁸³

“In the days of the Buddha,” he said in a letter, “a monk by the name of Meghiya¹⁸⁴ was accompanying the Buddha on his return from the

¹⁸² The tension around this issue and its association with the experience of signs in meditation can be found, for example, in an excerpt of a letter from Goenka to U Ba Khin and Mother Sayama reporting on Goenka’s very first *vipassanā* course in India: “Some [students] are having strong light, a thousand power bulb, some have cool bright light within and without, one has seen a Deva of a slightly higher order and other soothing *nimittas*, and is experiencing great, internal peace which is actually *pīti*, *passadhi* and *sukha* (zest, tranquillity and ease) which the people here take to be *brahmic ānanda* (bliss of brahma). One student became stuck in it, taking it as the highest goal. It took me time to convince him that this was a midway rest-house and not the final goal of liberation. Slowly all the obstacles of divine lights, divine sounds, divine visions and *pīti-sukha-ānanda* are getting eliminated and the students are moving forward with wisdom (*paññā*). The struggle still goes on between the truth and untruth, between light and darkness, between Dhamma and *pāpa* (evil), between positive and negative, between *vijjā* and *avijjā* (knowledge and ignorance). With your *mettā* and guidance ‘Truth must triumph’ ultimately.” (*Vipassana Newsletter [VRI Edition]* 30.13 [November 2020]: 3)

¹⁸³ The letter has been made available online by Mario Amati, one of Coleman’s students (see Ba Khin [May 16] 1969). U Ba Khin wrote: “I do not think it is advisable to go into a local christian monastery for Buddhist meditation. Surely there will be a conflict of forces.” Earlier on in the letter, U Ba Khin suggests how Coleman should work to refresh himself in meditation: “In the meanwhile it should be enough if you work for set periods at home to raise your level of awareness of Anicca to be able to ‘tune in’ with the transmissions from the I.M.C, Rangoon. Your reception will be good and you will actually feel the influx of the power of Anicca, if you can keep your attention inside the body and be steadfast in awareness of Anicca.” This description of U Ba Khin’s mode of training indicates how within his practice model the external influence of the teacher—even at a great distance—is as important as the internal observation of phenomena.

¹⁸⁴ See AN 93 at AN IV 354–358 and Ud 4.1 at Ud 34–37. As far as I can tell, there is no explicit reference in the original *sutta*(s) or commentaries to “forces of the lower order”

morning round of alms. When they reached a beautiful spot by the side of a riverine with nice trees to give shade Meghiya suggested to Buddha that it looked a good place for meditation. He asked to be allowed to stay at the spot to meditate for the rest of the day. Buddha knew that the place was infested with spiritual forces of the lower order not amenable to the Buddha-Dhamma so he told Meghiya the place was not appropriate for the purpose. But when Meghiya was very eager to take a chance Buddha kept quiet.

“After a time Meghiya returned to the monastery unable to make any progress in meditation although the place had seemed to be all right. Appearances are deceptive [...]”¹⁸⁵

When U Ba Khin speaks of “forces” in English, he is often translating the Burmese term *dhāt*’ (Pāli: *dhātu*), which we have already seen used above in a variety of contexts. There is an overlap in his usage of the term *dhāt*’ to refer to elemental forces of the universe, the traditional eighteen elements of Buddhism—comprising the six sense faculties, their bases, and their objects—and supernormal agentive forces. In the context of this passage, it appears that U Ba Khin considered the forces associated with Christian tradition to be of a “lower order.” This attitude additionally presents something of a conceptual problem when placed alongside the notion of non-interference in people’s faiths presented above. That is, U Ba Khin considered it his job to have his students tune in to the supportive “forces” (*dhāt*’) of the Buddha-Dhamma, and likewise to have those forces tune in on behalf of his students. And such a process necessarily involved the removal of forces of a lower order, including forces connected with other religious traditions. This account also reveals just how important the bounded and sanctified space of the meditation center was—the “victory ground for the *sāsana*” (*sāsanā*’ *’on*’ *mre*), as it was called—for U Ba Khin’s model of practice.¹⁸⁶ In his conception, such a sanctified space was integral to creating the optimal context for his students, the proper make up of “forces” to support them.¹⁸⁷

or any forces at all aside from mental defilements. There is, however, strong emphasis at the end of this discourse on the importance of supportive guidance from a *kalyāṇamitta* or good friend. This is also a term for one who serves as a teacher.

¹⁸⁵ Coleman 2000 [1971]: 166–167.

¹⁸⁶ Ko Lay 1980: 98–99. On associations of such language with the logic of certain *weizzā* societies, see Foxeus 2011, e.g. Foxeus 2011: 77.

¹⁸⁷ On the role of the built environment as working to delineate ethnic groups and established religions in colonial Rangoon, as well as the possibility for “exceptional spaces that enacted alternative visions” within such a matrix of built reality, see Turner 2021.

This account also brings back to mind the Ledi Sayādaw's statement from the *Manual of Insight* that "if the perfection of knowledge is developed, [the *insight* knowledge of impermanence] can be accomplished while listening to a discourse, or while carrying out the duties of a householder. This is so because for those whose knowledge is developed, everything within and without one's body, within and without one's house, within and without one's village, is an object at the sight of which the [insight] knowledge of impermanence may be nurtured and develop." In U Ba Khin's model, the bounded space of the meditation center, shrine room, or meditation cells in proximity to the teacher, and the right balance of forces—internal and external—were necessary for the proper cultivation of meditation. In his reckoning, even those with great *pāramī*—such as his students—needed such supportive conditions in order to succeed at their task in a short time and without the aid of powerful calming practices. Only after attaining to initial stages of awakening would they be less susceptible to the influences of "forces of the lower order," and even then he explicitly suggested creating a sanctified space for meditation.¹⁸⁸

Reading the Ledi Sayādaw's statement with U Ba Khin's experiential/phenomenological, practical, and theoretical perspectives in mind—inherited from Sayā Thetgyi and innovated in a more pluralistic context—one might hesitate to interpret it as an explicit gesture in the direction of mass meditation. Rather, if we take traditional Theravāda theoretical frameworks on the *pāramīs* seriously, we might read Ledi as primarily concerned with opening the way for the social acceptance of unique individuals such as Sayā Thetgyi and U Ba Khin, as opposed to the development of a movement of mass meditation *per se*.

It is precisely this theoretical framework of the *pāramī* model of gradual realization that governed U Ba Khin's sense of his own identity, and his broader worldview. And this model cannot be separated from a range of socioreligious notions of power that likewise underwrite a range of norms—in both the public and private spheres—within various Buddhist communities.

¹⁸⁸ See U Ba Khin's advice to Jan Van Amersfoort—verified as a stream-enterer under U Ba Khin in 1952—in a letter dated June 25, 1953: "The *Dukkha*, Suffering, is the result of the natural tendencies and it will necessarily be intense if you try to go into it at a place charged with the mental forces of the lower Order—particularly places like hotels where the pressure of *Kilesa* [defilements] must, as a rule, be heavy. I do not think you will have such an experience if you go into the state at a sanctified place. I suggest therefore that you have a separate hut or else an area reserved in your home for this specific purpose." (Chit Tin 1985: vii)

It becomes clear that for U Ba Khin many such norms were an integral part of a truth that he was bringing his students to understand in the process of meditation. His necessary karmic superiority as a great teacher—based on his particular collection of *pāramī*—was something ontologically concrete. His students, if they were discerning, would come to that truth and enact respect in accordance with traditional Buddhist norms, even if they were not Buddhists. In this way, his students became Buddhists by conforming to an ultimate order that traditional Buddhist norms simply encode.

We can see this outlook in U Ba Khin's remarks to his Burmese students on the second full day of one of his retreats:

Starting from the group of five (*pañcavaggi*), were the people who came in front of the Buddha Buddhists? No, they were not. The Buddha preached the Dhamma to whomever he met. And they practiced it and liked it. Right? People who like and practice according to the Buddha's way can be called Buddhists. All the foreigners that have come to me have become Buddhists by the understanding of "*anicca*" (impermanence). "*Anicca*" is a great force (*ā"ta" khupai*), believing, relying on, and staying under the shade of "*anicca*." Right? If you are under the shade of the Dhamma, it means that you are under the guidance of the Buddha as well. In this way, you have faith in the Dhamma.

Well, here you are all from Buddhist countries. Right? From non-Buddhist countries? No. In the case of this [American] woman [who is here at the center], now you see, she had not seen U Ba Khin [before], had not heard about Burma, did not know what kind of people she might meet. She came from America, eight thousand miles away. She came one day earlier than you. But that day also she could not meditate, because she went around Yangon. She started meditation in the morning, and you started in the evening. She said that during my speaking she was able to be aware of her breaths the whole time. Tell me, how many people can have awareness like her?

This morning, I preached the Dhamma in English. She came and listened. What did she do first? She paid homage to the Buddha. After the Dhamma talk, she paid respect to me. Amazing. What kind of reasoning caused her to pay respect to me? What had she seen in me? The audience from the other side did not pay respect to me. Why? Because they did not see anything in me. So, they did not pay respect. But she saw it. After only a short time, she cannot stay without paying homage after experiencing the peacefulness by practicing meditation here.

Now, the Burmese government sends people around the world for Buddhist missionary activities (*sāsanāpru*). Americans especially request [us] not to send monks. The reason is that though all people are the same, monks have a higher position. They don't want to pay homage to monks. Is it so? So, they request that [we] send only lay people. They want to talk and

discuss with [those] at the same level. People from such a country do not pay homage easily. Is it easy to pay homage man to man? My son ordained, and I paid respect to him even though he is my son. It is not easy to pay respect man to man. In any case, you should know about it. [...]

Generally, when good forces (*dhāt'*) and good deities (*nat'*) enter into one's mind, the mind becomes good and one obtains right view. One knows a teacher as a teacher. One knows the value of a teacher. Therefore, when people first arrive here, they do not pay homage. Nobody. Well, I do not say to them that they should become Buddhists. But I teach them the Dhamma and they come to know the value of the Dhamma. The more they know, the more they pay homage. Later, they become really obedient.¹⁸⁹

This is a strong statement from U Ba Khin himself about his stature as a teacher, and it speaks to his own sense of his personal spiritual power. It also presents a vision of social life that acknowledges cultural difference while at the same time hewing to a traditional Buddhist ontology of spiritual hierarchy and power that in U Ba Khin's perspective transcends culture. Candidates become Buddhist through their practice of *vipassanā*, and when they practice properly, they come to understand the inherent truth of normative Buddhist attitudes towards monastics and teachers; they obtain *right view* about beings who are ontologically superior to them in a spiritual hierarchy. That this realization comes about as a result of good or wholesome *dhāt'/dhātus*—which are also associated with good or wholesome deities or *nat'/devas*—entering into the mind of a practitioner makes clear the ontological line that U Ba Khin is drawing. It also makes clear that he did not separate social power relationships from a broader set of relationships involving concrete agentive supernormal forces.

The inseparability of these spheres of existence within traditional Buddhist social contexts points to an inherent friction in the project of secularizing Buddhist meditation. Later on, once the rhetoric of non-interference gets transferred out of a Burmese Buddhist context, this problem becomes even more acute, while at the same time less obvious—a historical development I will discuss below.

U Ba Khin himself suggested that his unique ability to create, through his presence, the conditions for meditative breakthrough for his students was the result of his *pāramī*, his collection of good deeds from his many past lives. This idea logically gave rise to another idea, the idea that those who came to

¹⁸⁹ U Ba Khin n.d. [1962?] 1.2: 21:41–27:35 (translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart).

learn from U Ba Khin were likewise highly developed beings, and that they ended up at his center by dint of their own great *pāramī*.¹⁹⁰

Two accounts of meditative experience under U Ba Khin point to developments in a mythology that emerged in the cult of his followers. This mythology—which gets partly or completely esotericized in various historical contexts—becomes central in how U Ba Khin’s followers, particularly S. N. Goenka, envisioned their missions to spread his teachings. The first account is that of Jan Van Amersfoort (Mr. A.), who writes of his attainment of the first stage of awakening under U Ba Khin:

I concentrated on the burning in my body—concentrated with other words in *Dukkha* (Suffering)—felt the burning inside till I felt myself almost burning like steam on the surface of water. Then I had to concentrate the total heat, total suffering, on the central part of my body until the suffering grew even unbearable. At the last moment when I felt myself about dying, it was as if my heart was pulled out of my body and at the same moment—wanting eagerly to be freed from *Dukkha*—with a sudden but a small flash of light, I was out of it and felt a refreshing coolness and delight, which words cannot describe. It is an escape and a refuge from all daily troubles, too great to be understood, when not experienced. And the great bliss is that everyone can achieve this state; provided he has a pure mind at least for the time of concentration, has the right intentions, attentiveness and concentration, and anyhow tries to live as pure as possible.

Another necessity is, that he has no fear whatsoever and a complete faith in his Guru.¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ In a discourse on the third day of one of his ten-day *vipassanā* courses, U Ba Khin makes reference to this idea: “For a person who has chances to meet with many Buddhas in *samsāra*, his number of world cycles to fulfill the perfections decreases. Therefore, people will not be in this meditation center if they don’t have perfection[s] (*pāramī*). We welcome them. People with perfection will come. I don’t want you to come here by reading [an advertisement in] a newspaper. Because of their perfections, foreigners come to Myanmar—a country replete with perfections. When their perfections become mature, *samādhi* and *paññā* appear. So, *pāramī* is vital. People will not come [to this meditation center] without *pāramī*.” (U Ba Khin n.d. [1962?] 2.1: 2:15–3:09 [translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart])

¹⁹¹ International Meditation Centre (ed.) n.d. (~1954?): 2–3. U Ba Khin’s comment on this episode of attainment reveals his reasoning about Amersfoort’s rapid and intense progress: “In 1952, Mr. Amersfoort came to me for a two-day meditation retreat, on December 22nd and 23rd. He came only for two days. He practiced one hour on Friday and [for the day] on Saturday. On Sunday, he practiced from morning eight o’clock to evening four o’clock. He wrote a letter to me in the last few days. Up until now, he can accomplish the *magga* and *phala javana*. He is training for *dibbacakkhu abhiññā*, [the supernatural power of the divine eye]. How? I have been explaining about *pāramī*.”

This is a remarkable description of Buddhist awakening, and one that can help scholars and practitioners alike to understand exactly what might be entailed in some less traditional modes of insight meditation. Amersfoort's account suggests that U Ba Khin had a very direct and forceful approach to insight practice, and his primary goal was to get his students as quickly as possible to experiences that he conceptualized as their first dip in the stream of awakening. And he often accomplished this by forcing them through very intense experiences. He claimed that he was successful in doing this for quite a few of his students, and he conceptualized his success as a teacher as directly related to the power of his stock of perfections.

But not all of his students achieved such breakthroughs. In this respect, I would like to focus on the account of another of U Ba Khin's students, a Burmese employee of his by the name of U Tint Yee. U Tint Yee's account of an attempt at a breakthrough reveals a different soteriology at play than what we see in accounts of actual awakening recorded by U Ba Khin:

In early 1955, some of Sayagyi's closest disciples had seen many newcomers reaching very high stages of development and began to wonder why, in spite of all their efforts and devotion, they could not reach such high stages of development in their meditation. When Sayama came to know of this she related the matter to Sayagyi. He then called these close disciples—U Chit Tin, U Ba Pho, U Boon Shain, U Soe Maung, U Tin Maung and myself—and told us, that he would be holding a special course in March (1955) exclusively for us. There would be no other meditators and he and Sayama would do their utmost to help us. [...] I was unable to take part in that course but all others took the course. [...] However, they could not reach that state of complete serenity and calmness for long spells in spite of the individual attention paid to them by Sayagyi and Sayama.

Sayagyi then explained to them very patiently and lucidly about the different types of parami (perfections) and the different types of aspirations each one may have made in previous life-cycles. Only then they were convinced and satisfied with their progress.

I took the course in April 1955. [...]

On the ninth day [...] at 8pm as I was meditating in the south-east room Sayagyi and Sayama entered the central shrine room. Sayagyi sat down near the door in front of me with Sayama behind him and the lights were

For people who have *pāramī*, [there are such accomplishments]. He practiced in the Himalayas. His practice in the Himalayas was similar to our *weizzā* path (*vijjālam* ' '). It is 'white magic.' His concentration is very strong until now." (U Ba Khin n.d. [1962?] 6.2: 25:24–26:30 [translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart])

switched off. He told me to concentrate at the centre of the chest and to dwell on any sensation arising as Anicca. I concentrated as instructed and Sayagyi told me to concentrate more strongly. As I followed his instructions, pulsations started arising at that spot. Meanwhile Sayagyi was instructing me to concentrate more and more strongly. As I continued as instructed keeping in mind, that everything happening was Anicca, the pulsations changed to strong poundings in the chest and eventually changed in direction, rising from the chest and ending in the throat. It was a very frightening experience as I felt my body being whirled around by some force. But I did not let go of Anicca nor my concentration at the centre and a series of thoughts flashed across my mind: the power of rupa (matter) disintegrating, of death arising, the image of a Buddha appearing, and then all thoughts of resistance and attachment to what was happening disappeared and I found myself calm and quiet again. The light was switched on again and Sayagyi asked me how I was feeling.

The first volition that arose in me was a very deep respect for Sayagyi and very slowly and with deep humility and respect I bowed down to Sayagyi three times. Then I told him that I did not break through. Sayagyi merely smiled and said, "You are not of that type." He then told me to concentrate at the centre again. As I concentrated again there was no sensation anywhere except at the centre where I could only feel a kind of coolness deep inside which is very difficult to describe. When I told about this he said, "Sadhu, Sadhu, Sadhu" and told me to take rest for the night.

The next day the sittings were not like before. The trouble with my back had disappeared and it has never appeared again. There was only awareness of calmness and coolness at the centre throughout the sittings. At lunch time I told Sayama of my feelings and she said she would tell me privately after lunch. After the meal I went to Sayama and she explained to me what it meant and to keep this knowledge to myself. And I am still following Sayama's instructions.¹⁹²

U Tint Yee went on to aid Sayāgyi U Ba Khin and Sayama in teaching at the International Meditation Centre, and he continued to teach there after Sayāgyi died. This account tacitly reveals a central aspect of the mythology and the cult of practice that formed around Sayāgyi U Ba Khin, and to which his inner circle was privy. The role of Sayama here is key, since she was known by U Ba Khin's followers to have psychic powers, and to be able to see their past lives and vows.¹⁹³ U Tint Yee makes explicit here that there was a certain degree of esotericism in the small community of students around U Ba Khin. Accordingly, his account does not spell it out, but there

¹⁹² Chit Tin 1982 (I): 11.

¹⁹³ WAI231.

can be little doubt that what is being inferred here is that he is a special individual, one who will not attain awakening in his present life because he has taken a vow to do so in a future life. His being asked to teach alongside U Ba Khin and Sayama is further testament to this idea.

This brings us somewhat obliquely to a central feature of how U Ba Khin's inner circle conceptualized his identity. While U Ba Khin was known as a powerful teacher, and he claimed to have brought numerous individuals to various stages of awakening, he himself never made any claims of attainment. An explanation for this comes into public view in a description of a portentous visionary experience of U Ba Khin's funeral rites—several days before the rites actually took place—by one of his disciples, Khit Sann Maung (my emphasis):

The scene changes: They, the disciples, were then in the Rangoon River; to the eyes of all they were in a fast moving boat heading for the place where the river meets the ocean but to the eyes of a few they were in a barge fully decorated with deitic designs, and it was formed by the bodies of the deitic Nāgā themselves, who had taken dhamma from the Great Guruji—they told us so! How could it be? This question also was not clear to me then. *They added, that the Great Guruji is a Bodhisatta.* [...] I recollect the lines of my friend's letter, "For him, only a more glorious life could await. Fortunate would be the generation with whom he again takes birth." *Certainly his glorious life would be then in Tusitā*, the plane to where Bodhisattas return. No wonder the deities were rejoicing. Would it not sound logical if I were to draw my conclusion from this dream?¹⁹⁴

Here Khit Sann Maung makes it explicit that some of U Ba Khin's disciples understood him to be a *bodhisatta* or bodhisattva, a being destined to become a fully awakened teaching Buddha (or one of his great disciples). This idea serves to explain why U Ba Khin never attained any stages of awakening, but was able to bring many others to those stages. And U Ba Khin was not conceptualized by his disciples as just any old bodhisattva. He was understood to be a rebirth (or emanation?) of the bodhisattva who is to be in the future the last Buddha of the present world cycle, Metteyya (Sanskrit: Maitreya).¹⁹⁵ While this idea does not quite jive with traditional Theravāda

¹⁹⁴ Khit Sann Maung 1972: 57.

¹⁹⁵ One of S.N. Goenka's close disciples once told me (Jan. 3, 2000) that he asked Goenka directly in the early 1980s whether he considered Sayāgyi U Ba Khin to be a rebirth of the future Buddha Metteyya. Goenka answered in the affirmative. On textual sources related to Metteyya within the Theravāda tradition, see Chit Tin 1992 [1988], Khin Lin Myint 2005, and Stuart 2017b. For a more recent public revelation of Goenka's belief in U Ba Khin's stature as a bodhisattva, see Hart et al. 2019: 2009–

doctrine—which asserts that the future Metteyya is currently abiding in the heavenly realm of Tusita and will remain there until his final birth as a Buddha—various Buddhist traditions have posited that bodhisattvas have the power to appear on earth as emanations even as they abide in other forms elsewhere.¹⁹⁶ This is the mythology that developed around U Ba Khin, and the activities of his close disciples were informed by it. It is unclear just how much U Ba Khin himself participated in this mythology. Based on some of his own statements, such as those presented above, it appears that he may have ascribed to it.¹⁹⁷ Whether he did so or not, a cult developed around him based on such ideas, and he was considered a truly exceptional being—more exceptional than the most exceptional.

21.20. In this instance, Goenka's student, Bill Hart, also articulates his conviction that Goenka himself was a bodhisattva. It is noteworthy that no mention is made in this instance of the specific identity of U Ba Khin with Metteyya.

¹⁹⁶ On narratives of King Bodawpaya's (1782–1819) claims to being the future Buddha Maitreya, their censure by the monastic authorities, and the late nineteenth-century colonial associations of such claims with heterodox communities of religious practitioners, see Charney 2006: 90, and Kaliyonides 2015: 181. On King Mindon's (1808–1878) conception of himself as a bodhisattva, see Than Tun (ed.) 1989: 9 and 342; 34 and 420; 50 and 464. On some of the socio-political issues entailed in such a conception, see Dhammasami 2004: 114–115, and Huxley 2007: 38–39. See also Harris (ed.) 2007 more generally on the intertwinement of Buddhist soteriology and politics. On the idea that much of the important material of the early Yogācāra tradition of Indian Buddhism involved transmissions from Maitreya in Tuṣṭita heaven, see, for example, Rongxi 1996: 153. On Tuṣṭita as a pure land in Tibetan Buddhist (Gelukpa) tradition, see Apple 2019.

¹⁹⁷ U Ba Khin himself strongly hints at the idea that he considered himself to be a (*mahā*)bodhisattva when—in a discourse on the fourth day of a ten-day meditation retreat—he tells the story of a monk, Mahāsīva, who was able to teach and bring others to arhatship even when he was not yet an attainer himself: “Ven. Mahāsīva was a *puthujana* [a person yet to attain one of the four fruits of the Buddhist path] but he instructed over 20,000 monks to become *arahants*. Here, take note that a *puthujana* person can also instruct you to become an *arahant*. People ask me whether I am a *sotāpanna* or a *sakadāgāmi* or an *anāgāmi*. U Nu asks very often. They should not ask about it. I don't answer back.” (U Ba Khin n.d. [1962?] 3.1: 30:25–31:10 [translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart])

He makes a similar statement a few days later during the retreat while remaining somewhat cagey: “Don't donate to me thinking that I am an *ariya*. I am nothing. U Nu used to ask me a lot whether I am a *sotāpanna* or *sakadāgāmi* or *anāgāmi*. If you go and ask Webu Sayādaw whether he is an *arahant* or not, will you get an answer? Somebody asked like this, but the Sayādaw just smiled and did not reply back. I am helping people to attain happiness as much as I can. Some people get it.” (U Ba Khin n.d. [1962?] 6.2: 20:40–21:30 [translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart])

One anecdote nicely encapsulates, and tacitly provides authority for, this esotericized mythology. In a note about U Ba Khin's temporary ordination under the renowned Webu Sayādaw, U Chit Tin told the following story:

As usual, Sayagyi recounted his experiences when he returned to IMC-Yangon. Sayamagyi may have been there, but no one else was present when he told Sayagyi U Chit Tin of an extraordinary incident at Webu Sayadaw's monastery. In the late afternoon on June 17, 1965, the day of their arrival, while U Hla Tun was shaving Sayagyi's head, the Sayadaw suddenly arrived, squatted in front of Sayagyi, and started picking up the hair that had been shaved off his head. He collected some and went away. Sayagyi was amazed at this, and he told U Hla Tun to save some of the hair in an empty plastic medicine bottle that Sayagyi took back to Yangon with him. He always kept this bottle behind the Buddha statue in the I.M.C. Pagoda. When Sayamagyi and Sayagyi U Chit Tin came out of Myanmar, they brought half of the hair with them so that the hair could be honoured and revered. The hair is now enshrined in the Dhamma Yaung Chi Cetis that have been built all around the world for the benefit of many.¹⁹⁸

Here we find evidence from one of his closest disciples for a cult of worship around U Ba Khin. That his hair might have been treated as a relic even before he died, and that it functions so today at some meditation centers of his students, reveals just how special they consider(ed) him to be. That a great *arhat* such as the Webu Sayādaw might also have treated U Ba Khin's hair in such a manner provides narrative cover for what otherwise might be criticized as a cultic practice, without doctrinal warrant, in some modern contexts.

This is who U Ba Khin was: a devout Burmese Buddhist, a layman, a government servant, a meditation master, an innovative and powerful teacher, a *weizzā-dho* or *vijjādhara*, a (counter-)missionary, and a bodhisattva. He was also a central figure in the process of the internationalization of Burmese insight meditation, as he had a unique interest in teaching foreigners and non-Buddhists. But we have noted that U Ba Khin had very few students, and that he himself did not participate in contexts involving mass meditation, even at a time when other monastic teachers were building Burmese institutions for such contexts. He taught on a small scale and closely tailored his teachings to the needs of his students. But he did have ambitions beyond this approach and eagerly encouraged his students to share his teachings, particularly beyond the borders of Burma.¹⁹⁹ Over his years of teaching he cultivated

¹⁹⁸ Bischoff (trans.) 2003 [1992]: 35.

¹⁹⁹ U Ba Khin sent students to John Hislop to learn beginning meditation in the 1960s (Chit Tin 1985), the African-American theologian Dr. Leon E. Wright was authorized

relationships and trained students who would eventually go on to teach. While this began somewhat informally, in 1969 he made a formal choice to deputize six foreign students to teach in various countries around the world. This was the beginning of perhaps one of the most significant developments in the history of insight meditation in the modern period.

by U Ba Khin to teach Buddhism to students in America by the late 1950s (Wright 1958 and Odgers 1964: 3), and the Buddhist Studies scholar Padmanabh S. Jaini was asked to carry U Ba Khin's teachings abroad in the early 1960s, though he did not take up the call (personal communication, Nov. 17, 2016).

III. S.N. Goenka: Faithful Student, Radical Teacher

There is a story about Sayāgyi U Ba Khin that I have heard told repeatedly among students of his now world-famous student and *vipassanā* guru S.N. Goenka. U Ba Khin was known to spend time chanting *parittas*, mantras, and *suttas*. He considered this to be one of his primary occupations as a meditation teacher (and bodhisattva). He is said to have kept detailed lists in his diary of the number of recitations he did every day along with other meritorious actions.²⁰⁰ But he also would recite his own verses sometimes. The story goes that U Ba Khin was known to recite one particular mantra that went something like: “May I not come into contact with the ignorant. May I encounter only wise, saintly people until I attain *nibbāna*.” This verse emerged from a vow he had taken that “may only ripened people with very good *pāramīs* (virtues) from the past come to me to take Dhamma, and may these people later take the torch of Dhamma, and spread it ’round the world.” Being a devout student of U Ba Khin and wanting to emulate him, S.N. Goenka learned the mantra and would go around reciting it. One day U Ba Khin heard him reciting it and rebuked him: “These words are not for you!” he said. “You are to give seeds of Dhamma to a very large number of people.”²⁰¹

This story presents a retrospective explanation of one of the key distinctions between U Ba Khin and those of his students who went on to teach *vipassanā* meditation outside Burma. It also presents U Ba Khin as a visionary (counter-)missionary who envisioned his foreign and non-Buddhist-turned-Buddhist students spreading the teachings far and wide so as to subvert the dark forces of the Western global order.²⁰² U Ba Khin had long hoped to go abroad himself to teach. But when it became clear he would not

²⁰⁰ Houtman 1990b: 203 (Ko Lay 1980: 119–21).

²⁰¹ Confalonieri 1999: 18–20 (WAI232 [February 22, 2009]). I have heard this story told numerous times and in numerous different ways. In most such instances, the teller has been attempting to prove why S.N. Goenka is special and at the same time explain why he did not teach advanced stages of meditation. For an understanding of U Ba Khin’s millennialist notion of the “seed” of Dhamma, see Appendix 4.3.

²⁰² Burmese biographical sources also present U Ba Khin in this light. See Htay Hlaing 1987 [1977] and Ko Lay 1980.

be able to leave Burma, he instead deputized a number of non-Burmese students to teach on his behalf. He likewise developed a method whereby he could channel his power through his disciples while they were teaching abroad so that they could have the support of the supernormal forces that aided him in his work in Burma.²⁰³ This formal arrangement came about in April of 1969, when U Ba Khin sent out letters to six of his foreign students authorizing them to teach on his behalf. They were: Robert Hover, U.S.A.; Dr. Leon Wright, U.S.A.²⁰⁴; Mrs. Ruth Denison, U.S.A. (to teach women only); Mrs. Forella Landie, Canada (to teach women only); Mr. John Earl Coleman, U.K.; Mr. Jan Van Amersfoort, The Netherlands.²⁰⁵ Notably absent from this list is S.N. Goenka, who began his career as a *vipassanā* teacher in January of 1967, when U Ba Khin tasked him with teaching *vipassanā* to a number of members of his community of Burmese-born Hindu Indians in Mandalay.²⁰⁶ In this instance, Goenka taught under the direct personal guidance of his teacher, and it was his first chance to formally translate U Ba Khin's traditional Burmese *vipassanā* meditation into a "non-sectarian" (*sampradāyiktā-vihīn*) Hindi idiom under the highly critical eye of his own Hindu community.²⁰⁷ It also set the stage for Goenka's 1969 mission to India—coinciding with the authorization to teach of his fellow non-

²⁰³ See, for example, Coleman 2001 [1977]: 178–180 and *Vipassanā Newsletter* 1.3 [Fall, 1974]: 1.

²⁰⁴ We have already noted that Wright had been teaching Buddhism with U Ba Khin's encouragement as early as 1958 (Odgers 1964: 3). Though he did not participate in the mainstream developments of the American insight tradition, he came to be known in his community as a charismatic healer and influenced a whole generation of African-American Christian theologians through his teaching of meditation at Howard University (see Andrews 1974; Howard University 1972: 156; Morrison-Reed 2011: 251; and Veazey 2019).

²⁰⁵ Ba Khin [23 April] 1969. Ruth Denison's biographer, Sandy Boucher, suggests that Denison was authorized to teach by a letter sent in 1971. She also suggests that many of Denison's memories were not accurate with respect to specific dates. (Boucher 2005: 132–133; 125)

²⁰⁶ Ko Lay 1980: 595.

²⁰⁷ Ko Lay 1995: 1:12:25–1:20:55. U Ko Lay describes this course and another course in Maymyo (Pyin Oo Lwin) in April of 1967 as "field training" for S. N. Goenka's later 1969 mission to India. He explains how at the Mandalay course Goenka was able to assuage the many critical voices from the local Hindu community of Mandalay by giving a talk on the non-sectarian nature of *vipassanā* meditation, and how both courses allowed both U Ba Khin and Goenka to see what it was like to teach meditation in contexts away from the supportive environment of the International Meditation Centre.

Burmese-born co-disciples—which marked the beginning of a nearly fifty-year-long project to spread *vipassanā* in India and around the globe.

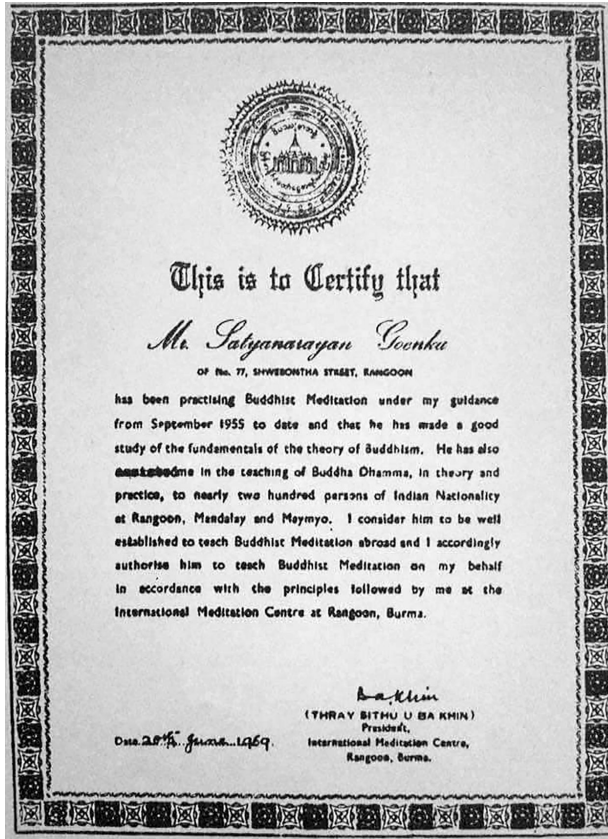


Figure 3: Letter of Goenka's authorization to teach, dated June 20, 1969, and signed by U Ba Khin

This is a key moment in the history of insight meditation, and it marks a turning point in the constitution of the tradition going back to the Ledi Sayādaw. It is in U Ba Khin's students and their global mission that we see for the first time fully incorporated all of the elements that come to constitute what we today call—in a globalized context—insight (at times mindfulness) meditation or *vipassanā* meditation. S.N. Goenka in particular—and the post-colonial Indian context in which he was ensconced for the first ten years of his mission—becomes a key node for understanding the historical developments that took place after 1969. He not only helped to train his co-disciples in the early years of their mission—since he had trained for fourteen years under U Ba Khin's tutelage while the others had limited exposure to

the master—but also had the allure of being an Asian teacher in contexts in which many non-Asians were seeking an exotic guru with that “Guru English,” as the scholar of South Asian literature Srinivas Aravamudan calls it.²⁰⁸ Most importantly, Goenka was a savvy businessman with a mind for organizing, and in forty-five years of teaching he was able to build a massive global network of meditation centers that has become perhaps the largest delivery system for introductory traditional insight meditation in the world.

1. Mission and Transmission in New Places and Spaces

To understand this new moment, and the emergence of (a) new kind(s) of insight(s) (or new layers of insight) as a consequence of these historical developments, we need to explore the kinds of meditative experiences people encountered and the troubled network of relationships that emerged between U Ba Khin’s co-disciples in these new contexts. At the center of these relationships is S.N. Goenka, working in India to bring his teacher’s teachings to an Indian public antagonistic towards Buddhism. While U Ba Khin authorized seven students to teach globally at this time, only four of them took up his charge. They were: S.N. Goenka, Robert Hover, John Coleman, and Ruth Denison. These four formed a global team that took its cues from U Ba Khin until his death in 1971. After that, they looked to Mother Sayama—along with her husband U Chit Tin—as U Ba Khin’s successor.

The story of these global (counter-)missionaries of insight meditation is, in many ways, the story of insight meditation more broadly in the twentieth century. It is a story of intense religious experiences, painful personal and cultural conflicts, and the gradual effacement of traditional Burmese Buddhist thought forms in new missionary contexts. It is also a story about Buddhist meditation in modern India. The inability of modern scholars to properly account for that context, and the role of S.N. Goenka’s community in the development and dissemination of modern regimes of insight meditation,

²⁰⁸ On this peculiar register of English, Aravamudan writes: “Anglophone scholars and proselytizers of South Asian religions (especially Hinduism and Buddhism in their revivalist and cosmopolitan versions) use this register in search of audiences who can ‘only connect’ via English. Aspects of free play and innovation within the syntax, vocabulary, and rhetoric of this specific register can be discerned [...] As register, Guru English is a *theolinguistics*, generating new religious meanings. Analyzing religion through language, and language by religion, Guru English is a practice nourished by eighteenth-century orientalisks and twenty-first-century gurus alike.” (Aravamudan 2007: 6)

has distorted historical understanding of the complex interests that inflect the landscape of today's meditation communities.²⁰⁹ There are various reasons for this lacuna, one being that most scholars simply have not had the scholarly resources to integrate the Indian context and S.N. Goenka's somewhat insular community. But there are more insidious reasons for this as well. At the outset of this volume, I laid out some of the ways in which the scholarly practices of scholars of Buddhist modernism have been complicit in erasing the emic perspectives and complex stories of figures such as S.N. Goenka.²¹⁰

One major reason the Buddhist-modernism analysis fails dismally in this and many other instances is that meditation teachers like S.N. Goenka—who teach in pluralistic contexts—engage a variety of rhetorical tactics in a variety of particular situations. And what is actually taught in practice often turns out to be incommensurate with the rhetorical carrot. It is this tension between rhetoric and practice that makes it so important for us to look closely at such traditions, and to take seriously the various emic frameworks and particular contexts within which they function.²¹¹

Despite being largely ignored by modern scholarship, S.N. Goenka and his community of students have become the largest delivery system for modern insight meditation in the world. The network of meditation centers and assistant teachers that Goenka established spans the globe today, comprising 180 permanent centers, where ten-day silent retreats are being

²⁰⁹ Sharf (1995 and 2015), McMahan (2008 and 2017), Davis (2004), Braun (2013), Wilson (2014 and 2017), Schedneck (2015), and Gleig (2019), among others, all neglect to properly account for the historical contexts and the peculiarities of the practices of both U Ba Khin and Goenka in their analyses of the history of insight meditation. As noted in the introduction, one important scholarly source for this dynamic is the work of Stanley Tambiah (1976 and 1984) on Thai Buddhism. Some of the conceptual and political distinctions emergent from Tambiah's rich ethnographic engagement with late twentieth-century Thai Buddhist practice traditions have been unhelpfully generalized—by both anthropologists and historians—and then projected back onto earlier and little-studied moments in the history of Burmese meditation traditions or deployed synchronically in constructing totalizing notions of “modern Buddhism” more generally. See Jordt 2007a, 2007b, and 2012 for an example of the latter tendency, and Cook 2010 for an example of the former.

²¹⁰ As noted in the introduction, despite being cogently critiqued by those more cognizant of the historical and ethnographic contexts in which Burmese insight meditation developed (see Houtman 2014: 111–112), Sharf continues to advance such arguments with little added nuance (see, for example, Sharf 2015). Perhaps more troubling is how a younger generation of scholars has continued to enable such approaches (see, for example, Braun and McMahan [eds.] 2017).

²¹¹ On this issue, see Scott 1992 and 1994; Dube 2021.

taught twice a month year-round, as well as 135 non-center sites, where retreats are taught at makeshift camps, or community activities involving meditation are organized.

All of these developments were accomplished through certain rhetorical tactics. But the rhetoric of meditative experience in Goenka's India was different than the rhetoric of experience in U Ba Khin's Burma. And when U Ba Khin's non-Asian students were teaching in Europe, North America, and Australia in the 1970s, their rhetorical engagements were of another order. For this reason, we must explore the somewhat troubled history of the relationships between Sayāgyi U Ba Khin's students as they developed a global mission to spread insight meditation or *vipassanā* beginning in 1969. These developments are representative of—and bring into stark relief—the fragmented contours of global Buddhist meditation traditions in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The four individuals who made up the above loosely affiliated team charged with spreading U Ba Khin's teachings outside of Burma went about doing so in different ways. While Goenka was based in India and took a vow to teach in India for the first ten years of his mission, Hover, Coleman, and Denison taught between Europe, the United States, and Australia. In the beginning, Hover and Goenka were the most active of the four, but by 1974 all of them were teaching courses at different locations around the world.²¹²

²¹² On Coleman's initial resistance to taking up the duty of teaching, see Coleman 2000 [1971]: 189–193. On Denison's somewhat accidental beginning of formal teaching, see Boucher 2005: 141–146. She taught her first course independently in December of 1975 (*Vipassana Newsletter* 2.1 [Winter 1974]: 3).

TEACHERS

John Coleman
Cherry Cottage, Altwood Rd.
Maidenhead, Berks SL6 4PB
England

R. H. Hover
14713 S. La Mesa Dr.
La Mirada, Ca. 90638

S. N. Goenka
Green House, 2nd Floor
Green Street, Fort
Bombay 400 023, India

Ruth Denison
2796 Creston Dr.
Hollywood, Ca. 90028

Sayaji U Ba Khin Memorial Trust
Sylvester Building, 2nd Floor
20 Sahid Bhagat Singh Road
Bombay 4, India

For information concerning courses by
U S.N. Goenka

Figure 4: *Vipassanā Newsletter* 2.1 (Winter 1975; published in Berkeley, California), providing contact information for the members of U Ba Khin's missionary team

Key in coming to terms with what was entailed in this teaching arrangement is to understand that U Ba Khin conceptualized his students as true deputies, as proxies able to serve as channels of his physico-mental power and allow him to extend it beyond the borders of Burma. A primary element of this teaching model involved his ability to radiate his thought waves to his students at great distances, a practice that he claimed to have verified by experiment.²¹³ This allowed U Ba Khin—with the support of Sayama—to do the same two things for his students' students at a distance that he had done for his own students in close proximity at the International Meditation Centre in Rangoon. He could transmit the force of wisdom (*vijjādhāt'—nibbānadhāt'*) that would help them purify their minds, and he could provide a protective “cover” from evil forces that are always on the lookout to intervene in the process of human liberation. This idea finds expression in a letter from U Ba Khin to Goenka dated October 11, 1969:

You are under our cover always. As you represent me for this great work in India, it is my duty to see at all costs that you succeed in your endeavours to give True Buddha Dhamma to those who are in need of it. Your success means my success and I shall see to it that you get reinforcement of Nibbana Dhatu from us and all the great powers who guide us in this most noble work.²¹⁴

²¹³ See Coleman 2000 [1971]: 178–180 (Stuart 2017a: 163 fn. 11) and Houtman 1997: 318–19

²¹⁴ This letter has been made available online by the International Vipassana Association at www.dhamma.org/en/os/subkletters.htm (last accessed Sept. 15, 2018).

How this relationship played out experientially—at least for S.N. Goenka in India—can be seen in the following anecdote told by Goenka in 1997. He describes being pressured by U Ba Khin to give Dhamma discourses in English—which he had never planned to do—at a meditation course in Dalhousie in early October of 1970:

I am merely a medium. Dhamma is doing its own work. [...] So it happened. Innumerable people from different countries, religions, beliefs started participating in courses. So too did leaders of various religions. All of them accepted this technique as their own; none of them felt that it was alien.

These initial Vipassana courses were taught only in Hindi since the majority of courses were held in North India. After a few months, a few westerners also started participating in these courses. [...] I expressed my inability to conduct a course in English and advised them to keep joining courses conducted in Hindi in small numbers. [...]

[T]hey contacted Sayagyi U Ba Khin and complained to him about me. [...] My revered teacher telephoned me [...] [and] told me with loving firmness: “You must go. Whatever English you know will be enough. You will be successful. Dhamma will help. All my *mettā* is with you.” [...]

The course started. For the first two days, while sitting on the Dhamma seat I experienced an inexplicable feeling of suffocation. As a result, I was unable to speak for more than fifteen minutes the first evening.

On the second evening, I had to struggle to speak for about twenty-five minutes. I felt suffocated again. Although, I found no cause for it in the surface layers of my mind, I felt that maybe the inferiority complex of having trouble speaking English was creating obstacles at the deepest level.

But the actual cause turned out to be something else. [...] On the third day, I felt strong, impure, anti-Dhamma vibrations flowing from [the adjacent] room and polluting the [...] meditation room.

With the pure vibrations of the Himalayas on the one hand and the powerful *mettā* of my revered teacher on the other hand, I could not understand what could cause these anti-Dhamma vibrations.

That afternoon, when I went to that room to check the student, I was startled to see a human skull on his table. Nearby was a blood-stained *kukri* (curved knife used by Gurkhas).

The student explained he was the disciple of some local tantric (member of a mystical cult). Only three nights ago he had gone to the cremation ground and had made an animal sacrifice with this *kukri* as part of a tantric ritual. His guru had told him that his meditation would be very successful if he kept the skull and *kukri* close to him.

Now I understood the cause of the suffocating, negative vibrations pervading the meditation room. Only after much persuasion by me did he throw that *kukri* and skull in some cavern faraway. And only then was the anti-Dhamma force eliminated from Shanti Kutir.

That afternoon, I meditated on the Dhamma seat for a long time. The time for the evening discourse approached. I saw that the entire atmosphere, washed by the purifying waves of the breeze from the Himalayas, had become even purer with the *mettā*-filled Dhamma vibrations from my revered teacher.²¹⁵

Finally, Goenka explains in evocative language how his ability to teach transformed once the harmful influence of the skull was removed. Here I present a translation of Goenka's original version of the story, written in Hindi, since the English version drawn from above has been dumbed down a bit in this context:

A few moments before the discourse was to begin, when my attention went to the heart-base (*hrdayavastu*, an energy center in the region of the solar plexus, considered to be the seat of the unconscious mind), I saw that the *bhavaṃga* (stream of basic consciousness) was very lively and palpable. The gate at the crown of my head (*brahmaraṇḍhrā*, another energy center considered to be a receptive opening for external cosmic forces) opened, and the Dharma vibrations of *maṃgal-maitrī* (auspicious loving-kindness) of my respected guru were flowing down into it. My entire body and mind were pervaded with a thrilling rapture. When I began to speak, I did so fluently and without stopping, just as well as when I was speaking Hindi. When the discourse was complete, I realized that I had spoken for an entire hour. [...] I was amazed at how the *maṃgal-maitrī* of my respected guru had given rise to such Dharma power [in me] that what felt like an impossible task naturally became possible. The first course in English was successful, very astonishingly so. This is what Dharma wanted, and this is what happened.²¹⁶

I find it remarkable that this anomalous story, presented in a newsletter article entitled “The Floodgates of Dhamma Open,” marks one of the primary historical moments in the development of U Ba Khin's “universalist” mission.²¹⁷ The tradition-cum-culture-specific language and the cult-specific phenomenology of experience stand out and must be taken seriously. We see

²¹⁵ Goenka 1997 (*Vipassana Newsletter* 7.3 [Dhammagiri, May 1997]: 1–2).

²¹⁶ *Vipaśyanā* 26.9 (February 1997): 2.

²¹⁷ Brooke Schedneck (2015: 30–37) notably reifies the universalizing rhetoric of these traditions in her analysis of subsequent Thai meditation traditions. A more recent piece of hers (Shedneck 2020), drawing on travel memoirs and putting forth the notion that *vipassanā* traditions have historically done the work of being “universal enough,” appears somewhat unhelpful from my perspective. The notion of a “universal enough” teaching or practice falls apart very quickly once an ethnographic lens is trained on the many fissures and conflicts that haunted Goenka in his mission, and the imbalances at work in transnational transmission.

very clearly here how Goenka understands his ability to teach as directly reliant on two things: the atmosphere of the place in which he is teaching—which can be influenced by various local and material factors—and his access to the transmission of his teacher’s “powerful *mettā*” or “*maṃgal maitrī*.” This is the model that U Ba Khin developed, whereby his students, even those who were not well practiced in meditation and had not really been trained to teach, might become teachers by serving as channels of his great powers of concentration and wisdom.

But it must also be emphasized that this is a retrospective account, and some of the language here betrays that retrospective perspective. First, Goenka is eager to tell a story in which he is the first of his cohort to teach *vipassanā* outside of Burma, and also the first of them to teach in English outside of Burma, even though initially he had assumed that he would be teaching to Indians in Hindi and his co-disciples from America and Europe would be responsible for spreading the teachings in European languages. He makes this claim, however, years after he cut ties with his other co-disciples under not particularly friendly circumstances. We will explore these schismatic developments below.

Second, the language of “vibrations” of “*mettā*” (Hindi: *maṃgal maitrī*) or “loving kindness” here is noteworthy, since it becomes a way for Goenka to speak obliquely—and in a language amenable to audiences not steeped in the cult context of U Ba Khin and his students—about some of the less doctrinally normative aspects of U Ba Khin’s teaching model.²¹⁸ In U Ba Khin’s

²¹⁸ One example of this use of the concept of *mettā*—“love” or “compassion” in English—to recode U Ba Khin and his onto-epistemic framework can be found in Goenka’s characterization of U Ba Khin in one of his evening discourses on day eight of his standard ten-day course:

“You have to take hard action, very strong hard action, but full of love, full of compassion. [...] Many incidents in the life of my teacher, Sayagyi U Ba Khin, illustrate this. At times he would take very hard action. Sometimes those who were not very close to him would doubt: ‘What sort of Vipassana teacher is he? Sometimes he shouts so strongly. How can this be?’ But those who were very close to him, it was very clear to us. When he shouted, there was not a trace of anger; and yet it appeared that he was very angry. Deep inside, there was only love, only compassion. [...] There were meditation cells. Somebody might come out of the meditation cell and start walking around. My teacher would ask: ‘Hey, what you are doing?’ And the student might say: ‘Oh sir, it happened this way, it happened that way, and I needed to come out of my cell. All right, I will go back.’ After some time, he comes out again. ‘Hey, what happened?’ And again some excuse. When we find that this fellow is not working according to discipline, then, sitting in the hall, Sayagyi would say: ‘Goenka, I have to use some harsh words with this person. Let me go down.’ The cells are just about five or six steps below. He goes down, knocks at the door, and shouts! And this

language, presented in the letter above, his blessings come in the form of “cover” (protection from harmful supernormal forces) and in the form of *nibbānadhātu* (the force or element of *nirvāṇa*), which is also something bestowed through “the great powers who guide us” (powerful deities and brahmas who were the direct disciples of the historical Buddha). U Ba Khin also used the language of *mettā* in similar ways, and this framing of such forces becomes the more common approach deployed by Goenka. In any case, the code is not particularly sophisticated. Even a casual perusal of Goenka’s public teachings reveals his traditional commitments. Yet these are easy to gloss over in the face of other, more dominant rhetorical moves.

More importantly, the phenomenology of experience inferred here in Goenka’s description—of the process of teaching the Dhamma as a procedure

is the shout of a great Vipassana master! It is like an earthquake. The whole Vipassana centre starts trembling. He shouts. Then he comes up those four or five steps, smiling and laughing: ‘Goenka, I have shouted at this fellow. I have shouted!’ What kind of a shout was this? Full of love, full of compassion.” (This passage is drawn from a transcript of an audio recording made in August of 1991 at *Dhamma Mahāvāna* in Central California)

A different notion of the utility of shouting in meditation teaching contexts comes out in one of U Ba Khin’s own descriptions of his teaching activities:

“How much do we have to eradicate *samudaya sacca*? There are three levels according to *bhūmi*. *Vitikkamakilesābhūmi* is gross. When *vitikkamakilesā* and *aniccavijjāṇāna* hit each other during *vipassanā* meditation, we call it the striking of *dhātu* [contact of *kusala* with *akusala*]. When water is poured onto fire, there is a loud noise. Right? Pho Htaung, will you scream again? We don’t know who is next [to scream because of the striking of *dhātu* within the body]. I request you not to hold back if you want to scream. *Dhātus* from within the body rise up and run away by screaming. Well, how do you run away when you are followed by enemies? Will you run away silently, smiling? No, you run away screaming. Everyone has some unwholesome and impure *dhātu*. When unwholesome and impure *dhātu* strike with *jhāna dhātu* and *nibbāna dhātu*, unwholesome and impure *dhātu* cannot stand to stay anymore inside the body, and they run away by screaming. When an unwholesome and impure *dhātu* is running away like that, you need to provide them wheels on a slope. I have heard only of a push from behind on a slope. But U Ko Lay said, ‘provide wheels on a slope.’ Later, I came to understand it. It means that when you put wheels on them, the [unwholesome and impure *dhātu*] will run faster than without wheels. At that time, you scream and let them go. Do you know Ma Khin Ei? She came here and meditated in a building over there. She sobbed while meditating by shouting that she wanted to return home. I went and checked. I said loudly: ‘Who wants to go back? Ok, go! Go! Go, back to your home!’ Then, she stopped crying and smiled. She asked: ‘What happened to me?’ Well, [the one] who wanted to go back home returned home because of my shouting, and Ma Khin Ei was left. I may shout like this. Don’t be afraid. I will not allow anyone here who does not want to meditate. Well, we have to experience such things when we practice meditation.” (U Ba Khin n.d. [1962?] 3.1:9:30–12:09 [translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart])

of channeling the “Dhamma vibrations” sent by his teacher from afar in Rangoon—is in consonance with the phenomenology of experience described by Hislop in his engagement with U Ba Khin as a student at the International Meditation Centre. It likewise conforms with other accounts of Goenka’s co-disciples. The way that this phenomenology extended to U Ba Khin’s teaching model once he commissioned his disciples to develop their global teaching mission is perhaps most explicitly laid out in the letter of authorization sent out to his European and American disciples. He writes:

My recent experiments giving courses of Buddhist Meditation to disciples outside of Burma by distant control were quite satisfactory and most encouraging. The chances of my going abroad to teach Buddhist Meditation are still very remote. So I have decided to conduct courses of Meditation by distant control for those who had taken lessons from me in Rangoon [...].

You are aware that the atmosphere throughout the world is at this time permeated with the forces of Evil which stem from Thanha, Mana, and Ditthi of the highest order. There must therefore be disturbances and resistances on the way; but my experiments show that the power of transmission from here is strong enough to reach my disciples in any part of the world if only they take the necessary precaution to keep the doors of reception open with awareness of Anicca.²¹⁹

It is this phenomenology of “distant control”—which translates into a phenomenology of experience of the kind described by Goenka above—that underwrites the model of *vipassanā* practice as taught by S.N. Goenka and the other disciples of U Ba Khin who went on to teach.

As we have seen, this phenomenology of experience extends beyond meditation teaching contexts to broader conceptions about space, place, and the struggle of cosmic forces. The bounded and sanctified space of the meditation center was an integral component of U Ba Khin’s teaching context. In their initial years of teaching, U Ba Khin’s students did not have such dedicated and sanctified spaces at their disposal. This meant that they were subject to the various challenges—such as the tantric skull experience described above—of bringing the “Dhamma” into contexts where “anti-Dhamma” forces were active.

In a newsletter describing the development of one of S.N. Goenka’s very first dedicated meditation centers—Dhammagiri in Igatpuri, Mahārāshtra—one of Goenka’s young Australian students, Graham Gambie, outlines the challenges of sanctifying a previously unsanctified piece of land:

²¹⁹ Ba Khin [April 23] 1969: 1–2.

June 5th saw a most moving and historic scene at the Academy. Goenkaji came with the architect and discussed plans for the 500-cell (double decker) “Zone of Silence” [...]. He selected the site for the Shrine room which will be the center of the Academy and sat for half an hour there in the open with Geo Poland, Graham and Arnie Possick. As the historic sitting came to an end Goenkaji smiled broadly and said softly, “Nice, Nice.”

It may be only a coincidence, but since that day the cat and dog who were already on the property have become good friends instead of deadly enemies and the cat will not chase rats even if they walk in front of him. Also “by coincidence,” the four thieves who have been regularly raiding the buildings, even stealing the tiles off the roof were arrested one hour after Goenkaji arrived in town. The local people pointed them out to the police as they felt it was unfair to disturb those only in peace.

Since the giving of “Cover,” a notorious murderer armed with an axe robbed a small temple only a few hundred yards away from the bungalows and threatened to kill the priest. Yet even though he came many times at night he did not cross the Academy border. Later he was also arrested—much Metta went in the direction of the Police Cells. Already group sittings have started. Three 10-day self-courses have been held and one 24 day self-course also. Goenkaji’s instructions to the meditators there was “Meditate! Meditate! Meditate! to clean yourselves and the surroundings.”²²⁰

We can see here how the establishment of a dedicated meditation center is understood as a process of sanctifying or placing under “cover” (notice that this term is capitalized in the newsletter article) the space in which people will meditate. The complete process by which such cover was established in the earliest days of U Ba Khin’s disciples’ mission remains unclear to me. But fairly early on, by the time Goenka’s first center in Igatpuri was being developed in the early 1970s, one aspect of the “giving of ‘Cover’” involved Goenka’s students walking the boundary of the meditation center while

²²⁰ *Vipassana Newsletter* 1.3 (Berkeley, Fall 1974): 1. Note similar interpretations of external events as “the eternal conflict of forces” in a letter from Leon E. Wright to U Ba Khin on July 19, 1958 (Chit Tin 1985: x): “Surely you will recall your constant warning to me of the eternal conflict of forces. Indeed, quite apart from the constant needling and throat-cutting calculated to thwart my meditation in Burma, clear to America, according to the letter of your prediction, even unto now I have struggled against – but have never failed to recognise – the opposition of conflicting forces whose purpose is to defeat positive spiritual endeavour. You have given me the clearest awareness of this I’ve ever had. Upon arriving in America in December, we ran into a hurricane – the kind of extreme physical disturbance you predicted I would meet. From that point on, it has been a matter of an almost constant succession of reverses, conflicts, disappointments; the evil forces have sought to break me.”

playing an audio recording of U Ba Khin's chanting of the *Vibhaṅgavāra* of the *Pañhāvāra* section of the *Kusalattika* section of the *Tikapatṭhāna* (Rhys Davids [ed.] 1988 [1921]: 153–180). This important Abhidhamma text—a part of the *Paṭṭhānapāli*—is used as a protective incantation in Myanmar.²²¹ This remains the practice today at meditation courses offered by S. N. Goenka's students at temporary sites. Additionally, it is today standard required practice at every course offered at S. N. Goenka's established meditation centers to play U Ba Khin's chanting of the *Tikapatṭhāna* in the meditation hall before the course begins. This appears to be one way that the power of U Ba Khin might be concretely resorted to for “cover”—protection from “anti-Dhamma” forces—initially in his physical absence at a distance, and then in his physical absence after his demise.

One point of contrast to note: Among the narratives we have about the establishment of U Ba Khin's International Meditation Centre in Rangoon, there is a story that suggests that the land for the center was sanctified land, already extremely pure, even before it was purchased and made into a meditation center. This idea is narratively affirmed by the claim that one of U Ba Khin's psychic students, the aforementioned master of *jhāna* Mr. Venkatarāman, was encouraged by the guardian deities of the *sāsana* to buy the land, as it was “victory land for the *Sāsana*” (*sāsanā' 'aon' 'mre*).²²² This stands in contrast to narratives about the establishment of Dhammagiri, which suggest that the land for the center needed to be purified of a range of conflicting forces; it needed to be *converted* into “victory land for the *Sāsana*.” Goenka's instructions in the newsletter article above to “meditate! to clean yourself and your surroundings” refers to how he conceptualized this project and process of sanctification.²²³ This distinction also points to a broader narrative about the (counter-)missionary process, which gets framed

²²¹ WAI234 and WAI239. The *Paṭṭhāna* is one of the texts listed by the Ledi Sayādaw in his *Rogantaradīpanī* for the use of protecting against demons responsible for bringing disease. See Ledi Sayadaw 1909: 48; Ledi Sayadaw 1955: 29. On the important role of the *Paṭṭhāna* within Burmese Buddhism, both historically and into the present, see Kyaw 2014.

²²² See note 163.

²²³ Mythologies about the sanctity of individual centers established by S. N. Goenka and his students have emerged over the years. One example of this is the mythology around a meditation center in rural Western Gujarat, *Dhamma Sindhu*. This center is understood, following statements made by S. N. Goenka, to be an extremely pure place to meditate, since it is in the vicinity of the port from which the *arhats* Mahinda and Saṅghamitta—missionaries to Lankā and progeny of the famous emperor Asoka—departed for their missions. It is also prophesied to be the last of Goenka's meditation centers still standing at the end of the *sāsana*.

as a massive cosmic battle of forces—reflected at times in the forces of nature and local happening—and a process thereby of world-sanctification.

The sense of the need for “cover,” the prospect of certain conflict with opposing forces—seen and unseen, internal and external—and the absence of ideal pure and bounded spaces for meditation in these new missionary contexts led to a number of different approaches to the interpretation of meditative possibility. The global team found that in their new teaching contexts, they were seldom able to replicate the “break throughs” that U Ba Khin had consistently been able to bring about in his students.²²⁴ We also cannot separate this development from narratives about the lower caliber of students—a different level of *pāramī* or stock of perfections—in this widened global context. We should also take into account that new ethical communities were emerging in these new contexts, and new conceptions of what was entailed in practice necessarily emerged from such developments.

In terms of teaching approach, we see a clear shift in practice emphasis. The global team focused on teaching introductory meditation courses and would then send serious students to Burma to meditate with U Ba Khin (before his death in 1971) and Mother Sayama. This would allow them to meditate in the proper environment of an established meditation center and in the proximity of the Burmese teachers’ powerful presence. More generally, there was a shift in the expectations that the team had regarding the possibility of meditative attainment under their watch. While the intensity of the meditative experiences in these new contexts appears to have remained the same by most accounts, the expectation of possible relief from that intensity—in the form of traditional Buddhist attainment—became less pronounced. We will see below how this shift in emphasis—and the complex of metaphysical, practical, and phenomenological ideas emerging from the cult around U Ba Khin—has powerful implications for the soteriological programs of these new missionary communities.

2. Lineage, Authority, and Fissure: Insight into Persons and Cultures in Schismatic Perspective

These missionary dynamics are central in a number of historical developments in the history of modern global insight meditation, and we must take them into account here—along with some additional personal, cultural, and social dynamics—as we try to begin to come to terms with the

²²⁴ WAI237.

second historical moment I mentioned at the beginning of this book: the moment when a group of young American and European meditators got serious about establishing insight meditation centers outside of Asia.

Erik Braun has presented this moment in an interesting way, capturing some of the key facets of the forces at play. He highlights—correctly, I think—the founding of the Insight Meditation Society (IMS) in Barre, Massachusetts in 1975/1976 as a central moment, when American students of Asian forms of insight meditation stepped out on their own. Emphasizing their newly “situated freedom,” Braun likens the position of these young Americans in a newly globalized late capitalist context to that of the Ledi Sayādaw in colonial Burma.²²⁵

We have already seen how Braun misconstrued the Ledi Sayādaw’s modes of agency. Unfortunately, the case is similar with his analysis of this second historical moment. In this case, Braun overlooked the broader historical context of the moment, and he also did not properly account for how the constraints on their “freedom” led to very particular choices on the part of the IMS founders. These choices have had important implications for the history of so-called secularized insight meditation in North America and around the globe.

In particular, by framing the founding of IMS as entailing a break between its founders and S.N. Goenka without providing even a cursory analysis of the history and context of Goenka’s teaching mission in India, Braun disregards a range of additional relationships involving U Ba Khin’s other students and his co-teacher(s) Mother Sayama (and U Chit Tin). We also cannot understand this key moment without taking into account another important relationship: that of S.N. Goenka and the Anagārika Munindra. A student of the Mahāsī Sayādaw (among others), Munindra was also a teacher, along with Goenka, of two of the founders of IMS, Joseph Goldstein and Sharon Salzberg.²²⁶

In what follows, I will lay out this range of relationships and detail their implications for the trajectory of key strands of insight meditation and Buddhism in contemporary America and Europe. I will argue that it is in this complex set of interactions between individual personalities and experiences, cultural identities, lineage identities, and missionary needs that we find the roots of the hybrid stalks and cross-bred fruits of the trees-shrubs-vines of globalized insight meditation and mindfulness in the world today.

²²⁵ Braun 2013: 162.

²²⁶ On Munindra and his important role as a pioneer of insight meditation in India and the West, see Pryor 2006, and Knaster and Pryor 2010.

a) *S.N. Goenka and Anagārika Munindra: A Long Friendship*

I have shown above how Sayāgyi U Ba Khin conceived of himself as a special individual, with unique powers to create the conditions for his students to attain meditative breakthrough. I have also shown how a mythology was constructed around him by some of his students, and how that mythology may have conditioned their conceptions of their own spiritual or soteriological trajectories. This is evidently the case for S.N. Goenka, who explicitly considered Sayāgyi U Ba Khin to be a rebirth of the future Buddha Metteyya (Sanskrit: Maitreya).²²⁷ In the case of Goenka, this mythology around his teacher got coupled with an additional mythology, a mythology of prophecy that became central to how both he and his close students thought of him and their mission to spread his teachings. This mythology of prophecy involves two ideas: 1. that the present time is a time of a revival of the historical Buddha's *sāsana* (teaching dispensation), a period of 500 years when Buddhist liberation is once again accessible (*vimuttikhet*)²²⁸; and 2. this revival entails the return of the true Dhamma to the land of its origin, India.

This mythology is integral to how S.N. Goenka, as well as his close students, conceptualized his mission. He spelled this out as follows on the last day of his standard ten-day *vipassanā* course:

²²⁷ As mentioned above in note 195, one of S.N. Goenka's closest disciples once explained to me that Goenka answered in the affirmative when questioned whether he believed U Ba Khin to be a rebirth of the person-continuum who will eventually become Metteyya.

²²⁸ See U Ba Khin n.d. [1962?] 2.1: 00:20–00:55 and 14:54–15:41 (translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart): "Because of the prophecy of the Buddha Gotama that the *sāsana* will last 5,000 years, at the current time people can still attain enlightenment. According to this, nobody can get enlightenment after 5,000 years. During those 5,000 years, people have more chance to attain enlightenment in the *Vimutti* Era (*vimuttikhet*). In this Era, [the light of] *dharmma* and *vinaya* shine[s]. The *Vimutti* Era is the first 500 years that come after [the first] 2,500 years of the *sāsana*. The current time is included in the *Vimutti* Era, and so people should practice meditation. [...] The time of Buddha's appearance is called the *Vimutti* Era. At that time, people can experience the taste of the Dhamma – *Dhammarasa*. After the *parinibbāna* of the Buddha, it fades slowly. After 500 years, it becomes the Era of *Samatha* for 500 years. After that, there is the Era of *Sīla*, the Era of *Dāna* and Era of *Suta*. Each Era has 500 years. *Suta* means having [scriptural] knowledge. After 2,500 years, the *Vimutti* Era comes again. Thus, it is the reason of all people to have great faith in the *Sāsana* after 2,500 years." See also Chit Tin (ed.) 1999: xxx–xxxii. On a related scheme of *sāsana* decline and its association with *weizzā* traditions, see Houtman 1990b: 87–88, Foxeus 2011: 196–236, and Patton 2018: 30–35. On some other earlier conceptions of the notion of various spiritually defined eras (*khet*) within theories of decline, see note 80, above.

When I was in Burma, many people there had a very strong belief; my teacher also had this belief. It seems that when this wonderful Dhamma was sent to Burma by Asoka, the two *arahants*, liberated souls, who were sent there—Sona and Uttara—when they were sent there, their teacher told them: “You are taking this jewel of Dhamma to a country which will maintain it in its pristine purity for the coming centuries. It will be forgotten everywhere else, but this technique will remain in that country.”

The name of the country in those days was Suvanna Bhūmi—the land of gold; the golden land. “The Golden Land can preserve this gem. Two thousand five hundred years after the passing away of Buddha, it will again come to India, get established there and then spread around the world.” My teacher used to say:

“Now, it is 2,500 years.” I don’t know, maybe by some accident, it was that year when I got the Dhamma. The 2,500th year was ending, and the first year of the next *sāsana*, the revival of Dhamma, was beginning. That was the time when I got Dhamma.

My teacher said: “The clock of *vipassanā* has struck now. It has to spread. It has to spread.”

To be honest, at that time it looked to me like a sectarian belief. Why 2,500? Why not 2,400? Why not 2,600? Why 2,500? What was the reason behind it?

It didn’t look very scientific, but this was the belief. But when I came to India, I was really wonderstruck when I saw what was happening. [...] Now, in the courses, people started coming. Unknown people. And from every sect, from every community—unbelievable. And not only ordinary people, householders, but heads of the community, heads of sects. Monks, Buddhist monks; Hindu *sanyāsīs*; Jain monks and nuns; hundreds of Christian monks, priests and nuns—hundreds, thousands in all. How is it they were coming? How were they coming? And a large number of people from different walks of life, how is it they were coming? What miracle?

[...] Slowly it became clearer and clearer. People come to the courses and when I come in contact with them; when I see many of them—meet them, discuss with them, talk with them—something inside starts feeling that this person is known to me, known to me from a long time ago: “This person is known to me; yes, known to me, for so many lives. This person must have been meditating in *vipassanā* with me. Now the time has come. This person already has the seed of *vipassanā*, the seed of Dhamma. Now the time has ripened for this person to grow in Dhamma. And not only help himself or herself, but to help others—there is a potentiality for them not only to help oneself, but to help others also.”

I also see that there are people who have come just to take the seed of Dhamma. They have done some very wholesome deed, some very good karma, and the ripening of that deed has helped them to get a seed of Dhamma.

Whether you belong to the category where you have just gotten the seed of Dhamma, or whether you belong to the category where you already had the seed of Dhamma and now you have come to develop in Dhamma, this wonderful jewel that you have gotten—make proper use of it. Don't just throw it away.²²⁹

Important here are two ideas: the first involves Goenka's sense of his own identity and the second involves how that figures into his mission—and a set of soteriological possibilities and identities available to Goenka's students in the context of that project. As the very special student of a very special teacher, Goenka becomes an agent of providence, a powerful teacher and bodhisattva in his own right, fulfilling an ancient prophecy by the dint of his stock of perfections (*pāramī*) from past lives. And his experiences on this mission—the historical unfolding of his teaching career—serve as clear and unquestionable proof of this stature.

His close students likewise got written into this narrative, as according to it they were/are also karmically destined—by dint of their *pāramī*—to serve others alongside this great Goenka bodhisattva over many lifetimes in *samsāra*. This was one soteriological possibility, one mode of identity, for those who came to learn *vipassanā* from Goenka and decided to participate in his community of followers.

It is in the context of this narrative of prophecy, *pāramī*, bodhisattvahood, and service—a narrative that powerfully informed Goenka's sense of identity as a teacher—that we must understand his somewhat ambivalent early relationship with his friend, the *vipassanā* teacher Anagārika Munindra from West Bengal. As noted above, Munindra was a student of the Mahāṣī Sayādaw. He came from India to Burma in 1957 to ordain as a monk, learn *vipassanā* under Mahāṣī, and study Pāli and be trained in traditional Burmese Theravāda scholasticism. He also explored a range of other meditation practice lineages while in Burma, spending a total of nine years there. He then returned to India in 1966 with the explicit aim of carrying out “*sāsana* work,” as they would put it in Burma; he hoped to spread the teachings of

²²⁹ Goenka 1991, Day 10: 59:00–1:02:43. See also a letter from U Ba Khin to Goenka, dated August 28, 1970, in which U Ba Khin underwrites the narrative of Goenka as the agent of the prophecy (Figure 5, below): “After the reign of King Asoka, Buddha dhamma was on the wane in Majjhima Desa. When we came to realise that YOU are the first to revive Vipassana meditation in India after a lapse of over 2000 years to give practical and concrete results, we cannot help feeling that we are doing a very great work to pay the debt of gratitude to the Buddha.” (www.dhamma.org/en/os/subkletters.htm [last accessed 9/15/2018])

Buddhism, in the form of *vipassanā* meditation, in India. And this is what he began to do when he settled in Bodhgaya upon his return to India.

During his time in Burma, Munindra had come to know Goenka—as Goenka often hosted Indian nationals visiting from abroad—and the two had become friends. But even then, it seems, a subtle tension existed between the two of them around issues of lineage, *vipassanā* practice paradigms, and modes of identity.

We have already seen that U Ba Khin was somewhat critical of other schools of *vipassanā* practice, particularly those that gave less emphasis to the development of concentration. The mode of practice that the Mahāṣī Sayādaw taught is emblematic of such approaches. We have also seen how U Ba Khin considered himself to be uniquely qualified to bring students to meditative attainment in a short period of time, and that he developed idiosyncratic teaching methods to do so. A Hindu *bhaktā* by upbringing, Goenka had a strong devotional attachment to his teacher and participated centrally in the cultic community of close disciples of U Ba Khin emerging during the 1950s and 1960s in Rangoon. The guru cult that emerged around U Ba Khin—and its attendant mythology of his unique *pāramī* and status as a bodhisattva—very much informed the sense of identity of his close students. It also often manifested in an air of superiority when it came to assessing various other teachings and lineages.²³⁰

But as a lineage of lay practitioners, U Ba Khin and his students had to walk a fine line when expressing such attitudes, particularly about monastic teachers. What is more, they needed the authoritative support of such monas-

²³⁰ Such attitudes come into the light in U Ba Khin's own teachings (U Ba Khin n.d. [1962?]), but they are also well-exemplified in his student U Chit Tin's explanation of why U Ba Khin wrote his short 1952 treatise, to which we have referred above: "[...] Sayagyi was the Chairman of the Subcommittee for Paṭipatti at the Buddha Sāsana Council [...] The reports received at the Council from [some meditation] centres said that there were a large number of Path and Fruition State winners [...] [The committee] was concerned that there might be something wrong at the centres, but they did not dare criticize them since it would be very harmful to say anything against the Dhamma. [...] Sayagyi had to look for a solution that would not disappoint anyone. He wrote *The Basic Study of the Buddha's Teachings and their Correct Application* [*Pariyatti 'akhekham nhañ' Paṭipatti 'aphre mhan'*]. A resolution was passed to distribute it to all the meditation centres in the country for their response. No replies came from any of the centres, not even those who had sent lists of Path and Fruition State winners. After that, no more lists were sent. (Bischoff [trans.] 2003: 33) Here U Chit Tin frames U Ba Khin's short treatise as an authoritative tool to silence misguided lineages and traditions who were overly eager to make claims of attainment.

tics to ensure the status of their own authority. (This is one reason why narratives about the connection between U Ba Khin and the Webu Sayādaw, as well as the Webu Sayādaw's explicit support of the International Meditation Centre, become important for U Ba Khin and his students.)²³¹ This issue, and S.N. Goenka's sense of attachment to his teacher, is nicely encapsulated in a story he tells about his connection to the Mahāsī Sayādaw in the 1950s when he lived in Rangoon (my emphasis):

In earlier days, I was very attracted to Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw himself. [...] I would often go [to his meditation centre, Thatana Yeiktha] to offer [Indians visiting from abroad] Indian vegetarian food. [...] But before offering food to the meditators, I would take advantage of the opportunity to offer a portion to Mahasi Sayadaw. In this way I came to know him, and he would often take the time to speak with me about Dhamma and my practice. He knew very well that I was a close disciple of Sayagyi U Ba Khin, and *at first I had a small fear that the venerable Sayadaw might suggest to me that I come to meditate with him.* Some of my friends had insisted that I should do this, but I felt so satisfied with the practice I had learned from Sayagyi that I knew there was no point in going to another teacher. But, if Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw himself were to suggest it, I would have been put in a very embarrassing position.

In our conversations we discussed how I was practising, and he always had very practical advice and encouragement for me. *He said that what I was doing was correct and urged me to continue until I reached the final goal.* He never once hinted that I should try *his technique*. This only increased my respect for the great *bhikkhu* [...].

Once, very hesitatingly, I requested him to please visit my house and take a meal there. [...] On this occasion he had a long discussion with me about what I was practising, and *he expressed not one word against the way Sayagyi had taught me. In fact, he expressed deep appreciation for this method of teaching. He never held a sectarian view of the practice of meditation, and my respect for him grew with continued contact.*²³²

This is a retrospective narrative of Goenka's contacts with the Mahāsī Sayādaw, written in 1991. And we must read it keeping in mind that intervening historical events to be discussed further below likely colored this account. Yet it clearly lays out a set of issues that U Ba Khin and his disciples were negotiating in Burma at that time—as lay practitioners in a small cultic community built around a mythology of a special lay teacher. In a context where monastic teachers such as the Mahāsī Sayādaw were the primary

²³¹ U Ba Khin n.d. [1962?] 2.2: 07:54–13:44 and Bischoff (trans.) 2003, particularly 1–38.

²³² Vipassana Research Institute (ed.) 1998 [1991]: 132.

sources of authority on *vipassanā* practice, the lay authority of U Ba Khin was something of an anomaly. Goenka here needs Mahāṣī's monastic imprimatur, yet he must also make it clear that his own teacher's teaching is somehow distinct, and that he won't look to any other teacher.²³³ When the cultic background of U Ba Khin and Goenka's relationship is taken into account, it is inescapable to discern—bubbling underneath this narrative—an unspoken sense of superiority on the part of Goenka that for political reasons cannot be explicitly expressed.

This delicate balancing act eventually gets enacted in a new social context, when S.N. Goenka and Munindra both find themselves in India at the end of the 1960s attempting to spread their respective *vipassanā* meditation teachings.

But a new issue arose in this context, an issue related to Goenka's narrative of prophecy, and his sense of identity as a special agent of that prophecy—being a student of the great bodhisattva, the future Metteyya. Munindra came to India from Burma in 1966 and began teaching *vipassanā*, though not at any scale. That his friend had preceded him by three years in a mission to spread and revive the *pure* and *pristine* Dhamma teachings of Burmese *vipassanā* in India no doubt threatened Goenka's sense of identity as a unique agent of dharmic providence. When Goenka arrived in India and began teaching, Munindra already had a handful of students—a few of whom were foreigners—and was able to teach in English. This friend of his, a Bengali Buddhist *anagārika* well-versed in traditional Buddhist learning and fluent in English, appeared a likely candidate to be identified as an agent/executor of the prophecy.²³⁴

²³³ Goenka, in his own teaching, insisted that serious students of his have no commitments to other teachers (*ananyabhāva*).

²³⁴ Another likely candidate to be inserted in such a narrative would be the Dalai Lama, who came to India as an exile in 1954.

Providence stepped in to solve this dilemma of identity and authority when Munindra requested to participate in one of Goenka's early meditation courses—the first course he taught in Bodhgaya—in April of 1970. By allowing Munindra to sit the course under him, when previously U Ba Khin had refused him as a student, Goenka was able to set himself up as an authority in his new missionary context and ensure that Munindra could be framed as a subordinate within his prophetic imaginary. And Munindra appears to have participated willingly in this process, perhaps himself taking part in the cultic mythology around the personality of U Ba Khin.

Upon the completion of his course under Goenka, Munindra wrote a letter to Sayāgyi U Ba Khin in Burma, describing his experience (my emphasis):

You will be glad to know that we had the opportunity to organize a ten-day Vipassana meditation course at the most sacred place of Buddhagaya and it was started on the 19th of April. It was conducted by my *Dhamma-mitta* and *Kalyana-mitta* Shri Satya Narayanji Goenka, who is one of your competent and devout disciples. [...] I myself took advantage of participating in this seminar and have been greatly benefited by this Vipassana course. *In such a short time, the technique helped to open up the new dimension of understanding that it was surprising.* The sincere and earnest meditators having accumulated previous *paramis* could quickly see, feel and understand the characteristics and functions of the *rupakalapas* in their body through the concentrated mind and penetrating insight. It is very strange to see the true nature of the body—the *anicca*-state—the state of continuous flux of four elements, which is perceptible to the inner eye of insight. I experienced sleepless nights with mind inward, observing *anicca*—the continuous change of my corporeal body. Body became so sensitive and alive that some times with the very contact of objects of sense doors I felt and observed the whole body like bubbles in the water appearing and disappearing when I was deeply aware and mindful.

Rewata Dhamma (WAI231), a scholar-monk and student of the Mahāsi Sayādaw, is another among many. See also U Ba Khin n.d. [1962?] (5.1 at 16:52), where U Ba Khin tells the story of one U Ba Than (Shin Kyan). U Ba Than was the student of another meditation tradition who would shake violently when meditating. U Ba Khin allowed him to meditate in the meditation room in the Accountant General's office, and eventually instructed him so that the shaking, which had apparently manifested "for years," might stop. U Ba Khin says that "I do not give *kammaṭṭhāna* to those who have practiced meditation in another center. But since I already allowed him to meditate here, I got a problem with that old man." (22:00) In this case, the problem had to be solved, and it was solved by U Ba Khin instructing U Ba Than. U Ba Khin goes on to say that "because of my *mettā*, because of my power, a beast was defeated and finally gave up." (23:30)

During this ten-day course, my *Dhamma-mitta* Shri Goenkaji used to give a talk on Dhamma every evening to all the *yogis*. All talks were on different aspects of Buddha Dhamma – related to the practice and true to the point and meaning in accordance with the teaching. The talks were so inspiring, encouraging and ennobling that since my return from Burma I had no opportunity to hear such good *Dhamma-desana* anywhere in India. I had no idea that my friend was so well conversant with and such a good exponent of Dhamma in its true spirit both in theory and practice. I feel so happy and fortunate myself that I took part in it.²³⁶

This remarkable communication—which was actually published and therefore made public in 1972 in a special memorial edition of *The Maha Bodhi* (vol. 80)—provided strong narrative support for Goenka’s story about himself as a uniquely powerful disciple of a uniquely powerful teacher on a mission to spread a uniquely powerful transmission of the Dharma/Dhamma. (We will also see how the narrative of this course with Munindra retrospectively becomes a way for Goenka to implicitly critique the Mahāśī lineage.²³⁷) And because Munindra had access to this transmission only indirectly through Goenka, and not as a direct disciple of Sayāgyi U Ba Khin, Goenka and his disciples were able to construct a narrative in which Munindra was a second-class teacher. Munindra sets himself up for this narrative in his letter to U Ba Khin, and very well may have bought into it himself (my emphasis):

During my stay in Burma, I had several occasions to visit your meditation centre and I liked the place very much—the environment was so calm and

²³⁶ Munindra 1972: 91 (*Vipassana Newsletter [VRI edition]* 149 [August 2004]: 3).

²³⁷ Goenka describes the event as follows, implying that this was Munindra’s first encounter with a key experience of insight, one that Goenka emphasizes as foundational on his courses (my emphasis): “Munindraji was extremely happy that he could join the course. *He experienced the arising and passing away of kalāpas [small indivisible units of matter] in the entire body, the state of bhaṅga.* After the course, Munindraji wrote a letter full of gratitude and Dhamma sentiments to Sayagyi. He gained so much benefit from the course that he started to send many foreign students who came to him to my courses. They were also benefited, which made Munindraji very happy.” (Goenka 2004a: 2) The Hindi version is similar, with a few notable particularities of language (my emphasis): “*bhāī Munīndra śivir meṃ sammilit hokar atyaṃt prasanna huā!* use sāre śarīr meṃ nanheṃ-nanheṃ paramāṇuom ke uday-vyay ke anityabodh kī mahattvapūrṇ anubhūti huī | sādhanā ke mārg meṃ ise bhaṃgajñān kā ṣṭeśan kahte haiṃ | śivir ke bād bhāī Munīndra ne ek atyaṃt bhāvabhīnā kṛtajñātābharā patra gurudev ko likhā | vah is śivir se itnā saṃtuṣṭ prasann huā kī uske pās āne vāle sabhī videśī sādhak-sādhikāom ko mere śivir meṃ bhejne lagā | unkā bhī kalyāṇ huā | Munīndra yah dekhkar atyaṃt prasann-vibhor huā kartā thā |” (Goenka 2004b: 2)

serene. I was very much inspired to stay there for some time and practise meditation under your kind guidance. You had been always very kind and sweet to me. Due to certain reasons during those days I could not get the opportunity to stay and practice there, and fulfil my intense desire. I understood your difficulty and appreciated deeply your friendliness and affectionate loving kindness towards me.

My keen desire to be in your centre under your noble guidance has been fulfilled now at the hand of your true disciple. The ten-day seminar was successfully completed on 19th April with great satisfaction. The result was beyond expectation. We learned many things. All meditators were extremely happy to have spent these ten days in retreat. Since my arrival in India I have dedicated my life for the cause of *sasana* and have been doing the *sasana*-work through practice and talks on Dhamma. *This ten-day meditation course has added more knowledge that I value and treasure very much for my Dhamma-work.* This has been also a refresher course for me. All credit goes to you for everything and I am deeply grateful to you and Shri Goenkaji for all this.²³⁸

For a number of years after this course in 1970, Munindra and Goenka both worked in India to spread *vipassanā* teachings. Students would often practice under both of them, and Munindra would sometimes work as an assistant to Goenka on his courses.²³⁹ At this time, Goenka was very active, traveling the breadth of India and engaging with a wide range of communities. Munindra, on the other hand, stayed primarily in Bodhgaya and taught few students.

A key distinction between these two teachers was their religious identities. Goenka used his identity as a caste Hindu to attract Indians from various backgrounds, emblematically maintaining this social position while at the same time teaching the Dhamma of the Buddha. Playing on the religious sentiments of his Hindu and Jain brethren, he strongly emphasized the “non-sectarian” (*sampradāy-vihīn*) nature of *vipassanā/vipaśyanā* and its “universal” or “public” (*sarvajanīn*) application. (It should also be noted that, despite this mode of framing his teachings, Goenka struggled in making meaningful connections with various Muslim communities in India.) Anagārika Munindra, on the other hand, was unabashedly Buddhist, and his white *anagārika* robes were testament to that religious identity. In a country where Buddhism was generally conceptualized in very negative terms, this identity constrained Munindra from having broad appeal among Indians beyond the Buddhist fold. In historical perspective, it seems likely that this

²³⁸ Munindra 1972: 92 (*Vipassana Newsletter [VRI edition]* 149 [August 2004]: 3).

²³⁹ WAI238.

is one of the primary reasons that Munindra never succeeded in gathering large numbers of students in India.

But Munindra was the teacher of quite a few non-Indian students, many of whom were enamored of the exotic allure of Buddhism and identified as Buddhist. Many such students also studied with Goenka. Indeed, Munindra encouraged his students to study with various teachers, and would often send his students to take courses with Goenka. These students were able to take what they liked from either teacher and conceptualize their practice according to the different models presented by them. Goenka—lacking any formal Buddhist education and encouraged by his teacher to limit his students’ access to theory²⁴⁰—presented his teacher’s practice-first model of *vipassanā*, largely eschewing recourse to scholastic categories and focusing on bringing his students to intense experiences of impermanence. Munindra, on the other hand, was a Pāli scholar trained in traditional Burmese scholasticism and Abhidhamma. He gave elaborate Dharma talks, and drew on the Mahāsi Sayādaw’s now classical analysis of the (*Mahā*)*Satipaṭṭhānasutta*, an important source text for many traditions of Burmese *vipassanā*.

It is in the fertile tensions of such differences, which emerged initially against the background of flowering New Age cultures in post-colonial India, that many of those who participated in developing the Insight Meditation Society were formed.

b) Cultural Identity and “Situated Agency”: U Ba Khin’s Global Team and Their Role in the Development of the Insight Meditation Society

Here we must not lose track, however, of the fact that Goenka was not acting entirely alone in these early years in India. He was part of a global team and an agent at a distance of U Ba Khin and Mother Sayama. As noted, Goenka’s Western counterparts, Robert Hover, John Coleman, and Ruth Denison (a bit later), were active in America, Europe, and Australia.

Hover in particular was instrumental in pioneering *vipassanā* courses in America and Australia in the early 1970s, and he sent many of his students to India and Burma to study with his Asian counterparts. Hover himself also made a number of trips to India and Burma during this time, and taught

²⁴⁰ In a letter dated May 20, 1970, U Ba Khin writes to Goenka that “the extracts from the Tipitaka relating to practical work of meditation which I gave before your departure to India should suffice for giving explanations to scholars in Buddhist literature. It is desirable to avoid telling anything which they cannot understand now by experience. [...]” (www.dhamma.org/en/os/subkletters.htm [accessed Sept. 15, 2018])

courses alongside Goenka in India.²⁴¹ Hover was likewise responsible for starting the American *Vipassana Newsletter*, following the example of Goenka's Hindi language *Vipaśyanā (Sādhakoṃ kā Māsik Prerṇāpatra)* [*Vipaśyanā (A Monthly Inspirational Newsletter for Meditators)*].²⁴² It is in the announcements, articles, and advertisements of this periodical that the historian finds public accounts of a number of key historical developments within the early communities of *vipassanā* meditation practitioners in America, most of whom were in some way or another connected to the global team of U Ba Khin's students.

It is in the lines of the early volumes of this periodical—in the summer of 1975—that we first catch sight of the publicization of the development of what eventually comes to be called the Insight Meditation Society (IMS).²⁴³ But before we get to the specifics of that moment, we must address events that took place about a year earlier—in the fall and winter of 1974—which serve as background for what came to pass in the process of and as a result of the founding of the Insight Meditation Society. The event that kicked things off can be found advertised in the *Vipassana Newsletter* for the summer of 1974 (1.2):

²⁴¹ Two *Vipaśyanā* newsletter announcements provide documentary evidence for these visits: "Mr. Robert Hover, an American meditator who conducts *vipaśyanā* courses there [in America], is visiting India at this time. He was also with Respected Guruji at the Madras course, and now they will conduct three courses in Varanasi and Bodhgaya. Many brother and sister meditators—among which were Indians and foreigners from all over—took part in the Madras course. [He] also handled the Bhuj course, in Bhadreśvar, and there also many meditators got the Dharma-benefit. The Nāsik course, in the lovely atmosphere of Deolālī, has already begun—Registrar." (*Vipaśyanā* 3.6 [December 1973]: 5)

"Respected Gurudev Sayāgyi U Ba Khin's American disciple, *vipaśyanā-ācārya* Robert Hover, has been conducting courses in Australia and New Zealand over the past two months. After completing his program there successfully, and stopping for one week at the International Meditation Center in Rangoon, he will come to India for three days and stay as a guest of his guru-brother, śrī Goenkaji. Mr. Hover has brought with him a Bodhi tree cutting from the Center (*āśram*), sent by Mother Sayama. This cutting will be planted at the far North corner of the Peace Plateau (*Śāṃti Pathar*) of the *Vipaśyanā* International Academy. Cuttings brought by the meditator Graham Gambie from the Bodhi tree in Bodhgaya, the Ānanda Bodhi tree in Śrāvastī, and the Sri Lankan Bodhi tree in Sarnāth have been planted at the other three corners." (*Vipaśyanā* 5.1 [June 1975]: 3)

²⁴² It was initially published under the title *Vipaśyanā (Ādhyātmik Māsik Patrikā)*, *Vipaśyanā (Monthly Spiritual Newsletter)*.

²⁴³ *Vipassana Newsletter* 2.3 (Summer 1975).

SEEK AND FIND

A 30-day sati-patanna course will be taught by Joseph Goldstein between September 4 and October 4. The course will be limited to 40 people and will be held in a Sierra mountain camp. A \$20 deposit will insure you a place in the course. Send it to Robert Fraser, Box 278, Lagunitas, Ca 94938. Also anyone who would like to cook for the first half of the course contact Robert.

Figure 6: *Vipassana Newsletter* 1.2 (Summer 1974), advertising a 30-day *sati-patanna* [sic] course taught by Joseph Goldstein in California at the end of 1974

Joseph Goldstein was one of the primary founders of the Insight Meditation Society, and he remains an important voice today in American Buddhist circles. He has been a powerful influencing force in the development of secularized global forms of meditation practice. He was also a student of both Anagārika Munindra and S.N. Goenka. This “Seek and Find” notice marks the first ever meditation course that he taught, the evening discourses of which were edited to become the best-selling Dharma book *The Experience of Insight* (Goldstein 1976). At the time Goldstein taught this course, he had been practicing under Goenka intensively for four years, and some in the communities of meditation students thought that he was being groomed by both Munindra and Goenka to become a teacher.²⁴⁴

But the teachings from this first course of Joseph Goldstein present an amalgam of the approaches of his two main teachers, and it appears that Goldstein’s choice to teach in this eclectic manner was not particularly appreciated by Goenka. One observer in India around this time recounted being present at a meeting—not long before Goldstein taught this first retreat in America—in which Goenka explicitly told Goldstein to stay away from Munindra entirely. Very recently, Goldstein has gone on the record to explain that around this time, he had “‘something of a split’ with Goenka over personal matters as well as stylistic differences relating to the practice.”²⁴⁵

We might here look in a bit of detail at this moment from the perspective of Goldstein’s 2014 retrospective framing of it. This account not only provides a narrative of events leading up to this key moment, but it also allows us not to lose track of the experiential aspects of these events. It permits us to attend to how these socio-historical developments in the history of insight

²⁴⁴ WAI239.

²⁴⁵ Stuart 2020: 101. It remains unclear what the true reasons for this “split” might have been, but it seems clear that there is more to the story than is available on the public record.

meditation traditions in the twentieth century cannot and should not be separated from powerful personal meditative experiences. Goldstein describes the years leading up to his first teaching engagements as follows:

Starting in 1970 I started doing Goenka retreats, which is also very powerful. It's a very powerful technique. But I had a major obstacle. [...] My body, it totally opened up. It just became a body of light. It was wonderful. It was just a free flow of energy [...] that's very enjoyable. And so I got into that, and would just spend hours and hours and hours in that, very effortless. Then I had to go back to the States [...] When I came back to India, I had lost my body of light, and it had become like a body of twisted steel. And I could not recreate that experience. And for two years I was struggling to get that back. [...] So it had started off gloriously and then it had crashed. [...] ²⁴⁶

Notably, Goldstein's account mirrors to some extent that of his first *vipassanā* teacher, Munindra, whose encounter with U Ba Khin's method of meditation under Goenka—after many years of practice and study under the Mahāsi Sayādaw—appears to have been a powerful entry into a new field of experience. Just as Munindra described his experience as both a “new dimension of understanding” and “a refresher course,” Goldstein emphasizes that the way in which his “body [...] totally opened up” and “became a body of light” while practicing with Goenka was unprecedented, yet he also attributes his fast development in this new practice approach to his earlier work with Munindra.

In detailing the intense difficulties that he came up against in his practice, Goldstein is explicit about his take on these experiences being clearer in hindsight. What stands out in particular in this narrative is the implicit critique of Goenka's approach to practice, a suggestion that his focus on one particular kind of experience prevents a broader perspective on *vipassanā* practice:

Sam Harris: “Did Goenka give you instruction?”

Joseph Goldstein: “No, not really, because there was a lot of emphasis in that tradition to get that free flow, so that was, in a way, the goal. It was exceedingly frustrating. It was the worst two years of my practice. It took me two years to realize that it's not about getting something back but to be with how things are. So finally—it took a long long time—finally, my mind let go of that fixation and just relaxed into how things were. And then, there started to be movement again. It never got back to how it was, but it didn't matter. [...] There's a very classic progression in what are

²⁴⁶ Harris and Goldstein 2014: 43:10–45:45.

called the ‘stages of insight.’ So there’s a very classic unfolding of different experiences, where people at a certain stage have experiences of tremendous rapture and clarity and concentration and all the things that we are practicing to develop. At this particular stage, they’re called ‘corruptions of insight,’ because the tendency is for almost everybody in one way or another to get attached to them. [...] So it takes some real guidance at that point to simply be mindful of those states as, as other changing conditions, and not to be attached to it, and the very next stage of insight is called ‘seeing what is the path and what is not the path.’ And that’s an important juncture, because until that point, you think that having those experiences is the path.”²⁴⁷

I think we can make full sense of this critique only by understanding the formal and painful dissolution of a number of teacher-student relationships that occurred in the process of the founding of the Insight Meditation Society. But before we discuss that fallout directly, it is important to fully understand the debate that took place leading up to it.

In deciding to teach a meditation course in 1974 in which he brought together the practice approaches of his two primary teachers, Goldstein forced into the open the subtle tensions—and the old debate from U Ba Khin’s time—that had been lying dormant after Munindra took his course with Goenka and wrote his letter to U Ba Khin. Many of the students who participated in Goldstein’s course were students of Goenka and/or Hover and/or Coleman and/or Munindra. Goldstein’s eclectic approach to practice raised questions about techniques of meditation, how they related to traditional Theravāda textual theories, and their connection to developmental models/maps of practice. Goldstein was also fond of mixing in flowery anecdotes and stories about Zen masters from the Zen tradition, which raised questions for some about whether he was diverging from traditional Theravāda teachings.²⁴⁸

But the issue most central to the emerging frictions within these budding insight meditation communities probably was the question raised by the title of Goldstein’s first book: *The Experience of Insight*. What is this *experience of insight*, and how does it relate to the teachings of the Buddha? What are our traditional sources for understanding such experiences? An account of Goldstein’s eclectic teaching approach raises difficulties with respect to how

²⁴⁷ Harris and Goldstein 2014: 45:41–48:26.

²⁴⁸ See Goldstein 1976. Goldstein’s connection with the newly formed Naropa Institute, founded by the charismatic Tibetan teacher Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, probably contributed to such characterizations.

one might answer this question. But one point is clear, Goldstein emphasized that his teachings were based in traditions of (*Mahā*)*Satipaṭṭhāna* practice, the practice of “setting up mindfulness,” which is most centrally embodied as scripture in the (*Mahā*)*Satipaṭṭhānasutta*. This text was a key source for the Mingun Jetavana and Mahāsī Sayādaws. Also Munindra—as a student of the Mahāsī Sayādaw—drew on it centrally in his teaching approach. The Ledi Sayādaw, Sayāgyi U Ba Khin, and Goenka (at the beginning of his mission), on the other hand, all drew on this text only partially, and they did so primarily as a resource for discussing calming practices foundational for the development of insight.²⁴⁹

So, when Joseph Goldstein—after four years of practicing quite closely with Goenka—decided to teach a month-long “*Sati-patanna*” (sic) course in America, in which he strongly emphasized Munindra’s teaching approach while at the same time incorporating aspects of Goenka’s teaching, it got Goenka’s attention and raised some eyebrows among his close students.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹ The Ledi Sayādaw’s partial use of this text in his *Anattadīpanī* (Ledi Sayādaw 1995 [1901]: 458–462) is paradigmatic of his approach and engagement with it. For the most part, his engagement with the category of *satipaṭṭhāna* was related to its role in the development of the *bodhipakkhiyadhammas* and not in connection with the (*Mahā*)*Satipaṭṭhānasutta* per se. U Ba Khin follows the Ledi Sayādaw’s approach in his only formal written work on the topic of meditation (1952: 29–30; 1962: 32–34) and in his teaching engagements. We can see a similar approach in Goenka 1974. In this respect, Patrick Pranke’s generalization that most *vipassanā* organizations teach techniques “typically [...] based on interpretations of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*” (Pranke 2010 [2011]: 463) is somewhat misleading when it comes to those following in the Ledi Sayādaw’s footsteps. It is noteworthy, however, that the Ledi Sayādaw’s disciple Sayā U Maung Gyi did write a comprehensive treatise on the *Mahāsatiṭṭhānasutta* (U Maung Gyi 1956).

²⁵⁰ WAI239.

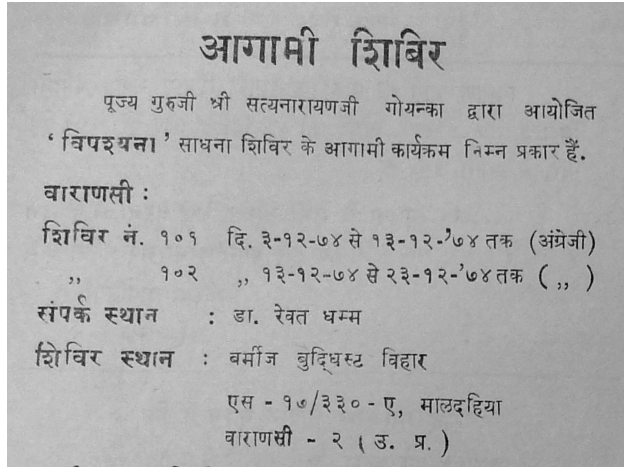


Figure 7: *Vipaśyanā (Sādhakoṃ kā māsik prernāpatra)* 4.6 (November 1974), advertising consecutive ten-day courses in Vārāṇasī in December of that same year, where S.N. Goenka made explicit mention of “a big confusion in the minds of Western students with these words of *satipaṭṭhāna* and *vipaśyanā* [...]”

During two consecutive ten-day courses in Vārāṇasī only a few months after the completion of Goldstein’s first “*sati-patanna*” course in the United States, Goenka—without referring explicitly to Goldstein by name—appears to have felt the need to speak directly to the concerns raised by Goldstein’s attempt to step out on his own in the way that he did.

In an elaborate discussion of meditation theory, Goenka draws attention to the way in which his “Western students” have misunderstood the concepts/categories of *satipaṭṭhāna* and *vipaśyanā* (my emphasis):

[There is] a big confusion in the minds of Western students with these words of *satipaṭṭhāna* and *vipaśyanā*. Awareness of walking walking walking, awareness of eating eating eating, is taken up by many students as *satipaṭṭhāna*. And awareness of sensation, subtle sensation in the body, is taken by them as *vipaśyanā*. Which has created a lot of confusions. [...] ²⁵¹

Because of not understanding the real purpose, those students who have started developing wisdom by experiencing subtler realities, many times, just out of their inquisitiveness, they start practicing some new practice—that means something new what’s going on in other schools—they start practicing with these grosser objects of the grosser activities of the body. Nothing wrong. But what’s wrong is, by forgetting all about the subtler realities, they get themselves so much engrossed in these gross activities of the body that they start losing all the subtle sensations. The entire body gets

²⁵¹ Goenka 1974: 10:46–11:00.

once again blocked up. Although *the poor teacher; the guide who gives this, this fourfold satipaṭṭhāna*, says very clearly that you have to go the subtler stages, you have to go [to] the subtler stages, but because of this not understanding the whole basic theory behind Buddha's teaching of practice, they again make themselves, their minds, so blunt. Though aware, but aware of the grosser things. So for them it becomes a big thing to go to the subtler stages of the body and mind. On this tradition, we start with *ānāpāna* because out of all the gross activities of the body—walking, eating or anything—amongst them, the subtlest is breathing. [...] ²⁵²

The subtler the awareness, the bigger the progress. If you understand what *vipaśyanā* is, how it is defined, the whole *satipaṭṭhānasūtra* is nothing but *vipaśyanā vipaśyanā vipaśyanā*. *Kāyānupaśyanā*—observing the body; *vedanānupaśyanā*—observing the sensations on the body, related to the body; *cittānupaśyanā*—observing the mind; and *dhammānupaśyanā*—it is a very wide term, *dhamma*, and it includes everything, practically everything: all the waves that arise on the mind, and the law, in full detail—not only at the intellectual level but at the actual level by experience—you understand the entire law, the entire *dhamma*, that is *dhammānupaśyanā*. And, observing the entire law of the sensual field, of the field of relativity—from the grossest to the subtlest—you transcend that and experience the law of *nibbāna*, which also comes under *dhamma*. So the entire *Satipaṭṭhānasūtra* is nothing but *vipaśyanā*: *kāyānupaśyanā cittānupaśyanā vedanānupaśyanā dhammānupaśyanā*. And what is *vipaśyanā*? “*Paññatti thapetvā, visesena paśyatīti vipaśyanā*.” Breaking the entire field of apparent truth, conventional truth, and reaching the stage of ultimate truth, that is *vipaśyanā*. ²⁵³

When we understand the historical context of these statements, it is clear that Goenka is speaking directly to Goldstein, as well as the other prospective Goldsteins among his students who may have had their own ideas, interpretations, and criticisms of Goenka's teaching/practice approach.

²⁵² Goenka 1974: 12:40–14:50. There are interesting resonances here with the Ledi Sayādaw's definition of insight knowledge (*vipassanāñāṇa*) in his *Anattadīpanī* (see Appendix 2.1). U Ba Khin's definition of *vipassana* is also relevant here: “Nobody can attain *nibbāna* without understanding *dukkhasacca* (the truth of suffering). When you know *dukkhasacca* discriminatingly, the body registers the phenomenal qualities that appear [within it] by way of [the three] characteristics. When the feelings (*vedanā*) that appear are registered by way of [the three] characteristics as they emerge within the heart, then everything is just fine. This is discernment (*paññā*). This is the work of *vipassanā* that we have come here for.” (U Ba Khin n.d. [1962?] 2.1: 10:20–10:34 [translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart])

²⁵³ Goenka 1974: 16:44–18:56. See also Stuart 2020: 203–208.

It is in the context of this emerging/ongoing conflict—over what is entailed in the *experience of insight*, with a backdrop of subtle tensions between key Burmese *vipassanā* teaching lineages—that the plans for the development of the first ever *vipassanā*/insight meditation center in America begin to form. The first public signs of these developments appear about half a year after Goenka’s critical comments presented above. The development is publicized in the *Vipassana Newsletter* (2.3 [Summer 1975]) as follows:

RETREAT CENTER

A year round Vipassana Meditation Retreat Center has been established in western Massachusetts as a permanent facility for Vipassana courses, organized self courses and individual retreats. Located in Adams, Mass., in the Berkshire mountains, about 130 miles west of Boston, the Insight Meditation Center of New England, as it has been named, is a former nunnery with excellent facilities. There are two very large and one smaller building, with a total of sixty rooms, including a chapel and large hall. The facility will be rented for one year, with an option to buy it if the arrangement proves successful.

Figure 8: *Vipassana Newsletter* 2.3 (Summer 1975): 4, providing news of the establishment of a *vipassanā* meditation center in Western Massachusetts

This “Insight Meditation Center of New England” eventually came to be called the “Insight Meditation Society,” and it ended up at a different location—in Barre, Massachusetts.²⁵⁴ But this notice refers to the early stages of the development of the IMS. It is important to emphasize here that the establishment of this retreat center was explicitly associated with the three non-Asian constituents of U Ba Khin’s global team: Robert Hover, Ruth Denison, and John Coleman. Hover in particular, a key pioneer of *vipassanā* in the United States, was an early force and a source of authority for a number of the young Americans involved in the early stages of the Insight Meditation Society:

²⁵⁴ The scan of *Vipassana Newsletter* 2.3 available to me, which was made from a hardcopy shared with me by William Hart, contains a handwritten marginal note next to the proposed address of the center in Adams, MA: “These plans have not been finalized. June 19th.” A notice from *Vipassana Newsletter* 3.2 (April 1976) announces the first courses taught by Coleman (June 16 to 30) and Hover (July 18 to August 8) at the site of what is now the Insight Meditation Society.

Mr. Hover's course will officially open the center on August 28, and he will conduct another retreat there in January. There are tentative plans for retreats in the spring to be conducted by Mrs. Denison and Mr. Coleman. This fall there will be courses led by teachers of other Vipassana Meditation practices. People will be welcome to use the facility for self-courses during the periods when there will be no formal retreats in session. Scheduled self-courses will be announced, as well.

Figure 9: *Vipassana Newsletter* 2.3 (Summer 1975): 4, providing news of the establishment of a *vipassanā* meditation center in Western Massachusetts

This notice indicates just how important the U Ba Khin lineage—the global team of U Ba Khin's students—was in the establishment of the Insight Meditation Society. It shows how the young American founders of the center, themselves not yet fully established as teachers, felt the need to have their seniors be framed as vital teaching authorities in publicizing the development of the center. But we also see here an idea that became a key source of friction in the development of the center, as well as between the members of the global team of U Ba Khin's students.

We have shown above how U Ba Khin and the cult of students around him in mid-twentieth-century Rangoon conceptualized themselves as conduits for a unique and powerful transmission of the Dhamma. The idea of a center at which “courses led by teachers of other Vipassana Meditation practices” might be offered—in addition to courses of training in U Ba Khin's practice approach—was not particularly palatable to U Ba Khin's Asian students, those deeply enmeshed in the cultic mythology around him. In India, Goenka had been able to sideline this issue since there were very few other teachers of insight meditation on the scene. His one rival, Munindra, had acquiesced to his authority and been narratively subsumed under the U Ba Khin umbrella. The emergence of a more eclectic Dharma scene in the United States, or rather the emergence of a group of young upstart teachers largely ignorant of the traditions, practices, and cultures they were carrying to the West, created a situation in which such tensions around lineage, identity, and experience came to the surface.

Erik Braun focuses on this historical moment in the final pages of his book, *The Birth of Insight*, in an attempt to draw a line between developments in the practice of Buddhist meditation in late colonial Burma and developments in Buddhist meditation in late twentieth-century America. As I have suggested above, his analysis misses the mark because he does not properly account for the traditional Buddhist concepts at work in colonial Burma, the various historical and cultural forces at play, and the kinds of

constraints that the young founders of the IMS faced in late twentieth-century America. Braun presents this later moment almost entirely from the retrospective standpoint of two of the IMS founders—Joseph Goldstein and Jack Kornfield—while largely ignoring the broader context of these retrospective accounts.²⁵⁵ He overlooks entirely the subtle tensions between Goenka and Munindra and their different approaches to teaching and practice in India. He likewise does not take into consideration the role of Hover, Denison, and Coleman in the founding of the IMS, and the fact that they themselves were operating under specific sanction.

Overlooking these issues is deeply problematic because it is precisely at this time—and likely in part because of their association with the eclectic context of American Buddhism of which the IMS becomes emblematic—that Robert Hover and Ruth Denison found themselves stripped of their sanction by Mother Sayama in Rangoon. News of this development was first publicized in the American *Vipassana Newsletter* (4.2) of May 1977, though it had likely been percolating for some time before that, and it marked a schismatic change in the global network of teachers that U Ba Khin had appointed:

TEACHERS

Shri S.N. Goenka
Green House, 2nd Floor
Green Street, Fort
Bombay, India

I.M.C.
31 A Inya Myaing Road
University Post Office
Rangoon, Burma

John Coleman
Cherry Cottage, Altwood Road
Maidenhead, Berks SL64PB
England

We have received word through Mother Sayama in Rangoon that Robert Hover and Ruth Denison are no longer recognized as teachers in the Sayagyi U Ba Khin Tradition. Their course schedules will no longer be published in this newsletter.

Figure 10: *Vipassana Newsletter* 4.2 (May 1977), making public the ouster of Robert Hover and Ruth Denison

²⁵⁵ Braun would have done well to draw on Sandy Boucher's 2005 biography of Ruth Denison, for instance, in analyzing some of the dynamics involved between Burmese, Indian and American practitioners in these early diasporic communities of insight meditation.

The factors that led to this development are complex, and a complete historical accounting of them will have to be carried out by those with more complete access to the archive of correspondences between the main participants. But one thing seems clear: the ousting of Robert Hover and Ruth Denison from the global team of U Ba Khin's students cannot be fully separated from the history of the development of the Insight Meditation Society and its founders' eclectic approach to meditation teaching and practice.

Hover's and Denison's openness to such eclecticism appears to be a primary reason for their ouster.²⁵⁶ In her biography of Ruth Denison, Sandy Boucher writes elegantly about how this conflict played out, noting that Denison's New Age approach to teaching, not simply her association with the young IMS founders, aroused the disdain of both Sayama and Goenka.²⁵⁷

But Boucher and the people she quotes—mostly American practitioners from the IMS and Spirit Rock meditation communities—appear to overlook or deliberately omit the cultic and cultural imperatives behind the conservatism that led to it. We can only understand Mother Sayama's and S. N. Goenka's actions in this historical moment if we understand the onto-epistemic commitments behind their teaching model, commitments that appear to have been less central in Denison's and Hover's conception of their mission.²⁵⁸ In the eyes of Sayama and Goenka, Denison's creative teaching approach, her engagement in practices of other Buddhist traditions, and her mixing in of various movement practices entailed a "conflict of forces," as U Ba Khin might have put it.²⁵⁹ From this perspective, Denison's behavior might disallow the free and complete flow of the pure force of Dhamma—the

²⁵⁶ See Boucher 2005: 161 and 163 on the negative response of Goenka and Mother Sayama to Ruth Denison's creative teaching approach. See also *Vipassana Newsletter* 2.3:4.

²⁵⁷ Boucher 2005: 145–66. I should note that it appears that Boucher's timeline for the conflict may be a bit off, since she suggests that Denison's ouster took place in early 1980 (Boucher 2005: 163). The announcement in the 1977 *Vipassana Newsletter* presented above suggests that at that point, Denison may have already been on the outs with Sayama for some time.

²⁵⁸ Robert Hover apparently never developed skills in higher levels of concentration, and it also appears that he had only a partial understanding of U Ba Khin's practical knowledge of classical Buddhist concentration practices and supernormal powers (see www.vipassanaforum.net/forum/index.php?topic=691.0 [accessed on Jan. 7, 2018]). Hover was, however, versed in traditional Buddhist theories about the higher stages of concentration and spoke about them at times, from that perspective, in his Dhamma discourses.

²⁵⁹ See above, pp. 96–114.

vijjādhātu or *nibbānadhātu*—that U Ba Khin had enlisted her to be a conduit of.

Denison apparently thought differently about things, though it is interesting to note that her own narrative of her conflict with Sayama draws centrally on her direct connection with U Ba Khin beyond the grave. Boucher presents Denison's story of her final conflict with Mother Sayama as an inner conflict that was resolved through a night-long meditation in which she had a vision or a dream—it is not clear which—of Sayāgyi U Ba Khin with the Buddha above him and felt him near to her, affirming her personal mission beyond the authority of Sayama.²⁶⁰ This vision gave her the strength to carry on teaching in her own way in America, despite losing Sayama's official sanction. Denison's emphasis on dance and movement in her teachings of insight meditation might be understood as foundational for a uniquely New Age strand of insight meditation. It is also notable, however, just how little experience she had as a teacher when she set out on her own.

Robert Hover, unlike Ruth Denison, appears to have taught strictly along the lines prescribed by U Ba Khin and Sayama. He spent time in Burma and India training to teach, and he was versed in Abhidhamma philosophy. So, it is less clear exactly what was behind his ouster, aside from his early association with the founders of the IMS. Hover, after all, was a great early pioneer of U Ba Khin's practice in the West. He was the first person to systematically teach U Ba Khin's method in North America and Australia, and he was responsible for drawing in and catalyzing the involvement of many students during that early period of the mission. He had begun the *Vipassana Newsletter* and was a founding member of the Sayāgyi U Ba Khin Memorial Non-Profit Corporation, which would have been responsible for the first dedicated center for the U Ba Khin lineage in America.²⁶¹ What might have led to him being pushed aside by Mother Sayama?

A few different aspects of Hover's behavior provide possible reasons for his being pushed out. They also provide key counterpoints for a number of historical developments within the discourse of modern insight meditation communities as their practices evolved into globally recognized commodities. Robert Hover brought a unique amalgam of influences to his understanding of *vipassanā* meditation. He was an aerospace engineer and

²⁶⁰ Boucher 2005: 163–165.

²⁶¹ For information on Hover's role in the establishment of the Sayāgyi U Ba Khin Memorial Non-Profit Corporation, see *Vipassana Newsletter* 3.3 (July 1976).

research scientist by training, with a keen interest in chemistry and theoretical physics. In the process of learning meditation, he gravitated towards the systematic theories of Theravāda Abhidhamma scholasticism. When he taught meditation, he incorporated a mix of these ideas in his theoretical explanations to his students.²⁶²

Hover also wanted to scientifically explore the phenomenology of meditation, including aspects of what he termed “faint field” processes and “selected paranormal processes” cultivated through meditation.²⁶³ He even carried out some early basic experiments with EEG-EKG measurements and how one might quantify the role of attention in the process of meditation.²⁶⁴ In retrospect, it appears that Hover was something of a visionary in this respect, since one of the primary forces that eventually brought meditation into the consciousness of mainstream therapeutic practice was the scientific study of how such practices could be used in healthcare contexts.²⁶⁵ Hover’s *vipassanā* teachings were an important source for the historically influential Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) of Jon Kabat-Zinn, and Hover likewise developed his own (wildly unsuccessful) method of therapeutic practice—derivative of the techniques he learned from U Ba Khin—which he called Internal Moving Healing (IMH).²⁶⁶

It seems likely that Hover’s theoretical bent, and his open-ended scientific attitude towards the practice and teaching of meditation, was one source of his eventual conflict with his most important Asian counterparts and mentors, Mother Sayama and S. N. Goenka. For these Asian teachers—U Ba Khin included—the ultimate truths of the Buddhist tradition were realities to be experienced, not ideas to be subjected to the rigors of scientific proof. Even Buddhist theoretical models were considered unnecessary for entrance into practice in the context of U Ba Khin and his students’ approach to teaching.²⁶⁷ Recourse to discussions of science, and presentations of scientific proof, served primarily as powerful rhetorical tools in the toolbox of

²⁶² My knowledge of Robert Hover’s teachings comes primarily from two sets of Dharma talks—one from 1977 and another from 1988—recordings of which were made available to me by Hover’s daughter, Leslie Hover.

²⁶³ Hover 1966: 2.

²⁶⁴ Hover 1966: 1.

²⁶⁵ A key publication that marked a turning point in such developments was Benson 1975.

²⁶⁶ On the connection between Hover and Kabat-Zinn’s MBSR, see Stuart 2017a. On Hover’s IMH, see Hover 2004.

²⁶⁷ Ko Lay 1995: 28:50–35:40.

these meditation teachers to affirm what they already knew was true according to tradition and experience.²⁶⁸ To have someone like Hover—with a truly experimental outlook on the tradition—representing it in the Wild West of America likely unsettled the natural order of things as they had been established within the cult of U Ba Khin. The source of authority within the tradition was U Ba Khin himself, and this authority was derived from his concrete connection to cosmic forces with direct connections to the Buddha. No scientific experiment carried out by a Western engineer was likely to prove that.²⁶⁹

One anecdote from an American student of Goenka—one of his “Assistant Teachers”—encapsulates a key aspect of the narrative behind the conflict between Hover and his Asian counterparts. This person explained to me how it is common knowledge among close students of Goenka that during a meditation retreat in India when Hover and Goenka were teaching together for the very last time, Hover gave a Dharma discourse in which he presented a number of Abhidhamma theories to the group of students participating in the course. The story goes that as Hover was presenting those theories, Goenka

²⁶⁸ U Ba Khin is known to have invoked the notion of scientific proofs in discourses to his students. For example: “[...] If anyone of you are capable and progressing in meditation, I want to train one to become like Ven. Saṅjīva. I want to train them to get to a stage where no fire can burn. If any one of you gives me a chance or if you are really trying hard in practicing, I want to test them where they are testing an atomic bomb. Do you think it is a good idea? Fire cannot burn them. If an atomic bomb cannot harm that person, it is a great chance for me. Right? Do you get it? Shall we try? I am brave enough to do a test like this. I am not sure when it comes to an atomic bomb, but I am sure when it comes to mosquitoes. [...] A place behind my office had many mosquitoes. At around 5pm, all the doors have to be closed because of many mosquitoes. Hundreds or thousands of mosquitoes enter into the rooms if the doors are not closed. My disciple will take off his shirt and [...] sit in that room for ten minutes. I am sure that no mosquitoes will bite my disciple. Since he takes a vow that no danger should fall upon his mind and body, no mosquitoes bite him. No animal can bite him. Ven. Saṅjīva was also like that. No danger fell upon him after he made a vow. How good is it? Is there anything better than this? Nowadays, it can be called a demonstration. So, I am waiting for brave men of science from a major university. There are things that are possible in Buddha Dhamma that are not possible by science. Science starts from matter. We do not start from matter but mind. We start from *nāma*. *Saṅkhāra* appears from *nāma*.” (U Ba Khin n.d. [1962?] 5.2: 24:00–27:15 [translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart])

²⁶⁹ It is noteworthy that in his early attempts to outline experimental pathways, Hover explicitly demurred to the authority of the Asian wisdom traditions, presaging current developments: “[My goal is to] set up and nurture a mutually fruitful exchange between selected individuals in this Country [America] and Burma and Ceylon to explore deeply and carefully the philosophic system of the Dhamma in light of Western experience, and perhaps more importantly, vice versa.” (Hover 1966a: 5)

looked sidelong at him with a skeptical glance, and that thereafter Goenka never taught with him again.²⁷⁰ It should be emphasized that this is a secondary account, and it is difficult to know whether anything like this really took place. But the story is telling in and of itself. As the story was relayed to me, it seemed that the idea behind its telling was to communicate that Goenka did not approve of Hover's understanding of traditional Buddhist doctrine, and that he considered Hover's creative intellectual engagement with traditional Buddhist scholasticism a distraction from the more basic elements of practice that Goenka and his assistants focused on in their teaching approach. In my reading, this narrative captures a radically anti-intellectual stance that becomes a central mode of discourse in the community that developed around S.N. Goenka. Sidelineing Hover, in retrospect, appears to be the sidelineing of serious scientific inquiry into meditation. It is also difficult not to read this development as partly motivated by cultural chauvinism pitting traditional Asian wisdom against American innovation.

A SCIENTIFIC ASPECT OF THE MEDITATION

by Robert Hover

Interest is arising in scientific aspects of the Vipassana Meditation. One such aspect is the curious phenomenon of the congestions, constructions, masses, clouds, networks and so on observed in individuals, their allied physical, emotional, mental, psychical symptoms, and their wide range of alleviation by the mental effort of the individual. Most Meditators have had things of this type and most who have sat with me have worked on them in detail. I have kept no record of these except through memory. But now, after observing several hundred experiences, such an abundance of these facts is accumulating that the statistical display of authenticated experiences represents a unique field of knowledge for the scientific world. But this statistical wealth resides in each of your experiences individually.

So here is the situation:

I am preparing an initial technical paper on the Meditation, dealing primarily with this phenomenon. If you would like to help

Figure 11: *Vipassana Newsletter* 1.3 (Fall 1974), containing an article describing Robert Hover's attempts to gather data for the scientific study of *vipassanā*

Another aspect of Hover's experimental approach to teaching meditation may also have contributed to his being sidelined by his Asian superiors.

²⁷⁰ WAI232.

Though Hover may not have himself developed the concentration skills outlined in classical Buddhist texts on the subject, he did have a number of students who went on to become adepts at such skills. One of these students was Ayya Khema (1923–1997), who went on to become a renowned Buddhist teacher in her own right. Around the time that he was ousted by Mother Sayama, it came to be known among the community of practitioners Hover was working with that he had begun to utilize one such student in his teaching, specifically, to channel U Ba Khin, who had passed away in 1971.²⁷¹ It remains unclear how exactly Hover was working with such a student, and it is also not clear how or if Mother Sayama may have come to know of this. But it seems possible that she would have been concerned by such a development. As shown above, one of Sayama's key roles in the teaching model developed by U Ba Khin was as a powerful channel for the cosmic forces U Ba Khin would invoke through his chanting. In this model, Mother Sayama's great powers of concentration allowed her to collaborate with such forces to create a forcefield of purity around a student so that the student might break through to the nibbānic state. These powers also allowed her to psychically see such cosmic forces as well as the mind-streams of students. Even when U Ba Khin was alive, she served as a central conduit for the flow of Dhamma to the students under her and U Ba Khin's "cover." Upon his passing, Sayama's role became even more important, since she became *the* source through which to connect with him beyond the grave.

The fact that Hover was experimenting with a young Western student who might have similar powers would likely have concerned Sayama. At the same time, such approaches did not fit with the rhetoric of science that had become central to how *vipassanā* was being pitched in "the West." Those who were not aware of the way U Ba Khin and Sayama had worked in Burma found these aspects of Hover's approach unconventional.²⁷²

Finally, it must be noted that it is rumored that Hover engaged in some kind of sexual misconduct while teaching meditation. The details of such an incident or incidents remain opaque to me, and I have found myself hesitant to attempt to explore such challenging social issues in detail. First, I do not feel theoretically equipped to address the implications of such a rumor.

²⁷¹ WAI239; WAI241.

²⁷² The timing of Hover's ouster, and his estrangement from the IMS community resulting from these strange practices, should also be understood in connection with Ram Dass's infamous and very public association with the fraudulent channeler-guru Joya Santayana, which ended in 1976 not long before the ousting of Robert Hover by Mother Sayama in 1977 (See Ram Dass 1976, Dowling 1977, and Hamilton 1995: 19–30).

Second, the rumor comes to me from only two secondary accounts of Hover's role in the development of the IMS, and I have not been able to corroborate it. It appears, however, that concerns about such misconduct may not be separable from concerns about the strangeness of Hover's use of a young woman in his channeling experiments. One informant said that Hover was "propositioning women," but it should be noted that this information was coupled with a narrative that focused more on the problematic nature of Hover's channeling as the primary reason for why he was largely erased from the history of the development of insight traditions in America.²⁷³ Another informant—a member of the early IMS leadership—also pointed to Hover's use of a young woman to channel U Ba Khin as the primary reason for his eventual estrangement from that community. They also could not corroborate accusations of explicit sexual misconduct.²⁷⁴ Another informant, who was close to Hover towards the end of his life, acknowledged a vague rumor of sexual misconduct but questioned whether Hover was capable of deliberate sexual harm.²⁷⁵ This person went on to note that the character of Hover's retreats could be quite wild. People were pushing themselves into strange and intense states, and a whole range of improprieties—such as someone defecating in the meditation hall—transpired.²⁷⁶ Unfortunately, the survivors of such incidents of sexual misconduct are lost to history, and it is their accounts we would hope to have were we to try to truly understand what went on.²⁷⁷ The scholars Amy Langenberg and Ann Gleig are currently working on the issue of sexual misconduct more broadly within the history of North American insight traditions, and they will hopefully address some of the questions around these particular historical moments in the near future.

To understand these issues and their connection with the early development of the IMS, it is important to note that the founders of the Society and others did not adjudicate Hover's problematic behavior in any formal manner. Hover was discreetly asked not to return to teach at the IMS because of his channeling practices and was then generally spurned—or

²⁷³ WAI239.

²⁷⁴ WAI241.

²⁷⁵ Ann Gleig and Amy Langenberg have noted, in private communications, that they have observed in their research a running theme among male meditation teachers who have been accused of sexual misconduct: a victim narrative in which the teachers claim they were targeted, mistreated, or misunderstood. It may at times be the case that such things happen. Unfortunately, it is too easy to use such narratives to minimize abuse and discount the experiences of survivors.

²⁷⁶ WAI240.

²⁷⁷ See Gleig and Langenberg 2020.

“ghosted” as one informant involved in the leadership of IMS at the time put it. Hover did, however, go on to teach on his own at various makeshift meditation camps for some years before retiring from teaching meditation. According to a different account, from the same informant that questioned whether Hover would have willfully violated anyone, the young founders of the IMS spurned Hover primarily because his ongoing presence was inconvenient. His intensive approach to meditation and his idiosyncratic personality did not in the end fit with the teaching model they came to favor.²⁷⁸ Those focused on Hover’s channeling of U Ba Khin as a straightforwardly problematic behavior disavow such a narrative. Upon his removal, Hover was subsequently rendered a non-entity in the narrative of the founding and development of the IMS. Hover himself, at the end of his life, lamented that the putative founders of the IMS had ostracized him even though he had been an organizing force that brought them together in those early days.²⁷⁹

Taking this all into account, I think it is fair to say that the different aspects of Hover’s identity contain many of the diverse elements that become hallmarks of the different trajectories of insight meditation in North America. As a historian of some of these traditions, I think it is important that Hover be recovered, restored to the historical record, and given credit for his early work teaching *vipassanā* in the United States. He should also be held historically accountable if the rumors of sexual misconduct are corroborated. Hover traveled widely in the United States and around the globe in the 1970s to teach, influenced thousands of students, and was a driving force behind some of the earliest attempts to develop systems and networks to bring *vipassanā* practitioners into communication with one another in the United States. He was also instrumental in helping get the Insight Meditation Society off the ground and taught a number of courses there in the early years. Finally, he was a key teaching source for some of the therapeutic methods that were eventually scientized and commodified into Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction. It is revealing, therefore, to account for how and why he has been largely written out of the history of insight meditation and mindfulness in “the West.”²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ WAI240.

²⁷⁹ WAI240.

²⁸⁰ A key exception to this is Eric Lerner’s wonderful *Journey of Insight Meditation* (1977), which features Hover, Goenka, Mother Sayama, and U Chit Tin when they were all teaching together. Lerner’s book itself has been given very little attention, however, by historians of insight meditation. It is also noteworthy that Hover appears anonymously in two consequential contexts: 1. In S.N. Goenka’s ten-day retreat

Let us now return to the moment in which Hover and Denison are publicly ousted by their Burmese superior. We have noted that this historical development cannot be separated from the founding of what has now come to be known as the Insight Meditation Society. And it appears that one key aspect that led to the divide was the idea that a meditation center devoted to the teachings of U Ba Khin ought not accommodate practices or teachers from other *vipassanā* traditions. As Denison and Hover had been explicitly given sanction to teach by U Ba Khin himself, they each found their own justifications to go on teaching despite the directives of Mother Sayama. They continued to teach in the United States. Denison established her own meditation center in Southern California and taught there until her death in 2015. Hover taught at the Insight Meditation Society in its early years and at temporary meditation camps around the country into the 1980s. After that key schismatic moment, however, neither of these teachers made a name for themselves in the way that their young counterparts, the founders of the Insight Meditation Society, went on to do.

c) Joseph Goldstein, Sharon Salzberg, and Jack Kornfield: Constraints of Authority

The young founders of the Insight Meditation Society also found themselves in a bit of a bind in that schismatic moment, since they had no official sanction to teach from the seniors in the U Ba Khin lineage, and they were in a situation where their authority as agents of the Dhamma was reliant on demonstrating a direct connection to lineages of ancient Asian Buddhist wisdom. In the case of Salzberg and Goldstein, Goenka had explicitly censured their teaching model and thereby denied them his sanction. In the case of Kornfield, lineage authorization was not as much of an issue because he had been a monk and drew on practice lineages—such as the Thai Forest teachings of Ajahn Chah—that up to that point had no formal procedure for authorization. It is here that Goldstein's and Salzberg's connection to Anagārika Munindra becomes of utmost importance. Munindra served as a key source through which these budding American meditation teachers could

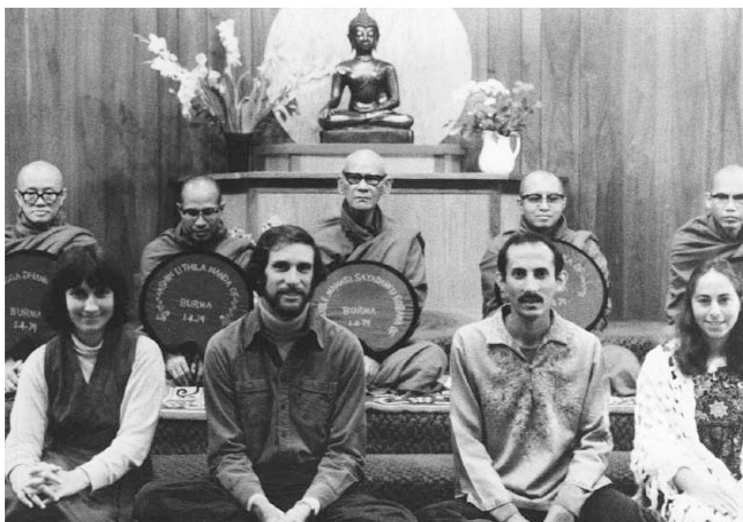
discourses, he appears as the morally compromised Western “research scientist” who, in a “research article,” analogizes U Ba Khin's method of moving attention throughout the body to the process of purifying special metals in a lab; 2. In Jon Kabat-Zinn's *Full Catastrophe Living* (1991), he appears as a “chemist” who—using a similar analogy to that deployed by Goenka—taught Jon Kabat-Zinn the “body scan” practice that became a key component of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction.

demonstrate their authoritative connection to Asia, and to Burmese *vipassanā*.²⁸¹ Munindra was open and supportive, and he had encouraged Joseph Goldstein to teach. He had practiced under a variety of teachers in various meditation lineages and claimed no strong ties to a single practice approach. In that difficult moment, when Hover and Denison were ousted by Sayama, and Goenka explicitly forbade the young Americans to teach in the lineage of U Ba Khin, it was to Munindra, his great disciple Dīpa Mā, and ultimately his traditional Burmese Buddhist preceptor Mahāsī Sayādaw, that these young teachers turned to demonstrate public sanction from an Asian teaching authority.

While the distinctions between Burmese practice lineages could be glossed over in the context of Munindra's and Goenka's post-colonial India, they came strongly to the fore in the context of the needs of the developing Western community of insight meditators. The hard lines of lineage identity that many scholars and practitioners take for granted today in their analyses of the history of modern Burmese *vipassanā* meditation were forged primarily in this key schismatic moment and its aftermath. While the Insight Meditation Society—as well as the teachers affiliated with it—has always remained deliberately eclectic and multilinedage in its makeup, the need to draw lineage lines is also foundational to it. Rather than gaining a “situated freedom,” as Braun has described it,²⁸² those involved in founding the Insight Meditation Society were heavily constrained by their need to demonstrate their authority. The question became: where would this authority come from?

²⁸¹ It is worth pointing out that these young teachers pulled much of their initial cultural capital from the endorsement of the “crazy wisdom” Tibetan Buddhist teacher Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and his budding Naropa Institute (Fronsdal 2002: 287–88). On the history of Naropa and its importance in the development of a distinctively Western Buddhism, see Fields 1992 and Seager 2002: 106–119. In light of troubling events over the years in Trungpa's global community, this is an ethically problematic pedigree. Trungpa's wildness meant that it was all the more important for the young teachers to have a strong public connection to Theravāda patriarchs later on. For explicit attempts to delineate ethical issues in connection to some of these early American Buddhist communities, see Kornfield 1993: 254–271 and 2000: 139–160.

²⁸² Braun 2013: 162.



Front row, from left:
Sharon Salzberg, Joseph Goldstein,
Jack Kornfield,
Jacqueline Mandell-Schwartz.
Back row, center: Mahāsi Sayādaw.
Insight Meditation Society, 1979.

due to the misconduct of their primary teacher. When we started IMS, I was twenty-eight, Joseph was twenty-nine, and Sharon was only twenty-one. As Sharon likes to say, “It all happened without adult supervision!” In our wisdom, combined with abject terror, we said, “Let’s hold hands for this one, guys.” And as a result, we created the team teaching

Figure 12: Photo of the founders of the Insight Meditation Society, together with the Mahāsi Sayādaw and unnamed monks (1979), in Jack Kornfield’s 1993 article “This Fantastic Unfolding Experiment”

For Goldstein and Salzberg, Munindra was the straightforward solution to their problems. They soon brought him to the United States to teach at the Insight Meditation Society in 1977, not long after its founding. Between 1977 and 1984, Munindra made a number of visits to America and taught at retreats at the IMS. He was also instrumental in bringing the Mahāsi Sayādaw to teach there and in California, and he was present during the famous monk’s visit to the IMS in 1979. Figure 12 above is an iconic representation of this historical moment, when the young North American IMS teachers performed their “authorization” within this lineage of Burmese monastic *vipassanā*. It is historically revealing to understand that this photograph was orchestrated by the Burmese scholar-monk U Rewata Dhamma, a close confidant of both the Mahāsi Sayādaw and Sayāgyi U Ba Khin, and a monastic consultant of S.N. Goenka. U Rewata Dhamma suggested that the above picture be taken as a public relations move, over continued concerns about Goenka’s censure

of the young lay teachers.²⁸³ While these New Age American flower children may have felt free to disdain Goenka's critique, Asian traditionalists such as U Rewata Dhamma understood the seriousness of such a fissure. In orchestrating the photograph, this learned Burmese scholar-monk—who had done his doctoral studies in India and was at the time living in the United Kingdom—sought to smooth over the lingering disquiet at the level of public representation.

While this monastic visit was instrumental, it was brief, and Munindra remained the primary connection to this lineage in the years that followed. But Munindra found himself caught up in the wildness of these developments, and things did not go smoothly for him in the raucous atmosphere of the late 1970s and early 1980s Dharma scene. There is widespread rumor that Munindra—despite his *anagārika* vows—engaged in some form of sexual misconduct toward the end of this time.²⁸⁴ I know little of these events, and it feels difficult to capture the ethos of that time at this historical distance. According to one account, Munindra was turned on to the sexual openness of the West by Anagārika Sujata, an American student who was running a retreat center in San Jose in the late 1970s.²⁸⁵ This set the stage for his interest in developing intimate relationships with women and culminated in an incident at the IMS in 1984 in which Munindra found himself entangled with one of his female students on a long retreat.

²⁸³ WAI241.

²⁸⁴ Sometimes these rumors have been voiced in explicit terms, at other times they have been described euphemistically, with statements such as “when things went south with Munindra [...]”.

²⁸⁵ WAI241.

Figure 13: Anagārika Sujata (left) with Anagārika Munindra (right) and an unidentified young woman during Munindra's visit to San Jose in 1977²⁸⁶

The entanglement led to a sexual encounter on the IMS premises involving Munindra inviting the young woman into the shower with him. By all accounts this was conceived of by those privy to it as a violation not only of the vows of celibacy people undertake while on retreat, but also of the trust necessary for a healthy teacher–student relationship. The incident resulted in a set of fraught deliberations, and two factions emerged among the community leadership aware of what transpired. One faction wanted to cover up the incident, and one wanted to adjudicate the issue through the institution of the IMS board. While the issue was being considered, however, Munindra returned to India before any clear resolution could be reached or formal adjudication enacted.²⁸⁷ Finally, according to a secondary account, Jack Kornfield was dispatched to India to speak directly with Munindra, confirm some of the details of the transgression, and bring back a record of Munindra's confession.²⁸⁸ This allowed the issue to be resolved to the extent that due diligence had been carried out. The event could now be put in the

²⁸⁶ The still image in Figure 13 is found in a film shot during Munindra's 1977 trip to the United States (Vimalaramsi 2006: 1:16).

²⁸⁷ WAI241.

²⁸⁸ WAI242.

past—one might even say swept under the rug—with Munindra at a safe distance in India.²⁸⁹ One additional detail emerges in the same account from which most of these details are drawn: The young woman Munindra became involved with had been a victim of sexual abuse as a child. In this telling, the young woman was vulnerable because of that history; it left her open to the kind of entanglement she found herself in with Munindra. This is, of course, only a secondary account of this woman's history. We don't have access to her account and cannot confirm that she was abused. Still, the chilling fact remains that many survivors of sexual abuse in religious contexts do have a history of abuse. This is one reason that sexual violations in relationships of trust—such as a student–teacher relationship in the context of a meditation retreat—are so harmful. Such violations reenact previous psychological dynamics and retraumatize.²⁹⁰ This key detail in the account of Munindra's transgression draws our attention to the effaced voice of a survivor, a voice floating in the background of a narrative of a revered meditation teacher.

In thinking about the needs of the young IMS founders in this moment, it is perhaps noteworthy that this incident did not bring them to cut ties with Munindra completely, as had been done with Robert Hover. There were different kinds of investments in Munindra's identity, and he was too deeply embedded in the narratives of the IMS founding to be completely removed from them. But there was a need for distance. While Munindra continued to be invoked as an authorizing identity, he remained in India and many of his students simply no longer sought out contact with him.²⁹¹ These events also led some of the young teachers at the IMS to feel the need to rely more directly on the source of traditional Burmese monastic *vipassanā*, and they looked to the Mahāsi Sayādaw's famous pupil, U Paṇḍita, for his authoritative imprimatur. This was also a time when many of Munindra's American students began to turn to Dīpa Mā—one of Munindra's prize Indian students—as a teaching source.²⁹² In the years that followed, U Paṇḍita

²⁸⁹ These issues and others like them did eventually lead to the formulation of a code of sexual ethics at the IMS, the development of which was spearheaded by Jack Kornfield. On this code and how it evolved in the decades following its initial development, see Gleig and Langenberg (forthcoming). It is also noteworthy that this troubled incident of Munindra's sexual transgression was not treated in any way in a 2010 hagiography of Munindra (Knaster and Pryor 2010).

²⁹⁰ I am grateful to Amy Langenberg for providing me with much of the language used here to express the situation of survivors of sexual abuse.

²⁹¹ WAI241. Munindra did remain an important teaching staple of the Antioch Buddhist Studies program in Bodh Gaya until the end of his life.

²⁹² On the life of Dīpa Mā, see Schmidt 2005.

visited the IMS several times, and this tie to the monastic Mahāṣī lineage became an even more primary mode of identity for the community that coalesced around the meditation center.

Despite these various developments, the leadership of the Insight Meditation Society has never fully embraced an institutional vision that puts monastics at the center of its activities, as is the case within the Mahāṣī Sayādaw lineage in Burma. And it remains difficult to understand the concept of a secularized American insight meditation tradition emergent in this moment—with a lay leadership and a lay orientation—without understanding the powerful influence of U Ba Khin's students, and the long association of Goenka and Munindra, on the context of the founding and development of the Insight Meditation Society.

Jack Kornfield represents a somewhat different approach to the dilemma of authority, a dilemma that was in part instigated by Goenka's critique of the IMS project. While Goldstein and Salzberg were primarily reared in the post-colonial Indian context under the limited influence of the lay teachers Munindra and Goenka and their Burmese lineages, Kornfield spent a number of years in Southeast Asia in monastic settings and explored a wide variety of practice traditions. He thus paradigmatically represents the American eclecticism that staunch lineage holders such as Sayama and Goenka were allergic to, and opposition to which led to the splintering of U Ba Khin's global team.

The public enactment of this mode of positioning authority appears starkly in Kornfield's 1977 collection *Living Buddhist Masters*, a volume containing the teachings of twelve of the most influential meditation teachers of the modern Theravāda tradition. By exhibiting his broad exposure to a variety of teaching and practice models, and at times displaying his personal connections to the individual teachers and his monastic experience, Kornfield was able to set himself up as a self-standing authority—with the experience, broad perspective, and innovative thinking to fully comprehend but also look beyond the spectrum of teachings of his Asian teachers.

It is important to point out, however, that in the process of presenting these Asian teachers to an anglophone North American public, Kornfield in some cases quite seriously distorts—or performs an apologetic gloss of—their teachings. The case of Kornfield's representation of U Ba Khin's teachings is exemplary in this regard, and it points to the initial stages in a long process of deliberate effacements enacted by modern North American meditation teachers. In 1977, Kornfield writes the following of U Ba Khin (my emphasis):

As one penetrates more and more deeply into the nature of reality by observing *anicca* closer and closer to the actual state of impermanence, there arises a different mode, a different “element” (the literal meaning of *dhatu*) that on the most basic level of being comes into contact with defilement and uproots it. This is a rough conceptualization of a *process that U Ba Khin well knew was inexplicable* but capable of being experienced. His own descriptions of it are similarly *metaphoric*:

With the awareness of the truth of *anicca* (impermanence) and/or suffering and/or non-self, he (the student) develops in him what we may call the sparkling illumination of *nibbana dhatu*, a power that dispels all impurities or poisons, the products of bad actions, which are the sources of his physical and mental ills. *In the same way as fuel is burnt away by ignition, the negative forces (impurities or poisons) within are eliminated by the nibbana dhatu*, which he generates with the true awareness of *anicca* in the course of his meditation. [...] *A note of caution is necessary here.* When one develops *nibbana dhatu*, the impact of this *nibbana dhatu* upon the impurities and poisons within his own system *will create a sort of upheaval which must be endured*. This upheaval tends to increase the sensitivity of the radiation, friction, and vibration of the atomic units within.²⁹³

From U Ba Khin’s perspective, there is absolutely nothing inexplicable about the process described here. While he certainly used similes in his teaching—as many Buddhist teachers do—U Ba Khin’s descriptions of the process of purification were not metaphoric, as Kornfield would have it. These are concrete truths that can be directly experienced, and the concepts presented here are the ones that U Ba Khin used to explain them. While this practice model may indeed “seem imprecise in the most technical Buddhist sense or in modern scientific precision,”²⁹⁴ as Kornfield suggests, it was not an attempt to explain the inexplicable or gloss the ineffable with metaphoric language. Kornfield’s own writings and teachings are much more in line with such modes of explanation/obfuscation. Kornfield also shoots wide of the mark when he suggests that U Ba Khin “was not really interested in any theoretical framework of Dhamma.”²⁹⁵ Indeed, as we have shown above, U Ba Khin had significant knowledge of Buddhist texts and Abhidhamma. Like the other teachers in his lineage, he synthesized such theories with his own more local theory and went to quite a bit of effort to demonstrate that his

²⁹³ Kornfield 2007 [1977]: 242–243 [237].

²⁹⁴ Kornfield 2007 [1977]: 241–242 [236].

²⁹⁵ Kornfield 2007 [1977]: 242 [236].

practice models conformed to traditional Buddhist theoretical models, even if for him the proof was already there in a direct experience.

But hinted at here in the reference to U Ba Khin's lack of "scientific precision" is another line of authority building at play in Kornfield's story at this key moment in history, one that cannot be separated from the story of Robert Hover as well as another of Goenka's students, Daniel Goleman, and a series of late capitalist therapeutic appropriations of Asian traditions taking place at this time.²⁹⁶ In October of 1977, Kornfield was awarded a PhD from the Humanistic Psychology Institute (now Saybrook University)—founded in 1971 and accredited through the California State University, Sonoma—for his dissertation "The Psychology of Mindfulness Meditation."²⁹⁷ This phenomenological study of Mindfulness Meditation, using data collected from over two hundred students on meditation retreats in America, followed Robert Hover's early calls for the scientific study of the phenomenology of *vipassanā*. In a different vein, however, it brought the frames of humanistic psychology and therapeutic possibility—in line with research by others such as Daniel Goleman and Ram Dass—to bear on the data.²⁹⁸ This research set the stage for a range of developments that have radically altered the landscape of modern global Buddhist meditation traditions, particularly within the realm of medicine and mental health.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁶ See, for example, Goleman 1971, 1972a, 1972b, 1973, 1975, 1976, and Benson 1975. On the role of physical yoga traditions in the development of notions of Asian therapeutic models, see Alter 2004.

²⁹⁷ Kornfield 1977.

²⁹⁸ On how traditions of existential phenomenology developed into those of humanistic psychology in the twentieth century to allow for Buddhist mindfulness to morph into cognitive behavioral therapies, see Felder et al. 2014. On this issue, see also Hickey 2019, and Helderman 2019.

²⁹⁹ The Dhamma discourses of Sayāgyi U Ba Khin (U Ba Khin n.d. [1962?]) reveal a context very much concerned with deploying meditation in general and his powers as a unique teacher in particular in the service of healing both physical and mental illness. Pace Braun (2013: 165), such healing practices were constitutive of the *vipassanā* teachings of U Ba Khin (and Goenka). It is difficult to properly account for the therapeutic models developed among insight meditation communities in North America and Europe without fully understanding the early Burmese context of U Ba Khin's small meditation center. It is also clear at this point that Robert Hover's early engagement (see Hover 1966) with such issues has not been properly acknowledged or accounted for in modern scholarship.

श्री राठीजी द्वारा प्रेषित मेडिकल रिपोर्ट :-				
(साधना के पूर्व)		(साधना के पश्चात)		
नवम्बर ७१ / फरवरी ७२		मार्च ७२ / अप्रैल ७२		
१) वजन	७० किलो	७० किलो	६७.५ किलो	६९ किलो
२) छाती	३४ इंच	३४ इंच	३५ इंच	३५ इंच
३) सिरदर्द	काफी	काफी	कम	नहीं
४) पेट	३८ इंच	३८ इंच	३६ इंच	३४ इंच
५) कमरका दर्द	काफी	काफी	कम	कम
६) ब्लडप्रेसर	MMHG ९/१३.५	९०/१३०	७०/१२०	७०/११०
(६ अ) पल्स	७४	७४	७२	७२
७) नींद	कम	ठीक	अच्छी	अच्छी
८) पाइल्स	आपरेशन जरूरी	१५%कम	३०%कम	५०%कम
९) कब्जियत	अजीर्ण आदत	२५%सुधार	४०%सुधार	६०%सुधार
१०) हाइड्रोसिल साईज	३' ३" x २' ३"	३" x २"	३' x ५ १/२"	३' x १ १/२"
११) पेशाब (रात को कितनी बार)	४/५	३	२/३	२/३
१२) पांव पर सूजन	+२	+१	+०.५	+०.३
१३) आयु ५६ साल (जन्मदिन २६-११-१९१६).				

Figure 14: *Vipāśyanā (Sādhakoṃ kā māsiḥ prerṇāpatra)* 1.12 (May 1972), showing the health reports of a meditator, “Śrī Rāṭhījī,” before and after practicing *vipāśyanā*

We cannot go into the details of these developments here, but it is important to note for our purposes that they—like so much else that has been discussed here—cannot be separated entirely from the influences of U Ba Khin and his students.³⁰⁰ The modes of authority available to the young founders of the Insight Meditation Society heavily constrained what was possible as they developed their own missions to spread the teachings of the Buddha in America. Possibilities for an unprecedented eclecticism contributed to the development of new approaches to and new conceptualizations of the teachings, while at the same time traditional models needed to be revered and acknowledged. This process was tied up with the necessity of demonstrating

³⁰⁰ For another general narration of some of the aspects at work here, see Braun 2013: 162–167, particularly 164. Note that Kornfield emphasizes that “from the very beginning we offered the practices of both Mahāsi Sayādaw and U Ba Khin, with Ruth Denison and John Coleman leading retreats.” (Braun 2013: 164) The absence of the mention of Robert Hover here is noteworthy. Jeff Wilson’s book *Mindful America* (2014) presents some useful outlines of how the practice of mindfulness has taken various forms in America. Unfortunately, like pretty much everyone else, he does not properly account for the background of these traditions, namely, the actors and historical interests being discussed here.

authority, whether as a lineage holder in a specific tradition of practice or multiple traditions of practice, or as a New Age therapist with all the tools that a budding (and experimental) humanistic psychology had to offer. It is the overlay of these two modes of authority that has led to the puzzling hybrid notion of “East–West Psychology” in contemporary times.³⁰¹

The marriage of and tension between these modes of authority—along with the historical and cultural assumptions that give rise to such modes—is constitutive of modern North American/globalized Buddhist meditation, and it is difficult to understand many of the developments, conceptions, misunderstandings, and problems of modern meditation communities and traditions without coming to terms with the cultural, historical, and conceptual overlays that emerge from this historical moment.³⁰² This played out among the founders of the Insight Meditation Society in a way that is foreshadowed by Kornfield’s above-quoted 1977 distortion of U Ba Khin’s teaching, and it finds no clear resolution in modern American understandings of insight meditation. Kornfield highlights the issue in describing (in 2015) a rift that took place between himself and his two long-term IMS co-teachers:

“Joseph and Sharon turned back to this Burmese teacher [U Paṇḍita] whose great emphasis was effort and striving,” he recalls. “That wasn’t good for most Western students. It triggered their feelings of self-judgment and unworthiness very strongly. So I felt it was important to continue to build on the things we’d learned in the West, rather than turning back to the traditional way.”³⁰³

This emphasis on “the things we’d learned in the West,” which is in part an invocation of Kornfield’s own authority (over and above his traditionalist colleagues), having a PhD in Humanistic Psychology and as a psychotherapist, marks a historical moment when meditation has become fully extracted and scientized such that traditional modes of authority have much less weight than they once did.³⁰⁴ But the overlay of both modes of authority

³⁰¹ For an insightful take on some of the issues entailed in this process, see Huntington 2015.

³⁰² A particularly striking example of this issue can be seen in the research of Willoughby Britton and Jared Lindahl. See, for example, Lindahl et al. 2017 and Lindahl et al. 2014.

³⁰³ Silberman 2015 (www.lionsroar.com/jack-kornfield-wise-heart-november-2010 [accessed on Sept. 1, 2018]).

³⁰⁴ On such modes of authorization, Lorenz Trein writes: “The idea of ‘science’ now enjoys high prestige, and the conspicuous consumption of science—whether through products that are read as indexical of scientific literacy (books, university degrees) or through the display of apparently advanced technology—has effects similar to those of other adorning possessions that elevate their owners’ status. In the field of alternative spiritualities, the conspicuous consumption of science is everywhere.

remains, even if this inbuilt hybridity of modern globalized meditation traditions is now difficult to see. It will be a challenging process to fully come to terms with our current situation unless practitioners, historians, and scholars of various stripes can properly acknowledge these constitutive forces when encountering modern practices and institutions that emerge from such forces. This process also involves acknowledging to the best of our ability both the strategic and unconscious erasures produced by current regimes of historical memory.³⁰⁵ While I am sympathetic to historical analyses that seek to recover the culture of encounter and mutual exchange which is an important part of these historical processes, I also think it is high time that scholars desist from soft-pedaling the implications of the power imbalances that have structured such exchanges and continue to structure much of the academic work being done on these histories.

d) Fallout in Asia

While developments within the early communities of insight meditation practitioners in North America and Europe in the 1970s and 1980s are historically important for understanding many aspects of modern globalized insight and mindfulness teachings, emphasis on these traditions in many ways takes us away from what I consider to be a more important—or at least more interesting—story. While the voices of North American teachers in the

Some of the most successful authors of New Age material are those who can display PhD titles from prestigious academic institutions on the dust jacket[.]” (Yelle and Trein [eds] 2020: 66)

³⁰⁵ Perhaps emblematic of how far we have not come since that time is Bhikkhu Anālayo’s recent critique of the American insight meditation teacher Daniel Ingram (Anālayo 2020). In the recently established journal *Mindfulness*, the venerable Anālayo enacts a methodologically troubled takedown of Daniel Ingram’s claims to attainment by recourse to traditional Buddhist textual formulations. That the enactment of such crypto-theological debates—driven by the internal politics of American insight communities and identities—now takes place in a scientific journal and is sanctioned by peer review is a remarkable testament to the strange hybrid worlds in which Buddhist meditations, ancient and modern, now get constructed. For reasons such as these, I am also somewhat dubious of projects such as those of Ann Gleig (2019), who suggests that we might theorize Buddhism in America “beyond modernity.” It is noteworthy in this connection that Gleig’s theoretical approach tacitly—perhaps even unconsciously—reenacts Kornfield’s deliberate cultural effacements, which are accompanied by an implicit (neo-)colonialist disdain for the Asian cultural perspectives of teachers such as U Ba Khin and S.N. Goenka (Kornfield 2007: 32–39; Gleig 2019a: 138). The works of Ira Helderman (2019) and Wakoh Shannon Hickey (2019) enact similar unconscious erasures.

IMS tradition have been very loud—through their best-selling books and slick marketing—a much quieter set of developments has been largely responsible for the growth and spread of access to the teachings of traditional Burmese insight meditation around the world. With little fanfare, S. N. Goenka continued to teach U Ba Khin's methods to large numbers of students who came to India to learn meditation. And in the years that followed the founding of the Insight Meditation Society in Massachusetts, he developed numerous teaching bases throughout India and beyond the subcontinent, in other Asian countries and in North America, Europe, and Australia. But how Goenka developed his teaching was unique, and the choices he made were colored by his schismatic past with his young American students, as well as a conflict with one of his own teachers that had a lasting impact on his identity as a meditation teacher.

In the physical absence of U Ba Khin, who died in 1971, Goenka looked to Mother Sayama (whose husband U Chit Tin was also a close disciple of U Ba Khin), as his teacher and guide in Burma. It appears that he simply followed her lead when she decided to sideline his co-teachers in America, and he continued to send his deserving students to Burma for advanced training with her and several of his other Burmese co-students. But not long after Hover and Denison became casualties of Sayama's censure, Goenka also found himself in her crosshairs. This next key schismatic moment occurred four years after Hover and Denison's formal ouster, in August of 1981. This time the conflict came about in the wake of several visits to India by Mother Sayama and her involvement with her husband in the establishment of an IMC satellite center in the United Kingdom in 1978/1979.

Key in the development of this conflict was Mother Sayama coming out of Burma and getting more directly involved in the activities of the community that Goenka had been building in India. A notice in the monthly Hindi-language *Vipaśyanā* newsletter (of October 1978) announces Mother Sayama's first trip outside of Burma³⁰⁶:

³⁰⁶ *Vipaśyanā* 8.4 (October 15, 1978): 3.

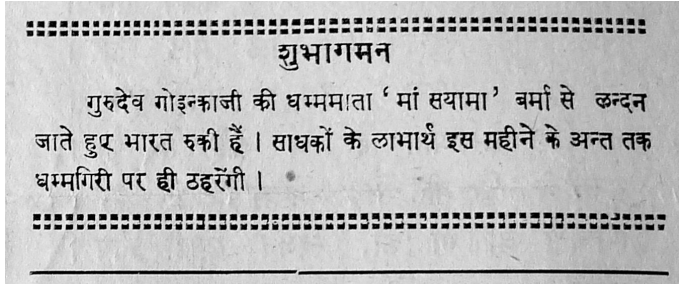


Figure 15: Announcement of Mother Sayama's first trip to India in the *Vipasyana* newsletter

Happy Arrival: Gurudev Goenkaji's Dhamma-mother, "Mother Sayama," will be stopping in India on her way from Burma to London. For the benefit of meditators, she will stay at Dhammagiri until the end of this month.

An announcement of Sayama's next visit to India can be found in the November issue of *Vipasyana*³⁰⁷:

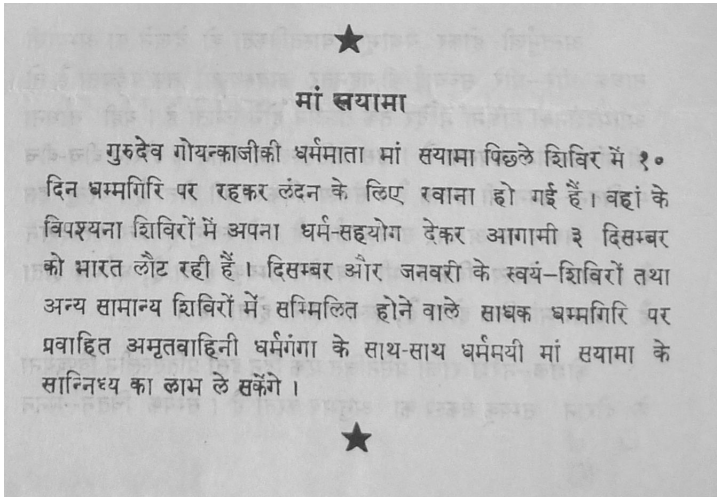


Figure 16: Announcement in the *Vipasyana* newsletter of Mother Sayama's second trip to India

Mother Sayama: Having stayed at Dhammagiri for 10 days during the last course, Gurudev Goenkaji's Dharma-mother, Mother Sayama, has departed for London. After giving her Dharma-support (*dharma-sahayog*) on *vipasyana* courses there, she will be returning to India this coming third

³⁰⁷ *Vipasyana* 8.5 (November 14, 1978): 3.

of December. The meditators who gather for this December and January's self course as well as other regular courses will be able to get the benefit of the presence (*sānnidhya*) of the embodiment of Dharma (*dharmamayī*), Mother Sayama, along with the streaming flow of nectar of the sacred river of Dharma (*dharma-Gāṅgā*) at Dhammagiri.

Two things stand out here. First, in both of these announcements, Sayama is referred to as "the Dharma-mother of respected Guru (Gurudev) Goenkaji." These public historical documents attest to the deep faith that Goenka and the early community around him in India had for Mother Sayama. They are also explicit in revealing how Sayama was understood at the time to be Goenka's teacher and superior. In many of his speeches and writings, throughout his life, Goenka referred to Sayāgyi U Ba Khin as his "Dhamma-father." The parallel use of the term "Dharma-mother" in these announcements indicate that, at least until 1981, Goenka and his community of meditators in India looked to Burma, to Mother Sayama, as a teacher and an authority in matters of Dhamma/Dharma.³⁰⁸

The second noteworthy aspect here is the way that the second announcement highlights how Mother Sayama's very presence (*sānnidhya*) will bring benefit to meditators. This takes us back to the teaching contexts of Sayāgyi U Ba Khin discussed above, in which he would use Sayama and her psychic powers to create a powerful forcefield to protect meditators from harmful supernormal forces and help push them to *nibbāna*. This aspect of Sayama's role in the tradition gets publicly accentuated here when she is described as "*dharmamayī*": "constituted by Dharma" or "the embodiment of Dharma." We see here how the tradition very explicitly placed at its center powerful teachers whose very presence was integral to the process of meditative development.

The notion of Sayama's special abilities comes out even more clearly in an announcement in the April 1979 *Vipaśyanā* newsletter³⁰⁹:

³⁰⁸ See *Vipassana Newsletter* 18.6 (18 June, 2008), in which Goenka expresses gratitude to Sayama after nearly three decades of silence about her: "I am profoundly grateful to my Dhamma father, revered Sayagyi U Ba Khin, who gave me a new birth in Dhamma. I am also grateful to my Dhamma mother Daw Mya Thwin, to my companions and supporters in the field of Dhamma: Prof. U Ko Lay, U Ba Po, U Tint Yee and fellow-writer, U Pargu."

³⁰⁹ *Vipaśyanā* 8.10 (April 12, 1979): 2.

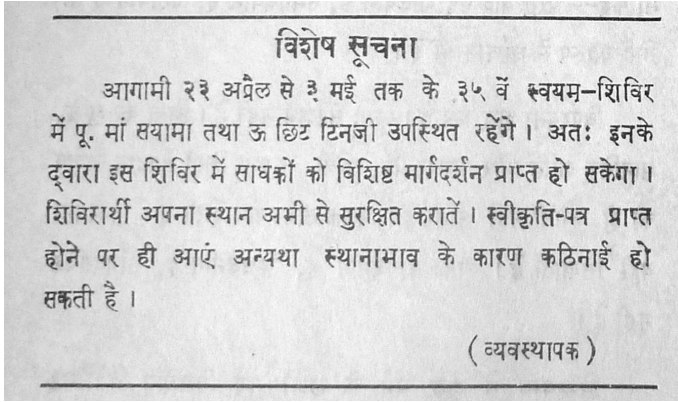


Figure 17: Announcement in the *Vipaśyanā* Newsletter indicating the possibility of getting “special guidance” from Mother Sayama and U Chit Tin during a meditation course at Dhammagiri, Igatpuri in April of 1979

Special Notice: From the coming 23rd of April to the 3rd of May, in the 35th self-course, Mother Sayama and respected U Chit Tin will be present. So, meditators on this course will be able to obtain special guidance (*mārgadarśan*) from them. Those seeking to join the course should make a reservation immediately. Please come only upon receiving an acceptance letter. Otherwise there may be difficulty on account of lack of space. (Registrar)

Another reason for Sayama’s visits to India, which is not evident in the public record, involved mysterious problems being faced in the development of S.N. Goenka’s meditation centers in India. Apparently, building projects—such as the construction of the main gate—at Goenka’s main center, Dhammagiri, had stagnated, and strange noises had been heard at the new center in Jaipur, Dhammathali. Informants explained to me that these problems were attributed by Goenka to supernormal anti-Dharma forces attempting to obstruct his mission.³¹⁰ So, one of the primary reasons for Sayama’s first visit to India was to help strengthen the “cover” at Dhammagiri and Dhammathali through her physical presence, and the ritual banishment of such forces. The need for such support shows S. N. Goenka’s continued reliance on his Burmese teachers, embodied and disembodied. It also reveals how Mother Sayama’s identity as a teacher with unique supernormal powers was integral to her role within the growing global community of *vipassanā* meditation practitioners in the lineage of Sayāgyi U Ba Khin.

³¹⁰ IAI231 and IAI232.

Goenka-ji and Mata-ji are planning to travel to Europe this summer. They will be accompanied by Mother Sayama as her visas and travel documents permit. The following schedule is *tentative*. Students should write ahead for availability of space and confirmation of course dates.

July 1–11 Gallion, France	Mme. Claude Peltier Federation Francaise de Yoga
July 14–24 Plaige, France	3 Rue Aubriot Paris 75004, France Tel: (01) 278-0305
July 26–August 5 Switzerland	Jim and Margrit Shannon (after March 5) 3033 Wohlei Wohlen, Switzerland Tel: (031) 82-18-84
August 7–September 9 Three courses Oxford, England	Susan & Graham Owens 14 Send Road Caversham Reading, Berks. England

Figure 18: *Vipassana Newsletter* of December 1978, announcing S. N. Goenka's first trip outside the Indian subcontinent since the beginning of his mission, along with the aspiration that he will be joined by Mother Sayama

Supportive connections between S.N. Goenka in India and Mother Sayama and others in Burma were maintained into the early 1980s. John Coleman, the one American left from U Ba Khin's original global team—who somehow was able to stay in Sayama's good graces throughout his life—likewise worked to help develop the new IMC meditation center in England.³¹¹

³¹¹ It is necessary to note that one informant (WAI242) involved in the leadership of Gaia House—a meditation center in the United Kingdom—noted that John Coleman propositioned a female Gaia House staff member after conducting a meditation course there in the 1980s. He was asked never to return.

आगामी शिविर

शिविर क्रमांक : १७१ हैद्राबाद (बि. अं. सा. कें.) दि. ४-१-८० से १४-१-८० तक (हिंदी)
 सम्पर्क : श्री रतीमल एम. मोहता द्वारा विषयना अन्तरराष्ट्रीय साधना केन्द्र, कुसुम नगर, हैद्राबाद-५०००३५ (ऑ. ग.) फोन ५९२५९

पुष्प गुफजी का स्वयं-शिविर : इगतपुरी दि. १९-१-८० से ३०-१-८० तक (प्रतिबंधित) (केवल स्वीकृति-प्राप्त पुराने साधकों के द्वारा)
 शिविर क्रमांक : १७२ दि. १-२-८० से १२-२-८० तक (अंग्रेजी)
 लघु शिविर : इगतपुरी दि. १२-२-८० से १७-२-८० तक (मां सयामा के संरक्षण व निर्देशन में)

सम्पर्क : व्यवस्थापक, विषयना विश्व विद्यापीठ, धम्मगिरि, इगतपुरी-४२२४०३ (नासिक-महाराष्ट्र) फोन : इगतपुरी ७६.

सूचना : १) कृपया साधना शिविर में शामिल होने से पूर्व शिविर-स्ववस्थापक के पास अपना नाम रजिस्टर करा लें। किसी कारणवशा शिविर में सम्मिलित न हो सकते हों तो कृपया पर्याप्त समय रहते सूचित करें ताकि किसी अन्य प्रत्याशी को स्वीकृति दी जा सके।
 २) अंग्रेजी शिविर में हिन्दी-प्रवचन सुनने लिए हिन्दी टेप की सुविधा उपलब्ध रहती है।
 ३) शिविरों के नियम कड़े होते हैं। उनका कड़ाई से पालन कर सकें तो ही भाग लेना चाहिए।

Figure 19: *Vipaśyanā* 96/7 (January 2, 1980), listing a three-day short course to be taught in February of 1980 in Igatpuri, “under the protection and direction of Mother Sayama” (*Mām Sayāmā ke samrakṣaṇ va nirdeśan meṃ*)

But in 1981, as the center in England began to develop and S.N. Goenka had begun regularly teaching courses outside of India—in North America, France, Switzerland, Japan, and Australia—a falling out occurred between Sayama and Goenka. Up until early 1981, no clear public signs of conflict appear. There are even signs of cordial cooperation. An announcement in the January 1981 issue of *Vipaśyanā* brings news of U Chit Tin’s visit to Goenka’s main center in Igatpuri to teach a retreat³¹²:

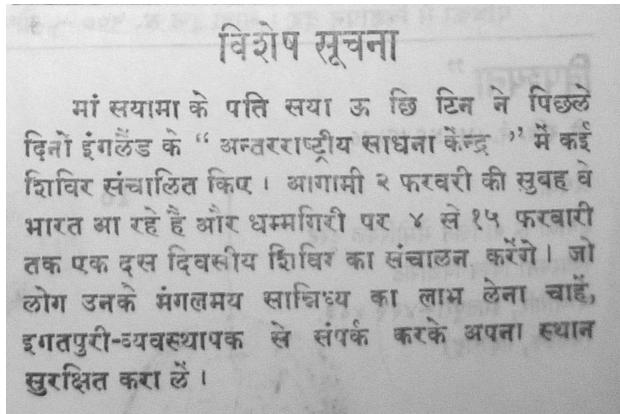


Figure 20: Announcement in the *Vipaśyanā* newsletter of the “auspicious presence” of U Chit Tin at Dharmagiri, Igatpuri, in February of 1981

Special Notice: Mother Sayama’s husband, Teacher (Sayā) U Chit Tin, has been conducting some courses at the “International Meditation Centre” of England in recent days. On the morning of the coming 2nd of February,

³¹² *Vipaśyanā* 10.8 (Jan. 20, 1981): 3.

he will be coming to India and will conduct a ten-day course from the 4th to the 15th of February at Dhammagiri. Whoever would like to get the benefit of his auspicious presence (*mangal-maya sānnidhya*) should contact the Igatpuri registrar in order to reserve their place.

And the February edition of the newsletter informs readers of Goenka's plan to visit the original IMC meditation center in Rangoon, where Sayama remained in charge, so that he and his students might get the benefit of the Dharma-atmosphere there³¹³:

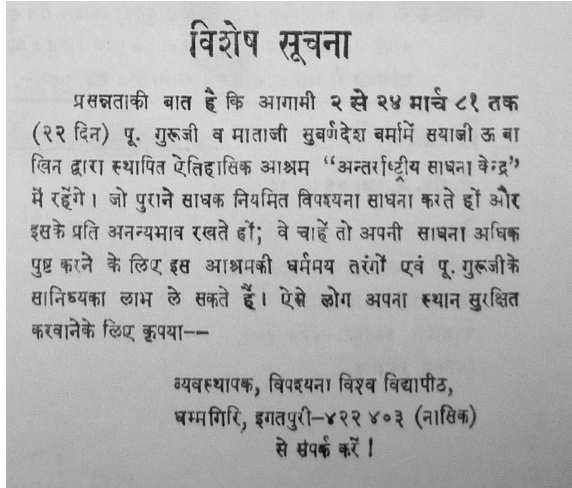


Figure 21: Announcement in the February 1981 *Vipaśyanā* newsletter of a planned visit by S.N. Goenka and his wife to the original International Meditation Centre in Rangoon

Special Notice: We are pleased to announce that this coming March, from the 2nd to the 24th (22 days) of 1981, [our] respected teacher (Pūjya Gurujī) and Mātājī will stay at “The International Meditation Center,” the historical ashram established by Sayājī U Ba Khin in Burma, the land of Gold. If they like, those old meditators who exclusively practice *vipaśyanā* and have no other affiliation/are entirely devoted to it (*ananyabhāva*), in order to develop their meditation further, can get the benefit of the ashram's pure dharmic vibrations (*dharmamaya taramṅom*) along with [our] respected teacher's (Pūjya Gurujī) presence. Such people, in order to reserve their place, should please contact the registrar at Vipaśyanā International Academy, Dhammagiri, Igatpuri, 422 403 (Nasik).

³¹³ *Vipaśyanā* 10.9 (February 18, 1981): 3.

Noteworthy here is the reference to the special supportive vibrations (*taramga*) at the original meditation center in Burma, to be complemented by Goenka's equally special presence (*sānnidhya*). Finally, the March 1981 *Vipaśyanā* newsletter notes a short course at Dhammagiri in mid-April of 1981 to be conducted by S. N. Goenka, Mother Sayama, and U Chit Tin together³¹⁴:

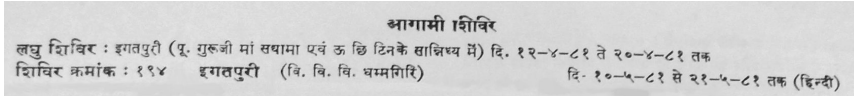


Figure 22: *Vipaśyanā* 10.10 (March 20, 1981), announcing a short course to be conducted by Goenka, Sayama, and U Chit Tin

Short course: Igatpuri (in the presence of respected Gururji, Mother Sayama, and U Chit Tin) from April 12, 1981 to April 20, 1981 [...]

These various public notices provide evidence of a great flurry of coordinated activity between 1978 and 1981 involving S.N. Goenka in India and Mother Sayama and U Chit Tin in Burma and the United Kingdom.³¹⁵ The founding of the first IMC satellite center outside of Asia in 1978/1979, the development of several new centers in India, Goenka's first "world tour"—to Europe, North America, and Australia—in 1979, and the prospect of additional centers in America, France, and Australia marked an unprecedented expansion of access to Burmese lay-taught insight meditation in Asia and the West.

But trouble was brewing. The first public signs of it can be seen in the English-language *Vipassana Newsletters* of Autumn 1980 ("The Financial Aspect of Organizing Meditation Courses") and Winter 1981 ("Future Courses"). Both of these newsletters contain information on S.N. Goenka's ideas about how all *vipassanā* courses should be run entirely on a donation basis, such that no one coming to take a course might be under any obligation to pay for the teachings or facilities provided on the course. Goenka's strong position on this issue emerged from his first experiences teaching courses

³¹⁴ *Vipaśyanā* 10.10 (March 20, 1981): 4.

³¹⁵ See also *Vipassana Newsletter* of Summer 1980: 1:

"News from I.M.C., Heddington: Two courses have been conducted by Mr. Coleman since the purchase of the Centre in November, 1979. Now Mother Sayama has joined Mr. Coleman for an ongoing program of courses this summer; forty people were on the first course April 11–21, Water Festival, with another course to follow April 21–May 1. Also Goenka-ji will be visiting July 28th and 29th. [...] There is no charge for courses as the Centre is run on a dana basis."

outside of Asia, where the course organizers were indeed at first compelled to ask for money from first-time students:

At the Vipassana meditation centres of the Sayagyi U Ba Khin Tradition, there are no charges at all, either for the teaching, the accommodations or food. [...] Of course, outside these Centres, organisers had been charging minimum fee which covered only the food, accommodations, and other costs. There was never any charge for the Teaching and no Teacher makes any kind of profit from the courses. [...] But any charging falls short of the high standards of pure Dhamma. After carefully considering the matter and with the experience of two world tours,³¹⁶ Goenkaji has come to an important Dhamma decision, which is that in the future, all courses conducted by him, whether in Centres of the U Ba Khin Tradition or at the outside camp sites, will be given completely free and without obligation of any kind.³¹⁷

The stance presented in these newsletters follows U Ba Khin's stipulation that money should not be taken from impure people—those who have not yet purified themselves through the practice of meditation—because taking such money might defile the atmosphere of the meditation space. However, the logic behind this injunction is not fully articulated in this initial public representation of Goenka's choice. The logic only becomes clear in a reading of one of U Ba Khin's letters to John Coleman about organizing courses in the United Kingdom (my emphasis):

Perhaps you know that the care-taker work of our Centre is done by a small group of my devoted disciples from the Accountant-General's Office. The strictest injunction is for any one of them not to show signs (not to speak of an appeal) for money required to keep the Centre going.³¹⁸ There is no admission or subscription fee or fixed donation payable by

³¹⁶ The first "world tour" was in the summer of 1979, when Goenka taught five courses, in France (with Sayama and U Chit Tin), Canada, and the United Kingdom. The second was in the summer of 1980, when Goenka taught several courses in Switzerland, North America, and Australia. The term "world tour" is somewhat misleading, since on both of these trips, Goenka only visited a few places in Europe and North America.

³¹⁷ *Vipassana Newsletter* Autumn 1980: 2.

³¹⁸ It is worth noting that today, and for many decades, signs indicating the cost of center maintenance and how much center projects cost are regularly put up at Goenka's centers around the world. This was apparently a common practice at the IMC in Rangoon as well. U Chit Tin wrote the following about U Ba Khin's approach to fundraising: "There was no appeal for any funds at any time from anyone. Whenever a project needs to be undertaken, a sign goes up on the notice board at the centre that there are plans to embark on a specific project. When people see the notice, they give *dāna* spontaneously. No one is allowed to go around collecting money." (Chit Tin [ed.] 1999: 54)

my disciples. If any disciple feels that, as a return for the gift of Dhamma, he or she should donate some thing in kind or cash, there is no objection. We accept aid only from disciples who have purified themselves with Vipassana meditation under me and *not from any other person*. The idea is not to allow my Centre to become polluted by aids from persons who have not yet undergone a process of purification of Mind with Vipassana meditation under my guidance. Who knows what is their source of income. We take no chances because we want the Centre to be developed on the foundation of Purity.³¹⁹

I would emphasize here how Goenka's position on donation and course maintenance presented in the newsletter excerpt above effaces the cosmological logic behind U Ba Khin's economic model. What is more, U Ba Khin's own practice at his center in Rangoon was not exactly in line with the approach outlined in the newsletter announcement presented above. In fact, U Ba Khin stated in a Dharma discourse given on the last day of one of his ten-day courses in the early 1960s that "I never tell people to donate here. I restrict one thing here, and that is not to ask for donations and a monthly fee. But meditators need to pay for the meals and maintenance charges, as I cannot afford it."³²⁰ The core issue at stake in these contexts does not appear to be a concern about economic principles, as it might appear from a de-contextualized reading of the newsletter. Instead, the primary concern of this model of donation was to control the quality and influence of the *dhāt* associated with the donations, which had the capacity to pollute the environment of the meditation center.

This concern, it seems, proved to be a key sticking point in a conflict that emerged between Goenka and Mother Sayama. The conflict became public in the international *Vipassana Newsletter* of Autumn of 1981, as will be shown below. But key events leading up to this moment took place in the summer of 1981. During his third set of courses outside of Asia, Goenka planned to first teach a course at a temporary location on the east coast of North America and then visit the United Kingdom to teach a course at the

³¹⁹ Ba Khin (24 April) 1969: 2. It is only in a subsequent newsletter (Autumn 1981)—as a response to tensions that had reached a breaking point—that an excerpt of this letter is reproduced and the cosmological logic behind the *dāna* model made publicly explicit.

³²⁰ U Ba Khin n.d. [1962?] 6.2: 30:45– 31:14 (translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart).

IMC satellite center in Heddington. He, John Coleman, and Mother Sayama with U Chit Tin were to respectively teach three back-to-back courses³²¹:

विदेशों में आगामी शिविर	
June 14-June 25 No. 196	Massachusetts. U. S. A. contact : Teri Keane, R. D. 1, Box 14a, Delhi, New York 13753 tel. 747-3749
July 3-July 14 No. 197	Wiltshire ENGLAND. contact : International Med.- Centre, Splatts House, Heddington, near Calne, Wiltshire SN11. OPE tel. 0380-850238
Aug. 13-Aug. 24 No. 199	Kyoto, JAPAN. contact : Steve Schmandt, 17 Zenami-cho, Mukaijima, Fushimi-ku, Kyoto 612. tel. (075) 621-4611
Sept. 1-Sept. 12 No. 200	California, U. S. A. contact : Dr. Jacques Tenzel, P. O. Box-1128, Mendocino 95460 tel. (707) 934-0485
Sept. 26-Oct. 7 No. 201	Sydney, AUSTRALIA. contact : Vipassana. Foundation, Box1685, North Sydney, 2060 N. S. W.
Oct. 9-Oct. 20 No. 202	Perth, AUSTRALIA. contact : Doug Solomon, 166 Marine Parade, Cottesloe 6011 W. A. tel. 384 0371

Figure 23: *Vipassyanā* 10.12 (May 18, 1981), announcing S.N.Goenka's teaching schedule for his third set of courses outside of Asia

Not long after these courses took place, with the four primary teachers of the tradition teaching back-to-back, an open conflict between Mother Sayama and S. N. Goenka emerged. According to most current accounts within Goenka's community of students, this conflict emerged over the question of how *vipassanā* courses were to be run with respect to donations and the remuneration of teachers. The story goes that while Goenka insisted that all

³²¹ *Vipassyanā* 10.12 (May 18, 1981): 3.

of his courses be run entirely on donations offered by previous students, Mother Sayama and U Chit Tin were open to a model in which fees were requested from new students for course requisites such as food, center maintenance, and the support of teachers. This *appears* to have been the pivot on which the developing conflict turned, and the difference in the donation-only structure of Goenka's centers and the maintenance-fee structure of the IMC centers in place today confirms that this was indeed a basic difference that historically set the two institutions apart. But the conflict may have been more complex than this, involving a range of possible issues. It is unclear to me exactly how the various aspects of the conflict played out in their entirety, and I look forward to a day when those directly involved will speak openly and honestly about all that transpired.³²² In terms of documentary evidence, the issue comes fully into the public eye in the Autumn edition of the English-language *Vipassana Newsletter* of 1981³²³:

³²² One of my informants (WAI234) noted that Goenka told all of his close students to never speak about the conflict.

³²³ *Vipassana Newsletter* (Berkeley, California) (Autumn 1981): 1 (news.dhamma.org/wp-content/uploads/1981-8-4-VNL-en-US.pdf).

A NOTICE OF CHANGE

Certain recent developments seem to Goenka-ji to be unacceptable, since they go contrary to his understanding of Dhamma and of the Teachings of Sayagyi U Ba Khin. Therefore he has regretfully decided henceforth to work separately.

In accordance with this decision, the Vipassana Newsletter will in future carry information about courses and other Dhamma activities of Goenka-ji only.

Those wishing to receive information about courses to be taught by Mother Sayama, Saya U Chit Tin, and John Coleman may contact Splatts House, Heddington near Calne, Wiltshire SN11 0PE, England.

In his teaching, Goenka-ji will continue to hold firm to the following Dhamma principles, which were always cherished by Sayagyi U Ba Khin:

- 1) that Centres and courses must be supported solely by the donations of grateful old students (dana);
- 2) that Teachers must not receive any remuneration for teaching Dhamma, nor use it as a means for personal gain;
- 3) that all emphasis in the Teaching be placed on the Eightfold Noble Path of Sila, Samadhi, Panna, which is practical, rational, logical, and producing tangible, here-and-now, concrete, beneficial results that can be verified objectively;
- 4) that students should take refuge in Dhamma, and not in any personality; that they should be encouraged to develop their own insight, and to rely on it;
- 5) that Dhamma should be presented in a way that is non-sectarian, and that it should be taken not as a religion but as an ideal way of life.

Figure 24: Notice in the *Vipassana Newsletter* of Autumn 1981, announcing the parting of ways of S.N. Goenka and his co-teachers at the International Meditation Centre

This “Notice of Change” indicates an official and irrevocable split between Goenka and his other co-teachers at the International Meditation Centre. And while the standard story of Goenka and his followers focuses particularly on points 1 and 2 mentioned here—usually articulated in ways that paint Sayama and U Chit Tin as corrupt and greedy—in historical perspective it appears that points 3 through 5 have the most salience for how the lineage develops under Goenka’s singular guidance. Most importantly, these points clearly target a particular person: Mother Sayama. Points four and five are particularly telling, since apparently many students were enamored of Sayama’s psychic powers, and her unabashed Buddhist identity clearly created problems in a post-colonial India staunchly opposed to Buddhism. It

is telling in this regard that no such notice of change was issued in the Hindi-language *Vipaśyanā* newsletter. We might speculate that Goenka did not feel the need to make the conflict known to his Indian publics, since most of the broader Indian community he was attempting to draw to his teachings were likely to consider him—and not his female, non-caste, and non-vegetarian Buddhist teacher—the true authority on a tradition that was after all simply the eternal heritage of India.

The swift response of Goenka's co-teachers at the International Meditation Centres in England and Burma explicitly highlights how taking "Dhamma" out of its Buddhist frame leads to wrong views about the Buddha's teachings:

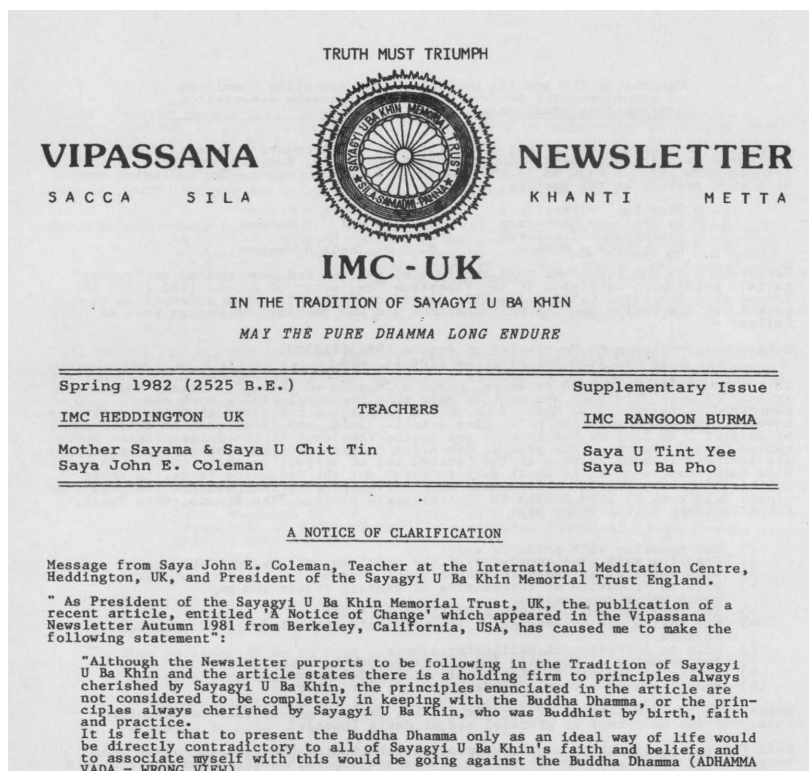


Figure 25: "Notice of Clarification" in the *Vipassana Newsletter* (IMC-UK), Spring 1982, responding to the "Notice of Change" issued in the Autumn 1981 *Vipassana Newsletter* (Berkeley, California)

This "Notice of Clarification"—formally authored by John Coleman but clearly written in collaboration with Mother Sayama and U Chit Tin—is

extensive. In addition to highlighting the fact that Sayāgyi U Ba Khin's original organization did actually charge dues to its members—and therefore ought not be conceived of as running on a donation (*dāna*) basis—it also pushes back against the key final point of Goenka's "Notice of Change": "5) that Dhamma should be presented in a way that is non-sectarian, and that it should be taken not as a religion but as an ideal way of life."

In socio-historical perspective, this appears to be the true crux of the issue that Goenka was up against. He had taken his teachers' teaching out of its Burmese Buddhist context and reframed it for a largely Hindu audience in post-colonial India. Now one of them emerged from Burma wearing her Buddhist identity as a badge of honor, brazenly wielding her power and authority and encroaching on Goenka's authority over community and institutional frameworks that he had spent a decade carefully constructing. Implicitly suggesting that Mother Sayama and U Chit Tin were corrupt and parochial by invoking the authority of Sayāgyi U Ba Khin, Goenka was able to establish himself as the preeminent student of his "Dhamma-father" while at the same time justifying the action of turning his back on his "Dhamma-mother."

As can be seen in the following retrospective account, Goenka was clearly deeply conflicted about this choice. And as we will also see further on, it appears that this deep internal conflict—and the rhetoric and power moves employed to resolve it both for himself and for his community of students—became the driving force behind many of the subsequent choices he made as he continued as an institution builder in the years following his conflict with Mother Sayama.

While the stance that Goenka and his community take in the "Notice of Change" is forceful and appears to constitute a coherent set of Buddhist modernist principles that might be the basis for a modern universalist approach to Buddhist (or non-Buddhist) meditation, I would highlight how the rhetoric employed here is largely aimed at solving a particular problem in a particular historical moment: the problem of Mother Sayama. What is more, it is in fact quite out of step with what Goenka and his students were themselves in fact engaging in at the level of practice. We have seen intimations of such engagements above, but the issue comes starkly into relief in Goenka's own retrospective account of the key schismatic moment of the summer of 1981:

I was on a world tour to conduct courses. When I reached Japan, an important person [Mother Sayama] spread the rumour by phone that revered Sayagyi U Ba Khin had withdrawn his blessing and support to me; and that he would not even give *mettā* to me in courses. This message

made everyone nervous. I too felt that if this is true, I should not conduct any more courses. I felt that all courses in Japan and elsewhere should be cancelled and I should return home. We were staying in Dhamma daughter Sachiko's home. This unpleasant news has been spread by what seemed to be a reliable source. According to this news, since I was no longer a teacher in the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin, Sachiko could have told us to leave but she didn't. John Beary proposed to all the assembled meditators that the next course should not be cancelled. This message may have been spread out of ill will. He suggested that the course should be held and if *mettā* is found to be weak, then the remaining courses could be cancelled. The course was conducted and it was very successful. Everyone said that the *mettā* was even stronger than before. [...] Because of the success of this course, everyone including me was convinced that Sayagyi's *mettā* and blessing were definitely with me.³²⁴

The need to affirm a direct connection to the person of U Ba Khin here is striking, and it appears at odds with the rhetoric of the "Notice of Change" presented above. This account suggests that a conviction to continue was reached through direct contact with the great master beyond the grave. Mother Sayama—as gatekeeper to U Ba Khin—needed to be psychically removed from the equation.

But another firsthand account of this moment and its fallout—from a British meditator who was at that time a young man working as a server at the IMC in England—describes additional attempts on the part of Goenka's close disciples to mediate the conflict between Mother Sayama and Goenka, even after this moment of missionary conviction at the meditation course in Japan:

I [had just] served one course with Sayama and U Chit Tin. And I wasn't aware of any problems until one day, a posse of Goenka students arrived straight from Japan [...] I can't remember exactly who they were. [...] They were all known as very senior students, and they looked very straight and proper. And they came bearing propitious flowers. I like to think chocolates, but I think it was probably just flowers. And they went up to Sayama and U Chit Tin. And they came down after a very short time, with very long faces. They said nothing. They dumped the flowers on our table [...] and they left. My understanding is that she just yelled at them. She was absolutely furious that they had the effrontery to come and talk to her. I know they'd come to try to heal whatever the problem was between her and Goenka. [...] It took me a while to work out what was going on

³²⁴ *Vipassana Newsletter (VRI Edition)* 18.6 (18 June, 2008): 1–3.

because no one would talk about anything. In fact, everyone was told not to talk about anything.³²⁵

But there was talk, of course, and people sought explanations. One account comes from Ken Streat, who visited the IMC center in England not long after the split occurred and found himself puzzled to find that all signs, pictures, or mention of Goenka had been removed from the center. When he asked the center manager about this, he was brought to U Chit Tin for an explanation:

“You see,” he said, “one time the Buddha was sitting outside in the forest and Mara come to him. You know Mara?” he asked. “Well, yes,” I said uneasily; Mara was the Buddhist equivalent of the devil.

U Chit Tin continued, “The Buddha is like a rock, and Mara he come and smash! [...] Smash! and nothing happen because the Buddha is like a rock. [...] But we are not strong like the Buddha. Eh? [...] Sometime Mara come and people fall. When people get...,” he hesitated, “too big, then Mara come and this is very bad. When Sayama come back to Splatt’s house this summer she feel very bad vibrations from Mara. She is not sleeping for many days! So now you understand?” he asked bluntly.

“Yes, I think I understand.” I said. I was getting the gist of it, but I found the fact that he had not mentioned Goenka rather odd.

Back in the office Don smoothly managed a more coherent explanation.

“We don’t like to talk about it Ken, but it seems that Goenka has become carried away by being a Guru. After his course here this summer, when Mother Sayama came back, she could not sleep for ten days. The vibrations were so bad in the house. Because of this she asked Goenkaji to stop giving such big courses, and to surrender to her as his teacher. She also asked him to start charging for courses as we do now, in order to dissuade the wrong people from attending. Unfortunately he has not complied with these conditions and Mother Sayama has said he can no longer be a teacher in the U Ba Khin tradition.”³²⁶

These two accounts provide a very particular reason for Mother Sayama’s choice to withdraw her support—and that of U Ba Khin—from Goenka. Goenka’s course at the IMC had been very large, and he had run into a number of difficulties during the course. On the sixth day, in the midst of the large crowd of meditators, one man accused Goenka of mind control and then publicly exited the retreat. On the eighth day, another meditator began hyperventilating. The heavy breathing eventually “exploded into a spine chilling, gut wrenching, extremely primal scream [...] [and the person]

³²⁵ WAI244.

³²⁶ Streat 2005: 157–158.

promptly keeled over and was hurriedly carried from the tent.”³²⁷ These challenges led Goenka to end the course a day early, and in Streat’s account of the course, Goenka seemed troubled by these events.³²⁸ When Mother Sayama returned to the center after Goenka’s course, she found herself deeply affected by the *dhāt* ‘ or “vibrations” there and took what she understood to be a disturbance of supportive forces to be the direct result of whatever had transpired on the course. She concluded that the large-scale courses Goenka had been carrying out were not conducive to developing the proper atmosphere of a dedicated center in the United Kingdom, and that an explicit strategy to deal with this problem should be developed.³²⁹

This response to the situation is very much in consonance with the model U Ba Khin used at the IMC in Rangoon, and it also fits with advice he gave to John Coleman about the early stages of teaching beyond Burma. U Ba Khin wrote: “you have to be careful in the selection of the first few students. No one should be taken who has physical or mental diseases.”³³⁰ But it also puts a different spin on U Ba Khin’s advice—also for *dhāt* ‘-oriented reasons—not to take money for courses from those who were not yet vibrationally purified. With her focus on bringing individual students to the final goal of the meditative path, Sayama found the mass meditation model and very large meditation courses that Goenka had been focused on worrisome. And her concerns were predicated on U Ba Khin’s theory of *dhāt* ‘, which stipulated the need to have the right psychic and material forces in force in retreat contexts to create the conditions for breakthrough to the nibbānic state. When Goenka did not submit to her orders, Sayama took it not only as an affront, but also as a sign that he himself had come under the influence of the wrong kinds of forces.

In the context of U Ba Khin’s teaching, one primary concern in this regard was the specter of Māra. The notion that teaching meditation involved counteracting *dhāt* ‘ that were against the Dhamma and working in the service of Māra was foundational to the visionary world in which U Ba Khin, Mother Sayama, and Goenka lived. In reproving Goenka’s students who came to try to make amends by “just yelling at them,” Mother Sayama enacted one of

³²⁷ Streat 2005: 151–152. See note 218 above on the role of screaming for practitioners in the context of U Ba Khin’s meditation model.

³²⁸ Streat 2005: 151.

³²⁹ In a private communication, Streat retrospectively interpreted this aspect of Mother Sayama’s experience as a reflection of psychological issues connected to her relationship with Goenka.

³³⁰ Ba Khin (April 24) 1969: 2.

Sayāgyi U Ba Khin's tried and true techniques for removing "forces of a lower order" from a meditation space (see note 218).

The interpretive approach that takes such cosmological or visionary concerns as foundational to the conflict gets further complicated by another detail. This detail comes from a secondary account put together from primary accounts of two close disciples of Goenka who were involved in trying to mediate the conflict. According to this account, in the process of rejecting overtures for mediation between her and Goenka, Mother Sayama invoked ethno-nationalist divisions, referring to Goenka disdainfully as "that black face." This is an invocation of the Burmese category of *kala*, a term that was used in Burma for both non-Burmese immigrants of South Asian origin as well as British colonialists.³³¹ In this detail, ethno-racial identity and cultural difference can be seen as key aspects of the divide between Goenka and Sayama. This distinction may also remind us of statements made by the Ledi Sayādaw in his *Rogantaradīpanī* about the challenges of creating a healthy and uniform community relationship with destructive nonhuman forces when large groups of foreigners are not in solidarity with such a relationship in urban Burmese colonial contexts.

It seems there may have been personal issues at play in the conflict as well. The same person who was present when Goenka's students came to assuage Mother Sayama provides a hint about possible interpersonal power dynamics and relational issues at play in the configuration of power between Goenka, Mother Sayama, and U Chit Tin:

The next summer [of 1982], Goenka did a course in France organized by Jean Claude See. [...] And I went in to talk to Goenka about it [the conflict between him and Mother Sayama]. We had just arrived. We were [...] shown in. [...] Goenka was in bed with his wife. [...] and we sat down and I asked him questions. [...] And I asked him very deliberately: "Look, Sayama's supposed to be an *anāgāmi*," you know. I didn't say he was a bodhisattva but that's what kind of was going around. "How can this happen? If you're such developed people, and you fall out like, you know, in this totally ridiculous unseemly way, it's not great for the rest of us. How can this be?" And he said, and I do remember this, but I don't remember [exactly] what he said of course. He basically said it was about U Chit Tin. He was not prepared to blame Sayama in any way, because he was very very devoted to her. He used to take refuge in her, as I'm sure you know, every morning. I mean, I used to listen to it. Every morning he took refuge in Sayama as well as U Ba Khin. And he said that he felt that U Chit Tin had come between them. And that U Chit Tin had a different

³³¹ Thant Myint-U 2001: 89–90.

agenda, and that he, Goenka, couldn't say anything about it or interfere. But he definitely said that. It's forty years ago, you know.³³²

What precisely the different agendas referred to here might have been remains unclear. Whatever they were, it should be evident at this point in our analysis—which no doubt remains quite partial—that the various social, personal, economic, cultural, cosmological, and psychological forces at work in this particular moment were multifaceted. It is challenging to come up with a single theoretical approach that might capture what went on. But one thing seems quite clear: the conflict between Goenka and Mother Sayama played out in the main within a visionary world that they shared, and that emerged from the practical ontological frames of U Ba Khin's teachings. A particular aspect of this visionary context is consequential in further complicating a simplistic socio-historical analysis of the conflict. While the conflict between Goenka and Mother Sayama may have been colored by cultural and personal differences, it seems that soteriological difference and a concomitant distinction in conceptions of community formation may have been the decisive factor at the end of the day. We find reference to this difference in a discussion of Mother Sayama's visionary framework for engaging with many of her students around the time of the conflict:

There was this thing. [...] Sayamagi picked people out and said she'd been with them [in past lives]. She was Mother Visākhā in the time of the Buddha. She had been Mother Visākhā. And she remembered it. And she'd find people who had meditated with her before. This was quite explicit. [...] And, you know, [these people were] whisked off to Burma. [...] She had all these people who she thought [were with her in the past], and she had these psychic powers. She believed entirely in the *nats*. [...] And she was very much what you would expect a middle-class Burmese housewife from that period to be, in terms of her beliefs.³³³

While this report characterizes Mother Sayama's visionary world as part of a normative Burmese middle-class outlook—to some extent dismissing her experiences as maladaptations of a common repertoire of Burmese Buddhist superstition—it is perhaps more instructive for the historian to understand that her outlook and behavior was foundational for and constitutive of the peculiarities of the small cult community that had developed around U Ba Khin in Rangoon. Goenka and many of U Ba Khin's other close students also participated in this visionary world, and they looked to Mother Sayama as an

³³² WAI244.

³³³ WAI244.

authority largely because they took seriously her access to *abhiññā* or supernormal psychic power. Many of them had witnessed her use such powers in teaching contexts to push students to the final goal of the path, and they took as veridical her visionary knowledge of the past and the future. Her self-identification as a rebirth of Mother Visākha, the famous lay disciple of the historical Buddha, was a central component of this visionary knowledge.

While Goenka certainly participated in this visionary world—and did so to the end of his life in ways that eventually alienated many of his students—Sayama’s explicit public enactment of this cultic meta-narrative threw a wrench into his missionary agenda. Reading the “Notice of Change” presented above with such issues in mind, it perhaps takes on a valence that one otherwise might not discern. Points 3 through 5 of that notice strongly emphasize that the teaching is: 3. “practical, rational, logical, [...] producing [...] beneficial results that can be verified objectively”; 4. “that students should take refuge in the Dhamma, not in any personality”; and 5. “that Dhamma [...] should be taken not as a religion.” I would suggest that these points explicitly take on the problem of Mother Sayama’s visionary, cultic, and Buddhist identities, respectively.

While this public disavowal set the stage for a rhetorical program that would have deep and lasting effects on Goenka’s community and its public image as it developed into a global institution, his own retrospective account of resolving the conflict by seeking a direct psychic connection to Sayāgyi U Ba Khin—an account that involved a number of his closest disciples who are today leaders of the community he built—tells a different story: A visionary solution solved a visionary problem. And this visionary process, virtually impossible to “verify objectively,” becomes foundational for the internal community validation of its mission. This process also explicitly relied on and involved the direct influence of the personality of a great Guru, and a dead one at that.³³⁴

³³⁴ The formal ritual vows that all meditation students take upon entering S.N. Goenka’s courses until the present day involve a “surrender” to the Buddha and the teacher of the course: *imāhaṃ, bhante, attabhāvaṃ jīvitaṃ ācariyassa pariccajāmi* (“I, good sir, surrender my person for life to the teacher.”). Strictly speaking, the teacher of any course in the Goenka tradition is both Sayāgyi U Ba Khin and Goenka. In Goenka’s “Teacher Self Courses,” which were reserved for his closest disciples, he would have his students explicitly direct such formal vows of surrender to the person of Sayāgyi U Ba Khin.

A story that U Ba Khin tells about Goenka in a discourse on the fifth day of one of his ten-day meditation retreats is revealing of the original cultic context of such a “surrender.” It also powerfully subverts the standard scientized narrative of Goenka’s

Dissonances such as these—between what people in these traditions *say* for rhetorical force, missionary expediency, or political purposes, and what they actually *do* in practice—lie behind many of the misconceptions in the

introduction to U Ba Khin and his eventual embrace of *vipassanā* meditation:

“Māra really exists, *Pāpimā* (the evil one). I believe what the Buddha said. Here too, we have disturbances. Thus, *imāhaṃ bhante attabhāvaṃ jīvitaṃ bhagavato pariccajāmi*. *imāhaṃ, bhante, attabhāvaṃ jīvitaṃ ācariyato paṭiccajāmi*. *Bhante* – venerable, *imāhaṃ* – my, *attabhāvaṃ* – body, *jīvitaṃ* – also life, *bhagavato* – to the Buddha, *pariccajāmi* – offer. In this way, [meditators] offer their bodies to the teacher. So, the teacher owns the body of meditators, and it makes him more effective in protecting them. But for a meditator who has less willingness to offer his body to a teacher, how can a teacher protect him? Protection of a person is not hanging around hand in hand beside him. Protection is given by good *devas* who have *pāramī* with me in *samsāra*. Therefore, if a meditator has less of willingness to take protection, they (the *devas*) know. [...] [People] come and meditate here. Among them is a high-ranked person. [...] Why does this person pay much respect to me? He had migraine headaches since he was seven. At the age of twenty-seven, it became serious. Every ten days, he regularly suffered terrible migraine headaches. He had to inject morphine. How serious was his headache! He is a rich man. He appointed a secretary and went around the world for six months to places such as Switzerland, England, Holland, Germany, America, etc., to try to cure his disease. But it did not work. So, he came to me to meditate. I told him that he would have to eat and stay like us without going anywhere. He is a Hindu and they have a caste system. He did not want to eat food from here. But he had no choice. He came here in July. Before, there was no meditation retreat during the rainy season. We were exhausted with big responsibilities and less of donors at that time. So, I told him to come back in September for meditation. He offered his body to me. He accepted himself as Sayāgyi’s disciple. As soon as he did so, his headache was gone. But there was another point to consider. He ate a meal with potato curry from here too. Because of faith, his headache was gone. So, practice with faith. Then, he felt flippantly that his headache was gone. On the first Friday of September, the meditation retreat was going to start, but he did not appear. He did not enroll in the list either. Here, we were going to start on Friday. He suffered a headache, as seriously as before, the Wednesday prior. How? He broke his promise, right? Therefore, I guess that the guards who gave protection in favor of me did not protect him anymore. So, he suffered a headache like before. Such diseases are not because of *rūpa*’s changes, but because of *dhātu*. Later, he meditated here and he was completely free from headaches. So, he pays much respect to me. [...] The Buddha preached openly in the *Āṭānāṭiya Sutta*: *itthiṃ vā vāhanaṃ katvā, anuyanti disodisaṃ, purisaṃ vāhanaṃ katvā, anuyanti disodisaṃ*. *itthiṃ vā* – woman, *vāhanaṃ katvā* – make as a vehicle, *anuyanti disodisaṃ* – go here and there. *Purisaṃ* – man, *vāhanaṃ katvā* – make as a vehicle, *anuyanti disodisaṃ* – go here and there. [...] They follow by riding on shoulders. Well, that Hindu man got migraines because they teased him by riding on his shoulders. So, he got headaches. By the power of *mettā* from a noble person, such a disease can be cured. No need for medication.” (U Ba Khin n.d. [1962?] 5.1: 11:51–15:23 [translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart])

world today about the nature of Buddhism and Buddhist meditative experience. And S.N. Goenka, working to convince non-Buddhists in post-colonial India to dedicate their lives to the practice of *vipassanā*, wrote the book on how to convince people to feel comfortable living with these dissonances. This key historical moment was the forge in which S. N. Goenka's true identity as a meditation teacher was fashioned, and the dynamics at play here form the fulcrum of issues that come to make up the fabric of modern Buddhist meditation traditions and global secularized mindfulness practices. In looking back at the history of Sayāgyi U Ba Khin, the global team of teachers he deputized, permutations of insight practice in various local contexts in Asia and the emergent global “non-sectarian” insight meditation institutions that budded from them, we can begin to discern more clearly some of the overlooked particulars of the process of gestation involved in the birth of insight—as a modern concept and category—during this period between 1969 and 1981.

2. S.N. Goenka Steps Out on His Own: A Bodhisattva for a Modern Global Public

It is in the wake of his conflict with Mother Sayama—and also because of it—that S.N. Goenka fully came into his own as a global teacher. The rhetoric that he and his community employed to deal with the conflict came to publicly define his mission from 1981 onward. Having already built a strong basis for institutional development in India in the 1970s, Goenka went on to develop the largest delivery system for intensive mass insight meditation that the world has known.

I suggest here that in coming to terms with the notion of insight meditation as a modern category, scholars must look to this historical process to fully understand it. This is the case because the great majority of non-Burmese people in the world today who have been exposed to the practices of traditional Burmese insight meditation, particularly in their “non-sectarian” form, have been exposed to it through Goenka's teachings or teachings partly derivative of them. Yet the community that coalesced around S.N. Goenka came to develop a particular religious outlook, a particular conception of its place in the history of Buddhist (or rather the Buddha's) teachings, a particular (and at times incoherent) conception of those very teachings, and a particular conception of its mission in the world. Through carefully examining this process of community formation, we can more fully

understand the dynamics that give rise to the modern insight meditation movement. The main components of this process came together in the early years of the 1980s.

a) Foundations of Mindfulness

This idiosyncratic process of community formation begins with Goenka advancing a new exegetical agenda: he presents a comprehensive analysis of the well-known *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, in which he shows how the practice he teaches can be reconciled with the traditional text.³³⁵ This scholarly performance allowed Goenka to distinguish himself from his Burmese counterparts, to push back against criticisms of Western students and the more traditional lineages of Burmese monastic *vipassanā* they had looked to, and to set himself up as a true *paṇḍita*—with a core text and commentarial tradition—for his Indian public. This exegetical project becomes central to Goenka’s identity as a meditation teacher from this point onward, but it is important to note that the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* was not central to the meditation teachings of any of Goenka’s predecessors in his Burmese lineage.³³⁶ Goenka’s first “*Mahāsati Paṭṭhāna Sutta*” course took place in December of 1981. Announcements for the course appear in the October and November issues of the *Vipaśyanā* newsletter, just a few months after the formal break with Mother Sayama:

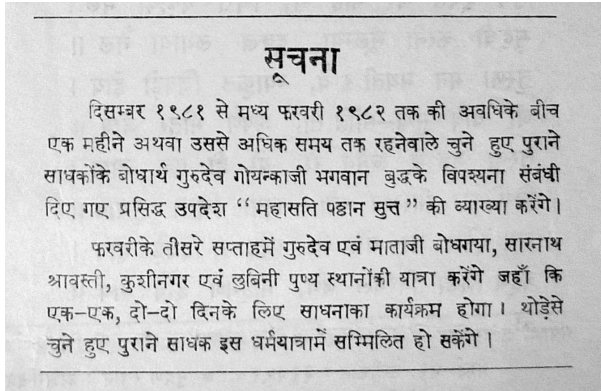


Figure 26: Announcement of S.N. Goenka’s first *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* meditation course, in the *Vipaśyanā* newsletter of October 1981

³³⁵ See VRI 2008 [1996], and Goenka 1999.

³³⁶ As noted above, both the Ledi Sayādaw and Sayāgyi U Ba Khin used this text primarily to present initial *kammaṭṭhānas* for *kāyagatāsati*.

Announcement: For the sake of the awakening of select old meditators staying [at Dhammagiri], Respected Guru Goenkaji will present explanations (*vyākhyā kareṃge*) of the Blessed Buddha's famous discourse (*upadeś*) connected with Vipāśyanā, "the *Mahāsati Paṭṭhāna Sutta* [sic]," during the one-month-or-more period between December of 1981 and the middle of February 1982.

In the third week of February, [our] Respected Guru and Mātāji will make a pilgrimage to the meritorious sites of Bodhgaya, Sarnath, Shravasti, Kushinagar, and Lumbini, where there will be short meditation programs of one or two days. A small number of select old meditators will be able to participate in this Dharma pilgrimage.³³⁷

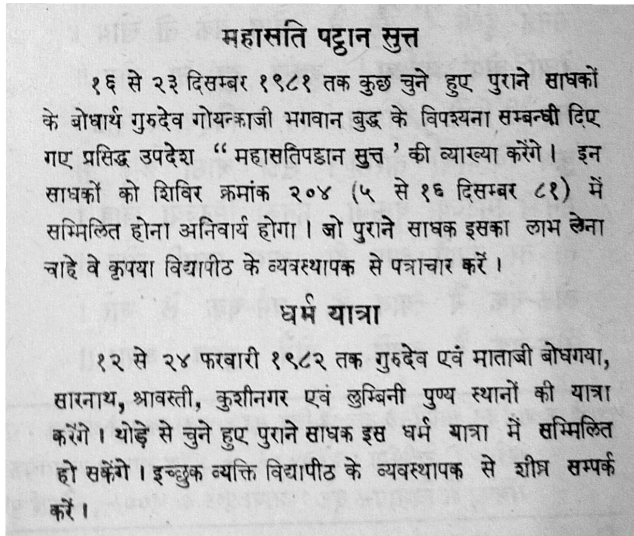


Figure 27: Second announcement of S.N. Goenka's first *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* meditation course, in the *Vipāśyanā* newsletter of November 1981

Mahāsati Paṭṭhāna Sutta [sic]: For the sake of the awakening of some select old meditators, Respected Guru Goenkaji will present explanations of the Blessed Buddha's famous discourse connected with Vipāśyanā, "the *Mahāsati Paṭṭhāna Sutta*," from the 16th to the 23rd of December, 1982. It is compulsory that those meditators participate in course number 204 (5–16 December, 1981). Those old meditators who want to get the benefit of this [opportunity] should please send a letter to the registrar of the [Vipāśyanā International] Academy.

³³⁷ *Vipāśyanā* 11.4 (Oct. 12, 1981): 3.

Dharma Pilgrimage: From the 12th to the 24th of February [our] Respected Guru and Mātājī will make a pilgrimage to the meritorious sites of Bodhgaya, Sarnath, Shravasti, Kushinagar, and Lumbini. A small number of select old meditators will be able to participate in this Dharma pilgrimage. Those desiring [to participate] should straight away contact the registrar of the [Vipaśyanā International] Academy.³³⁸

January 5-20 Goenka-ji's self course- restricted to selected old students	VIA, Dhammagiri Igatpuri Maharashtra tel. Igatpuri 76
January 20- February 2 teaching of Satipatthana sutta	VIA, Dhammagiri Igatpuri Maharashtra TEL. Igatpuri 76

Figure 28: *Vipassana Newsletter* (Autumn 1981, Berkeley, California), announcing the first course in which S.N. Goenka presented formal teachings on the *Satipatthāna Sutta*

The emergence of this particular form of exegetical/pañḍitafied Goenka can only be fully fathomed if we take into account the challenges he faced with those of his Western students who had turned away from him and towards the traditional teachings of the monastic Mahāsī Sayādaw in Burma. We saw the beginnings of this process above, when Goenka spoke of the “confusion in the minds” of some of his Western students in response to news of Joseph Goldstein’s *Satipatthāna* course in America in 1974. But now Goenka put this exegetical project at the center of his institution and community building projects.

In retrospect, it appears somewhat unfortunate that Goenka felt the need to do this. The meditation practice that he taught is of course very much a practice of *satipatthāna*. But it does not easily fit into the structure of the *Mahāsātipatthāna Sutta*, which is a complicated hybrid text with a murky textual history.³³⁹ The practices Goenka inherited from U Ba Khin fit more appropriately with those outlined in texts such as the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* (MN

³³⁸ *Vipaśyanā* 11.5 (Nov. 11, 1981): 3.

³³⁹ On the historical challenges of interpreting this text, see, for example, Schmithausen 1976, and Anālayo 2003; 2011: 73–97.

118), or the *Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta* (MN 140).³⁴⁰ But these texts were less “famous” (“*prasiddh*”) and did not have the popular currency of the *Mahāsātipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.³⁴¹ What is more, the Mahāsī Sayādaw taught by using the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, and had written comprehensive commentaries incorporating his understanding of it into a wide range of Buddhist teachings.³⁴² So, Goenka obviously felt the need to respond in kind. A person close to Goenka during these years explained to me how Goenka requested him to collect all of Mahāsī Sayādaw’s writings on *satipaṭṭhāna* while he was on a trip to Burma in the early 1980s and bring them to India so that Goenka might use them to develop his own interpretations of that famous scripture.³⁴³ In this agonistic process, a teacher with just a high-school education—teaching an anti-intellectual practice somewhat suspect of academic learning—comes to set himself up as a central authoritative source of textual and scholarly interpretation.³⁴⁴

b) Institutions, Assistants, and Proxies: Channeling the Pure Stream of the Dharma

Another major component of the community imaginary emergent during this period—a component that came to dominate the core religious outlook of Goenka and his close disciples—involves a shift in soteriological emphasis. I have earlier told a story that has become a mantra of Goenka’s closest disciples. It is a story about Goenka’s identity as a spiritual teacher. While U Ba Khin took a vow to teach only those with “high *pāramī*,” the story goes, Goenka was destined to teach the ignorant masses. It is to this end that the community turns in earnest at this moment in history. While this agenda was not entirely new, it came to the forefront of community intentions after Goenka’s break with Mother Sayama.

And the break instigates an opportunity for Goenka and his disciples to reiterate and participate in a very old polemical ideology, one that pits those who have taken vows to stay in the cycle of rebirth for long(er) periods of

³⁴⁰ These are both texts that were central to the Ledi Sayādaw’s teachings, and U Ba Khin repeatedly pointed to his teachings as conforming primarily to the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*.

³⁴¹ See Nyanaponika Thera 1962.

³⁴² See, for example, Mahāsī Sayādaw 2016 (written originally in Burmese during the 1940s).

³⁴³ WAI234.

³⁴⁴ History repeats itself here to some extent. U Ba Khin’s authoring of *The Right Answers to Practice with a Basis of Theory* served a similar function.

time to serve humanity against those who have accomplished the purported aims of the Buddha's teachings and will exit the cycle in the near(er) future.³⁴⁵ To bring out this important historical development, we must note here a key distinguishing aspect of Goenka's soteriological identity against that of Mother Sayama as well as of his counterparts on the global team of U Ba Khin's students. While Robert Hover, Ruth Denison, John Coleman, and Mother Sayama were all confirmed by U Ba Khin to be *ariyas* (those who have attained at least the first stage of Buddhist awakening), this was apparently not the case for Goenka.³⁴⁶

I have already noted how U Ba Khin's closest disciples considered him to be a bodhisattva, and a particularly important one at that: the bodhisattva who will become the next fully awakened Buddha, the Buddha Metteyya/Maitreya. By emphasizing his identity as a future chief-disciple-bodhisattva (*aggasāvakabodhisatta*) of the coming Buddha, Goenka and his followers were—at this particularly challenging moment in the history of their mission—able to set themselves up as special beings with a special mission, while at the same time ensuring that the likes of Sayama and U Ba Khin's other students could be relegated to an inferior position within the cosmic hierarchy.³⁴⁷

The powerful conceptual and practical implications of this idea should not be understated. It comes to serve as a strong driving force motivating the

³⁴⁵ On the beginnings of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India, see Williams 1989 and Harrison 1987, 1992, 1995, and 2018.

³⁴⁶ Goenka referred obliquely to this issue when answering questions after a discourse on the seventh day of one of his *Satipaṭṭhānasutta* courses (1990, *Dhammabhūmi*, Australia):

Question: "This question is not meant to cause offence. Are you, Goenka, an enlightened being, having reached the highest level through the practice of Vipassana? If not, do you know of others who have reached such stage[stages]?"

Answer: "One thing [is] very clear, that I am not an *arahant*, I am not a *buddha*. But I am on the path to become an *arahant*, there is no doubt about that. And I have covered certain areas, and I have gained [benefitted] by this technique. I am a changed person compared to what I was when I started it. And one thing that I can say with a little bit of surety [certainty] is that I have taken a few more steps than you all have taken. That is why I am competent to teach you. Walk, walk on the path and reach the goal. That is more important than examining your teacher as to whether he has become an *arahant* or no *arahant*."

³⁴⁷ It is worth noting that Goenka was not the only one of U Ba Khin's students who was considered to be a vow-taker. A story—reproduced above (see note 169)—from *Anecdotes of Sayagyi U Ba Khin* (U Chit Tin 1982 [I]: 11) strongly suggests that his Burmese disciples and co-teachers U Chit Tin and U Tint Yee were also considered vow-takers.

missionary zeal of Goenka and his students, and it has had a forceful impact on choices they have made in their attempts to spread Goenka's teachings. It is difficult to fathom the diligent and tireless work of this community, and its institutional success, without taking into account this foundational religious and soteriological outlook.

We can see how this idea plays out historically by looking at two telling anecdotes related by students of Goenka, along with Goenka's own narrative about his identity as a teacher.

The first anecdote comes from a time just after Goenka had made his break from Mother Sayama. Many of his students had a difficult time deciding whether to stick with him or side with Mother Sayama in the dispute between these two great masters of insight meditation. Some continued to frequent both of them, spending time in India with Goenka, and visiting Burma to meditate with Mother Sayama. Early on, however, Goenka made it clear that any serious student of his would have to make a choice. It was either him or Mother Sayama: no student of his could continue to work with her. One of Goenka's students, who has become an important and influential administrator (*ācārya*) in the institution that Goenka went on to build, tells the story of how he finally decided to put his weight behind Goenka and bid farewell to Mother Sayama: Goenka approached him and insisted that he make a decision. Upon thinking over the different qualities of his two teachers, this person decided to follow Goenka. Why? Because: "in the end, I knew that if I went with Sayama it would be for my own liberation. With Goenkaji, it was for [the liberation of] others."³⁴⁸

We can see here a key idea, an idea that serves to strengthen Goenka and his community of followers in their understanding of past conflicts, and in constructing an imaginary of a glorified future. At the same time, this idea devalues U Ba Khin's own teachings in certain respects. His primary focus was to bring his students as quickly as possible—and with whatever force necessary—to attain the final goal of Buddhist *nirvāṇa*. This was done through a one-on-one teaching model, one that often involved Mother Sayama's assistance. By throwing in his lot with Goenka, and framing this choice as a selfless one against the selfishness of those who might choose to follow Sayama, that close disciple of Goenka ultimately chooses to participate in, and be part of fashioning, a distinct mission with Goenka at its center. U Ba Khin's model gets replaced by a mass meditation model, the

³⁴⁸ This is a secondary account; the quote is paraphrased from a conversation with an informant (WAI235).

aim of which is to bring introductory practices to the masses. In this model, the idea that liberation is possible in a short time, let alone in this lifetime, disappears almost entirely. What is more, for many of Goenka's close disciples, the actual attainment of the final goal of Buddhist practice becomes something to be avoided.³⁴⁹ As Goenka insisted in intimate contexts with his closest disciples, he and his students will all get liberated together in a future life, during the time of a future Buddha, not in this lifetime.³⁵⁰ One's duty is to spread the teachings, not to attain the goal set out in them at this time.

The second anecdote describes an event that took place in western Massachusetts in 1999.³⁵¹ A young meditator had devoted several years to practicing meditation at Goenka's centers in North America, and he had also spent some time doing service on courses, cooking food and caring for the meditators who came to learn *vipassanā*. But he found himself frustrated at the lack of guidance he was receiving from the meditation teachers at the centers at which he spent time. In reading up on the history of the International Meditation Centre, he came to know about some of Goenka's co-students who taught in the United States. While sitting in meditation on a ten-day course with one of Goenka's Assistant Teachers, he began to seriously consider seeking out one of these other teachers. He knew that Ruth Denison had a center in California and considered heading west to meet her.

During the course, he found himself overcome with distracting thoughts. He found it difficult to meditate in his small meditation cell and therefore spent most of his time during the course in the meditation hall. Most students were meditating in their meditation cells, but one elderly woman was with him in the meditation hall. She seemed agitated and distracted, slept much of the time during meditation hours, and was quite noisy and distracting in her comportment. It was a difficult meditation course all around, and the young man attributed the difficulty to forces beyond his control.

At the end of the course, he discussed his plans to seek out Ruth Denison with the meditation center manager. The manager was surprised and asked him to recall the elderly woman who had been in the meditation hall during the past course. That was Ruth Denison! She had come to the center in Massachusetts to meditate.³⁵² This was a sign for the young meditator that

³⁴⁹ WAI238.

³⁵⁰ WAI238.

³⁵¹ WAI240.

³⁵² In her biography of Ruth Denison, Sandy Boucher notes that Denison was "graciously received" at one of Goenka's meditation centers in the early 2000s (see Boucher 2005: 236, n. 49).

he should not head west to seek another teacher. At the time, he took this experience to suggest that though Denison was an important student of Sayāgyi U Ba Khin, and though she taught others and had her own meditation center, she—like him—was subject to agitations and difficulties and therefore not a suitable guide. One key idea that I take away from this account serves as a running theme among many close students of Goenka whom I have come in contact with over the past two decades: Goenka's special status as a teacher surpassed those of his co-students—not just Ruth Denison—even though many of them had been confirmed to have attained stages of Buddhist awakening.

Such distinctions get tied up with Goenka's own personal narrative about his teaching mission. The idea that he had a special karmic trajectory was no doubt central to his sense of self identity since first arriving in India, but it necessarily takes on a different kind of importance after his break with Mother Sayama. Most importantly, Goenka comes to emphasize how his teaching mission involves primarily two types of students: 1. those new to the teachings of the Buddha, and 2. those destined to serve others along with him over many lifetimes. It is noteworthy that in this taxonomy of individuals there is no place for a person who gets the teachings from Goenka and attains *nirvāṇa* straight away in this life. Goenka explained his theory of the two types of individuals on the tenth day of his standard ten-day course as follows³⁵³:

When I was in Burma, many people there had a very strong belief; my teacher also had this belief. It seems that when this wonderful Dhamma was sent to Burma by Asoka, the two *arahants*, liberated souls, who were sent there—Soṇa and Uttara—when they were sent there, their teacher told them: “You are taking this jewel of Dhamma to a country which will maintain it in its pristine purity for the coming centuries. It will be forgotten everywhere else, but this technique will remain in that country.”

The name of the country in those days was *Suvaṇṇa Bhūmi*—the land of gold; the golden land. “The Golden Land can preserve this gem. Two thousand five hundred years after the passing away of Buddha, it will again come to India, get established there and then spread around the world.”

My teacher used to say: “Now, it is 2,500 years.” I don't know, maybe by some accident, it was that year when I got the Dhamma. The 2,500th year was ending, and the first year of the next *sāsana*, the revival of Dhamma, was beginning. That was the time when I got Dhamma. [...]

³⁵³ This passage was transcribed from an audio recording made in August 1991 at the *Dhamma Mahāvāna* meditation center in Central California.

To be honest, at that time it looked to me like a sectarian belief. Why 2,500? Why not 2,400? Why not 2,600? Why 2,500? What was the reason behind it? It didn't look very scientific, but this was the belief.

But when I came to India, I was really wonderstruck when I saw what was happening. When I came there, I made a list of people who knew me or whom I knew. The list did not come to three figures. It was less than 100. Less than 100 in a country of millions; less than 100 people who knew me or whom I knew. Now, in the courses, people started coming. Unknown people. And from every sect, from every community—unbelievable. And not only ordinary people, householders, but heads of the community, heads of sects. Monks, Buddhist monks; Hindu *sanyāsīs*; Jain monks and nuns; hundreds of Christian monks, priests and nuns—hundreds, thousands in all. How is it they were coming? How were they coming? And a large number of people from different walks of life, how is it they were coming? What miracle?

I didn't know them, they didn't know me; yet how these people got attracted to Dhamma. Slowly it became clearer and clearer. People come to the courses and when I come in contact with them; when I see many of them—meet them, discuss with them, talk with them—something inside starts feeling that this person is known to me, known to me from a long time ago: “This person is known to me; yes, known to me, for so many lives. This person must have been meditating in Vipassana with me. Now the time has come. This person already has the seed of Vipassana, the seed of Dhamma. Now the time has ripened for this person to grow in Dhamma. And not only help himself or herself, but to help others—there is a potentiality for them not only to help themselves, but to help others also.”

I also see that there are people who have come just to take the seed of Dhamma. They have done some very wholesome deed, some very good *karma*, and the ripening of that deed has helped them to get a seed of Dhamma.

Whether you belong to the category where you have just gotten the seed of Dhamma, or whether you belong to the category where you already had the seed of Dhamma and now you have come to develop in Dhamma, this wonderful jewel that you have gotten—make proper use of it. Don't just throw it away.

This missionary narrative/theory, which is inextricably embedded in a classical South Asian Buddhist theory of rebirth, becomes a (if not *the*) central narrative for Goenka and his close disciples. It drives their missionary project and leaves little room for the teaching of fully developed classical early Buddhist models of *vipassanā* practice that lead to the attainment of *nirvāṇa*. The teaching model presented here suggests that—if one participates in Goenka's vision of the modern spread of the Buddha's teachings—a student of Goenka is either on a long path to serve humanity by spreading the

teachings under Goenka, or has come to get a small taste of the teachings and hopefully begin the very long and arduous path to eventual awakening in a distant future life. This narrative allows for the development of a missionary model in which the idea of students attaining the final goal of the Buddha's teaching in this very life gets pushed to the background—if not rubbed out entirely—while the work of large-scale missionary institution building gets foregrounded.³⁵⁴

It is precisely this focus that leads to a development that will have a lasting impact on the institutional structures, teaching models, and practice emphases of Goenka's community of students in India and around the world. In early 1982, Goenka announced in the *Vipaśyanā* newsletter his plan to develop a system in which his students could begin to teach under him³⁵⁵:

³⁵⁴ A historically and contextually denuded explanation of this development can be found in a recent edition of the *Vipassana Newsletter*: "Whatever the reason, people of all backgrounds came to Goenkaji and filled the courses he conducted. And soon he had another surprise: the people sitting before him did not progress in the same way as meditators at Sayagyi's center in Yangon. There it was said that not a single course of Sayagyi's went 'dry'; that is, in every course someone experienced *nibbāna* for the first time. Goenkaji tried working with some of his more serious students, as Sayagyi had done. He stopped when Sayagyi explained that Goenkaji had a different role. If someone was going to reach the highest stage, they had all the tools and did not require his guidance. In his later years, Goenkaji was not even interested if people reported that they had experienced *nibbāna*. It was too easy to be misled, he felt. If someone really had reached that stage, the confirmation would come from a change in that person's life." (*Vipassana Newsletter [International Edition]* 46, no. 2 [July 2019]: 2)

³⁵⁵ *Vipaśyanā* 117 (January 9, 1982) (see also *Vipassana Newsletter* Winter 1982: 1).

सुखद सूचना

“विपश्यना” साधनाकी ओर लोगोंकी अतीव बढ़ती हुई रुचिके परिणाम स्वरूप जगह-जगहसे शिविर लगवानेकी मांग बढ़ती जा रही है। केन्द्रों पर भी स्थान सीमित होनेके कारण सभी मुमुक्षुओंको स्वीकृति देनी संभव नहीं। [इगतपुरी के पिछले शिविर क्रमांक २०४ में लगभग २८० एवं शि. क्र. २०५ में लगभग २६० लोगोंको स्थान दिया गया। दोनोंमें ही लगभग ४००-४०० लोगोंने स्थान सुरक्षित करवाए थे परन्तु समय रहते उनकी ओरसे आरक्षण रद्द करवानेकी सूचना नहीं आने पर अनेक ऐसे लोगोंको वंचित रह जाना पड़ा, जो वस्तुतः सम्मिलित होना चाहते थे।]

सौभाग्यसे अब विद्यापीठमें लंबी अवधिके शिविर लगने लगे हैं और सहायक आचार्य तैयार किए जा रहे हैं। पुराने साधकोंसे पके हुए कई भारतीय और विदेशी इस धर्म-सेवाके काममें लगे हैं और भविष्यमें धर्मसेवा देनेके लिए तत्पर हैं। पू. गुरुजी चाहते हैं कि ये शिविरोंके दौरान केवल आचार्यकी ही सहायता न करें बल्कि जगह-जगह जाकर पुराने साधकोंके लाभार्थ ३ या ५ दिनके लघु शिविरोंका अथवा दस दिनके पूर्ण शिविरका भी संचालन करें। अतः जिस क्षेत्रके साधक रुचिवान हों और इस प्रकारके लघु शिविर या बड़े शिविरके आयोजनके निमित्त साधन सुविधाएँ जुटा सकें हों, कृपया उपलब्ध स्थान एवं अनुकूल समय आदिका विवरण देते हुए पू. गुरुदेवको इगतपुरीके पतेपर सूचित करें ताकि सहायक आचार्योंकी सुविधानुसार उन्हें शिविरोंके संचालन हेतु भेजा जा सके।

भवतु सन्ध मंगलं !

Figure 29: Announcement in the January 1982 *Vipaśyanā* newsletter of plans to depute “Assistant Teachers” (*sahāyak ācāryā*) to conduct meditation courses at the request of local groups of “old students”

Happy News: As the [number of] people gravitating toward “Vipaśyanā” meditation has grown immensely as a result of interest everywhere, the demand for putting on courses continues to increase. But because space is limited, it is not possible to accept all of those desiring liberation (*mumukṣuṇā*) at centers. (Approximately 280 [people] were given a place at the last course at Iगतपुरी, number 204, while approximately 260 participated in course number 205. In both [courses], approximately 400 people reserved a space, but [some] did not inform us in time of a

cancellation such that many who would have truly wanted to come were cheated out of coming)

Fortunately, now at the Academy courses of longer periods have been going on, and Assistant Teachers (*sahāyak ācāryā*) are being trained (*taiyār kie jā rahe haiṃ*). Some ripened (*pake hue*) old meditators—both Indian and foreign—are/have engaged in this work of Dharma-service (*dharma-sevāke kām*) and will devote themselves to it in the future (*dharmasevā deneke lie tatpar haiṃ*). Respected Gurujī [Goenka] wants [these assistants] not only to support the teacher during these courses, but to go to various places to conduct short courses of three or five days as well as full ten-day courses for the benefit of old students. Therefore, if meditators of a particular place are interested, and they can come together to organize this sort of short course or long course, they should send the details of the time and place, etc., of the expected event to Respected Gurujī at his Igatpuri address so that he can send Assistant Teachers to conduct the courses as is convenient.

May all beings be well! (*bhavatu sabba maṅgalaṃ!*)

While the initial idea appears to have been that Goenka's Assistant Teachers (*sahāyak ācāryas*) would help support communities of meditation practitioners who had already done courses with Goenka himself, the demand for courses combined with Goenka's missionary urge led almost immediately to the development of a system in which his assistants taught courses to both first-time students and old meditators in his stead. This project gets explicitly laid out in a formal announcement in the June 1982 issue of the *Vipaśyanā* newsletter³⁵⁶:

³⁵⁶ *Vipaśyanā* 11.12 (June 6, 1982): 2–3.

विपश्यनाका प्रसार

पिछले एक-दो वर्षोंसे गुरुदेव गोयन्काजी विपश्यनाके शिविर लगानेमें इस कदर व्यस्त रहे कि उन्हें अन्य आवश्यक कार्योंके लिए अवकाश ही नहीं मिल पाया। भविष्यके अक्टूबर अन्त तकके कार्यक्रम भी एकके बाद एक इसी प्रकार गुंथे हुए हैं कि बीचमें अवकाश ही नहीं है। यह सब इसी कारण है कि विपश्यनाकी मांग भारत ही नहीं अपितु सारे विश्वमें इतनी बढ़ गयी है कि पूरी नहीं की जा सकती। साधकोंके सद्धर्मके आशु-लभका यह प्रत्यक्ष प्रमाण है।

अधिकसे अधिक लोगोंको धर्मका लाभ हो और यह कल्याणकारी विद्या सधियों तक शुद्ध-रूपमें प्रवाहित होती रहे, इस निमित्त गोयन्काजी पिछले कुछ वर्षोंसे कुछ लोगोंको विपश्यना सिखानेका प्रशिक्षण देते रहे हैं। पिछले जाड़ेके शिविरोंके दौरान उन्होंने इन शिक्षार्थियोंमें से आठ को सहायक आचार्यके पद पर नियुक्त किया।

इनमें चार भारतीय हैं — १ — श्री नटवरलाल एच. पारिख
२ — डॉ. बी. जी. सावला
३ — श्री लक्ष्मी नारायण राठी
४ — श्री रामसिंह

और चार विदेशी हैं — १ — मि. ब्राह्म गैम्बी
२ — मि. नार्म स्मिथ
३ — मि. बिल हार्ट
४ — मि. जॉन विअरी

इनमेंसे कुछ एक ने प्रशिक्षणका काम आरंभ कर दिया है। मि. बिल हार्ट का पहला शिविर बोधगयामें पिछले १० से २० मार्च तक “बर्मी बौद्धविहार” में लगा जिसमें नए-पुराने साधकोंने-पूरा लाभ लिया। शिविर अत्यंत सफलापूर्वक संपन्न हुआ। सहायक आचार्योंके भारतमें लगनेवाले चार शिविरोंकी सूचना पिछली पत्रिका में प्रकाशित हो चुकी है। विदेशोंमें होनेवाले अन्य शिविरोंकी सूचना इस अंकमें प्रकाशित है।

स. आ. के इन सभी शिविरोंमें गुरुदेव गोयन्काजीके ही प्रवचनोंको टेप पर सुनाया जाता है और शिविरके दौरान उनके द्वारा दिए गए आवश्यक दैनिक निर्देशोंको भी टेप पर सुनाया जाता है। इस प्रकार सहायक आचार्योंकी उपस्थिति और मार्ग-निर्देशनमें नए-पुराने सभी साधकोंको विपुल धर्मलाभ प्राप्त होता है, यह पिछले शिविरकी सफलतासे स्पष्ट हो चुका है। अतः शिविरार्थियोंको बिना हिचक इन शिविरोंमें सम्मिलित होकर धर्मलाभ प्राप्त करना चाहिए। जो साधक अपने गांव-नगरमें किसी सहायक आचार्यका शिविर लगवाना चाहें उन्हें “विपश्यना विद्व विद्यापीठ, इगतपुरी” से संपर्क करना चाहिए।

Figure 30: First formal announcement of the appointment of eight “Assistant Teachers” in the June 1982 issue of *Vipasyana*

The Spread of Vipāśyanā: Over the past one or two years, Respected Guru Goenkaji has remained so busy organizing Vipāśyanā courses that he has not had a break to engage in other necessary duties. The schedule until the end of the coming October is [likewise] packed with one [course] after another so that there will be no break during that time [either]. The reason for all of this is that there is not just demand for Vipāśyanā in India. [The demand] has also grown so much throughout the world that it cannot be fulfilled. This is direct proof (*pratyakṣ pramāṇ*) of the immediate benefit of the True Dharma (*saddharm*) for meditators.

More and more people are getting the benefit of Dharma, and this auspicious wisdom (*kalyāṇakārī vidyā*) continues flowing out to hundreds in its pure form (*śuddh-rūp meṃ*). For this reason, Goenkaji has been training some people over the past few years to teach Vipāśyanā. During last winter's courses, he appointed as Assistant Teachers (*sahāyak ācāryā*) eight from among those in training.

Four of them are Indian:

1. Śrī Naṭvarlāl H. Parikh
2. Dr. B. G. Sāvlā
3. Śrī Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇ Rāṭhī
4. Śrī Rāmsiṃh

And four are foreigners:

1. Mr. Graham Gambie
2. Mr. Norm Schmitz
3. Mr. Bill Hart
4. Mr. John Beary³⁵⁷

³⁵⁷ It is noteworthy, and deeply revealing of the social context of the time—particularly of U Ba Khin and Goenka's attitudes about gender roles—that all eight of those initially appointed as assistant teachers were male. Goenka came from an extremely conservative cultural environment. While he was pushed over the years towards more progressive views about gender, it took many years for him to appoint female assistant teachers to teach independently of a male counterpart. This is obviously a somewhat uncomfortable historical issue, one which the tradition has tried to gloss over in its attempts to present itself to a global public as purveying a modern scientific technique of meditation. In a 2012 article entitled "Assistant Teachers: Modern Era Dhamma Messengers," we find the following statement: "There were only eight people in the first group of assistants announced by Goenkaji [...] They were all men; it was an experiment and Goenkaji did not want to take the chance of offending people in some Asian countries before the experiment had been shown to work. But right from the beginning it was understood that women would play an active role, starting with the wives of many of the first appointees." (*International Vipassana Newsletter* 391) This statement is an attempt to gloss over the issue of Goenka's traditional values and how they influenced the power structure of the Goenka Vipassanā organization. It projects onto Goenka a progressive modern attitude toward gender roles—one that is not really in line with what is known about his attitudes at the time—and suggests that such an

Some of them have already begun the work of teaching. Mr. Bill Hart's first course, in which old and new meditators got full benefit (*purā lābh liyā*), took place in Bodhgaya at the "Burmese Buddhist Monastery" from the 10th to the 20th of March.³⁵⁸ The course was completed very successfully. Information for four Assistant Teacher courses to take place in India were announced in the last [issue of the] newsletter. Information for additional courses abroad are announced in this issue.

In all of these Assistant Teacher (Sā. Ā) courses, [students] listen to Goenkaji's discourses on tapes, and [they] listen to the various necessary daily instructions given by him throughout the course on tapes as well. In this way, with the presence (*upasthiti*) and guidance (*mārga-nirdeśan*) of the Assistant Teachers, all new and old meditators get the full Dharma benefit (*vipul dharmalābh*). This has become clear from the success of this last course [conducted by Bill Hart]. So, those desiring to take courses should, without hesitation, participate in these courses and get the benefit. Any meditator who would like to organize an Assistant Teacher course in their village or city should contact "the Vipassyanā International Academy, Igatpuri."

Noteworthy here is the emphasis on the popularity of Vipassyanā as "direct proof" of its beneficial efficacy and authenticity. We see missionary success—measured by the number of courses taught, the number of people coming to individual courses, the development of new meditation centers, and the sense of "benefit" expressed by students—becoming the primary benchmark for the success of the mission. While U Ba Khin and Mother Sayama had measured success by the number of people they brought to the final stage of the Buddhist soteriological path, that aspiration of spiritual

attitude was constrained by Asian cultural norms. But conservative gender norms remain at the core of the basic Goenka Vipassanā course structure, and many of the course rules—such as the practice of segregation according to biological sex—cannot be understood without recourse to traditional Asian attitudes about gender that Goenka himself surely participated in. The quote above makes this clear itself in noting that the first women to get involved as assistant teachers were "the wives of many of the first appointees."

³⁵⁸ Cf. *Vipassana Newsletter* of Spring 1982: 1. In an article entitled "Assistant Teacher's Course—Bodh Gaya, March 1982," there is a description of the first ever Assistant Teacher conducted course. It is noteworthy that in the English-language newsletter we find the following: "When Centres began to arise in various other parts of the country, it became necessary for Goenka-ji to devote more attention to them, and therefore since 1977 he has not taught any course in Bodh Gaya. His presence there was sorely missed, and it was regrettable that while so many other techniques were available to those who came to the place of Enlightenment, there was no opportunity for people there to learn Vipassana meditation as taught by Sayagyi U Ba Khin. To remedy this situation, it was decided to hold an assistant teacher's course."

progress for individual students dramatically recedes in this new context, as the project of giving the seed of Dharma to more and more people becomes the central focus of the community.

Success and demand also bring the need for more institutional infrastructure, and more warm bodies to do the work of spreading the teachings. The Assistant Teacher model/program was developed to serve this need. It is clear, however, that this program was developed in a context in which Goenka did not feel that his students were yet competent to teach the Dharma themselves. And his experiences with students such as Joseph Goldstein and Sharon Salzberg—who had made themselves teachers against his judgment—had perhaps made him wary of giving his other students in this new context too much license as individuals. This led to the novel solution of using the audio technology of tape-recorded instructions and discourses to structure the courses. This allowed Goenka to be the only actual teacher, while at the same time harnessing the zeal of his close disciples and providing more and more courses as demand increased.

But there was clearly trepidation in the community about this new development. This is apparent on two levels in the announcement translated above. First, there is a need to emphasize the unequivocal success of the initial Assistant Teacher course. Second, there is a need to encourage people to participate in the courses “without hesitation,” since they can still get the “full benefit” of a course despite the strange new structure of instruction, the presence of guides of a lesser stature than Goenkaji, and the reliance on the technology of tape recordings. The need to emphasize these aspects of the new situation, and the concern around what was entailed in it, comes across most obviously in a short account of the first Assistant Teacher-led course in the English-language *Vipassana Newsletter*:

When asked for their comments, virtually all the participants—both old and new students—were very positive about the system of using tapes of Goenka-ji’s instructions and discourses, together with the personal day-to-day guidance of the assistant. One old student said that he felt as if he was taking a course directly with Goenka-ji. Some of the new students immediately made plans to join the coming courses at Dhammagiri and elsewhere.³⁵⁹

This early apologetic stance on what comes to be the primary mode of operation for Goenka’s organization from this time onward is telling.³⁶⁰ It

³⁵⁹ *Vipassana Newsletter* Spring 1982: 2.

³⁶⁰ This stance is articulated along similar lines, and with similar apologetic and

emphasizes—perhaps too unequivocally—that the use of tape recordings and assistants works well for all course participants, even those learning Vipassanā for the first time. More importantly, it presents the idea that participating in such a course might be just like “taking a course directly with Goenka-ji.” This comes to be a refrain in all courses taught to the present day. Assistant Teachers, even those designated as “Full Teachers” (Ācāryas) in the organization’s hierarchy,³⁶¹ explain at the beginning of every ten-day course that “in a very real sense, Mr. Goenka is the teacher of this course.”

विशिष्ट शिक्षारोका आयोजन			
गर्मी की छुट्टियों में शिक्षारोको की विपुल मांग को ध्यान में रखते हुए सहायक आचार्यों द्वारा संचालित कुछ विशिष्ट शिक्षारोका आयोजन निम्नलिखित किए गए हैं। इनमें नये-पुराने सभी सम्मिलित होकर धर्म-ज्ञान प्राप्त कर सकते हैं :-			
वि. शि. क्र. १	*इगतपुरी	दि. १७-५-८२ से २८-५-८२ तक	संचालक - सहायक आचार्य श्री लक्ष्मीनारायण राठी
” ” २	*इगतपुरी	दि. २८-५-८२ से ८-६-८२ तक	संचालक - स. आ. श्री नटवरलाल एच. पारिख
” ” ३	*संपक - व्यवस्थापक-विषयना विभव विद्यापीठ, धम्मगिरि, इगतपुरी-४२२ ४०३.	फोन : ७६.	
” ” ३	जयपुर केन्द्र दि. २८-५-८२ से ८-६-८२ तक	संचालक - स. आ. श्री रामसिंहजी	
” ” ४	*संपक - श्री श्यामसुन्दर मृन्दडा, जी-१/ए, अशोक मार्ग, जयपुर-३०२ ००१.	फोन : ६३३२२/६५४१४	तार-हॉली
” ” ४	*कलकत्ता १५-६-८२ से २६-६-८२ तक	संचालक - स. आ. श्री लक्ष्मीनारायण राठी.	
” ” ४	*संपक - श्री सुदर्शन टंडारिया, ४८-बी, मुक्ताराम बाघ स्ट्रीट, कलकत्ता-७०० ००७.	फोन : ३४४७९२.	
पू. गुरुजी के भावी-शिविर			
शि. क्र. २१३ एवं २१४	अमेरिका में तथा २१५ फ्रांस में क्रमशः २८ मई से ९ जुलाई तक होंगे।		
शि. क्र. २१६	*हैदराबाद (विषयना अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय साधना केन्द्र, ‘धम्मखेत्तु’) दि. १४-७-८२ से २५-७-८२ तक (हिन्दी)		
	*संपक : १) श्रीमती जयबेन पी. सेंदुता, ६१, श्रीनगर कॉलोनी, हैदराबाद-५०० ८७३. फोन : ३०२९१. अथवा:		
	२) श्री पूनमल अग्रवाल, द्वारा-होटल राजधानी, सिद्धिअम्बर बाजार, हैदराबाद-५०० ०१२. फोन : ५७५७१.		
शि. क्र. २१७	जयपुर (विषयना केन्द्र, धम्मयश्री, गस्ताजी रोड) दि. ४-८-८२ से १५-८-८२ तक (हिन्दी)		

Figure 31: Vipassanā newsletter 11.11 (May 8, 1982): 4, announcing the first Assistant Teacher courses to be taught in India by Indian Assistant Teachers beginning in May 1982 in Igatpuri, Jaipur, and Kolkata

In assessing the development of this new historical situation, it is helpful to think back to the early days of the mission of U Ba Khin’s global team. We saw above how Goenka, from the beginning of his time in India, conceptualized himself and his fellow co-students as mere agents of his teachers’ will. This process was tangibly palpable for him as he taught his courses and felt himself filled with and protected by his teachers’ *mettā*. The “radio waves” of his teachers’ powerful *samādhi* flowed through him when

justificatory overtones, into the present day (my emphasis): “Even for very old students of Goenkaji, the recordings continue to be astonishing for their clarity and immediacy. It’s no wonder that Goenkaji eventually decided that the recordings should be used indefinitely on courses in this tradition. This is the best way to ensure that long into the future, people around the world will continue to receive the *authentic* teaching as he himself presented it, without addition or subtraction—the *teaching of liberation*.” (*International Vipassana Newsletter* 39.2 [June 2012]: 8)

³⁶¹ The term *Ācārya* (“Full Teacher”) becomes more of an administrative title—as opposed to a title referring to someone’s capacities as a meditation Teacher (with a capital T)—once the organization fully develops its institutional structure by the mid-1990s.

he taught—even after U Ba Khin had passed away—and he was simply a channel for the flow of (U Ba Khin's) Dhamma.

भारत में विशेष शिविर	
शि. क्र. S-६	*कलकत्ता १५-६-८२ से २६-६-८२ तक संचालक - स. आ. श्री लक्ष्मीनारायण राठी. *संपर्क - श्री सुदर्शन ठेंडारिया, द्वारा-विदेशीना शिक्षा केंद्र, ४८-डी, मुक्ताराम बाबू स्ट्रीट, कलकत्ता-७०० ००७. फोन : ३४४७९२.
शि. क्र. (S-५A)	*हैदराबाद १८-६-८२ से २५-६-८२ तक *संचालक : स. आ. श्री. एन. एच. परीख
भारत में भावी शिविर	
शि. क्र. २१६	*हैदराबाद (विषयना अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय साधना केंद्र, 'धम्मलेख') दि. १४-७-८२ से २५-७-८२ तक (हिन्दी) *संपर्क : १) श्रीमती ऊषावेन पी. मेहता, ६१, श्रीनगर कॉलोनी, हैदराबाद-५०० ८७३. फोन : ३०२९१. अथवा २) श्री पूनमल अग्रवाल, द्वारा-डोटल राजधानी, सिद्धिअम्बर बाजार, हैदराबाद-५०० ०१२. फोन : ५७५७१.
शि. क्र. २१७	*जयपुर (विषयना केंद्र, 'धम्मयत्री, गस्ताबी रोड') दि. ४-८-८२ से १५-८-८२ तक (हिन्दी) *संपर्क - श्री व्यामसुन्दर मुन्दडा, जो-१/ए, अशोक मार्ग, जयपुर-३०२ ००१. फोन : ६३३२२/६५४१४ तार-डॉली
विदेशों में भावी शिविर	
शिविर क्रमांक (S-५)	
June 9-20	British Columbia, Canada
conducted by	Contact : Evie Chauncey, 444, Dupplin Road, Victoria, B. C. V82/139
Goenkaji's assistant	Tel : (604) 386 4808
teacher Graham Gambie	
शिविर क्रमांक २१५	France, Vence (between Nice and Grasse)...Site... [Domaine des
June 28 to	Courmettes Tourrettes-sur-Loup (06240) Vence]
July 9	Contact : Jean-Claude See
	52 Rue de Verneuil, 75007 Paris Tel. : (1) 261 1644

शिविर क्रमांक (S-७)	Salt lake city, Utah, U.S.A.
Early July	Led by Norm Schmitz
	Contact : Mark Lonnon 1944 E. Hollywood Ave.
	Salt Lake City, Utah 84508
शिविर क्रमांक. (S-८)	France
Mid-July	Led by Norm Schmitz
	Contact : Same as Camp - 215 (on page 3)
शिविर क्रमांक (S-९)	England
July 28-	Led by Norm Schmits
Aug.7	Contact : Dorck Girling 3, Mill Lane Dinton, Bristol BS 155 TQ
शिविर क्रमांक २१८	Kyoto, Japan
August 18-29	Contact : Chris Weeden, 508, 29-10 Higashi Korien Cho
	Neyagawa Shi, Osaka 572 Tel : (072) 034-2696

Figure 32: *Vipassanā* newsletter 11.12 (June 6, 1982), listing Assistant Teacher courses to be conducted in India, Canada, France, and the United States

We have also seen how such experiences served Goenka in his moment of doubt, when teaching his first course after Mother Sayama attempted to oust him. In developing the structure of his organization such that his teachings and instructions remained integral and indispensable in all courses while his assistants served as mere proxies, Goenka simply extended this logic. Goenka was a proxy of his teacher, a channel through which U Ba Khin's

mettā could flow. In the same way, Goenka's assistants became proxies of Goenka, channeling their teacher's channeled *mettā*. The primary difference in this new set up was that his assistants were given much less leeway to act on their own. While initially Goenka may have intended for his assistants to become Teachers in their own right, carrying out scriptural recitations and teaching the Dhamma from the Dhamma seat on their own in evening discourses,³⁶² by 1996 Goenka had made it clear that this would never be the case within the organization that he had built.³⁶³ Perhaps fearing that what he did to Mother Sayama might be done to him, Goenka decided that no other person within his organization would be an actual Teacher in their own right.³⁶⁴ The organization thus becomes an organization made up entirely of assistants, proxies, administrators, and disc jockeys, each a power node for the *mettā* flowing from U Ba Khin, through Goenka, and into the ritual format of meditation courses around the globe.³⁶⁵

In sum, from the 1980s onward Goenka gathered around him a large collection of devoted and subservient disciples to help him construct a vast network of meditation centers and develop a delivery system for his teachings by way of audio and video tape. This trajectory enabled the community to purvey Goenka's teachings without any of his assistants becoming fully accomplished meditation masters. The system allowed Goenka to avoid conflicts connected to questions of authority such as those

³⁶² See *Vipassana Newsletter* 11.2 (April 1984): 2: "In courses led by assistants, the teaching is presented by means of tapes of Goenkaji's chantings, instructions, and discourses. However, in case of mechanical difficulty, an assistant must be prepared to speak or chant directly when necessary. Assistants who have been working for two years have now been permitted by Goenkaji to give some of the shorter chanting or instructions themselves, following as closely as possible Goenkaji's way of presentation."

³⁶³ IE007.

³⁶⁴ One informant (IAI234) indicated that around the time that Goenka made the decision that his assistants would never teach in the absence of his audio and video materials, he inferred publicly that he was threatened by the power and respect that Ram Singh—who was a government official in Rajasthan, one of the first Assistant Teachers appointed, and served as a supervisor of the Assistant Teacher program from early on—had come to garner in the organization. For a hagiographical account of the life of Ram Singh with some of his writings, see VRI 2011. On Ram Singh's key role in the development of Goenka's mission in India, see above, pp. 207–209 and below, pp. 214–215.

³⁶⁵ Over the years, an organizational hierarchy of Assistant Teachers developed, primarily for the sake of dividing up administrative and organizational duties. There developed five tiers of responsibility: 1. Assistant Teachers (*sahāyak ācāryā*), 2. Senior Assistant Teachers (*varīṣṭ sahāyak ācāryā*), 3. Full Teachers (*ācāryā*), 4. Center Teachers (*kendrīya ācāryā*), and 5. Coordinator Area Teachers (*samanvayak kṣetrīya ācāryā*).

that had plagued U Ba Khin's global team, led to fissures between Goenka and some early Western students, and ultimately forced him to turn his back on Mother Sayama.³⁶⁶ The development of this system is best understood with reference to this particular moment in history. It has at its foundation the notion of a tiered channel originating in the person of the bodhisattva who will become the next fully enlightened Buddha Metteyya/Maitreya, and it is driven and enacted on the basis of a powerful missionary urge. On the one hand, it makes possible the rapid and expansive spread of access to intensive Burmese insight meditation retreats around the globe. On the other hand, many of the Assistant Teachers leading these retreats have had minimal direct contact with the original cultural and cultic contexts in which the teachings were developed under U Ba Khin. They likewise remain largely disconnected from the traditional doctrines of Burmese Theravāda Buddhism that provided the foundations for U Ba Khin's teachings and practices.

c) Publishing for Indian and Global Publics: The Vipassana Research Institute and the "sārification" of a tradition

It was also in the year 1982, at the same time that the Assistant Teacher program was getting off the ground and Goenka had given his first teachings on the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta*, that we first see summaries of oral discourses of Goenka's ten-day *vipassanā* courses (in Hindi) published serially in the *Vipaśyanā* newsletter.³⁶⁷ These summaries—produced by Ram Singh, one of Goenka's first assistants and an influential politician from the state of Rajasthan—transpose the oral tradition of Goenka's elegant Dharma talks into a simple and accessible Hindi-language literary form.³⁶⁸ The objective of creating such summaries was for meditators to have short readable reminders of Goenka's teachings for inspiration in their daily lives. Goenka had already written a few short introductory books, primarily with the aim of introducing his teachings to the general public.³⁶⁹ But the project of

³⁶⁶ At the same time, there is also a history within the organization—too complicated to explore in detail here—of conflicts of authority, oustings, and ostracizations, demonstrating that while Goenka's choice may have minimized such issues, it certainly did not avoid them entirely.

³⁶⁷ See *Vipaśyanā* 11.7 (Jan. 9, 1982)–12.7 (Dec. 30, 1982).

³⁶⁸ English-language parallels to these summaries appear some years later (see *Vipassana Newsletter* 11.4 [Oct./Nov. 1984] through 13.3 [Sept. 1986], and Goenka and Hart 1997 [1987]).

³⁶⁹ *Dharm: Ādarś Jīvan kā Ādhār* (Goenka 1976), and *Dharm: Jīvan Jīne kī Kalā* (Goenka 1976).

summarizing the discourses from the ten-day retreats provided those who had already learned the basics of meditation a literary source for the teachings. Not long after this, Hindi translations of the liturgy that Goenka chants in the course of his standard ten-day retreats were also published serially in the newsletter.³⁷⁰

This begins the process of what I like to call the “sārifcation” of the tradition. In boiling down the teachings to their “essence” (Hindi: *sār*; Pāli: *sāra*), and presenting that essence in a variety of literary forms that strip out a large part of the substantive practical and doctrinal content of the tradition, the organization provides meditation students with reading material that keeps them occupied and provides them a sense that they are engaging intellectually with the tradition. At the same time, this material is largely redundant—lacking novel content—and therefore uncontroversial. It serves merely to solidify Goenka’s “sārifed” understanding of the teachings of the Buddha as opposed to providing meditation students with actual access to those teachings in their traditional textual forms.³⁷¹ This process is the literary parallel of the Assistant Teacher program in that it dumbs down an already simplified set of doctrinal points and strips out much of the nuance of U Ba Khin’s original teachings.

It is this dumbed down version of the teachings that comes to constitute conceptualizations of the Buddha’s teachings writ large within the community of Goenka’s assistants and students. What is more, this “sārifed”

³⁷⁰ It is noteworthy that while English versions of the discourse summaries were published only a few years after the first Hindi versions were made, English translations of the Buddhist liturgical texts chanted by Goenka on his retreats were not published until many years later, in 2006 (see Goenka 2006). The reasons for this delay are not clear to me, but it seems likely that this was a deliberate public relations choice, to avoid the issue that the content of Goenka’s liturgy is largely devotional, contains explicit supplications to his teacher, and invokes a range of supernatural forces in a religious fashion that is explicitly tied to traditional Buddhist protective rituals and domestic Buddhist ritual practice. The material in this liturgy does not appear to fit with the image—presented particularly to Goenka’s English-speaking followers—of a tradition that is (as Goenka states in the standard discourses of his ten-day retreat)

“logical, pragmatic, scientific [...] [without] any kind of guruism involved, [without] any kind of dogma or belief involved[,] [...] a pure science of mind and matter.”

³⁷¹ A series of books published by the Vipassana Research Institute is emblematic of this process of “sārifcation.” Entitled *Suttasār* or “The Essence of the Suttas,” this series contains summaries in Hindi of the 4 major *Nikāyas* of the Theravāda Buddhist tradition. Written by a close disciple of Goenka, the Sanskrit scholar S. N. Tandon, these summaries strategically efface many of the diverse details of the meditation practices taught by the Buddha in the foundational scriptural corpus of the Theravāda tradition (Tandon 2001[3 vols.]).

version of the tradition remains constitutive even in the face of a variety of more advanced teachings offered by Goenka on his advanced courses, teachings which push beyond the basics and are more explicitly connected to traditional Theravāda Buddhist doctrine and technical aspects of meditative discernment. That is, while Goenka ultimately draws on the entire breadth of his teacher's practical and doctrinal knowledge in his more advanced courses—while de-emphasizing and obscuring certain aspects of U Ba Khin's interpretive models—the basic outlook of most of his assistants is that such breadth is primarily theoretical, and practically out of reach for the majority of, if not all, meditation students in this day and age. Such attitudes are the direct result of the future-lives-oriented soteriological emphasis of the community.

The literary activity of the community reflects this relationship to the teachings. This project of sārification had already begun to some extent in the 1970s, through articles written by Goenka for the *Vipaśyanā* newsletter. But it becomes more explicit when Goenka sets out on his own, no longer under the cover of his Burmese co-teachers. It is Goenka's poorly-informed and ultimately distorting interpretation of the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta* that sets the stage for this. His teachings on the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta* involve a similar "sārification." Goenka takes a complex, layered text and reduces each and every aspect of it to a representation of his essentialized practice, the practice he teaches in his basic ten-day courses.³⁷² But it is the formal encapsulation of these teachings in literature—in discourse summaries, translations of the ritual chanting carried out on the courses, and short explanatory articles—that solidifies this "sārification." The *Vipaśyanā* newsletter was the initial forum for this process, but by the mid-1980s another idea had developed: Goenka and his followers would found a research institute for the study of *Vipaśyanā* in traditional Buddhist texts. And so, in 1985 the *Vipaśyanā* Viśodhan Vinyās (Vipassanā Research Institute) was born.

We see the first public signs of this development, and interest in research, in the July 1984 *Vipaśyanā* newsletter³⁷³:

³⁷² See Goenka 1999.

³⁷³ *Vipaśyanā* 13.7 (Jan. 19, 1984): 3.

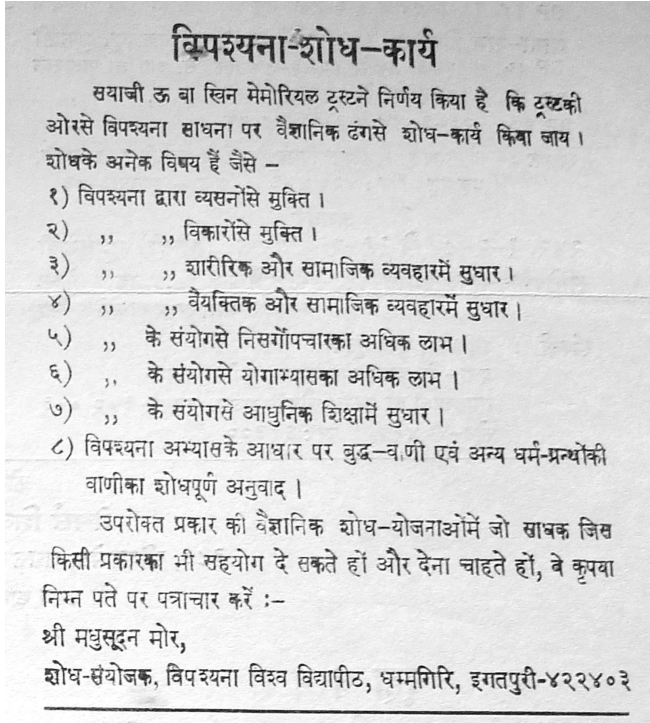


Figure 33: January 1984 *Vipāśyanā* newsletter announcing the undertaking of various “research activities” on *vipāśyanā*

Vipāśyanā Research Activity: The Sayaji U Ba Khin Memorial Trust has decided that scientific research into Vipāśyanā meditation should be undertaken on its behalf. There are many topics of research, such as:

1. Freedom from addiction through Vipāśyanā
2. Freedom from illness (*vikār*) through Vipāśyanā
3. Improvement of bodily (*śārīrik*) and social behavior/deportment through Vipāśyanā
4. Improvement of individual and social behavior/deportment through Vipāśyanā
5. The enhanced benefit of Nature Cure (*nisargopacār*) when combined with Vipāśyanā
6. The enhanced benefit of yoga practice when combined with Vipāśyanā
7. Improvement in modern education when combined with Vipāśyanā
8. The comprehensive/fully informed (*śodhpūrṇ*) translation of the Buddha’s teachings (*Buddha-vāṇī*) as well as the teachings of other Dharma texts (*dharmagranthom kī vāṇī*) on the basis of [insights gleaned from] Vipāśyanā practice

Any meditator who can provide support in any way in the execution of proper modes of scientific research and would like to offer it should please send correspondence to the below address: Mr. Madhusūdan Mor, Research Coordinator, Vipassanā International Academy, Dhammagiri, Igatpuri – 422403

This announcement appears to signal the development of S. N. Goenka's interest in a new research agenda, one in line with developments beginning to make waves in the West. I noted above how Robert Hover had pushed for such research—with a slightly different emphasis—early on in the 1960s, as well as in the early years of the mission of U Ba Khin's global team.³⁷⁴ Following on this, the seminal research of scholar-practitioners such as Daniel Goleman (e.g. 1971, 1972a, 1972b, 1975, 1976, and 1981) and Jack Kornfield (e.g. Kornfield 1977 and Walsh et al. 1978) set the stage for the development of “mindfulness” for medical purposes, spearheaded most notably by the now famous Jon Kabat-Zinn. Kabat-Zinn's Stress Reduction Clinic had begun to publish scientific studies on mindfulness/awareness meditation beginning in the early 1980s (e.g. Kabat-Zinn 1982, Kabat-Zinn et al. 1985 and 1986, Kabat-Zinn and Chapman-Waldrop 1988, and Kabat-Zinn 1990), and the results presented in those studies had a powerful effect on the history and development of globalized secular meditation. Was Goenka now attempting to participate in such developments (that he had in fact unwittingly been one of the primary influences in sparking)?

This does not seem to be the case, at least not in any substantive sense. Engagement in research, and the founding of the Vipassana Research Institute, served three purposes for Goenka's organization: 1. To maintain tax exempt status for the Sayaji U Ba Khin Memorial Trust—the formal entity responsible for Goenka's network of meditation centers; 2. to publish literature that would provide Goenka's students with a sense of access to the traditional teachings of Theravāda Buddhism and give Goenka a publishing forum for his writings beyond the *Vipaśyanā* newsletter; 3. to perform/enact/demonstrate scholastic authority in support of Goenka's (“non-sectarian”) interpretations of traditional Buddhist thought and practice (encapsulated in the term *vipaśyanā/vipassanā*).

The first purpose was and is primary. Goenka would have been able to achieve the second and third purposes without founding the Vipassana Research Institute, but activities entailed in the second were considered possibly a source of profit and therefore rendered the Sayaji U Ba Khin

³⁷⁴ See above, pp. 153–157.

Memorial Trust's status as a public charitable trust uncertain. As already pointed out, Goenka had been doing much of his literature-oriented missionary work through the publication of the *Vipaśyanā* newsletter, and he had published a number of introductory books, some in multiple printings. But the Vipassana Research Institute allowed him to do these things—which were essential to his institution-building agenda—without threatening the advantageous tax-exempt financial situation of the Sayaji U Ba Khin Memorial Trust, a status that was equally essential for his larger project. By setting up a research institute that could also be tax exempt, but under different auspices, Goenka killed two birds with one stone. It seems, therefore, that Goenka never really had any serious intention to carry out scientific research on the effects of the meditation practices he taught. He of course already knew that the teachings were efficacious as therapeutic mechanisms. This was evident to him through his own experience with his teacher and the many students he had helped to heal in various ways. But the Vipassana Research Institute did serve his (counter-)missionary agenda. It gave him a publishing mouthpiece through which to invoke the rhetoric of science thereby justifying why his teachings are historically correct and should be adopted by as many people as possible around the world. As an accredited research institute, this platform also allowed him to set himself up even more forcefully than before as an (or really *the only true*) authentic authority on and purveyor of pure Dhamma acting in the world. This was always his primary aim.

In the first public announcement of the establishment of the Vipassana Research Institute, it is already clear that carrying out scientific research on the effects of meditation was never a real priority for Goenka and his community of missionaries³⁷⁵:

³⁷⁵ *Vipaśyanā* 15.2 (July 31, 1985): 3–4.

विपश्यना विशोधन विन्यास

‘विपश्यना विशोधन विन्यास’ का गठन विशेषरूपसे विपश्यना साधना संबंधी साहित्य के प्रचार-प्रसार हेतु ही किया गया है। इसके पहले यह काम ‘सयाजी ऊ बा खिन मेमोरियल ट्रस्ट’ द्वारा हुआ करता था। परंतु ट्रस्ट का उद्देश्य मुख्यरूपसे साधना के व्यावहारिक पक्ष को उजागर करना है। उसके द्वारा व्यावसायिक काम किया जाना उचित नहीं। जब कि साहित्य की प्रांग सभी क्षेत्रों से उठने

लगी तो प्र. गुरुदेव के आदेशानुसार प्रकाशन जैसे व्यावसायिक कामों के लिए उक्त ट्रस्ट का गठन किया गया। इसका उद्देश्य बिना किसी मुनाफे के उचित मूल्य पर साहित्य उपलब्ध कराने का ही रहेगा। यदि कभी कुछ मुनाफा हुआ भी तो वह धर्म के प्रचार में ही लगेगा।

फिलहाल विन्यास ने निम्न पुस्तकों का प्रकाशन आरंभ कर दिया है जो कि शीघ्र ही छपकर तैयार हो रही हैं।

- १) हिंदी “धर्म ज्योति” द्वितीय संस्करण
- २) हिंदी “धर्म जीवन जीने की कला” चतुर्थ मुद्रण
- ३) गुजराती “धर्म जीवन जीवानी कला” द्वितीय संस्करण
- ४) अंग्रेजी “Vipassana Journal” द्वितीय संस्करण
- ५) अंग्रेजी “Summary of Discourses” प्रथम संस्करण
- ६) हिन्दी “प्रवचन-प्रवाह” प्रथम संस्करण

इनके अतिरिक्त विन्यास विपश्यना संबंधी अन्य उपलब्ध पुस्तकों की विक्री का काम भी करेगा। निकट भविष्य में इसके अन्य प्रकाशनों में—

‘हिंदी’ एवं ‘राजस्थानी’ में अलग अलग दोहो का संकलन होगा।

विपश्यना विशोधन विन्यास का पंजीकृत कार्यालय बम्बई में निम्न प्रकार है—

८ मोहता भवन, आफ-डी. मोसेस रोड, वरली, बम्बई-४०००१८.

फिलहाल सारा लेखा-जोखा हैदराबाद के निम्न शाखा-कार्यालय में हो रहा है। अतः पुस्तकों के लिए इसी पते पर संपर्क करना चाहिए।

Vipassana Research Institute,
Gandhi Darshan, Exhibition Ground,
Mukramjahi Road, Hyderabad-500001.

निम्न पते पर भी पुस्तकें प्राप्य होंगी :-

V. A. K. Spiritual Book Shop
P. O. Sri Aurovindo Ashram,
Pondicherry-605002.



Figure 34: First announcement of the Vipassana Research Institute

The “Vipassana Research Institute” has been established particularly for the sake of disseminating literature connected with Vipāśyanā meditation. Before this, such work was done by the “Sayaji U Ba Khin Memorial Trust.” But the Trust’s purpose is primarily to promote the practical aspect of meditation. It is not appropriate that it should be involved in business dealings (*vyāvasāyik kām*). Since there has arisen a demand for literature from all sectors, in order to carry out the business of publication in accordance with the order of [our] Respected Teacher, the aforementioned Trust has been established. Its purpose will be to make literature available at an appropriate price without making any profit. If there is ever any profit, it will be used for the dissemination of Dharma (*dharm ke pracārmeṃ hī lagegā*).

For the time being, the Institute has begun to publish the following books, which are being made ready and will soon be printed:

1. Hindi: *Dharma Jyoti*
2. Hindi: *Dharma Jīvan Jine kī Kalā*
3. Gujarati: *Dharma Jīvan Jivavānī Kalā*
4. English: *Vipassana Journal*
5. English: *Summary of Discourses*
6. Hindi: *Pravacan-Pravāh*

In addition to these, the Institute will sell other available books connected with Vipāśyanā. In the near future, in its additional publications there will be a collection of *dohas* in “Hindi” and “Rajasthani.”

The registered office of the Vipassana Research Institute is in Bombay as follows:

8 Mohta Bhavan, Dr. E Moses Road, Worli 400018

For the time being, all accounting is happening at the following branch office. So, for books please contact this address:

Vipassana Research Institute
 Gandhi Darshan, Exhibition Ground
 Mukramjahi Road, Hyderabad-50000
 Books can also be attained at the following address:
 V. A. K. Spiritual Bookshop
 P. O. Sri Aurovindo Ashram,
 Pondicherry-605002

This announcement highlights what was and is the main priority of Goenka and his organization: to spread Goenka’s (intellectually minimalist but experientially potent) teachings of Vipāśyanā far and wide, and to give the seed of Dhamma to as many people in the world as possible. It also tacitly points to what was the real driving force behind the establishment of a research institute when it notes that “its purpose will be to make literature

available at an appropriate price without making any profit. If there is ever any profit, it will be used for the promotion/dissemination of Dharma.” A research institute can act as a publishing house, participate in the business of selling books, and remain exempt from taxes if its goal is research and not profit. At the same time, to obtain the formal status of a research institute, the organization would have to carry out actual research and provide educational facilities. The Vipassana Research Institute was born of these necessities. Under the onus of these needs, a Pāli Studies program was developed in connection with Bombay University,³⁷⁶ several seminars were held on Vipāśyanā and health,³⁷⁷ and Goenka began writing about the importance of textual learning for the practice of meditation.³⁷⁸

At heart, however, the somewhat narrow embodiment-oriented emphasis of the tradition—with an attendant anti-intellectualism—made the possibility of developing a legitimate research program impossible. This is evident even to this day in the Vipassana Research Institute’s own standard description of its mission:

The Vipassana Research Institute (V.R.I.) was established in 1985 for the purpose of conducting research into the sources and applications of the Vipassana technique. [...] Goenkaji realized the importance of establishing a research institute when [...] he began to teach courses on the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the main discourse in which the Buddha systematically explains the technique of Vipassana. Goenkaji noticed that students attending the *Satipaṭṭhāna* courses, who are studying the words of the Buddha while at the same time applying them in their meditation practice, feel inspired and filled with gratitude. They experience the positive quality of confidence that comes when they compare their own experience with the Buddha’s words. Naturally, some of them feel

³⁷⁶ *Vipassana Newsletter (VMC edition)* 13.1 (April 1986): 3–4; *Vipassana Newsletter (VMC edition)* 13.4 (December 1986): 8–9; *Vipassana Newsletter (VMC edition)* 14.4 (December 1987): 3.

³⁷⁷ See, for example, *Vipassana Newsletter (VMC edition)* 12.3 (September 1985): 4, on a seminar entitled “Mind and Body: Healthy Living Vipassana Way”; *Vipassana Newsletter (VMC edition)* 14.1 (April 1987): 2–3, “Seminar on Vipassana Meditation”; 14.2 (June 1987), “Papers from the Seminar on Vipassana Meditation”; *Vipassana Newsletter (VMC edition)* 15.2 (June 1988): 3, “Vipassana Meditation in the Practice of Medicine”; and *Vipassana Newsletter (VRI edition)* 1.3 (January 1991): 10, “A Report on Health Seminar.” Nearly all of the “papers” presented at these seminars and published in the newsletters and in various booklets of the Vipassana Research Institute involved no research and are best understood as missionary propaganda.

³⁷⁸ See, for example, *Vipāśyanā* 14.5–15.7, and especially *Vipāśyanā* 15.8/9 (2/24/1986): 1–2 (*Vipassana Newsletter* 13.1 [April 1986]: 1–2).

inspired to undertake further study; and, to provide this opportunity, the Vipassana Research Institute was established.³⁷⁹

The Institute's research work focuses on two main areas: translation and publication of the Pāli texts, and research into the application of Vipassana in daily life.

Contrary to what this statement indicates, I have over twenty years of ethnographic engagement with this community of practitioners run into numerous young meditators who find themselves deeply puzzled by Goenkaji's *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* course and his interpretations of that famous text. I have also seen a consistent trend within the community, particularly in recent years, of actively discouraging students from studying traditional Buddhist texts, which often on their face conflict with Goenka's interpretations of the teachings of the Buddha.³⁸⁰ This tension between Goenka's practical interpretations and the interpretations of many scholars with direct knowledge of both the doctrinal and practical frameworks of early Buddhism made the Vipassana Research Institute a challenging enterprise from its inception.³⁸¹

Yet research and educational programs had to be carried out so that a tax-exempt press could continue to churn out missionary materials free of encumbrance. One project that could be carried out without impinging too much on the basic focus of conducting meditation courses—and which could likewise be conceptualized by all as a powerfully meritorious work of good karma—was the transliteration of traditional Theravāda Buddhist texts into Indian scripts, as well as others, and the publication of the Theravāda Buddhist canon in a new Indian edition. Though work of this sort had been undertaken some years before in Nālandā—readable editions of the Pāli canon were available in Devanagari script and reasonably good Hindi translations were available in print—Goenka emphasized the importance of reproducing the Burmese version of the Pāli canon in Devanagari and made

³⁷⁹ VRI 1994 (1991): 245.

³⁸⁰ One interview subject told me a particularly salient story about how a Coordinator Area Teacher (*samanvayak kṣetrīya ācāryā*)—who is currently a highly influential administrator in the network of *vipassana* meditation centers in India—explicitly told students not to study Pāli or read traditional Buddhist texts, but to simply rely on publications of the Vipassana Research Institute. (IE009 [12/9/2016])

³⁸¹ Certain aspects of the “sārification” project appear focused on resolving this tension or glossing over it. The *Sutta Sār* volumes (Tandon 2001 [3 vols.]), mentioned in note 371, are a good example of literature devoted to such aims.

it the primary project of the Vipassana Research Institute to publish this version in an Indian edition:

V.R.I. Has entered the entire Pāli canon, its *Aṭṭhakathā*, and *Ṭīkā* on computer in Devanāgarī and is preparing to publish simultaneously the *Tipiṭaka*, *Aṭṭhakathā* and *Ṭīkā*, not only for its own research purposes, but for the use of various educational and research institutions in India and abroad. [...] Translation into Hindi will follow the publication of the Pāli texts. [...] Clearly, the research work is best done by those with direct experience of the Buddha's teaching.³⁸²

While the institute did eventually produce elegant Indian transliterations of the 1956 Burmese version of the Pāli canon and its commentaries, and also made the texts available in a searchable electronic format, it has produced very little that would pass muster as original peer-reviewed research for most of its existence. To this day, it has made virtually no progress in making available Hindi (or English) translations of the Pāli canon and commentaries. While scholars at the institute have indeed translated some texts, publishing those translations has not been and may never be a priority. What the institute did produce over the years, however, was a wide variety of propaganda materials in support of Goenka's missionary enterprise.

Most important in the above quotation is the final point: that research work is "best done by those with direct experience of the Buddha's teachings." This statement presents the fundamental experience-oriented outlook of Goenka and his close disciples, and what it really means is that the only way to understand—and therefore be able to responsibly interpret and translate—the Buddha's words is to practice Vipassanā as taught by S.N. Goenka in the tradition of Sayāgyi U Ba Khin. In this way, one gets a direct experiential understanding of the ultimate truth of existence. Once one has had such an experience, he will see that such experience actually underlies every word of the Buddha.³⁸³ This attitude toward research into traditional textual sources

³⁸² VRI 1994 (1991): 246.

³⁸³ This approach to textual study and "research" is perhaps most clearly elucidated in an article from the April 1987 English-language *Vipassana Newsletter* (14.1:2) summarizing the activities of a "Seminar on Vipassana Meditation [...] held at Dhammagiri from Dec 20, 1986, to Jan. 1, 1987, under the sponsorship of the Vipassana Research Institute." The article summarizes the conclusions of the seminar—which was apparently attended by "distinguished scholars, government officers, members of the medical, legal, and other professions, social workers, and religious leaders from the Buddhist, Jain, and Hindu communities": "I. The historical actuality of Vipassana is indicated by the numerous references to it in the *Tipiṭaka* [collections of the teachings of the Buddha]. II. The Buddha taught a system of self-

on the Buddha's teachings serves to solidify the internal narrative of the tradition while at the same time calling into question the interpretations of anyone outside of it, those not fully committed (*ananyabhāva*) to Goenka and his community.

The Vipassana Research Institute and its work on publishing the Burmese version of the Pāli canon thus helped to solidify the community's identity as a singularly pure purveyor of the Buddha's teachings. But such research and associated educational programs were apparently not enough for the institute to maintain its status as a full-fledged research institute. A Vipāśyanā *ācārya* who was heavily involved in the development of Goenka's main meditation center, Dhammagiri, during the 1980s and 1990s explains the issue:

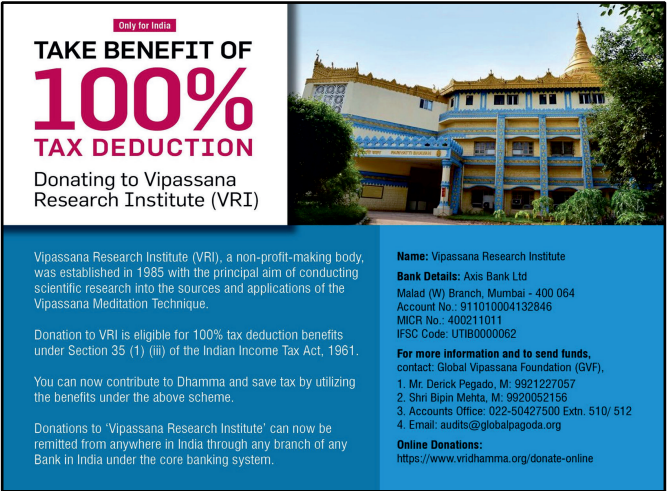
There was this phase in Vipāśyanā where [...] just Pali and that research was not going to give them the tax exemptions that they wanted. And hence, very unwillingly though, they decided that we have to put in a few papers of scientific benefits of Vipassana, which was what that exemption was under: social effects, social beneficial effects, and technically the Pali and all that research did not come under that. So, for that, one had to quickly have a few conferences in Dhammagiri, for which quickly a few papers had to be made. [...] So that's how that really goes. There was an alcohol and addictions conference.³⁸⁴ Different kinds of conferences were there. That was that phase, and then all of it came in that seminar brochure, the journal. And most of that was really a phase, and the purpose of that phase was not an evaluation of the scientific efficacy of Vipāśyanā, not at all. That was never a priority. That wasn't and that isn't a priority of Vipāśyanā at any given point in time. Goenka-ji always believed that anything else which is tagged on to it will gain priority, and the technique will go. So, nothing else, not even implementing it in education. There was such a big push from a lot of us at one point in the mid-early 90s to why not set up a little bit of a school or an educational set up outside of the center where we can try and now put these things into education? No.

transformation through self-knowledge. The knowledge needed for this transformation is experiential rather than cognitive or intellectual. [...] The way to attain this knowledge is through insight into *vedanā* [sensation]. [...] III. More research is needed to examine what light the texts throw on the technique, and what light the technique throws on the texts. [...] The article expands on each of these findings, and I won't go into the numerous conceptual problems with the ideas presented here. One particularly glaring notion is the facile distinction made between the "experiential" and the "cognitive." One more general point to note here is that the findings in the report of the seminar simply and uncritically conflate the technique taught by S. N. Goenka with the entirety of what "the Buddha taught" as represented in the complex and historically layered Theravāda Buddhist canon.

³⁸⁴ See VRI 2015 (1990).

We were totally dissuaded at every given point of time. We were told that “When time is ripe, we’ll do it.” But the time was never ripe. So, that’s when a few papers came up, but I guess that was a passing phase because post the 90s, mid-90s, yeah ’96-’97, no more such studies happened.³⁸⁵

This account of the activities of the Vipassana Research Institute during the decade of the 1990s is quite telling. The rhetoric of the early public discussions of the purpose of the institute foregrounds social benefits, health, and education.³⁸⁶ But the accomplishments of the institute over the past thirty odd years demonstrate that these were, as the critical comments above suggest, never a priority. I would go even further to say that, indeed, research writ large does not appear to ever have been a real priority. Maintaining a tax-exempt publishing house for the dissemination of Vipassānā missionary propaganda appears to have been the primary purpose of the Vipassana Research Institute from its inception until the present day. This may sound like an entirely negative assessment of this institutional aspect of the tradition. But there are various ways to look at the issue, and one way of considering it is to acknowledge this approach as a skillful use of public authority for the purpose of spreading the seeds of Dharma widely in the form of meditative experience.



Only for India

TAKE BENEFIT OF
100%
TAX DEDUCTION

Donating to Vipassana Research Institute (VRI)

Vipassana Research Institute (VRI), a non-profit-making body, was established in 1985 with the principal aim of conducting scientific research into the sources and applications of the Vipassana Meditation Technique.

Donation to VRI is eligible for 100% tax deduction benefits under Section 35 (1) (iii) of the Indian Income Tax Act, 1961.

You can now contribute to Dhamma and save tax by utilizing the benefits under the above scheme.

Donations to 'Vipassana Research Institute' can now be remitted from anywhere in India through any branch of any Bank in India under the core banking system.

Name: Vipassana Research Institute

Bank Details: Axis Bank Ltd
 Malad (W) Branch, Mumbai - 400 064
 Account No.: 911010004132846
 MICR No.: 400211011
 IFSC Code: UTIB0000062

For more information and to send funds,
 contact: Global Vipassana Foundation (GVF),

1. Mr. Derick Pegado, M: 9921227057
2. Shri Bipin Mehta, M: 9920052156
3. Accounts Office: 022-50427500 Extn. 510/ 512
4. Email: audits@globalpagoda.org

Online Donations:
<https://www.vridhamma.org/donate-online>

Figure 35: A recent Facebook advertisement for “100% Tax Deduction” when donating to the Vipassana Research Institute

³⁸⁵ IE003.

³⁸⁶ See *Vipassana Newsletter* 14.1 (April 1987): 2–3.

d) Goenka and His Teachings: Calm and Insight

With all of this talk of social contexts, political forces, personal conflicts, organizational hierarchies, institution building, and publishing activities, we have perhaps drifted away from one of the central concerns of this book: the actual practices that form the core activities of the traditions studied here. It should be clear at this point, however, that it is not possible to fully separate the teachings themselves from teaching contexts—personal, cultural, and political. Still, there remains a very strong continuity between the basic meditative technologies taught by Goenka and those of his teacher, even though the contexts in which Goenka taught conditioned a variety of particular developments.

I showed above that one of the central ways scholars have marked the emergence of insight meditation as a modern category in colonial Burma is by pointing to the development of practices/practice traditions that highlight the possibility that insight—and therefore Buddhist attainment—can be accomplished in the absence of developed forms of concentration (*samādhi*) or calming (*samatha*). It is with this idea in mind that Erik Braun—whose 2013 work paradigmatically reifies this notion—identifies particular teachings of the Ledi Sayādaw as constitutive of the *birth of insight*. By drawing an unsubstantiated historical link between the Ledi Sayādaw and the Mahāsi Sayādaw, Braun goes on to associate the Ledi Sayādaw with another aspect of the emergence of the category of modern insight meditation: the development of large meditation centers and teaching models involving large groups of meditators in the context of such centers.

I also demonstrated how Braun has mis-characterized the Ledi Sayādaw’s teachings in arguing that Ledi “suggests a preferential option for the dry approach” (insight without calming) to insight practice, and that Ledi considered that just any old lay meditation practitioner might attain Buddhist enlightenment without the use of calming/concentration. On the contrary, the Ledi Sayādaw distinguishes clearly between those developed in wisdom, who can accomplish the discernment of insight meditation straight away, and the “common masses,” who should first practice body-oriented attention practices (*kāyagatāsati*) for the sake of calm.

I went on to show how U Ba Khin’s model of practice, deployed in a distinctly pluralistic post-colonial urban social context, largely conforms to that of the Ledi Sayādaw in terms of theories about the relationship between the development of concentration and the development of insight. Following trends not particularly associated with Ledi, U Ba Khin established an urban

meditation center. But he taught on a very small scale. What appears to become more pronounced in U Ba Khin's teaching—or perhaps it simply only now becomes available to the gaze of the historian—is the role of the teacher and the meditation environment (the protective setting of the meditation center) in creating optimal conditions for practice. (U Ba Khin's role as a healer also sets him apart, but that is a topic for another study.) U Ba Khin is unequivocal about the importance of the teacher and his protective influence for possibilities of success in meditation:

You will find out that meditation by yourself does not work. However you try to calm your mind, only the time will be gone, and your mind will not be calm. But, if you practice with teachers who have the ability to protect you, you will get *samādhi*. For this reason, the Buddha said: *yathābhūtañāya satthā pariyesitabbo*. *Yathābhūtañāya* – for *yathābhūtañāna* (knowledge of things as they are), *satthā* – teachers, *pariyesitabbo* – should be approached. Without a teacher, there is no way. The guidance and protection from a teacher are very important. There are pulling forces in the environment, and they disturb concentration. If a teacher protects [a meditator] from these forces and disturbances, a meditator who is working for *samādhi* can get concentration. After getting calmness of mind, there is *cittavisuddhi* (purity of mind), and the characteristic of *cittaekaggata* (one-pointedness of mind) appears. At that time only, *vipassanā* meditation should be practiced.³⁸⁷

This understanding of the role of the teacher conditioned how U Ba Khin taught, and he would use psychic helpers to discern the influence of negative forces and channel supportive cosmic forces to overcome them. Mother Sayama was one of these helpers, and U Ba Khin's teaching often relied on her forceful powers to push his students to Buddhist attainment.³⁸⁸

S.N. Goenka learned *vipassanā* from U Ba Khin under these conditions, and his own experience with his teacher(s) conditioned the development of a

³⁸⁷ U Ba Khin n.d. [1962?] 7.1: 19:30–20:47 (translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart).

³⁸⁸ It seems that, at a certain point, U Ba Khin realized that pushing people too hard using his “*mettā*” or his “power” (*ā*) could possibly be harmful. He indicates this in a discourse from the early 1960s, when speaking to his Burmese students about an American woman who had to leave the course early: “Well, for this foreigner lady, she felt weak and she wanted to go back home. I made a guess that if I gave a forceful *vipassanā*, she might fall down. She ate nothing except milk and fruits. She did not touch the rice and bread. Then, I let her to go back. [...] Now she is expressing her thanks to me and donating many things. She will come again with her brother in the coming December. [...]” (U Ba Khin n.d. [1962?] 6.2: 2:35–3:15 [translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart])

heavily faith-based and teacher-centered teaching model under him. But in the context of Goenka's mission in post-colonial India, this emphasis was gradually stripped from the public representation of the practice: first as a result of the need to distinguish the tradition (and extricate his blind-faith-believin' Hindu brethren) from the kind of "guruism" common in most South Asian traditions; second to ensure that Mother Sayama could be sidelined; and third to placate his rationalist disciples. As a result, in his presentation of the theory of the relationship between calming and insight, Goenka offers a theory generally in line with U Ba Khin's—and amenable to the Ledi Sayādaw's classical text-based theory—but with less doctrinal coherence and absent explicit mention of the importance of the role of the teacher³⁸⁹:

A Buddha before he becomes Buddha is a *bodhisatta*. He practices everything that is common and then finds out: "No, this is not the actual path." And then because of the *pāramitās* of the past, which are now developed to such an extent that they start helping him, he starts investigating the real path, real path. He sits under a tree, and it is the past *pāramitās* which help him, and the first thing he remembers [is] that as a child sitting under a tree, I had practised *anapana*. Yes as a child, hardly about five years old. An occasion arose where he was sitting under a tree, nobody was around, and he started practising *anapana*. He remembers that. Because of the past *pāramīs*, because of the past practices, and starts working with *anapana*, *anapana*. And as one starts working with *anapana*, *paññā* starts developing simultaneously. As you practise *anapana* you start feeling sensations on the body. And because of his past *pāramī*, the sensation was not taken as a sensation to play games. The sensation was taken to understand wisdom, develop wisdom, this is *anicca*, this is *anicca*. With the help of *anapana*, and with the help of this *paññā* of *anicca*, *anicca-vijjā-ñāṇa*, *anicca-vijjā-ñāṇa* progressing the *anicca-vijjā-ñāṇa*, *anicca-vijjā-ñāṇa*, all the *avijjā* was broken, eradicated. The *nibbāna-dhātu*, he came in contact with *nibbāna-dhātu*, experienced *nibbāna*, became fully enlightened. The correct path was found.

Therefore, afterwards when he started teaching, even from the first *jhāna*, *sampajañña* was added. By the time one reached the third *jhāna*, *sampajañña* became very strong. By the time one reaches the fourth *jhāna*, one not only attains the *jhānasamāpatti* of the fourth *jhāna*, one attains the *nirodhasamāpatti* also—the *phalasamāpatti* of *sotāpanna*, the *phalasamāpatti* of the *sakadāgāmī*, the *nirodhasamāpatti* of *anāgāmī*, the *nirodhasamāpatti* of *arahant*. The path became so clear.

³⁸⁹ This passage was transcribed from an audio recording of a discourse on the tenth day of Goenka's standard thirty-day retreat, recorded in January/February of 1989 at Goenka's main meditation center, *Dhamma Giri*, in Igatpuri, Mahārāṣṭra.

There were people around him who came to learn [the] technique. To some, Vipassana was given right away, of course with the base of *sīla*, Vipassana was given right away. *Samādhi* develops along with Vipassana. No special practice is done for *samādhi*. And that is called *sukkhā* Vipassana, the dry Vipassana. Someone is fit for that.

Samādhi is given to someone—wet Vipassana—first *jhāna*, second *jhāna*, third *jhāna*, fourth *jhāna*. As one develops in these *jhānas*, one practises *paññā* and gets liberated. Then even not the first *jhāna* but still *samādhi*, *khaṇika-samādhi* or *upacāra-samādhi*, so that there is little bit of *samādhi* at least to start. And the *samādhi* develops as *paññā* develops, but it is not totally *sukkhā*, not totally dry.

And this tradition is working in this way. There must be *upacāra-samādhi*. One is not taken to four *jhānas* first, and then given Vipassana.

While Goenka's use of the term *nirodhasamāpatti* is doctrinally unorthodox, the model he explains here conforms with the traditional Abhidhamma model of how supramundane absorption mind moments (*lokuttarajhānacitta*) manifest for those attaining the various stages of Buddhist awakening. His discussion of the concepts of “dry insight meditation” (*sukkhavipassanā*) and “wet insight meditation,” however, muddies the definitions of the traditional categories. In the traditional interpretation, a *sukkhavipassaka*, or dry insight meditator, attains liberating insight even though he might be incapable of developing the calm of *jhāna* or absorption meditation.³⁹⁰ Goenka suggests here that this category of practice entails an implicit development of *samādhi* “along with Vipassana,” but he is not clear whether *samādhi* in this case refers to absorption *samādhi* (*appanā*) or access/semblance concentration (*upacāra*). Goenka's subsequent invocation of both “momentary concentration” (*khaṇika-samādhi*) and “access/semblance concentration” (*upacāra-samādhi*) as constituting a “not totally dry” practice further fudges the traditional definitions of these categories of concentration. It is

³⁹⁰ On the *sukkhavipassaka*, see notes 145, 151 and 44. A normative definition common to a number of Pāli commentaries can be found in the *Manorathapūraṇīṭikā*: “Another fulfills the path of stream-entry as a dry-insight practitioner (*sukkhavipassaka*), one who is taken up with the duty of discernment, being unable to bring about the [jhānic] attainments (*samāpatti*). At that moment [of fulfillment], he is known as one who conforms with the Dhamma (*dhammānusārī*). He is known as one who has reached [right] view (*diṭṭhipatta*) upon the fulfillment of the fruit of stream entry and up through the fulfillment of the path of arhatship. At the moment of [the fulfillment of] the fruit of arhatship, he is known as one liberated by way of discernment (*paññāvimutta*).” (*aparo paññādhurena abhinivīṭho samāpattiyo nibbattetuṃ asakkonto sukkhavipassako va hutvā sotāpattimaggaṃ pāpuṇāti. so tasmim khaṇe dhammānusārī nāma hoti, sotāpatti-phalādīsu chasu thānesu diṭṭhippatto nāma, arahattaphalakkhaṇe paññāvimutto nāma.* [Mp-ṭ II 148–149])

noteworthy that U Ba Khin did not include momentary concentration in his formal taxonomy of concentration. Goenka's mention of it here is puzzling, since it is precisely this kind of concentration that U Ba Khin critiques as inadequate for the proper development of insight. And in the end, Goenka presents the listener with a stance fully in line with U Ba Khin's: "There must be *upacāra-samādhi* (access concentration)." ³⁹¹ What is missing from Goenka's analysis is mention of the importance of the presence and power of the teacher in creating conditions that suffice as a substitute for the development of full-blown absorption meditation: ³⁹²

Partly because for a householder, it is so difficult. It takes such a long time to develop these four *jhānas* or eight *jhānas*, and it is so difficult for the ordinary householder to find that much time. Even a monk, even a nun will get bored, it becomes so difficult. And another danger [is] that if one practises these four *jhānas*, and if Vipassana is not added, *sampajañña* is not added at the earlier stage, the bliss, the ecstasy, even in the third and fourth *jhāna* is so high, what to talk of the fifth to eighth. One feels like remaining submerged in that. One does not feel like coming and starting Vipassana. One misses Vipassana at all. One does not work at all in Vipassana. There is a danger.

Another danger: by the time one reaches the third or the fourth *jhāna*, some of the mental faculties increase so much, one develops different kinds of psychic powers. This supernatural power, that supernatural power. There is every possibility, if *pañña* is not there, if Vipassana is not added, there is every possibility that this person will lose track. He will develop ego because of these supernatural powers and will be far away from full liberation.

So this technique very rightly wants you to start with *khaṇika-samādhi*, or better, with *upacāra-samādhi*. Even it come[s] to *appanā-samādhi*, the

³⁹¹ "To attain *bhāvanāmayāñāna* (knowledge produced through cultivation), *samādhi* is vital. Most of the meditators give up in *samādhi*. What kind of *samādhi*? It should be real *cittavisuddhi* (purification of mind). Real *cittavisuddhi* is called *upacārasamādhi* (access/semblance concentration). *Upacārasamādhi* is very close to the condition of meditation in which one is going to attain *jhānājavana* (the mental force of absorption [concentration]). For instance, when a meditator establishes concentration by mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*), *cittaekaggata*—calmness of mind—arises in him. At that time, training signs (*uggahanimitta*) appear suddenly like a diamond. A meditator sees from the training sign to the counterpart sign (*paṭibhāganimitta*) that there is the nature of *cittavisuddhi*. If he reaches this level, his concentration is good enough." U Ba Khin n.d. [1962?] 7.2: 23:20–24:06 (translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart)

³⁹² This passage was transcribed from an audio recording of a discourse on the tenth day of Goenka's standard thirty-day retreat, recorded in January/February of 1989 at Goenka's main meditation center, *Dhamma Giri*, in Igatpuri, Mahārāṣṭra.

first stage of *appanā-samādhi*, the first *jhāna* of *appanā-samādhi*, is good enough. And then working with Vipassana, working with Vipassana, one reaches the first *phalasamāpatti* of *sotāpanna*, the second *phalasamāpatti* of *sakadāgāmī*. Then all importance is given to these four *jhānas* or eight *jhānas*. Partly because after becoming *sakadāgāmī*, it doesn't take much time. Mind has become much purer. A purer mind can get concentrated easily. So these four *jhānas* and eight *jhānas* have become easy for one who has become *sakadāgāmī*. And partly because one has practised Vipassana, practised *nibbāna*, so there is no danger of this person going mad in any way. It becomes easy. So it is only after *sakadāgāmī* that the *jhānas* are being practised—four or eight.

At this stage, for a meditator, *upacāra-samādhi* is good enough. You are aware of the object continuously, continuously. Although you didn't get the absorption *samādhi* of the first *jhāna*—some may get, some may not get—but *upacāra* is there. Continuously, continuously. It is not just like a few seconds. Now you are aware of your object for a minute, for two minutes, five minutes, ten minutes, fifteen minutes, in some cases one hour. Good enough. This is good enough for you to start practicing Vipassana, and this will take you at the deeper level of Vipassana. And you will be moving towards the final goal of liberation, *nibbāna*, *nibbāna*. [...]

Develop your *upacāra-samādhi*. Try to maintain the awareness of the sensation on this area as long at a stretch as possible, as long at a stretch as possible. This will help you tomorrow when you start practising Vipassana. Keep working diligently, keep working diligently, continuously, diligently, continuously, continuously.

Here we see Goenka both warning about the dangers of *jhāna* and suggesting that his students should indeed work towards the absorption of the first *jhāna*. While the emphasis remains on the more basic goal of *upacārasamādhi*, there is a clear indication here that the deeper state of the first absorption is a more highly prized (sufficient) goal of calming practice.

In Goenka's normative teachings, this basis of either *upacārasamādhi* or the capacity of concentration enabled by the first *jhāna* becomes foundational for the *vipassanā* modality. Following Sayāgyi U Ba Khin, Goenka explained the process of *vipassanā* or insight meditation by way of the cultivation of the seven *visuddhis* or purifications and sixteen insight knowledges, and he drew on the *Visuddhimagga* to outline how these purifications develop within his model of practice. I present here Goenka's practical analysis of the development of these stages of purification from a discourse on the last day of one of his thirty-day courses:

And then the next station, the fifth station: *magga-amagga-nāṇa-visuddhi*. Oh, this is the path, and this is not the path. This becomes so clear. This

is the path which leads me, which is leading me to the final goal of full liberation from all the defilements. [It] becomes so clear.

You already started this when you started moving from head to feet: *sammasana-nāṇa*. Repeatedly, moving from head to feet and feet to head, repeatedly, repeatedly, again and again—you try to understand, what is this phenomenon? “Oh, this physical structure; appears to be so solidified. And the mental structure, the four components.” Repeatedly, repeatedly, you are observing, you are observing. *Sammasana-nāṇa*.

And repeatedly observing, observing, you start experiencing: things arise, they seem to stay for some time, and look, they pass away. *Udaya*, arising, and sooner or later *vaya*, passing away. *Udaya-vaya, udaya-vaya*. This *udaya-vaya-nāṇa*. Understand every step is a step of personal experience, you are not playing an intellectual game. You are experiencing how things arise, they pass away. The entire physical structure, the entire mental structure, the combination of the two, manifesting itself as this sensation or that sensation. Look—arising, passing, arising, passing.

All the *kalāpas*, they seem to be so much solidified, but the characteristic is so clear—arising, sooner or later passing away, arising, passing. So also the cognizing part of the mind—arising, passing; the recognizing part of the mind—arising, passing; the feeling part of the mind—arising, passing; the reacting part of the mind—arising, passing, arising, passing. *Udaya-vaya, udaya-vaya*.

Observing this mind-matter phenomenon continuously, continuously, one reaches the stage of *bhaṅga*. *Bhaṅga-nāṇa*, the wisdom of *bhaṅga*, total dissolution. The apparent truth of solidity is gone now, you are coming nearer and nearer to the ultimate truth. The entire physical structure—mass of sub-atomic particles, *kalāpas*; no solidity, mere wavelets. And so also the mental structure, mere wavelets; all emotional solidity is gone—*bhaṅga, bhaṅga*. Arising is not so predominant; passing away is so predominant—dissolution, dissolution.

Some start understanding this reality of dissolution earlier; others get entangled themselves with this experience of dissolution. Because when everything gets dissolved one feels a free flow, a free flow of energy throughout the physical structure, which seems very pleasant. One starts enjoying, one starts relishing.

And then suddenly one realizes: “Oh, what I have started doing. This is *ādinava*, very dangerous. This is *bhaya*, very frightening.” Wisdom of *ādinava*, wisdom of *bhaya* arises. “Oh, this is what I had been doing in countless lives. Relishing the pleasure of the pleasant sensations and the resultant aversion towards the unpleasant ones. And rolling in misery, rolling in misery, life after life, life after life. This is what I have started doing now, in the name of Vipassana, in the name of the practice of liberation. I have started creating more and more bondages for me. Dangerous, frightful.”

Then *nibbidā-ñāṇa*—no more relishing, “So disgusting. What is there to relish?” No more relishing.

And then an understanding arises: *muñcitukamyatā*. “Oh this combination of mind and matter is source of misery, nothing but misery.” One feels like coming out of it, a Dhamma volition to come out of it—*muñcitukamyatā*—to come out of it.

Then *paṭisaṅkhā-ñāṇa*, one tries to come out of it. One stops reacting to these sensations understanding fully well that this will multiply the *saṅkhā*, the bondages, the *loka-cakra* [Pāli: *cakka*], the *bhava-cakra* [Pāli: *cakka*]*—the cycle, the wheel of misery, the wheel of life and death, death and life, life and death, death and life. One starts retreating from this wrong path. The old habit-pattern takes us towards that path of misery, of bondage. And the wisdom helps us to come out of that wrong path, and start walking on the path of liberation.*

Saṅkhāra-upekkhā. Saṅkhāra-upekkhā-ñāṇa—the wisdom of developing indifference, equanimity towards *saṅkhāras*. Different types of *saṅkhāras* have been accumulated, *anusaya kilesa*. And as one proceeds further on the path of purification these *saṅkhāras* are shaken and they come on the surface, manifest themselves as this sensation, or that sensation. The only thing one has to do is: remain equanimous, *upekkhā, upekkhā, upekkhā*.

All the *bhava-saṅkhāras*, *saṅkhāras* which are responsible to give a new life, let them come on the surface. You are just observing objectively, you don’t lose the equanimity of your mind, and they pass away. *Uppajjivā nirujjhanti, uppajjivā nirujjhanti*. They arise, they get eradicated, they arise, they get eradicated.

One cannot say how long it will take to get rid of all the stock of the *saṅkhāras*. Here again a danger comes. On the path there are so many dangers, so many pitfalls. One has to be very careful. A danger comes to many a students at this stage: one becomes very eager to reach the goal. “Oh look still, still I have to work with my *saṅkhāras*. Still I have not eradicated my *saṅkhāras* completely.” And this eagerness, this craving for the goal, becomes a big hindrance. One has to be very careful. Always remember the words of the enlightened person: *kālaṃ āgameyya*—let the time ripen.

Ātāpī sampajāno satimā. “My job is to remain with *sati*, with *sampajañña*. Let the time ripen.” Then one keeps on progressing, keeps on progressing. One cannot know the amount of stock of the old *saṅkhāras* one is carrying. Therefore, it cannot be said that the path of *saṅkhāraupekkhā* is so long—so long for this person, so long for that person.

Those who have cleared their stock from many lives in the past and have taken a vow that they will get Dhamma from the Enlightened One, they get birth as human beings when someone becomes a Buddha, comes [i.e. such a person who takes the vow] in contact [with Buddha], gets

Dhamma [from him], and soon reaches the final goal. Maybe a few years, maybe a few months, maybe a few days, maybe a few hours, in some cases maybe a few seconds—it depends. [...]

When all those *saṅkhāras* which are responsible to take you to the lower field are eradicated, time comes—*anuloma*—the mind becomes very straight, fit to take the dip in the nibbānic stage. And yes, it does take a dip. But first becomes *gotrabhū*. Leaving this side of the shore, shore of *anicca*, *anicca*, and before reaching the other shore one becomes *gotrabhū*—the *gotra* is changed, the clan is changed. Previously one was an *anariya*, non-ariyan, now one becomes *ariya*. First experience of the nibbānic stage.

And then coming back to the sensual field again, working the same way, the same way, eradicating *saṅkhāras* after *saṅkhāras*—*sakadāgāmi*, *anāgāmi*, and a time is bound to arise when one becomes *arahant*.

Visaṅkhāra-gataṃ cittaṃ. The mind is free from all the *saṅkhāras* which are responsible to give a new life. And that is the stage where one gets the seventh purity—*dassanañāṇa-visuddhi*, *ñāṇa-dassana-visuddhi*. The wisdom is now pure, perfect. The observation is now pure, perfect—*kevalaṃ paripuṇṇaṃ, kevalaṃ parisuddhaṃ*.³⁹³

One aspect of Goenka's model of practice that is not found in this formal analysis should not be overlooked. The key stage of *saṅkhāra-upekkhā*—equanimity towards *saṅkhāras* or karmic formations—gets enacted according to a very particular instruction. The instruction involves bringing meditative attention to an energy center at the solar plexus, the xiphoid process of the sternum. This part of the body was referred to in the vernacular by the Ledi Sayādaw as the “heart dwelling” (*nhaluṃ* "aim"), by U Tiloka as the “hollow of the heart” (*nhaluṃ* "bhū" "luṇ"), by Sayā Thetgyi as the “concave of the chest” (*raṇ* "ñīvan" "chī"), and by Sayāgyi U Ba Khin as the “centre.”

All of these teachers conceptualized this physical energy center as the seat or “heart-base” (*hadayavatthu*) of the subconscious mind-stream (*bhavaṅga*), at times equating the physical base with the mind-stream itself. They also considered the ability to meditatively access this very subtle aspect of embodied mental life as a key aim of the practice.³⁹⁴ Accessing this deepest level of the mind at the level of direct experience—when it is accompanied by the *weizzā* or *vidyā* of *vipassanā*—allows for the arousal and subsequent eradication of karmic forces from past lives that are responsible for future

³⁹³ This passage was transcribed from an audio recording of a discourse on the twenty-ninth day of Goenka's standard forty-five-day retreat, recorded in January/February of 1992 at Goenka's main meditation center, *Dhamma Giri*, in Igatpuri, Mahārāṣṭra.

³⁹⁴ See note 95 above.

births—*bhavasāṅkhāra*, to use Goenka's language. This is the idea Goenka has in mind when teaching on the cultivation of equanimity and its relationship to the wisdom of *vipassanā*. This wisdom is accessed through and co-emergent with the cultivation of one-pointed attention, when all conditions are conducive.

Like his teacher, and his teacher's teacher, Goenka understood the importance of deep concentration for the cultivation of insight. He also drew on classical sources to understand, interpret, and justify the experiences of *vipassanā* that he had encountered with his teacher. Unlike his teacher, however, and despite his classical teachings on the importance of absorption for the cultivation of the classical insight knowledges, Goenka never formally taught his students to attain *jhāna*. What is more, the initial warnings in the previous statement—about the dangers of *jhāna*—come to dominate the teaching approaches of Goenka's inner circle such that an explicit devaluation of *jhānic* attainment comes to the fore. How has this come to be the case when Goenka is so clear in his formal teachings about the importance and necessity of *jhāna*, particularly when it comes to higher stages of Buddhist attainment?

Two factors are at work here, and we have touched on both of them in the course of this book. The first factor involves ideas about the power of the teacher's (or assistant teacher's) presence, the power of the protective ritual liturgy employed on all of Goenka's courses, and the power of the sanctified atmosphere of the meditation center. These contextual aspects of Goenka's meditation retreats serve to obviate the need for the development of deep states of calm, since they dispel and keep at bay forces—internal and external—that would otherwise have to be dispatched through the powerful energies of absorption.

The second factor involves soteriological expectation. As outlined above, Goenka and his close disciples see themselves as bodhisattvas of sorts, working to give the “seed of Dhamma” to as many people as possible, and to ensure that the Dhamma spreads far and wide. While there is talk of attainment here and there, and rumors of certain disciples of Goenka having attained various stages of Buddhist awakening, such attainment is considered extremely rare. Most of Goenka's inner circle take themselves to be in it for the long haul and consider it their primary duty to accrue good karma that will eventually come to fruition in a distant future life. In making the spread of Dhamma their primary mission, most of them have all but given up on the idea that they themselves will attain any stage of awakening in this very life, or that they will bring others to such attainments. In some cases, there is even

the active discouragement of such attainments and an incitement to hold back from awakening in order to work into future lives for the benefit of many. (Does this sound familiar? These are some of the soteriological forces behind the historical development of early Mahāyāna Buddhism.)

I suggest that it is these two contextual factors that are primarily responsible for the development of a global movement of non-sectarian Burmese mass insight meditation that eliminates the necessity of teaching and cultivating deep states of calm. Those truly advanced in wisdom, like Goenka and his close circle—as they would have it—have no need for such states. Those who might need or like to develop such states on their own, and would aim at true Buddhist awakening, are not the audience for Goenka's mission. It is worth pointing out that in none of the studies to date dealing with the question of the relationship between practices of calm meditation and practices of insight meditation within modern Burmese Buddhist practice traditions have these historical factors been addressed or taken into account. Since the institution Goenka built is almost certainly the largest global delivery system of intensive traditional Burmese insight meditation in the world today, and U Ba Khin and his students have influenced the development of global and secularized meditation traditions in a variety of other important ways, this appears to be a serious oversight—perhaps even a veritable scandal—on the part of current scholarship.³⁹⁵

³⁹⁵ The problems of this oversight are evident in recent publications such as Braun and McMahan (eds.) 2017, and Cassaniti 2018. The lack of historiographical knowledge of the formation of Goenka's practice, teaching model, and institution building renders particularly worrying modern sociological works on the tradition. Some examples of scholarship in this vein are: Pagis 2019, Rahmani 2017, 2019, and 2020, Loss 2010 and 2011, and Neubert 2008. A fairly recent dissertation by Melnikova (2014) provides some much-needed socio-linguistic contextualization of the post-colonial Indian context of Goenka's mission, and Óscar Carrera (2021) has recently done some thoughtful work on the tail end of the process of the public representation of the lineage in India. Unfortunately, both of these more promising pieces of scholarship lack the proper historiographical and ethnographic grounding, respectively, that would have allowed them to properly capture the various forces at work in the tradition they have attempted to study.

IV. Conclusion: From the Ledi Sayādaw to S.N. Goenka

This long and winding road from the teachings and practices of colonial Burma through missionary contexts of post-colonial South Asia to the globalized teachings of S.N. Goenka's world-network of insight meditation centers and communities reveals just how much a journey transfigures a destination, and how arrival at a destination transfigures the perspective on the journey to it. Now that we have arrived, it is perhaps fitting to look back at the ground we have covered and revisit the questions raised at the outset.

I noted above that in analyzing the early development of insight meditation in colonial Burma, Erik Braun singles out the role of the influential scholar-monk, the Ledi Sayādaw. In telling the Sayādaw's story, Braun draws connecting lines between his meditation teachings and the development of globalized New Age therapeutic mindfulness movements such as those spearheaded by Jon Kabat-Zinn, the architect of MBSR or Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction. In developing this narrative, and attempting to draw such lines, Braun suggests that he can locate "the birth of insight" at a key moment in the life of the Ledi Sayādaw, a moment that he defines primarily by the notion that one can attain the insight of Buddhist awakening without the arduous work it takes to develop deep states of calm. He likewise singles out the moment of the founding of the Insight Meditation Society (IMS) as another key turning point in the history of modern meditation traditions, suggesting that the "situated freedom" of the young founders of this meditation center allowed for traditional insight practices to be reoriented for a North American and subsequently global public.

Braun does a good job of telling the Ledi Sayādaw's story. But by focusing on the singular importance of the Ledi Sayādaw in the development of colonial and post-colonial Burmese Buddhist meditation traditions, he effaces important historical precedents that prepared the ground of practice in which Ledi planted his authoritative scholastic seeds. He also misunderstands the broader doctrinal frameworks of the Ledi Sayādaw's teachings on meditation. What is more, by making it a priority to draw a link between the Ledi Sayādaw and the Mahāsī Sayādaw—who was perhaps one of the most historically significant actors in building a movement of mass Buddhist meditation within Burma—Braun downplays key distinctions in the models

(and associated contexts) of practice handed down through the lineages associated with the Ledi Sayādaw's and the Mahāsī Sayādaw's teachings.

The problems in Braun's treatment of this history get compounded when he tries to move from colonial Burma to modern global contexts. Without properly contextualizing the Ledi Sayādaw's lay successors—particularly U Ba Khin in Burma, Robert Hover in North America, and S.N. Goenka in India—he attempts to weigh in on the historical development of key strains of North American (Buddhist) meditation traditions that have an integral historical link to that lineage. By failing to properly account for these central historical actors, and the complex details of their identities as teachers in diverse (counter-)missionary contexts, integral components of the history of insight meditation and mindfulness go unaccounted for. One might even suggest that they get conveniently erased. Beyond the simple issue of historiographical carelessness, this analysis is troubling because it analogizes acts of neo-colonialist extraction and commodification with powerful subversive strategies of anti-colonial resistance. It also uses the pulpit of a normativizing Buddhist (modernism) Studies to rubber stamp foundational cultural chauvinist attitudes that have had a powerful impact on the integrity of insight meditation traditions and traditional Asian Buddhisms.³⁹⁶

This analysis has attempted to partially rectify these misinterpretations and historical lacunae, but there is clearly much that remains untouched. For example, even fully contextualizing S.N. Goenka's early years of teaching in the complex landscape of 1970s India would be a monumental historiographical task. And surely, like many of my colleagues, I have serious blind spots as a researcher. It is my hope that by filling in crucial components in the genealogy of global insight meditation in the twentieth century—and shedding light on how current scholarship is entrenched in a deep coloniality of the Western imagination—I might help to create a conceptual space in which more nuanced scholarly modalities can productively emerge.³⁹⁷ I also

³⁹⁶ For a recent discussion of how the discourse of “authenticity” haunts Western Buddhist Studies and likewise finds troubled parallels in North American convert traditions, see Quli 2019 (with echoes of Quli 2009). For a discussion of the ways in which unacknowledged or unconscious normative judgments in the field of Buddhist (Modernism) Studies have tacitly produced something of a normative crypto-theological “original Buddhism” fundamentalism, against which various forms of historical Buddhism get measured, see Josephson-Storm 2020.

³⁹⁷ I have been encouraged in this mode of thinking by scholars such as Balbinder Singh Bhogal, who, in his work on the Sikh tradition, suggests that “Sikh *dharam* or *sikhi* needs to be recovered from under the prism of secular modernity's refashioning of it into a religion (Sikhism) as the historical past of today's post-colonial present, in order

hope that serious scholars of Burma studies and South Asian Studies—with the appropriate linguistic, cultural, doctrinal and religious knowledge—will take this as a call to revisit and properly fill in this still incomplete historiographical effort.³⁹⁸ Braun is by no means alone in engaging these patterns.³⁹⁹ His work is exemplary, however, because it not only entrenches trends in scholarship that go back to poorly informed research works of the mid-1990s⁴⁰⁰; it has also been widely cited, for the most part, uncritically. It is high time that Buddhist Studies scholars revisit this received academic narrative and ensure that the world-making practices of the practitioners of the communities being studied remain the focus of our concern.

to enter a future with a horizon not yet colonized by the West's imagination." (Bhagal 2018: 488) While I am certain that my work is complicit in various ways in perpetuating the prismatic perspective of "secular modernity's refashioning" of Burmese Buddhist tradition, I would hope that some of what has been recovered in these pages might contribute to helping current scholarship enter the decolonial horizon that Bhagal gestures towards. My main concern at this point is not earlier colonial actors, however, but modern scholars such as myself who are caught in the vortex of a trenchant coloniality constitutive of our disciplines.

³⁹⁸ There is also a need for more detailed local ethnographies, carried out in as many places as possible, of communities of insight practitioners in various cultural contexts. One example of such an ethnography in South Asia is Lauren Leve's (2017) thoughtful work on *The Buddhist Art of Living in Nepal*. It is my hope that such ethnographies will become more nuanced when they take into account some of the historical forces I seek to lay bare in this book. The engaging work of Sarah Levine and David Gellner (2007) is also noteworthy in this regard.

³⁹⁹ One particularly concerning example of a set of scholarly procedures that parallels Braun's bowdlerizing analyses can be found in Joseph Cheah's 2011 book *Race and Religion in American Buddhism*. Like Braun, Cheah conflates Sayāgyi U Ba Khin and the Mahāsi Sayādaw, and quite incorrectly suggests that "[...] the upshot of Mahasi Sayadaw's and U Ba Khin's impetus to simplify and rationalize Burmese Buddhist practices to the point of relying only on a particular form of meditation, one that was divested of devotional practices and many doctrinal underpinnings, is that it allowed for the introduction of vipassana meditation to Westerners, or how this type of meditation could be reinscribed for individualistic ideologies that surrounded the Western context." This statement demonstrates near total ignorance of U Ba Khin's teachings and teaching contexts, and it also ignores the explicit attempts by U Ba Khin's very devoted and devotional students to ensure that Western white appropriators, among others, did not distort or defile the teachings. It is unfortunate that a scholar writing quite productively and thoughtfully on the very important topic of race in modern American Buddhism should himself unconsciously perform the kinds of practices that he is attempting to critique in his research.

⁴⁰⁰ It is indeed remarkable how, despite the very robust foundational work of Gustaaf Houtman (1990), scholars of the history of Burmese insight meditation have done such a terrible job carrying forward—or rather doing justice to—his early effort.

Braun did get one thing right, however, when he chose to focus on the importance of the Ledi Sayādaw in the history of modern insight meditation traditions. He just singled out the wrong reasons for such a focus, and perhaps the wrong moment of Ledi's most influential activities.

Ledi is historically important less for what he did for the larger landscape of traditions of mass meditation in colonial Burma and more for how his teachings made their way to U Ba Khin and subsequently to Goenka. Goenka in the end was the key instrument in spreading the Ledi Sayādaw's *sāsana* work far and wide, making it accessible to a global audience. It is this ("non-sectarian") version of insight meditation that has had the largest global impact. But Goenka's connection to the Ledi Sayādaw may be even more intimate than this remote historical lineage link indicates.

In a talk to a group of some of his closest disciples in 2002, S.N. Goenka made an intriguing suggestion. Several of these disciples have informed me that Goenka insinuated obliquely at this time that he was himself a rebirth of the Ledi Sayādaw.⁴⁰¹ Apparently he did so by pointing out that his own birth was proximate in time to the passing away of the great scholar-monk.⁴⁰² While this would be a case of a somewhat complicated rebirth scenario, given that Goenka was born some eight months after the Ledi Sayādaw's passing, it seems that Goenka was himself convinced of the facticity of this connection. And some of his close disciples have continued to participate in this narrative.

If it is the case that Goenka was a rebirth of the Ledi Sayādaw, it appears that Ledi may have indeed become one of the most influential insight meditation teachers of the modern period. And he may have actually been one of the key agents in giving birth to "insight" as a modern category. He simply did these things after a change in the conventionally designated identity of his mind-body continuum. Ledi as Goenka, powerfully conditioned by the personality and post-colonial sensibilities of U Ba Khin, brings together all of the elements of a modern globalized insight: He develops a large-scale, "non-sectarian," movement of mass global lay *vipassanā* practice designed to introduce beginners to the basic contemplative teachings of the Buddha so as to bring them into the fold of the Buddha's children and set them on the path to awakening either now or, more likely, in a future life.

Taking this rebirth narrative into account, we might turn in closing to look at one key respect in which the Ledi's approach to the Buddha's teachings

⁴⁰¹ IA235; IAI232; WAI238.

⁴⁰² IA235.

are distinguished between his birth as a nineteenth-century Burmese Buddhist scholar-monk and his rebirth as a twentieth-century Burmese-Indian Hindu businessman. As noted, a particular focus of Ledi the nineteenth-century monk was the concern that his fellow Buddhists were not using the contemplative resources at their disposal to access the less apparent truths of the Buddhist religion. He was outspoken about the danger of skepticism and reliance on the intellects of average men. In this regard, I would revisit a passage quoted in our earlier discussions of the Ledi's ideas:

There are people who are skeptical of religious treatises. They trust only what they have experienced for themselves. They are ignorant of the truth of the afterlife. They forget that when it comes to capacities for knowledge and wisdom, there are an infinite number of things in the world that are not able to be known or seen, that is, by the average person. So, religion is not something to be thrown overboard. The quest for true religion is the purpose [of a life]. This is because future well-being (i.e., in the here-after) outweighs present well-being. Once you are misdirected now, thousands of future existences will be at stake. Beware!⁴⁰³

Ledi here refers explicitly to those who are skeptical of the existence of supernatural beings—the existence of which he insists can indeed be verified by the excellent man⁴⁰⁴—and the Buddhist theory of karma. Scholars have noted that a key aspect of many modern Western discourses around insight meditation and derivative practices is an explicit skepticism with respect to such theories. This attitude is perhaps most apparent in the appeal to the oft-cited *Discourse to the Kālāmas*, in which the Buddha encourages a particular set of his students not to “go by oral tradition, by lineage of teaching, by hearsay, by a collection of scriptures, by logical reasoning, by inferential reasoning, by reasoned cogitation, by the acceptance of a view after pondering it, by the seeming competence [of a speaker], or because you think: ‘The ascetic is our guru.’”⁴⁰⁵ Reference to such an approach to early

⁴⁰³ Adapted from Ledi Sayādaw (U Tin U trans.) n.d.: 42 (Ledi Sayadaw 1909: 112–113; Ledi Sayadaw 1955 [1909]: 72). See also Stuart 2024: 296.

⁴⁰⁴ “Those wishing to verify the presence of the demons may watch stealthily in the dead of night in places where an epidemic is rife. There, at places indicated by perturbed howling of dogs or at crossroads and alleys or underneath houses or at the back of houses, they will see red demons or black demons or white demons or dark females about four or six cubits tall, or she-demons of ordinary Burmese woman’s appearance in Burmese dress with hair hanging loose; or hog-like demons or dog-like demons of huge sizes, scurrying about. They are visible clearly by moonlight, but only dimly on dark nights.” (Adapted from Ledi Sayadaw [U Tin U trans.] n.d.: 8)

⁴⁰⁵ Bodhi 2012: 280. This quotation has been misrepresented time and again among

Buddhist teachings has become a mantra of modern Buddhist communities. But what those who take recourse to such ideas rarely acknowledge is that in laying out the criteria for when and why one ought to accept a teaching as efficacious, the Buddha and his audience have some shared background assumptions. When the Buddha states that “when, Kālāmas, you know for yourselves: ‘These things are unwholesome; these things are blameworthy; these things are censured by the wise; these things, if accepted and undertaken, lead to harm and suffering,’ then you should abandon them,” he is speaking of human action within the context of a karma theory that takes for granted a system of rebirth and a definition of suffering that relies on the concept of rebirth.⁴⁰⁶ These are the same assumptions that the Ledi Sayādaw refers to when he implores modern Buddhists to “beware!” of missing out on “true religion.”

In his rebirth as Goenka, however, Ledi learned to soften his pitch, after himself being brought along by a combination of U Ba Khin’s powerful channel of the *sāsana* and his rhetoric of religious non-interference. What is more, Goenka’s own teaching engagements in India with those of a skeptical bent led him to find skillful tactics to assuage his students’ doubts. His approach is emblematically represented in a simile that he employs on the last day of his ten-day meditation retreats:

When you decide to accept Dhamma at the practical level, then with a free will, you will surrender yourself. Ten days ago you surrendered because you were asked to surrender. You had to surrender to give a trial. Now with a free will, with full understanding, you will surrender, surrender to Dhamma; and you will surrender for the whole life: “As far as possible I have to live a Dhamma life.” With this understanding one surrenders to Dhamma, and tries one’s best to live a Dhamma life.

It is the practical aspect of Dhamma, the applied Dhamma, which gives all the benefits. One joins a camp like this to learn the practical aspect of Dhamma. And this is what one keeps on practicing from morning four, four-thirty till night nine, nine-thirty. Practicing, practicing.

Of course, every evening we had these Dhamma talks which were very essential to clarify the technique, to clarify the practical aspect of

modern Buddhists, perhaps most tellingly in the opening pages of Jack Kornfield’s (1977) doctoral dissertation, “Psychology of Mindfulness Meditation.” Both U Ba Khin and Goenka, among many others, invoked it in ways that set the stage for such appropriations.

⁴⁰⁶ On this point, see Bodhi 2010 [1997], Thanissaro 2012, and more recently—and perhaps more problematically considering its claims to historical perspective and an understanding of onto-epistemic pluralism—Petrunker 2020.

Dhamma. But when there are Dhamma talks, naturally certain theoretical aspects of Dhamma also come to light. And when this happens, in some cases it is found that a student may not accept certain aspects of the theoretical part of Dhamma: “It is not according to our traditional belief; it is not according to our philosophical belief.” If this happens, leave it aside. Leave that part aside, and accept whatever is acceptable to you.

But as far as the practical aspect of Dhamma is concerned—one may belong to any tradition, any sect—I have not come across anyone who has any objection to accepting it. The theoretical aspect, if you leave aside a certain part, you have not lost much. Later on, when you find that this is also acceptable, then you will accept it. Of course, one who has given the theoretical part of Dhamma has also given it with all the love and compassion so that the practical aspect becomes clearer and clearer.

It is like when a mother, with all the love, prepares a very delicious dish for the child. In our country we have a very delicious dish, called *khīr*, made from milk, rice, dry fruits, sweets. The mother offers, offers this dish to the child. And the child says⁴⁰⁷:

“No, I won’t take it.”

“Try it. What is wrong?”

“No, I won’t take it. There is a piece of black stone in it.”

And the mother says: “This is not a black stone, this is cardamom. It has its own taste. Try it.”

Still the child says: “No, this is a black stone, this is a black stone.”

Then what will the mother do? Mother will say: “All right, take this out. Whatever you think is a black stone, take it out. Enjoy the rest. Later on when you find that this is also something good, then enjoy it.”

The mad child will throw away the whole dish: “There was a black stone in it! There was a black stone in it!” They will miss everything.

Similarly in the theoretical aspect of Dhamma if you find anything to be a black stone, take it out. Enjoy the rest. But as far as the practical aspect of Dhamma is concerned, there is nothing to be taken out. [... Actually, there is nothing like [a] black stone, but because of the traditions, one coming from a particular tradition may feel: “No, this is not good.”]⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁷ This passage is a finalized transcript (not true to the audio) based on an audio recording of a discourse on the eleventh day of one of Goenka’s standard ten-day retreats, recorded in August of 1985 at *Dhamma Dhārā* meditation center in Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts.

⁴⁰⁸ These last few sentences in brackets are not found in the official transcript for translation, which is based on a 1985 recording. But they are in all of the audio versions at my disposal, most of which come from a recording made in 1991. It is also noteworthy that no such phrases can be found in the available audio recordings of the parallel Hindi versions of Goenka’s eleventh-day discourse.

Here we see what I consider to be the hallmark of Goenka's rhetorical strategy as a (counter-)missionary. He allows for those coming to learn from him to take what they want of the Buddha's teachings, at least at the theoretical level, and leave aside what they find unpalatable. The explicit separation of the practical (Hindi: *vyavahārik*; Pāli: *patipatti*) from the theoretical (Hindi: *saiddhāntik*; Pāli: *pariyatti*) is what allows for such a stance.

But the simile possibly betrays a subtle condescension, one that suggests that Goenka has more of Ledi—as the nineteenth-century Burmese monk—in him than is obvious on the rhetorical surface.⁴⁰⁹ Not only does he make clear that “later on” one will “find out that this is also something good,” in certain contexts he makes this even more explicit by stating that “actually, there is nothing like [a] black stone.” For Goenka, as much as for the Buddha and for the Ledi Sayādaw, theory and practice are integrally linked. The foundational tenets of Buddhism were and are indelible truths to be uncovered through practice. Yet they are largely beyond the scope of the “average person.”⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁹ We might compare this simile with a similar one found in the opening pages of *A Treatise on the Shortcut to Knowledge and Vision of Insight Meditation in This Very Life*:

“Please understand me if [I] missed something or have erred in usage in some places. Additionally, though it accords with the original texts and is reasonable, if [you] do not agree with it, you should accept only what you agree with. For example, donors will offer various kinds of alms and desserts at a donation ceremony. One will see what one likes and what one does not like. One need not have the things he does not like. One can be full by only eating the meal that one likes. Please take the same approach with this text as well. Please let me know if there might be something unintentionally wrong in the text. *Vipassanā* is so profound that some people may have difficulty understanding it at points. Because of not understanding, they may have complaints. Even the Buddha could not be freed from complaints, and so [for me] the intention to be in accord with the teachings of things as they truly exist is more important because [this text] aims particularly at everyone attaining enlightenment by an understanding of things as they truly exist. If there are scholars who might instruct [me] as to whether I am right or wrong, I would be grateful. (Htun Thein et al. [eds.] 1953: 4–6)

⁴¹⁰ It is noteworthy that this stance is precisely the one that Joseph Goldstein presents, though in a less traditional manner: “The attitude in Western cultural conditioning toward rebirth and different realms of existence is often skeptical or disbelieving; there is a healthy strain of ‘Show me, I’m from Missouri’ in our approach to these questions. It may be of value, though, to realize that along with all that we can verify directly in our practice, these concepts of karma and rebirth are very much part of what the Buddha taught, and that it is possible through meditative attainment to experience for oneself the truth of these teachings. For those of us with something less than perfect concentration or great psychic power, however, an attitude that helps to

The simile of the ignorant and capricious child reveals Goenka's perspective on the masses of meditation students he taught and continues to teach around the globe into the present. He often noted that even many of his more advanced students remained in the "kindergarten of *vipassanā*." This attitude is best understood in light of what has been discussed above about the two classes of students he considered himself karmically destined to teach. As noted above, at a certain point in his teaching career, Goenka decided that it was his primary duty—and that of his closest students—to spread seeds of Dhamma to as many people as possible. The aim of this missionary agenda was and is that those who have not done so in past lives might take their very first step on the Buddhist path and set out upon the long and arduous journey to develop *pāramīs* or karmic perfections that will ultimately lead to Buddhist awakening in a distant future life. But a small cohort of karmically developed individuals, Goenka's inner circle and those connected to him by their service to his mission, have been working for many lifetimes and will work for many more to carry out the work of spreading the Dhamma until they are reborn at the time of the future Buddha Metteyya and can actualize their perfections as awakened disciples. The ignorant child, coming to take the seed of Dhamma, can in the short term put aside integral Buddhist theoretical knowledge. For, if they make a foundation of the practical aspect of the teachings, the theoretical aspect will eventually ripen along with the practical, though it might take lifetimes upon lifetimes for this process of ripening to occur.

In the final analysis, if we want to understand how these ideas carry into the lives of millions of people in today's global spiritual marketplace, and how the radiant jhānic radio waves of the mind of a learned Burmese Buddhist monk who came of age in the nineteenth century find their way into the body of reality that constitutes modern/post-modern/non-modern global meditation, we must properly understand his legacy in Burma in the unique personalities of the laymen Sayā Thetgyi and Sayāgyi U Ba Khin, and his rebirth as a wealthy Hindu merchant who powerfully contributed to revolutionizing the landscape of the contemplative cultures of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

keep us open to possibilities beyond our present level of understanding is expressed in a phrase of the poet Coleridge: 'the willing suspension of disbelief.' With this attitude of mind we are trapped neither by blind belief nor blind disbelief. In this way we acknowledge what we don't yet know for ourselves and stay receptive to new levels of understanding. [...] There are those even today who have developed the power of mind to see karmic unfolding through past and future lifetimes. But it is not necessary to be able to see our past lives in order to understand the principles of karmic law. If we pay attention and carefully observe our own lives, it can become very clear how our actions condition certain results." (Goldstein 2008)

Appendices

Appendix 1

U Ba Khin's Teacher's Verses and Associated Texts

1. U Ba Khin's Teacher's Verses⁴¹¹

ဘုန်းတော်အနန္တ၊ ကံတော်အနန္တ၊ ဉာဏ်တော်အနန္တ စကြဝဠာ ကမ္ဘာမြေမိုး
ဖြန်းဖြန်းကျူးမျှ တန်ခိုးတော်အနန္တတို့နှင့် ပြည့်စုံတော်မူထသော
မြတ်စွာသုရားရှင်ကိုယ်တော်မြတ်ကြီးအပေါင်းတို့၏ ဓမ္မဓိတ်၊ ဗောဓိဓိတ်၊
နိဗ္ဗာနဓိတ်အပေါင်းတို့သည် ဤနေရာ ဤဌာနသို့ကြွရောက်သဖြင့်
တည်နေတော်မူကြပါစေကုန်သတည်း။

သုရားတပည့်တော်တို့၏ ဦးခေါင်းထက်၌ ကိန်းစက်တည်နေတော်မူကြပါ
စေကုန်သတည်း။

သုရားတပည့်တော်တို့အား ရစ်ပတ်လွှမ်းခြုံတော်မူကြပါစေကုန်သတည်း။

May the element of the Dharma, the element of awakening, and the element of nirvāṇa of all the Buddhas—with their infinite merit, infinite good karma, infinite knowledge, and infinite power that can extend throughout and subdue the entire universe—come and be present in this place.

Let [these forces] be enshrined over the head of this disciple of the Buddha.

Let [these forces] encompass this disciple of the Buddha.

မင်္ဂလေးတန်၊ ဖိုလ်လေးတန်၊ နိဗ္ဗာန်၊ ပရိယတ် ဆယ်ပါးသောတရားတော်မြတ်၊
ဓမ္မဓိတ်၊ ဗောဓိဓိတ်၊ နိဗ္ဗာနဓိတ်အပေါင်းတို့သည်လည်း ဤနေရာ
ဤဌာနသို့ကြွရောက်သဖြင့် တည်နေတော်မူကြပါစေကုန်သတည်း။

⁴¹¹ International Meditation Centre 2019: 0:00–1:32.

သုရားတပည့်တော်တို့၏ ဦးခေါင်းထက်၌ ကိန်းစက်တည်နေတော်မူကြပါ
စေကုန်သတည်း။

သုရားတပည့်တော်တို့အား ရစ်ပတ်လွှမ်းခြုံတော်မူကြပါစေကုန်သတည်း။

May the element of the Dharma, the element of awakening, and the element of nirvāṇa of the ten [features] of the Buddha's teachings—the four paths, the four fruits, nirvāṇa, and the scriptures—come and be present in this place.

Let [these forces] be enshrined over the head of this disciple of the Buddha.

Let [these forces] encompass this disciple of the Buddha.

မဂ္ဂဋ္ဌာန်၊ ဖလဋ္ဌာန်၊ ရှစ်တန် ပရမတ် အရိယာသူတော်မြတ်ပရမတ္ထထေရ်
သင်္ဃာရှင် အပေါင်းတို့၏ ဓမ္မဓါတ်၊ ဗောဓိဓါတ်၊ နိဗ္ဗာနဓါတ်အပေါင်းတို့
သည်လည်း ဤနေရာ ဤဌာနသို့ကြွရောက်သဖြင့် တည်နေတော်မူကြပါ
စေကုန်သတည်း။

သုရားတပည့်တော်တို့၏ ဦးခေါင်းထက်၌ ကိန်းစက်တည်နေတော်မူကြပါ
စေကုန်သတည်း။

သုရားတပည့်တော်တို့အား ရစ်ပတ်လွှမ်းခြုံတော်မူကြပါစေကုန်သတည်း။

May the element of the Dharma, the element of awakening, and the element of nirvāṇa of all the true venerables of the saṅgha, the eight types of true noble disciples—those established respectively in the four paths and the four fruits—come and be present in this place.

Let [these forces] be enshrined over the head of this disciple of the Buddha.

Let [these forces] encompass this disciple of the Buddha.

2. Protective Precedents in the Ledi Sayādaw's Works

*a) Invoking the Protection of the Seven Buddhas of the Past in Burmese*⁴¹²

ဘုန်းတော်အနန္တ၊ ကံတော်အနန္တ၊ ဉာဏ်တော်အနန္တ စကြဝဠာ ကမ္ဘာမြေမိုး
ဖြန်းဖြန်းကျိုးမျှ တန်ခိုးတော်အနန္တတို့နှင့် ပြည့်စုံတော်မူသော အရှင်ဝိပဿီ
မြတ်စွာသုရားကိုယ်တော်။ ... သိဒ္ဓိ ... ဝေဿဘူ ... ကကုသန် ... ကောဏာဂုံ ...
ကဿပ ... ကေတမ ... ။

ဤ ခုနစ်ဆူကုန်သော မြတ်စွာဘုရားရှင်ကြီးတို့သည် အကျွန်ုပ်၏
ဦးခေါင်းထက်၌ ... ထဲယာနှစ်ဖက် ပခုံးထက်၌ ... အဆုတ်အသဲ နှလုံးထဲ ...
အမြဲကိန်စက် စောင့်ရှောက် တည်နေတော်မူကြပါစေကုန်သတည်း။

The venerable Buddha Vipassī is of infinite merit, infinite good karma, infinite knowledge, and infinite power that can extend throughout and subdue the entire universe. [...] [The venerable Buddhas] Sikhī [...] Vesabhū [...] Kakusan [...] Koṇāgoma [...] Kassapa [...] and Gotama are of infinite merit, infinite good karma, infinite knowledge, and infinite power that can extend throughout and subdue the entire universe.

May these seven venerable Buddhas be always enshrined over my head [...] be always enshrined around my shoulders [...] be always enshrined in my heart, protecting me in their sacred presence.

*b) Invoking the Protection of the Seven Buddhas of the Past in Pāli from the Rogantaradīpanī*⁴¹³

*Vipassī bhagavā araham sammāsambuddho anantapuñño anantaññāṇo
anantaguṇo anantatejo ananta-iddhi anantajuti ||*

*Sikhi [...] Vessabhū [...] Kakusandho [...] Koṇāgamano [...] Kassapo [...] amhākaṃ bhagavā araham sammāsambuddho anantapuñño anantaññāṇo
anantaguṇo anantatejo ananta-iddhi anantajuti ||*

⁴¹² Ledi Sayadaw 1992: 10–11.

⁴¹³ Ledi Sayadaw 1909: 87–88 (Ledi Sayadaw 1955: 55–57).

*satt' ime buddhā bhagavanto arahanto sammāsambuddhā anantapuññā
anantaññāṇā anantaḡuṇā anantatejā ananta-iddhimantā anantajutimantā |
mayhaṃ nāthā | mayhaṃ patiṭṭhā | mayhaṃ tāṇā | mayhaṃ leṇā | mayhaṃ
paṭisaraṇā ||*

The Blessed One Vipassī, the Arahant, the fully self-awakened Buddha, has infinite merit, infinite knowledge, infinite good qualities, infinite potency, infinite power, and infinite splendor.

The Blessed One[s] Sikhi [...] Vessabhū [...] Kakusandha [...] Koṇāgamaṇa [...] Kassapa [...]

Our Blessed One [Gotama], the Arahant, the fully self-awakened Buddha, has infinite merit, infinite knowledge, infinite good qualities, infinite potency, infinite power, and infinite splendor.

These seven Buddhas, Blessed Ones, Arahants, fully self-awakened Buddhas—with their infinite merit, infinite knowledge, infinite good qualities, infinite potency, infinite power, and infinite splendor—are my protectors, my support, my safety, my shelter, my refuge.

*c) Excerpt of an Associated Pāli Verse from the Rogantaradīpanī:
Invoking the Protection of the 28 Buddhas of the Past⁴¹⁴*

*Taṇhaṅkaro, Medhaṅkaro [...] Kassapo, amhākaṃ bhagavā ||
ime svāhaṃ 'tivandāmi, niccaṃ tiṭṭhantu me sīse ||
aṭṭhavīsati sambuddhā, iddhimanto jutindharā ||
Iddhiyā jutiyaṃ tesaṃ, antarāyā samentu me ||
Sabbe dūre palāyantu, pisācā yakkharakkhasā ||*

Taṇhaṅkara, Medhaṅkara [...] Kassapa, and our Blessed One [Gotama].

I pay sincere homage to these twenty-eight Buddhas.

May they ever reside at [the top of] my head, powerful and splendid.

By their power and splendor, may all my impediments be pacified.

May all fiends, [menacing] spirits, and demons be banished.

⁴¹⁴ Ledi Sayadaw 1909: 84 (Ledi Sayadaw 1955: 53).

*d) The Burmese Gloss of the Excerpt of an Associated Pāli Verse from the Rogantaradīpanī: Invoking the Protection of the 28 Buddhas of the Past*⁴¹⁵

... မေ၊ အကျွန်ုပ်၏
 သီသေ၊ ဦးခေါင်း၌။
 နိစ္စံ၊ အမြဲ။
 တိဋ္ဌန္တု၊ ကိန်းဝပ် တည်နေတော် မူကြပါစေကုန်သတည်း။
 အဋ္ဌဝီသတိသမ္ပဒ္ဓါ၊ နှစ်ကျိပ်ရှစ်ဆူ ကုန်သော မြတ်စွာဘုရားတို့သည်။
 ဣဒ္ဓိမန္တော၊ စကြဝဠာ ကမ္ဘာမြေမိုး ဖြန်းဖြန်းကြိုးမျှ
 တန်ခိုးတော်အပေါင်းတို့နှင့်လည်း ကောင်းစွာ ပြည့်စုံတော် မူကြပါပေ ကုန်၏။
 ဇုတိန္ဒရာ၊ စကြဝဠာ ကမ္ဘာမြေမိုး ဖြန်းဖြန်းကြိုးမျှ တန်ခိုးရှိန် ဝါ စက်
 အာဏာတို့ကိုလည်း ကောင်းစွာစိုက်ထူ ဆောင်တော်မူကြပါပေကုန်၏။
 တေသံ၊ ထိုနှစ်ကျိပ်ရှစ်ဆူကုန်သော မြတ်စွာဘုရားတို့၏။
 ဣဒ္ဓိယာ၊ စကြဝဠာ ကမ္ဘာမြေမိုး ဖြန်းဖြန်းကြိုးမျှ တန်ခိုးတေဇော်
 အာနုဘော်ကြောင့်၎င်း။
 ဇုတိယာ၊ စကြဝဠာ ကမ္ဘာမြေမိုး ဖြန်းဖြန်းကြိုးမျှ တန်ခိုးရှင် ဝါ
 စက်အာဏာကြောင့်၎င်း။
 မေ၊ အကျွန်ုပ်အား။
 အန္တရာယာ၊ ခပ်သိမ်းသော ဘေးဒဏ် ရန်မာန် အန္တရာယ်အပေါင်းတို့သည်။
 သမေန္တု၊ မငြိမ်တွယ် ပျောက်ပြယ် ကင်းငြိမ်းကြပါစေကုန် သတည်း။ ...

⁴¹⁵ Ledi Sayadaw 1909: 85–87 (Ledi Sayadaw 1955: 54–55).

3. S.N. Goenka's Teacher's Verses⁴¹⁶

Anantapūṇyamayī, anantaḡuṇamayī, buddhā kī nirvāṇadhātu, dharmadhātu, bodhidhātu, śīrṣā parā jāge pratikṣaṇā, hṛdayā meṃ jāge pratikṣaṇā, aṅgā-aṅgā jāge pratikṣaṇā.

May the element of nirvāṇa, the element of the Dharma, and the element of awakening of the Buddhas—which are the product of infinite merit and infinite good qualities—arise continuously at the head [of these meditators], arise continuously in the heart [of these meditators], arise continuously throughout the body [of these meditators].

Anantapūṇyamayī, anantaḡuṇamayī, dharma kī nirvāṇadhātu, dharmādhātu, bodhidhātu, śīrṣā parā jāge pratikṣaṇā, hṛdayā meṃ jāge pratikṣaṇā, aṅgā-aṅgā jāge pratikṣaṇā.

May the element of nirvāṇa, the element of the Dharma, and the element of awakening of the Buddha's Teaching (*dharma*)— which are the product of infinite merit and infinite good qualities—arise continuously at the head [of these meditators], arise continuously in the heart [of these meditators], arise continuously throughout the body [of these meditators].

Anantapūṇyamayī, anantaḡuṇamayī, saṅgha kī nirvāṇadhātu, dharmādhātu, bodhidhātu, śīrṣā parā jāge pratikṣaṇā, hṛdayā meṃ jāge pratikṣaṇā, aṅgā-aṅgā jāge pratikṣaṇā.

May the element of nirvāṇa, the element of the Dharma, and the element of awakening of the community of saintly people (*saṅgha*)—which are the product of infinite merit and infinite good qualities—arise continuously at the head [of these meditators], arise continuously in the heart [of these meditators], arise continuously throughout the body [of these meditators].

⁴¹⁶ S.N. Goenka – Topic 2016: 0:00–2:30 (cf. Goenka 2006: 2 and 66–67).

Appendix 2

The Body Scan Practice in the Ledi Sayādaw's Early Meditation Manuals

1. The Ledi Sayādaw on the Element of Suffering as a Meditation Object in the *Anattadīpanī*⁴¹⁷

This element of pain (*dukkhadhāt* ') can pervade the entire body whenever there is disease or other dangers [that cause pain], be they internal or external.

Note that this element of pain can appear throughout the body, inside and out— from the soles of the feet to the crown of the head, including inside the skin, flesh, veins, bones, bone-marrow, intestines, liver, lungs, brains, etc. — wherever the touch is known, wherever painful contact (*nā*) is known, as the result, for example, of knowingly piercing oneself with a sharp needle.

A meditator (*yogīpuggil* ') who wants to catch hold with knowledge of this element of suffering while striving assiduously on the meditation subject of feeling must detect [that element] in the whole body so as to observe in perceptible form what one has experienced throughout life, what is being experienced now, and what is going to be experienced in the future. One must catch hold of it. If one cannot catch the element completely in knowledge, insight knowledge will not appear, even though one cultivates the [three] characteristics, [thinking:] “feeling as impermanent.” Only when the element [of suffering] is caught hold of completely, does pure insight knowledge (*vipassanāññāṇ* ' *acac* ') appear.

⁴¹⁷ Ledi Sayadaw 1995 [1901]: 468. See also Ashin Sumaṇa (trans.) 2021: 9.

2. The Ledi Sayādaw on the Discriminating Knowledge of Impermanence in the *Anattadīpanī*⁴¹⁸

[...] Discriminating knowledge (*pariññā*) of impermanence means that, according to the instructions given under the dependent origination of feelings, one will have to observe [feelings] directly with knowledge, as [they] arise and pass away at the six sense-doors, as if seeing [them] with one's own eyes.

Observation of the Arising and Passing Away of [Painful] Feelings at the Sole of the Feet

As already stated under the topic of dependent origination, one will first have to observe painful feelings in any part of the body where there is pain or injury caused by a brick, a disease, or a stick. One should observe such that the instants of arising (*udaya*) and vanishing (*vaya*) are directly perceived.

The Knowledge of Distinguishing [Mental and Material] Dhammas (Dhammavavatthānañāṇ')

The pain and throbbing of the injury that appears on the right sole of the foot is painful feeling (*dukkhavedanā*) or the element of pain. The distinction between the sole of the foot—which is a conglomeration of matter (*rup 'tarā'*)—and this element of pain must be understood so that one might catch hold of painful feeling with knowledge. When one gets hold [of feeling] with knowledge, it is called “the knowledge of distinguishing [mental and material] *dhammas*.” It is also known as “knowledge of apprehending *dhammas*” (*dhammapariggahaññāṇ'*) or “knowledge of discerning mind and matter” (*nāmarūpaparicchedaññāṇ'*). This is the knowledge that sees distinctly that mind is one thing and matter is another and distinguishes between them. [...]

⁴¹⁸ Ledi Sayadaw 1995 [1901]: 490–491. See also Ashin Sumaṇa (trans.) 2021: 25–26.

3. The Ledi Sayādaw on Covering the Whole Body with Feeling—from Feet to Head—in the *Anattadīpanī*⁴¹⁹

Observing the Arising and Passing Away of Feelings from the Instep of the Feet to the Crown of the Head

Once this aspect [of impermanence] is discerned clearly in a comprehensive manner, it will be discerned clearly in the future also. After comprehending it on the right sole, comprehend the impermanence of feeling on the right instep by detecting contact (*phassa*) caused by a brick, a disease, or a stick and observing the nature of feelings (*vedanādhamma*), their cause (*paccaya-dhamma*), and their nature of arising and vanishing (*udayabbayadhamma*).

The same method of detection should be applied to the lower leg, the knee, the upper part of the thigh, the middle part of the thigh, and the lower part of the thigh. Then move to the left sole, to the left instep, to the left lower leg, to the left knee, to the upper part of the [left] thigh, to the middle part of the [left] thigh, to the lower part of the [left] thigh, detecting [contact and feeling in those areas]. Then [move to] the outside of the hip, then to the outside of the waist, then to the various areas—internal and external—of the back, then to the nape of the neck, then to the various areas inside the head, then to the various areas on the outside of the face, then to the throat, then to the various areas of the outside of the chest and the stomach, all along detecting [contact and feeling in those areas].

Then detect the mass (*cū*) of painful feeling inside the head, within the brain, as heat, cold, tension or solidity. Then observe by following painful feeling as it appears all throughout the inside of the lungs, the inside of the liver, the inside of the heart, the inside of the stomach, the inside of the intestines, the inside of the waist, the inside of the thigh, [and so on].

As one is observing all these [parts of the body], one must catch hold of painful feeling distinctly. It must not be confused with matter. The instants of arising (*upād’*) and perishing (*bhañ’*) must be thoroughly caught [in experience]. When those instants are discerned clearly everywhere in a thorough search made throughout the whole body, the sign of the impermanence of painful feeling will be discerned as clearly as a ruby in the palm of the hand. This ends the section on painful feeling.

⁴¹⁹ Ledi Sayadaw 1995 [1901]: 492–496. See also Ashin Sumaṇa (trans.) 2021: 28–30.

Observation of Pleasant Feelings

Pleasant feeling must be observed by way of detection in the same manner as [described] above, beginning from the right sole [and moving] through the entire body. The discernment of the impermanence of pleasant feeling requires particular care. One should follow the method of detection detailed previously in the section dealing with the qualities of pleasant feeling in the section on dependent origination. As concerns skill in [discerning] the three characteristics, the main focus is to perceive precisely the instant of arising and the instant of perishing. [...]

Observation of Feelings of Delight

In connection with feelings of delight, when one sees a pleasant-looking appearance with the eyes, this kind of appearance comes into contact with the eyes and with the heart-mind simultaneously—at both places. Because of contact or *phassa* with the heart-mind, feelings of delight arise and spread out from the blood (*sve* “*apran*”) of the heart. When a feeling of delight arises, the blood of the heart becomes especially clear and bright, and a smile forms on a person’s face. One should observe this element of delight, which is the manifestation of the joy of the mind as it spreads out [from the heart], by explicitly catching hold of it with [insight] knowledge, by explicitly catching hold of it at the instant it arises.

If the contact of the object with the heart disappears, the impulsion of delightful feeling that arises and spreads out [from the heart] will also gradually fade and disappear. The blood of the heart again dries up and a person’s face returns to its natural state. One should observe by explicitly catching hold of the instant of vanishing, the moment when these processes of impulsion of [the feeling of] delight disappear. [...]

Observation of Feelings of Displeasure

[The same practice that is enjoined for the observation of feelings of delight is enjoined for the observation of feelings of displeasure (*domanassa*).]

Observation of Neutral Feelings

When it comes to feelings of equanimity, unlike with feelings of delight and displeasure, instances of contact (*phassa*) and instances of feeling are not

obvious. Instances of mind as consciousness (*cit 'vīññāṇ'*)—in the process of seeing, hearing, and cognizing objects—are generally obvious. One should, therefore, observe the instants of arising and the instants of vanishing of feelings of equanimity by catching hold of the sense objects and consciousnesses at the six sense doors—with which [the feelings arise] in tandem—in the process of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, experiencing touch within the body, and reflecting within the mind.

It is an inviolable reality (*dhammatā*) of these five feelings that when one arises on the body, another is obstructed. Two [different] feelings never arise together. Therefore, when feelings other than the feeling of equanimity arise in the body, one should observe them in their obvious manifestation, as they are directly perceived, and thereby infer the aspect (*akhyak'*) of impermanence of the feeling of equanimity through [the experience of] its disappearance and cessation. This ends the section on feelings of equanimity.

The Characteristic of Impermanence

It is proper to clearly observe the characteristic of impermanence of the five types of feeling persistently over a long period lasting years and months. The one who is proficient in clearly observing the aspect of impermanence also becomes proficient in [clearly observing the characteristic of] suffering and also in [clearly observing the characteristic of] not-self.

4. The Ledi Sayādaw on the Abhidhamma and Practicing with a single consciousness in the *Āhāradīpanī* (Manual of Nutriment)⁴²⁰

The teachings set out in the Abhidhamma scriptures are taught by those who have attained omniscience. So, when cultivating the [three] characteristics with respect to the appearances and disappearances occurring within a thought-process at the eye-door, for example, it would be a flight of the imagination to consider [that we are experiencing] the things stated [in these scriptures]. Take note that this possibility is very far from what can be discerned by the pure knowing and seeing of insight (*vipassanāññāṇa-dassana'acac'*).

⁴²⁰ Ledi Sayadaw 1996 [1901]: 209. My translation is influenced by U Tin Shwe (trans.) 2016: 29.

5. The Ledi Sayādaw on the importance of Body-Consciousness for Discerning Impermanence in the *Āhāradīpanī* (Manual of Nutriment)⁴²¹

Investigative discriminating knowledge consists in the discriminating knowledge of impermanence, suffering, and not-self. When it comes to discriminating knowledge of impermanence, [because] body-consciousness—among the six consciousnesses—appears everywhere throughout the body, and [because] it appears in tandem with feelings of pleasure and pain, which are quite apparent, it is the most suitable initial entry point for discriminating knowledge.

Of the two kinds of body-consciousness, the one that is associated with pain is more obvious. Therefore, the aspect of discriminating knowledge of body-consciousness associated with pain will be discussed first. When some object, such as stone, strikes any part of the body so that a strong feeling of pain appears, that painful feeling will disappear [only] when the wound heals. Although the primary work regards feeling, all four mental aggregates arise and disappear together, as do all three nutriments.

Since the four mental aggregates arise in one place [where sense contact originates], they are not found in the whole body, where, in accordance with inviolable reality, only the aggregate of matter is found [at all times]. Therefore, in considering the place where one feels the injury, the aggregate of matter is found throughout the body when there is the appearance of the injury in that one place, while the mental aggregates are not found [throughout]. Because their appearance and disappearance are very rapid, it seems that [the feelings] persist concurrently with the eyes, the ears, and the heart-base (*hadayavatthu*). While the pain of an injury remains, the eyes are seeing, the ears are hearing sounds, and the heart knows at the same time. It is this speed of appearance and disappearance in a process of change, which is imperceptible and unthinkable, that is referred to when they say: “In the twinkle of an eye, there are more than a billion appearances and disappearances.”

[This is] the division of the four mental aggregates at the place of the injury: Correctly knowing (*mhan* “*si*”) the injury is consciousness; the pain is feeling; noting the injury is the aggregate of perception. In this way, because [the aggregate of perception] is present, [the pain] returns again if it is

⁴²¹ Ledi Sayadaw 1996 [1901]: 210. My translation is influenced by U Tin Shwe (trans.) 2016: 31.

remembered, even after the pain has disappeared, and the injury can appear in the mind whenever it is remembered. When there is feeling, contact is obviously the cause. Continuous excruciating pain is the work of intention. Contact and intention are included in the aggregate of formations. One-pointedness [of mind], the life faculty, and attention are also *dhammas* included in the aggregate of formations. The four mental aggregates appear [in this way]. The conglomeration of matter at the place [of injury on the body] is the aggregate of matter. The five aggregates appear [in this way]. Before the injury, there is only the aggregate of matter at that place. In this way, when pain does appear, the aggregate of feeling appears quite apparently. Therefore, feeling is called “pain” simply as a name. The aggregate of consciousness itself is apparent in the mere knowing of the [painful] touch.

6. The Ledi Sayādaw on Awakening through Feeling Alone in the *Āhāradīpanī* (Manual of Nutriment)⁴²²

In the text of the *Sallāsutta* and the *Cūḷatanhāsāṅkhasutta*, [we find that] what is to be carried out in meditation (*kammaṭṭhān* “*icca*”) can come to completion with feeling alone. In the *Vedanāpariggahasutta* (*Dīghanakhasutta*), the wandering ascetic Dīghanakha attains the path and fruition states with feeling alone. It is easy to apprehend feeling with knowledge. Even in the section on apprehending consciousness and contact, they are explained in connection with feeling. Therefore, in these current times, those who want to practice assiduously for attention that brings about insight (*vipassanā*) should assiduously carry out the work of meditation with feeling alone. The methods shown in the explanation of consciousness are sufficient for this meditation subject.

⁴²² Ledi Sayadaw 1996 [1901]: 247. My translation is influenced by U Tin Shwe (trans.) 2016: 61.

7. The Ledi Sayādaw on Insight Instruction and Abhidhamma Knowledge in the *Āhārādīpanī* (Manual of Nutriment)⁴²³

Just as fire and flames appear together and disappear together, so also consciousness and its associated mental concomitants appear and disappear together. If impermanence can be perceived in consciousness, the perception of impermanence in that group of concomitants is already accomplished. Similarly, if suffering and not-self can be perceived in consciousness, the perception of suffering and not-self in that group of concomitants is already accomplished. The same goes for discriminating knowledge that dispels (*pahāṇapariññā*). This is the automatically accomplished function (*kicca*) of discriminating knowledge as it pertains to the mental concomitants.

Those who are unfamiliar with the Abhidhamma are not able to distinguish between consciousness and the mental concomitants, but take them to be one and the same. They take craving and aversion to be the mind. This consideration is relevant to the section on insight. The insight meditation teacher must teach those people to complete [the practice working] with mind alone and not to give other names to the mental qualities.

If this or that person has heard of craving, aversion, ignorance and so on, and asks questions about their distinctions, then their qualities should be explained appropriately in connection with mind-consciousness.

8. Ledi Sayādaw on the Heart-base or *Hadayavatthu* in the *Āhārādīpanī* (Manual of Nutriment)⁴²⁴

The hellfire [of self-view] born of the heart-base (*hadayavatthu*), the door of mind-consciousness, is a great conflagration. A skilled fireman is needed [to extinguish it].

The way to extinguish [the conflagration] is explained [here]. Because mind-consciousness appears in the heart continuously, as a single entity, at all times, day and night, people cling to the idea that “it is eternal” (*‘amraitaññ’ nesaññ*). When thinking, knowing, noting, and guessing, the hellfire and flames of “I think,” “I know,” etc. continue [to burn] incessantly. The place at which the conglomeration (*cu*) of mind-consciousness appears

⁴²³ Ledi Sayadaw 1996 [1901]: 236. My translation is influenced by U Tin Shwe (trans.) 2016: 51.

⁴²⁴ Ledi Sayadaw 1996 [1901]: 220–222. My translation was influenced by U Tin Shwe 2016: 39–40 and refined with the help of Swe Swe Mon.

is the heart-base (*nhaluṃ* "aim") in which there is about a half teaspoon of blood (*sve*). The blood in the heart is in a state where it is constantly bubbling at all times—like the bubbling water of a spring—as a result of the digestive heat (*pācakavam* "mī") underneath and the body-preserving element of heat (*kuīy* 'con' 'dhāt

"mī") called "*usmā*" that can be found circulating throughout the body. The matter of the heart-base (*hadayavatthurup*'), [which serves as] the support (*mhīrā*) of mind-consciousness, is dependently infused in that blood by the hundreds of millions. The conglomeration of heart-base matter also perpetually fluxes (*lhuin* "cī") in the blood of the heart. Each and every mind-consciousness continues to appear in succession in the heart-base matter, bright like a smile, clear as day, glittering and luminous.

It has been taught [by the Buddha]: "*pabhassaram idaṃ, bhikkhave, cittaṃ,*" and "*pañḍaram cittaṃ.*"

This means as follows: *Bhikkhave* [means] monks. *Idaṃ cittaṃ* [means] this mind as consciousness (*cit* 'viññān'). *Pabhassaram* [means] glittering and luminous. *Cittaṃ* [means] mind as consciousness. *Pañḍaram* [means] pure white.

It is not the kind of thing that is perceived visually. It is the kind of thing that is discerned with [insight] knowledge. But it is also alright to imagine this [as being seen] in your own [actual] eyes and see it with the eye of knowledge. According to [the saying] "*vijjuppādā va ākāse uppajjanti veyanti ca,*" because instants of arising and instants of vanishing are discerned to occur as rapidly as the appearance and disappearance of flashes of lightning, the main focus is to be able to discern these two instants, feeling (*thithi*) them and catching (*mimi*) them in awareness (*ñāṇ*) as [the feeling of a given consciousness] strengthens and then attenuates. [Felt] as a trembling and circulation in the blood of the heart, the places where [consciousnesses] appear are [now] taken up. [Such places] can at times be in the middle, at the front side, or at the back side. [They] can also be on the right side or on the left side and so on. The aspects of the place where [the trembling is felt to] occur are manifold. Naturally, it disappears wherever it appears. If other parts of the body that are the same size as the hollow of the heart (*nhaluṃ* "tvaṇ" "khan"), such as the surface of the eye, are pierced at any spot with a sharp needle, then the group of mental aggregates referred to as "pain" will appear at each spot pricked. As someone can distinctly know and discern their disappearance at each specific place where they appear, every case of appearing at each spot and every case of disappearance [at that same place] can be felt and caught in a process of discernment. [...]

The blood of the heart seems to be moving everywhere, wherever and whenever one might look, subtly moving due to the very rapid flux of the appearance and disappearance of the mind. Those subtle movements should be perceived (*thaṇ' mraṇ'*) simultaneously with thoughts, such as “I know” and “I think.” It is not sufficient if, though perceiving the frequent appearances and disappearance of the subtle movements of heart’s blood, one neglects the knowing and thinking that is occurring. This hellfire of “I know” and “I think” should not be excluded from observation and discernment. One should also by turns closely inspect observing knowledge, perceiving knowledge, and discerning knowledge.

*pheṇūpamaṃ kāyaṃ imaṃ veditvā |
marīcidhammaṃ abhisambudhāno ||* (Dhammapadapāḷi [4.3])

If the matter aggregate is perceived as a lump of foam and the mental aggregates are perceived as the colors of a mirage, then one reaches the deathless *nibbāna*.

These words uttered [by the Buddha] should be noted as an example illustrating two points: the absence of an essence and the way that appearances are perceived. [...]

Appendix 3

The Body Scan Practice and other Miscellany in Sayā Thetgyi's Teachings from *A Treatise on the Shortcut to Knowledge and Vision of Insight Meditation in This Very Life* (*Diṭṭhadhammavipassanāññāḍassana Phrat' lam "' kyam "'*)

1. A Description of the Initial Practice of *Vipassanā*, Involving the Development of Awareness of Bodily Feelings and Body-Consciousness Throughout the Body⁴²⁵

At this point, and only when the teacher is present, [the practitioner] should feel (*tve'*), in an area around half an inch or an inch in size at the fontanelle of the head, some coolness or warmth. When [the verb] "*tve*" is used, this does not refer to something that is visible to the eyes. One feels [the cold or heat] as though by touching something. Once it is felt, one should simply remain aware (*si*) [of it] without letting the mind go elsewhere. If [one can do this continuously] for quite some time, the small spot—be it warm or cool—can be felt to move in a gentle flux. Keeping the mind in that place with whatever appears, the small round spot [of sensation] at the fontanelle will spread out to cover the head, tending to flow downward. Be aware [of it] and follow [it] as it flows downward and, in this way, let it gradually spread to cover the entire body. When it has covered the entire body in this way, or before the body is entirely covered, subtle vaporous waves of heat or subtle vaporous waves of cold will appear at certain parts of the body, fluctuating slowly like cloud formations.

At times one feels the fluctuating presence of the fire element (*tejodhāt'*), radiating (*rhin'rhin'*) and spreading out (*lyham "'lyham "'*) in the bowels or in the [lower] back. At times it might seem that there is some very faint

⁴²⁵ Htun Thein et al. (eds.) 1953: 43–44. My translation is influenced by Ledi Paññāsīha 2012: 147–148.

movement at various places in the body, like baby ants crawling here and there. [Feelings] can also appear like the continual rising of bubbles in a glass of carbonated liquid. Or they can be like successive bursts of fireworks, bursting out in the body one after the next. At times it is like pins and needles, surging swiftly (*phran* “*phran*”). After repeatedly observing in this way for quite some time, concentration (*samādhi*) should increase to the extent that one feels the successive appearances and disappearances [of such feelings] throughout the body, not leaving even the tiniest needle-sized point [unexamined]. These appearances and cessations are not observed with the eyes. Rather, they are things felt in the body (*kuiy* ‘*ve’tarā*’). [It is], therefore, [stated] in the Pāli of the Saṃyuttanikāya: “*kāyañ ca phoṭṭhabbe ca paṭicca, kāyaviññāṇaṃ uppajjati*,” [which means] “Due to the association of two things, the body and the elements of touch/feeling (*atve’dhāt*’), body-consciousness appears.”

2. Descriptions of Experiences of “Elemental Matter” (*rūpakalāpa*) in the Practice of the Body-scan⁴²⁶

Then, in that state, one will feel how the successive appearances and disappearances [of matter within the body] occur faster and faster, more [quickly] than those of oil bubbles in a cooking pot. At this time, the entire body—like the pot of hot oil—will be felt to be overflowing with boiling oil, [the bubbles] incessantly appearing and disappearing.

At times it feels as though the particles of elemental matter (*rup* ‘*kalāp*’; Pāli: *rūpakalāpa*) are descending in successive waves throughout the body, like a riverbank collapsing, for example. At times it seems as though rain is falling on the surface of the body. At times it can also be as though a great bolt of lightning enters into the body, appearing and then disappearing indistinctly in rapid succession.

At times, it [feels] like maggots wriggling and burrowing, as they do in a flesh wound or when eating putrid food. It can seem as though they are everywhere in the body, inside and out, pushing and climbing upon one another like maggots filling a toilet pit. [It can feel] like cold winter snowflakes falling on the body—both on the inside and the outside—and [it can feel] like they are falling everywhere in the body, appearing in a succession of cold bursts. Or it is like being pricked with needles. It can also feel like the entire

⁴²⁶ Htun Thein et al. (eds.) 1953: 45–47. This translation is influenced by Ledi Paññāsīha 2012: 149–150.

body is immobile, the limbs paralyzed, while the insides vibrate as though boiling. When one observes continuously [in this way], day and night, the entire body boils like this at all times, and one continuously feels only the ongoing destruction and passing away [of those experiences]. If one observes while lying down, [the vibrations move] downward and upward from the top of the head to the toes and from the toes to the top of the head, and it feels like foam or bubbles flowing down through the entire body.

3. The Development of Disenchantment and Concentration (*samādhi*) Leading to Unbearable Sensations (with an Emphasis on the Term *Vedanā*)⁴²⁷

While observing the Dhamma properly in this way, it may happen that simply living and breathing in this age of misfortune, and the unavoidable worldly affairs, become unbearable. When concentration (*samādhi*) gets this powerful, extremely painful, almost unbearable, feelings (*vedanā*) can be felt throughout the body. The body appears extremely hot, as though filled with molten liquid, and the feeling phenomena (*vedanātarā*"*ive*) continue to arise and disappear without interruption.

4. On the Tension Between the Authority of Textual Sources and the Authority of Practice⁴²⁸

One might ask: “How should such experiential observations, which are the result of discernment, be understood in relation to authoritative treatises (*kyam* “*gan*’)? The phenomenon that is felt right now within one’s own internal continuum of conscious experience (*ajjhattasantān*’) is the continuously appearing and disappearing matter and mind phenomena of the five aggregates, which are ultimate phenomena characterized by being “impermanent,” “suffering,” and “not-self.” This is known as the stage (*cakhan* “”) of purification by overcoming doubt (*kaṅkhāvitaraṇavisuddhi*) [acquired through] investigative discriminating knowledge (*tiraṇapariññā*).

⁴²⁷ Htun Thein et al. (eds.) 1953:48. This translation is adapted from Ledi Paññāsīha 2012: 151.

⁴²⁸ Htun Thein et al. (eds.) 1953:48–49. This translation is adapted from Ledi Paññāsīha 2012: 151–152.

This should be made very clear. So, pause and look closely at the issue. Even though this [presentation] here is consistent with the authoritative treatises containing the Buddha's teachings, it may appear to contradict the saintly scholars who are skilled in literature but not skilled in practice. [But] the Dhamma is not in contradiction. The meaning [of the texts] is not in contradiction. The quality of phenomena (*sabhāvadhamma*) [described] is not in contradiction. Scholars who have not made efforts [to practice] are prone either to speculate and conceptualize excessively or to lack a point of reference. This is not stated to condemn the saintly scholars. It should be taken as a statement aimed at seeking [common] understanding.

5. On the Theory of Body-consciousness and Mind-consciousness as Foundational and Sufficient Objects for *Vipassanā* Discernment of the Five Aggregates⁴²⁹

Although there are six [consciousnesses], when one is observing internal matter and mind, the main focus of the method is observing one's own matter and mind in order to discern the appearance and disappearance of one's own five aggregates as they manifest internally. To discern the five aggregates distinctly within the body, only one's own body-consciousness and mind-consciousness are essential. Therefore, when one observes properly within the body, which is known as the material body (*rūpakāya*), the qualities of matter (*rup'*)—such as “hardness, cohesiveness, temperature, and impetus (*thok'kan'*)”—as they appear and disappear within the body (*khandhā*), [they are sensed] as stiffness, liquidity, cold or heat, and vibrating movement manifest as miniscule particles breaking apart without a moment's pause. Because these phenomena (*tarā"*) of appearing and disappearing occur within one's own physical body, only one's own body-consciousness (*kāya-viññāṇa*) knows [them]. When material phenomena (*rup'tarā"*) appear, body-consciousness knows its appearance. When body-consciousness is active in cognizing, mind-consciousness knows the where and how of its appearance. Whenever the feeling, perception, and formations aggregate cease, body-consciousness and mind-consciousness cease as well. (This completes the brief exposition of the five aggregates, which is enough for basic understanding.)

⁴²⁹ Htun Thein et al. (eds.) 1953: 61–62, translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart (cf. Ledi Paññāsīha 2012: 162–163).

6. The Path of Practice by Way of Suffering with a Key Description of the Experience of the Insight Knowledges of the *Visuddhimagga*⁴³⁰

In observing the appearance and disappearance of *rūpa* and *nāma* (matter and mind), when the disappearing [aspect] becomes very rapid, a meditator sees only the disappearing of *rūpa* and *nāma*. Seeing only the disappearing [aspect] is called *bhaṅgañāṇa*. Coming to see these [disappearances] as dangers is called *bhayañāṇa*. Coming to see these as defects is called *ādīnavañāṇa*. Becoming disenchanted [with them] is called *nibbidāñāṇa*. [These identifications] are simply names for what appears in knowledge and in the mind of the one meditating. This [whole process] is called *vipassanāñāṇa*. By observing the [successive] disappearance [of *rūpa* and *nāma*], the matter-mind formations (*rūpanāmasaṅkhāra*) become hot. (Note: The five kinds of matter-mind formations [aggregates] are ultimately real. A person, a living being, or a body are conventions.)

When [the matter-mind formations] become hot, the whole body may become so hot that it is unbearable. And the mind will remain disenchanted by seeing it as suffering. The knowledges of danger (*bhaya*), fault (*ādīnava*), and disenchantment (*nibbidā*) appear all together at the same time in the meditator deeply seeing. Continuing to observe in this way, the matter-mind formations become almost unbearably hot and painful—like the sensations [experienced] when contracting a disease (*vedanā*)—and then numb. It is similar to being boiled in hot water. [This is how] one abides in equanimity with feelings (*vedanupekkhā*). One encounters various kinds [of feelings]. They are of such variety that they are innumerable and cannot be described. It can happen that a meditator's body cannot move, and it can feel like the arms and legs are paralyzed. At such times, a meditator often wants to give up meditation. One should not give up but should continue. If one gives up, lights (*obhāsa*) of various sorts—which are obstacles of *vipassanā*, and which are *paññatti* [or experiences of conventional reality]—may also appear.

Light is a conventional reality. When matter and mind are constantly degrading in this way, [the experience of which is] so difficult to bear, a meditator might think as follows: “Should I give up meditation to free myself from such constant degradation of mind and matter, or should I continue striving?” This quality (*sabho*) of desiring to be free [from the constant

⁴³⁰ Htun Thein et al. (eds.) 1953: 107–111, translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart.

degradation of matter and mind] is called *muñcitukamyatāñāṇa*. At that particular time, if one shifts the posture or continues to reflect on this or that, the awareness (*ñāṇa* ‘*amraṇi*’) [of the constant degradation of matter and mind] can decrease. One is relieved of the intensity of the degradation of matter and mind. Although one is more comfortable, this is not good. One must continue observing. If one continues observing, after a while, the unbearable qualities (*sabho*) of the feeling (*vedanā*) will spread uniformly throughout the entire body. Then one will find only a single mass of heat. Although it is hot, since the heat is spread uniformly throughout the body, one can endure it. This is called knowledge of re-observation (*paṭisaṅkhāñāṇa*) by way of the purification of knowledge and vision of the path (*paṭipadāñāṇadassanavisuddhi*). When the unbearable [feelings] are [thus] uniform in the mind (*cīti*), one should remain attentive to impermanence, suffering, and not-self as appropriate. Attending in this way, the feelings of heat and boiling increase uniformly. Although they increase, they are no longer unbearable. It is like waves of heat exploding from within the body and as if one’s body were being consumed by flames, [yet] one perseveres. At that time, the mind does not deliberate in this way or that, does not reflect in this way or that. It no longer wanders off. The mind remains powerfully fixed in meditation, as in a state of one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*). One endures the hot and intense feelings that spread throughout the body. This is still equanimity with feelings (*vedanupekkhā*). In this way, when one observes formations (*saṅkhāra*) with an equanimous mind (*upekkhācīti*), there is no movement or shifting of the mind. It does not take up any other objects. It remains just passively observing what is happening. This is called *saṅkhārupekkhāñāṇa* (knowledge of equanimity with formations). In this way, while one continues to observe formations in a state of equanimity, without warning one passes beyond (*lvaṇa* ‘*mroka*’) the formations being observed—being known and seen. The six senses cease, and only *nirvāṇa* remains. One reaches the end of appearances and disappearances, the state of not becoming. The knowledge that arises just before attaining *nirvāṇa* is called *anulomañāṇa* (knowledge of conformity). The knowledge of attaining *nirvāṇa* is called *maggāñāṇa* and *phalañāṇa* (*magga* ‘*ñāṇa*’ *phui* ‘*ñāṇa*’): knowledge of the path and knowledge of the fruit [of the path]. One should [then] say: “Well done!” (*sādhū*).

Sometimes, at that moment, the formations experienced as heat exploding [within] and consuming [the body] may transform—when there is a disconnect from the [feelings of] bodily contact—into a flame that has the quality of being seen with the physical eyes, like a sign that can be seen in

calming practice (*samathanimit*‘). This is not good. It is like slipping and falling from the top of a mountain.

This is the path of practice by way of suffering (*dukkhapaṭipadā*). Two people cannot have the very same experience. This person experiences it in one way while that person is able to experience it in another way.

7. Sayāgyi Maung Po Thet’s Long Search, His Prioritization of *Samādhi*, and the Theory of Practicing with a Focus on the Internal Touch Element⁴³¹

By following Sayāgyi’s method, there is a high likelihood of attaining insight knowledge (*vipassanāñāna*) within seven days. Sayāgyi got this [meditation] method because he was mature in the perfections such that he could become a teacher. Still, it took him four[teen] years to find this method.⁴³² Why did it take such a long time? He did not know the method of the pure Dhamma (*tarā”acac*‘) and he did not know the fast method to encounter it. It is easy once one knows the pure Dhamma and the way to encounter it.

It includes every kind of phenomena (*sabho*), which are constantly experienced and perceived at all times. Therefore, it is said that the wise men become [unaware] just like a well-trained horse sometimes fails to do his task.

Now, with regard to matter and mind that appear distinctly internally, “when the receptor element (*akraññ’dhāt*‘) of [the sense-base of] the body (*kāyañ ca*) and the element of touch (*phoṭṭhabbe ca*) interact (*paṭicca*), body-consciousness (*kāyaviññāṇam*) arises (*uppajjati*).” The way people interpret [the relationship between] the receptor element (*akraññ’dhāt*‘) of [the sense-base of] the body and body-consciousness (*kāyaviññāṇam*) is generally correct. However, in the case of the element of touch, usually people do not interpret it as fundamentally internal, caused due to past actions (*kamma*), mental states (*citta*), environmental causes (*utu*) and nutriment (*āhāra*). Instead, they interpret touch as having an external cause: the touch of the wind or the touch of a mosquito’s bite, etc. So, the touch of the wind is known only when the wind is blowing. When the wind is not blowing, the touch

⁴³¹ Htun Thein et al. [eds.] 1953: 147–149, translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart.

⁴³² It is not clear precisely which period of four years might be referred to here in the 1953 edition, and it seems likely that this reading is a textual corruption. In the 1953 edition the number is presented in prose and in the other editions available to me the number is represented by numerals.

element of the wind is absent. So, how might one observe the three characteristics? The same goes for when a mosquito bites. When it comes to the internal touch, it appears because of past actions, mental states, environmental causes, and nutriment. Therefore, it never stops and is continuously present. Because it is continuously present, [the] arising and passing away [of matter and mind], if one is endowed with concentration, they can encounter it at any time. Even if one is locked away in a pit, they will encounter it. Since it can be encountered continuously, one should observe it at all times without interruption. But since we are concerned here with the internal touch element, if [one] simply looks with an ordinary [external] orientation, it is not the kind of viewing that involves knowledge constituted by meditative cultivation (*bhāvanāmayanāṇa*). [Such things] can be discerned only by looking with concentration. Therefore, the Buddha taught the threefold training: morality, concentration, and wisdom. People miss out when they do not pay proper attention to concentration.⁴³³ Even when they do pay proper attention [to concentration], they are not familiar with the significance of observing the internal touch (*ajjhata phoṭṭhabba*) and do not come to know how to give importance [in practice] to the internal touch. Because of this ignorance, when the internal touch appears [to a meditator] unexpectedly in one way or another, [one] fails to orient oneself to it. Because of this failure of orientation, it is generally not discerned [by a practitioner]. But to those endowed with concentration, the Dhamma (*tarā"kaṃkā"*) at times reveals itself from within [the body], as if to say: "I am here, I am the Dhamma."

8. A Description of the Sadhammapāla Kammatṭhāna Sayādaw's Short-cut Practice with a Focus on Meditative Attention at the Heart-base⁴³⁴

At the end [of an hour of sitting still in meditation], close your eyes and look at the concave of your chest (*raṇ'khyuṇ'*). This is the seat of the *bhavaṅga* consciousness (*bhavaṇ'nerā*), [the heart-base]. Bring the mind there, to the concave of the chest. Do not think about anything, do not plan, abandon

⁴³³ Htun Thein et al. (eds.) 1953: 148–149 (translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart). Cf. Ledi Paññāsīha 2012: 179–180.

⁴³⁴ Htun Thein et al. [eds.] 1953: 20. This translation is slightly adapted from an unpublished translation made available to me by the venerable Sāsanadhaja (Simon Feichter).

whatever you have heard. If you do not abandon it, it will be very difficult to see the true Dhamma. Keep your mind steady at the *bhavaṅga*. By its nature it automatically moves to other things. It can wander away. When you notice it has gone away, bring it back to the *bhavaṅga*. When you bring the mind to the *bhavaṅga* for a long time, you will automatically come to know the nature of arising and vanishing, as well as the constant changing of the five aggregates of body and mind within the body. Do not plan to know the matter and mind that have not yet manifested. Do not think about the matter and mind that have appeared. Remain knowing matter and mind as they appear in a process. It is similar to how an egret, when waiting to catch a fish for food inside a hole in a paddy dyke does not think about picking the fish when it has not yet appeared and does not think to pick the fish that has already been picked. [Rather], it is similar to when, at the right moment, as the fish appears, the egret catches it and picks it up. At any one time, make an effort for at least one hour. If you can stay longer, it is better. If you cannot continue sitting when the time is nearly over, relieve the pain and then sit again. In this practice, there are two approaches: the path of practice by way of pleasure, and the path of practice by way of pain. For the person practicing by way of pleasure, the characteristics can appear easily. For the person practicing by way of pain, the quality of pain appears in great measure. When the nature of suffering becomes intense, do not turn back! Stay continuously observing. The suffering that is apparent now is still ordinary. If you can patiently observe this minor suffering, you can get liberated from the countless infinite sufferings of the four lower realms. So, continue to make efforts with faith and patience. Now realize that as you meditate, and the nature of suffering becomes gradually more and more apparent even to the point that it is almost unbearable, the freedom from birth in the lower realms is nearer and nearer at hand. While contemplating patiently in this way, you will discern and understand the truth of suffering and thereby close the door to the lower realms.

Appendix 4

A Miscellany of Excerpts from Sayāgyi U Ba Khin’s Oral Teachings on *Vipassanā*

1. Sayāgyi U Ba Khin on the Prioritization of *Samādhi*⁴³⁵

U Khin Nyunt, you are the eldest one! Don’t speak! You seem to be confused. Young people also, don’t speak! If you want the pure Dhamma (*tarā’’acac’*), you need only a good foundation of concentration (*samādhi*). You don’t need other things. When you attain concentration, insight knowledge (*vipassanāññāṇa*) will automatically come. So, you don’t need to discuss anything. I talk and preach here. Are you coming here to talk and preach? No, you are not. You come here to take benefit yourself, right? If you cannot do well for yourself, how can you give to others? So, first you need to work for yourself. Well, work hard. Let’s say “*sādhu*.” “*sādhu, sādhu, sādhu*.”

2. On Mind and Matter, The Ledi Sayādaw’s Teachings on Elemental Matter, *Samādhi*, and Bodily Feeling⁴³⁶

In short, the objects (*tarā’’*) that appear with awareness (*simhu*) are called *nāma* (*nāmatarā’’*). How about *rūpa* (*rup’*)? *Rūpa* is not paintings drawn by U Ba Kyi. *Rūpa* is not a wood carving carved by a woodcarver. *Rūpa* is not the physical appearance of a human or a deity. What we call *rūpa* is distinguished by its quality. *Ruppatīti rūpaṃ. Ruppatti lakkhaṇena rūpaṃ. Ruppatti*—it decays; *iti tasmā*—therefore; *rūpaṃ*—it is called *rūpa*. *Ruppatti lakkhaṇena*—because of the characteristic of decay; *rūpaṃ*—it is called *rūpa*. The quality of decay and things possessing the quality of decay are called *rūpa*. How does *rūpa* originate? *Rūpa* has its origins in the four great

⁴³⁵ U Ba Khin n.d. (1962?) 2.2: 24:40–25:30 (translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart).

⁴³⁶ U Ba Khin n.d. (1962?) 3.1: 0:00–7:43 (translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart).

elements (*dhāt'krī"*). They are *pathavī* (earth), *āpo* (water), *vāyo* (wind) and *tejo* (fire), and they are also known as great element *rūpa* (*mahābhutrup'krī"*). *Pathavī* does not refer to earth [itself]. *Pathavī* refers only to the quality and characteristic of hardness and softness. *Vāyo* refers only to the quality and characteristic of motion and support. *Tejo* refers only to the quality and characteristic of heat and cold. *Āpo* refers only to the quality and characteristic of fluidity and cohesion.

By the combination of these four great elements, *vaṇṇa* or shape, *gandha* or scent, *rasa* or taste, and *oja* (nutritive essence) or elemental force (*dhāt'*) appear. The four great elements together with *vaṇṇa*, *gandha*, *rasa* and *oja* add up to eight types [of materiality]. By the combination of these eight types, a single material unit (*rup'vatthu*) appears. This unit is called a *rūpakalāpa* (*rup'kalāp'*). It can [also] be called eight-part particle matter (*aṭṭhakalāp'rup'*) because it is made up of the eight types. Since this [unit of] eight-part particle matter is formed by the combination of eight types, is it very large? It is not large.

It is very small. The Buddha gave an example. When an egg of a head louse is divided into 36 portions, a portion of it is equal to the finest dust left from the wheel of cart in the summer. When this finest dust is divided into 36 portions, a portion of it is called *tajjārī* particle. When a *tajjārī* particle is divided into 36 portions, a portion of it is an *aṇu* particle. When an *aṇu* particle is divided into 36 portions, a portion of it is called *paramāṇu* particle. [A unit of] eight-part particle *rūpa* is the same size as a *paramāṇu* particle. Otherwise, when a [particle of the] finest dust visible to the ordinary eye is divided into 46,656 portions, a portion of it is equal to [a unit of] eight-part particle *rūpa*.

According to the Ledi Sayadawgyi,⁴³⁷ a head louse is formed by the combination of a hundred billion of such *rūpakalāpas*. Both the animate world (*sak' rhi lok'* [Pāli: *sattaloka*]) and the inanimate world (*sak' mai' lok'* [Pāli: *okāsaloka*]) are completely filled with such *rūpakalāpas*. *Rūpa* has the nature of decay. Thus, such *rūpakalāpas* also have the nature of decay. A *rūpakalāpa* is established by the hardness of the *pathavī* element, combined with the fluidity of the *āpo* element, supported by the *vāyo* element, and then burnt by the *tejo* element. Every *rūpakalāpa* disappears right after it appears. It is like the sparks of the fire sparklers children play with. These sparkles spark and then immediately disappear. Well, not only do the *rūpakalāpas* of the body (*khandha*) act like this, but it is the same for the

⁴³⁷ Ledi Sayādaw 1998a (1901): 160.

rūpakalāpas of chairs, books, and carpets. Every *rūpakalāpa* arises and then immediately disappears.

The whole of this animate and inanimate world is full of *rūpakalāpas*. The inanimate world refers to the absence of life and the absence of consciousness (*viññāna*). The animate world refers to humans, deities, and living beings. *Rūpakalāpas* in the body (*khandha*) are constantly burnt up and destroyed by the power of the fire element (*tejodhātū*; Pāli: *tejodhātu*). We cannot see the destruction of each *rūpakalāpa*. They are too small to see. But it is true that groups of *rūpakalāpas* burn up and get destroyed. Therefore, the whole world (*loka*) is impermanent.

Is there any object free from deterioration? This is a chair, but it will deteriorate one day. The world will also deteriorate. Nothing is permanent. Why? Because it has as its foundation *rūpakalāpas*, which are not permanent. Nothing in this whole world lasts forever. The quality of not lasting is the quality of impermanence (*anicca*). Each and every *rūpakalāpa* does not last. Material things composed of *rūpakalāpas* also do not last. Bodies and identities composed of *rūpakalāpas* also do not last. Why is that? Because within them, *rūpakalāpas* deteriorate, get burnt up, and disappear incessantly. The quality of deterioration is ever-present.

I point my finger at a bulb twice. When I point at the bulb for the second time, is the light of the first time there? [Audience:] “No.” Where does it go? [Audience:] “The light in the bulb when you pointed at it the first time is gone.” Can you see it? Well, the light itself is in the process of burning. If not, we wouldn’t need to pay the bill to RES. *Ojadhātu* (the element of nutritive essence) from the food eaten spreads out in your whole body. Inside the body, there is the deterioration [of *rūpakalāpas*]. If there were no deterioration, we would not need to eat. For example, look at a candle. Do you see its flame? You may think the flame is the same. But when you have a look close up, you can see smoke comes out from it. New flames are coming into existence by the oil from the wax. At the same time, old flames are disappearing. But it is not visible [to the ordinary eye]. *Rūpakalāpas* are burnt up and deteriorate inside the body. But they are replaced by new *rūpakalāpas*, which are formed from *ojadhātu*. *Ojadhātu* is from *āhāravatthu* (food stuff). In the stomach, food is cooked by *pācakatejodhātu* (the digestive fire element). Then, *ojadhātu* replaces the decaying *rūpakalāpas* in the whole body with new *rūpakalāpas*. Feces move to the other side. In this way, *rūpakalāpas* come into existence and deteriorate continually.

If the replacement of *rūpakalāpas* is strong, people are active. If not, they feel weak. Now, you all are not active because in the evening the replacement is weak [due to skipping dinner]. But when you observe the three characteristics, the nature of the qualities of appearing and disappearing, you will become energized. Within the body, you are full of *rūpakalāpas*, and they are burnt up and made to disappear by *tejodhātu*.

These disappearances should be experienced bodily by feelings that arise due to contact with the body (*kāyasamphassajā vedanā*) through the mind as body-consciousness (*kāyaviññāṇacit*‘). This is why concentration (*samādhi*) is very important. With strong concentration, the decay and disappearance of *rūpakalāpas* is experienced as *kāyasamphassajā vedanā*. You must become “sensitive” [to this]. This is why I encourage you to establish concentration. Without concentration, you cannot experience it. The work of *vipassanā* is leaving aside concepts (*paññat*‘) and observing *nāma* and *rūpa* as impermanent, suffering and not-self, which are their ultimate qualities. I have explained to you about *nāma* and *rūpa* because it is fundamental knowledge for when you step into *vipassanā*.

3. “Pure *Vipassanā*,” Ordinary People, *Bhadda* Individuals and the Seeds of Liberation⁴³⁸

Māra could enter into the abdomen of people like venerable Mahāmoggallāna. So, he can easily enter into ordinary people. His nature is to disturb [people] by wandering everywhere. Because of Māra, the pure Dhamma (*tarā*“acac”‘) cannot stay in the mind-stream of beings. Māra tricks [them] into attaining fake *dhamma*. Therefore, if one comes to practice meditation (*tarā*“ā”thut’), [one needs to ask] whether or not [the practice] is consistent with the authoritative treatises containing the blessed Buddha’s teachings. When one is practicing for concentration (*samādhi*), there are various kinds of practices. There are forty concentration methods. There are ten kinds of *kaṣiṇa* (*kaṣiṇ*“”), such as the earth *kaṣiṇa*, the water *kaṣiṇa*, the fire *kaṣiṇa*, the wind *kaṣiṇa*, and so on. [There are] ten kinds of recollection (*anussati*), such as *buddhānussati*, *dhammānussati*, *ānāpānasati*, up to ten. [There are] ten kinds of impurity meditation (*asubha*), four formless meditations (*arūpajhān*‘), two divine abidings (*brahmā’vihāratarā*“) and two immeasurables (*appamaññā*). In total, there are forty. By [these] various

⁴³⁸ U Ba Khin n.d. (1962?) 6.1: 10:06–13:00 (translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart).

methods, concentration gets established, and one can tell whether the level is right when certain signs (*nimit*‘) appear. These are “pointers.” Only when these signs appear, is the level of concentration right. Only then can pure insight knowledge be attained. Ordinary people (*sāman*‘*puggil*‘) cannot attain such insight knowledge. When one makes efforts to practice insight, different kinds of [challenging] things happen. The top of the head can’t be found when a meditator puts attention there. Though various vibratory movements [can be felt] at the point at the top of the head, when one looks at it, [such movements] are not discerned. For some people, their heads whirl and they are unable to discern anything for four or five days. When such things happen, it is because something is blocking or obstructing [the process]. It is, therefore, very difficult to know and see real pure insight (*vipassanā*‘*acac*‘‘*amhan*‘). Now, you have come here to practice this Dhamma that is difficult to know and see. So, when you know [it], you come to know distinctly the quality of real pure *anicca*. As a result, the seed of knowledge of the wisdom-power of impermanence (*aniccavijjāññāṇ*‘) is formed. Such a person, [in whom the seed is formed], is called a *bhabba* person—a person fit for liberation [from *samsāra*]. At the time of the Buddha, the Buddha also sought out such people. He did not seek out persons who were not fit for liberation [from *samsāra*].

If you realize this kind of Dhamma [that you are practicing] now, you become persons fit for liberation. After getting the right kind of seed [of Dhamma] from Sayāgyi, and then returning [to your home], you can die as you like and [even] be reborn in hell. Yet you can be liberated from *samsāra* by coming into contact with the Buddha as a human in the next Buddha-dispensation (*buddhasāsanā*). This good seed, [this] pure seed, is sufficient.

4. The Five Aspects of One Who Strives, the Conflict of Forces (*dhāt*‘), and The Discernment of Bodily Feelings in Practice⁴³⁹

To attain the path and fruit of stream entry (*sotāpatti*), five aspects of one who strives (*padhāniyaṅgatarā*‘) are needed. *Padhāna aṅgā*—there are five fundamental factors. The Most Venerable Ledi Sayādawgyi said that these five kinds of striving are key points. What are they? The first is having faith in the Buddha. It is practicing meditation with no doubt. The second is being

⁴³⁹ U Ba Khin n.d. (1962?) 4.2: 3:08–10:09 (translated by Swe Swe Mon with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart).

healthy, without any part of the body infirm. Some people come here to cure their diseases. Other people have to carry them. I said it is impossible [to meditate] with such a condition. The third one is honesty. Meditators must be honest. So, don't tell lies. Telling lies shows that you are not an honest person. We know to some extent if you tell lies.

When *dhāt'* are striking within the body initially, my duty is to help you to conquer [unwholesome *dhāt'*] and to progress in practicing. The rest is your duty. The fourth factor is effort (*virīya*), very strong effort. The fifth factor is sharpness of knowledge to see the destruction of the mind and matter aggregates (*khandha*). Within the framework of the body (*khandhā'aim'*)—replete with *rūpakalāpas*—these units of elemental matter get burnt up by the power of *tejodhātu*. There is no moment absent of the burning of *rūpakalāpas*. When you observe mindfully with knowledge emergent from powerful concentration, you will experience the *rūpakalāpas* getting burnt up within. The characteristic of destruction is felt within the body as feeling produced through bodily contact (*kāyasamphassajā vedanā*); [it comes] as a forceful flush or a subtle tingling.

Today, at checking time, one meditator got a feeling like electronic needles poking the skin. People may have different types of feeling. Don't think: "He experienced such a feeling so I will try to get it too." If you think like that, you will become like Venerable Mahāsiva. The underlying *dhāt'* is different [for different people]. Because it is different, the feelings are also different. Ordinarily, they are the same. Like this, the wisdom-power of impermanence has appeared, and one feels it as a forceful flush in the head or face because he feels—inside the body and as feeling produced through bodily contact—the quality of *rūpakalāpas* getting burnt up by the power of *tejodhātu*. When feeling the body in this way, impermanence, impermanence (*anicca*) [manifests] as the quality of destruction. *Aniccaṃ khayatthena*—because it gets destroyed, it is called *anicca*. This is the quality of what is appearing. What happens there when you look at these [feelings] with knowledge? *ālōko udapādi*—the element of *nibbāna* (*nibbānadhāt'*) appears. [They are] destroyed, destroyed, destroyed, destroyed.

Here, we have meditators who can see or know or experience such feelings. They can know in which parts of the body *dhāt'* are striking. There are "positive and negative reactions," right? The negative ones are the coarsest. The negative or unwholesome (*akusuil'*) defilements (*gye"*) are striking the positive, *nibbānadhātu*. Then, they confront each other. If [the confrontation] is strong, you lose track of *anicca* and your body becomes

stiff. You don't know where to find *anicca*. At that time, you have to make your mind calm and try to again attain concentration.

To get concentration back, bring the mind back to your nostrils. Breathe and call back your mind. Stabilize it in this spot. When the mind is stabilized at this spot, gentle or subtle [feelings] come to be felt there. If you are aware [of them] in this way, stabilize the mind there. When the mind is stabilized there, catch hold of the fontanelle of the head and observe closely. At that place, indistinct, intense, or subtle feelings will appear. When they appear there, observe [the feelings] as they move [to other parts of the body], to know that the quality of appearance and destruction is inevitably there throughout the body at all times. It is not the discovery of new things. The quality of appearance and destruction continue inevitably as a fundamental quality within us. We have to come to know this [quality].

To know it, these five aspects of one who strives, which are five factors of becoming a stream-enterer, are important. The Ledi Sayadāwgyi defined the word “*padhāna*” in the following way: “Let all flesh and blood dry up. Let only bone, tendon and skin remain. I will never give up.” Such effort (*virīya*) with four factors is called “*padhāna*.” A person who makes effort like this is called “*padhāniya*.” Such a person has five aspects of one who strives. It is not an easy task.

[Bāhiya] Dārucīriya attained arahantship by holding the leg of the Buddha in Vesālī. He was dubbed the foremost person in attaining the fruit of arahantship quickly. He had no chance to ordain. He attained arahantship as an ordinary person. At the time of the Buddha Kassapa, he practiced with strong effort that we can call “*padhāna*” as described above. Here, you don't need to take the risks he did. If the ratio of your [five] aspects of one who strives is less, the result will also be less. A person who has fulfilled the perfections (*pāramī*) in past lives realizes the Dhamma easily because they have already removed defilements. If you practice, you will know for yourself. The only thing you have to do here is work hard in your meditation.

Appendix 5

Some Facets of the Role of Bodily Awareness in S.N. Goenka's Teachings

1. Goenka on Experiential Wisdom (*bhāvanāmayā paññā*)⁴⁴⁰

Being old serious students, you know what you have to do. Now you are free to scan your body in any way you like. Whichever way. If the mind wants to work just moving in one direction, head to feet, head to feet, let it work for some time in this way, head to feet, head to feet. After all, even going in one direction, one is experiencing sensations. One is developing *paññā* with these sensations—carry on.

The mind feels like working both ways, all right, both ways—carry on. It is easy to pass the attention part by part, part by part, then don't forcibly try to pass through the entire body. The mind wants to work part by part, all right, part by part. Or simultaneously through some parts of the body, all right: simultaneously through some parts of the body. Or the entire body, there is only subtle vibrations, same type of subtle sensations throughout the body. So easy—you pass it through the entire body. Even through the entire body, sometimes it just flows very slowly, very slow flow, like some honey flowing from top to bottom, slowly, slowly. Like some warm melted thing flowing, flowing, flowing, slowly, slowly. Or maybe at times automatically fast; a flow of very subtle vibrations like electric currents. Anything, let it happen naturally, don't force, don't try to work in this way or that way.

Being old, matured students, you can take advantage of every experience that naturally happens. Most important thing is that you maintain your *sampajaññaṃ*. You are *sati*, you are aware of whatever is happening. And you are *sampajaññaṃ*; that means you are understanding the nature of arising,

⁴⁴⁰ This passage was transcribed from an audio recording of a discourse on the eleventh day of Goenka's standard thirty-day retreat, recorded in January/February of 1989 at Goenka's main meditation center, *Dhamma Giri*, in Igatpuri, Mahārāṣṭra.

passing, arising, passing at the level of sensations, that means at the level of experience.

You are experiencing this arising, passing, arising, passing, so your *paññā* is *bhāvanā-mayā paññā*. You give importance to sensations, because with sensations, the *paññā* becomes *bhāvanā-mayā paññā*. You are experiencing it; you are feeling it yourself. How it arises, it passes, it arises, it passes. Every sensation is nothing but arising, passing, arising, passing. All the time, this sensation or that sensation, it is only for very new students, immature students, that keep on playing games with the sensations. If one feels a flow of very subtle sensations one feels so elated; “Ah wonderful. Now I am successful. My Vipassana is very strong now.” And suddenly, if there is gross sensation, one feels so depressed: “Oh now my meditation is very weak.” You are just relishing sensations; you are not doing Vipassana. A serious student, matured student, should understand that.

Merely reaching the stage where you start feeling the sensations is not enough. Feeling the sensation and understanding that it is impermanent, impermanent. Mere feeling the sensation is *sati*. *Sampajañña* is missing. *Samudaya-dhammānupassī viharatī, vāya-dhammānupassī viharatī*. Then *sampajañña* is there: “Look, arising, passing away, arising, passing away.” *Samudaya-vāya-dhammānupassī viharatī*. With such a great rapidity, arising, passing, arising, passing. This understanding, if this is missing, then you are not practising Vipassana at all.

2. Goenka on the Importance of *Vedanā*⁴⁴¹

You have to experience—*vedanā*. Tangible experience of *vedanā* is on the body. *Kāya-samphassajā vedanā, kāya-samphassajā vedanā*. Within the framework of the body, wherever you have *vedanā*—*sukhadā-vedanā*, or *dukkhadā-vedanā*, or *asukhadā-adukkhadā-vedanā*—*vedanā, vedanā* [Pāli:—*sukha-vedanā*, or *dukkha-vedanā*, or *adukkhamasukha-vedanā*]. You are experiencing it. You are witnessing the truth of *vedanā*. The direct experience.

And you are understanding that it is *phassa-paccayā vedanā*. Masses of subatomic particles within the framework of the body, they arise, they pass, they arise, they pass. They come in contact with each other, with this

⁴⁴¹ This passage was transcribed from an audio recording of a discourse on the twentieth day of Goenka’s standard thirty-day retreat, recorded in January/February of 1989 at Goenka’s main meditation center, *Dhamma Giri*, in Igatpuri, Mahārāṣṭra.

phassa—the *kalāpas* coming in contact with *kalāpa*—*vedanā* arises. Or the *phassa* of the *nāma*, your mind. Wherever your mind goes, there is a contact with these material *kalāpas* and your mind, [with] these material *kalāpas* and your mind. And the sensation is there.

Wherever there is life in the body, there is sensation. Because wherever there is life in the body there is *nāma*. Without *nāma* there is no life. As it is said, you point out your finger in any direction, and there is space. Any direction, there is space. Similarly you take your attention anywhere in the body, there is *vedanā*, there is *vedanā*. *Kāya-samphassajā vedanā*.

Cakkhu-samphassajā vedanā may be at times, may not be at times—the *vedanā* that arises because of the contact of the eyes with the vision. And so also *sota-samphassajā vedanā*, so also *ghāna-samphassajā vedanā*, *jivhā-samphassajā vedanā*—may be at times, may not be at times. And so also *mano-samphassajā vedanā* may be at times, may not be at times. But *kāya-samphassajā vedanā* is every moment, every moment.

There is no *kāya-samphassajā vedanā* only when you are either from the fifth *jhāna* to the eighth *jhāna*, because only *nāma* is working, or when you are out of all these and in the *nibbānic* stage. The technique is taking you not to the eight *jhānas*, but taking you to *nibbāna*—where both *nāma* and *rūpa* gets *nirodha*, not working at all. It is beyond them, where *saḷāyatana-nirodha*—none of the six senses are working. Even the mind is not working—beyond mind. From fifth to eighth *jhāna*, the sense doors over the body stop working, but the mind is working. *Nāma* is there. But in *nibbāna* even *nāma* is not there. Beyond that.

Now you are working with *nāma* and *rūpa*, within the structure of the body. *Nāma*, *rūpa*, *nāma*, *rūpa*. You are asked to give importance to *kāya-samphassajā vedanā*, because with *kāya-samphassajā vedanā* there can be *sampajaññaṃ*. *Sampajañña* is something which has to be practised all the time: *abhikkanto*, *paṭikkanto*, *ālokito*, *vilokito*, etc. You have taken *Satipatthana Sutta* course and you know—whatever you are doing at the physical level. Even you are lying down for sleep, a stage will come when there will be no sleep—you are aware, you are aware. You are giving rest to the body, but you are aware of sensations—*anicca*, *anicca*. *Sampajaññaṃ* is there.

Now at this stage when you are in deep sleep, you can't help. But otherwise every moment, every moment. And that "every moment, every moment" is possible with *kāya-samphassajā vedanā*, because it is every moment, every moment, every moment. And that is why he gives so much importance to this *kāya-samphassajā vedanā*. It is there.

And he gives the example: “As in the sky different kinds of winds arise—arise, pass away. Come from different directions, pass away. Or as in a rest house, people come from different directions, of different communities, come, go away, come, go away. Similarly in this body, different kinds of *vedanās* keep on arising, passing away, arising, passing away.”

*Yathā ’pi vātā vāyanti, ākāse vividhā puthū,
Tathevimasmim kāyasmim, samuppajjanti vedanā.*

Kāyasmim. As different kinds of wind arise in the sky, he says, in the same way—*tathevimasmim kāyasmim*: so emphatic about it; in the body, one has to work in the body. So similarly, different kinds of *vedanās* arise in the body.

3. Goenka on the Senses and Feeling Produced through Contact with the Body⁴⁴²

You started working with respiration. This tradition gives more importance to respiration rather than many other objects of concentrating the mind. Buddha also gave great emphasis on Anapana. But then there were such cases where he had also given other objects. Buddha is Buddha. A master teacher who has reached a stage where he’s *sabbaññu*, that means he knows everything. So just going deeply in the person who has come to take Dhamma, he will immediately realize all his background of the past, all his present capability. So at times, he will give some other object other than respiration which will be suitable for this person to start.

But we find that Anapana is generally suitable to vast majority of people. And especially, due to one reason or the other, those who come in this tradition and work, Anapana has worked very well for them. So, the student who is walking on the path with the help of Anapana understands that this is perfectly all right for me because, by the practice of Anapana, so soon I reach the stage of *vedanā, vedanānupassanā*.

And the next is *vedanānupassanā*, we give importance to *vedanā*. Now here again, one can work with any *vedanā*. We are working with *kāya-samphassajā vedanā*. This tradition gives importance to *kāya-samphassajā vedanā*. There is *vedanā cakkhu-samphassajā* also, *sota-samphassajā, ghāna-samphassajā, jivhā-samphassajā, mano-samphassajā*. Out of all the

⁴⁴² This passage was transcribed from an audio recording of a discourse on the forty-second day of Goenka’s standard forty-five retreat, recorded in January/February of 1992 at Goenka’s main meditation center, *Dhamma Giri*, in Igatpuri, Mahārāṣṭra.

six *indriyas*, six *āyatana*, wherever there is a contact there is a sensation. And, if it suits to somebody, one can start working what sensation I have when there is a sound, and what sensation I have when there is a smell, or what sensation when there is a vision, etc. But this tradition, again, has given importance to *kāya-samphassajā vedanā*. Contact in the body, on the body, with the material *kalāpas*, *kalāpas* coming in contact with *kalāpas*. Or the body coming in contact with the mind as the mind moves from head to feet, feet to head. There's a contact.

So, the sensation which comes because of the contact on the body is given more importance in this technique. And a reason is so simple. That any other *vedanā* may be at times, may not be at times. But this *vedanā* is constantly there as the respiration is constantly there, so the *kāya-samphassajā vedanā* is constantly there so long as one is alive. So you won't have to search for the object which is not there at times. Then you will be perplexed as to what to do now. I am working with *sota-samphassajā vedanā*, the ear, and now there is no sound. Or I am working with nose, *ghāna-samphassajā vedanā*, there is no smell, what to do now? Or the *jivhā*, the tongue *samphassajā vedanā*, and there is no taste, now what to do? But *kāya-samphassajā vedanā* is always there, constantly there.

Another reason. That when you work even with the *sota-samphassajā vedanā*, or the *cakkhu-samphassajā vedanā*, or *jivhā-samphassajā vedanā*, or *ghāna-samphassajā vedanā*, or even *mano-samphassajā vedanā*, although the sensation will start at that point where there is a contact, contact of ear with the sound, but then this *vedanā* will spread in the whole body. Like you strike the gong at any one place, the gong will start vibrating, vibrating, where the contact has been made. But then this vibration spreads on the entire gong. So even if somebody works with any other *āyatana*, one has to ultimately come to the whole body.

So, this tradition has started giving importance to start with the whole body and work with the whole body and then as Anapana was given so much emphasis by Buddha, similarly, the sensations in the whole body was given so much emphasis we find in the Buddha's words. And more than that, the student by experience finds that how it works very easily, and gives result very easily, and with this confidence as one starts working and continues to work, one finds that with this *vedanā*, feeling of sensation on the body, one can develop all the 37 *bodhi-pakkhiya dhamma*. That means the entire field of Buddha's teaching. The entire field of understanding Dhamma to reach the final goal.

4. A Brief Overview of the Three Trainings and the Goal of Practice⁴⁴³

A very important *pāramī*—*adhiṭṭhāna-pāramī*. You took *adhiṭṭhāna* for a long course of 45 days, and you completed it. This *adhiṭṭhāna-pāramī* will be a great asset for you. Your self-confidence has increased, self-reliance has increased, your ability to face the storms has increased. In day-to-day life also, who knows what kind of storms may come? Now you have that strength to face it. And so also, in your future meditations, whenever you decide to have a long course, there'll be no hesitation at all. You have developed the strength, the strength of self-reliance. This *adhiṭṭhāna* will go a long way to help you not only in this life, but whatever coming life or lives there are, you will find that this strength, the base of Dhamma, every *pāramī* has its own meaning. *adhiṭṭhāna-pāramī* has a strong meaning.

Dhamma will come to help. Whenever a problem comes, difficulty comes, a storm comes, this *adhiṭṭhāna-pāramī*, the base of *adhiṭṭhāna-pāramī*, and the Dhamma will come to your help. And then, working for so many days continuously, continuously, so much merits have gone to your credit living a life of faultless *sīla* for so many days. It is not easy for a householder. In day to day life, you may not make any major mistake. But tiny little mistake here or there, in certain situations, a little compromise here, a little compromise there. Because after all, the family life is full of difficulties, problems, because so many responsibilities are there. At least as a householder you could spare so much time, that for these 44 days, 45 days, you could live in faultless *sīla*. This gives you wonderful base for future.

And then your practice of *samādhi*, *samādhi* with the object of reality pertaining to your own mind and matter phenomenon. Not with the object of any imagination. This gives strength. Such kind of *samādhi* is *sammāsamādhi* because it gives the strength to go deeper in *paññā*, to make analysis... analytical study at the experiential level, of what one calls "I," what one calls "mine." That means these five *khandhas*, *pañcakkhandhas*.

And you kept on doing that. The Vipassana was Vipassana based with the *kāya-samphassajā vedanā*. The *samādhi* was *samādhi* with the object of respiration, respiration, which is connected both with the *nāma* and the *rūpa*.

Similarly, in Vipassana, you took the object of *kāya-samphassajā vedanā*, the *vedanā* that arises because of a contact on the body. So again, mind and

⁴⁴³ This passage was transcribed from an audio recording of a discourse on the forty-fourth day of Goenka's standard forty-five-day retreat, recorded in January/February of 1992 at Goenka's main meditation center, *Dhamma Giri*, in Igatpuri, Mahārāṣṭra.

matter is involved. And with the help of that, you kept on making analytical study, analytical study. Dividing, dissecting, disintegrating, dissolving, moving from gross towards subtle, towards subtle. And realizing the reality at subtler level, subtler level. And developing your faculty of remaining equanimous. Equanimous not just at the level of *samādhi*, but equanimous at the level of *paññā* with the base of *anicca*.

And *anicca* also, experiential *anicca*. This again was a very important reason why you worked with *kāya-samphassajā vedanā*. Because this is so tangible reality, you can feel it so distinctly, things arising, passing, arising, passing. So clearly. And with that actual experience of the reality of arising, passing, arising, passing, whatever equanimity that you develop, the *upekkhā* that you develop, started eradicating your stock of the impurities. Working on this with proper understanding, you have been able to get rid of so much stock of your *saṅkhāras*. At least that much misery is over. Whatever *saṅkhāras* are eradicated, that much misery is over. Misery of that particular *saṅkhāra* which is eradicated is over. So many are eradicated, so miseries pertaining to those so many, it's over.

Not that all the *saṅkhāras* of the lower field are fully eradicated, yet, whatever are remaining, they are also shaken. Shaken by this practice. Their strength is not as it was before. *Vikkhambhana*, they are shaken, the root is shaken. And as you continue to practice, the *saṅkhāras*, because they are shaken, it becomes easy. And easily, layers after layers of the remaining *saṅkhāras* of lower fields are bound to pass away. So, the 45 days were very well used, very well used.

References

A Note on Informants, Interviews, and Ethics Oversight

Some of the data for this paper was gathered from informants in various local contexts in Asia, North America, and Europe during research on several different research projects and under the auspices of several different project grants. The data derives from field observations, informal conversations and interactions, and formal interviews. Between 2008 and 2011, I carried out research under the auspices of the American Institute of Indian Studies (“Text, Path, and Practice: Meditation Theory and Community Imperatives in Indian Buddhism”); from 2016 to 2017, I carried out research under the auspices of the American Council of Learned Societies in collaboration with the Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Program in Buddhist Studies (“Liberating the Impurities from the Body: A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Somatic Experiences among American and Indian Meditators in the Goenka Vipassana Tradition”); from 2017 to 2018, I carried out research under the auspices of the Fulbright program (“Insight in Perspective: The Fashioning of the Modern Vipassana Tradition in India”). During these periods, I was also affiliated with the Vipassana Research Institute. Since many of the issues being dealt with in this book are sensitive, I have decided that all my informants and interview subjects will remain anonymous, even in cases where they may not have objected to being identified. Most informants or interview subjects are identified by a number, e.g. IA235 or WAI238, so that the reader might be able to see how certain kinds of information come from specific individuals. At times, for the sake of allowing the reader to get a sense of the importance of a source, I may identify some aspect of an informant’s identity. But in all cases, such aspects should not allow for the informant to be identified. During these various research stints—and beyond the time frames of the specific funding periods mentioned above—I was subject to the IRB guidelines of the respective institutions I was associated with: the University of California at Berkeley (protocol #2009-6-2, approved July 1, 2009 by the Office for the Protection of Human Subjects of the University of South Carolina at Berkeley), Brown University (protocol #1301000752, approved Aug. 15, 2016 by Brown University’s Office of Research Integrity), and the University of South Carolina (protocol

University of South Carolina (protocol #00064022, approved Feb. 7, 2017 by the University of South Carolina Institutional Review Board).

Abbreviations

IMC	International Meditation Centre
IMS	Insight Meditation Society
VIA	Vipassana International Academy
VMC	Vipassana Meditation Center (of Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts)
VRI	Vipassana Research Institute

All abbreviations for Pāli primary sources are those of von Hinüber 1996. References to Pāli canonical sources are to Pali Text Society editions unless otherwise indicated.

Literature

- Alter, J. (2004), *Yoga in Modern India: The Body Between Science and Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).
- Anālayo, Bh. (2003), *Satipaṭṭhāna: The Direct Path to Realization* (Birmingham: Windhorse Publications).
- Anālayo, Bh. (2006), 'The Ancient Roots of the U Ba Khin *Vipassanā* Meditation', *Journal of the Centre for Buddhist Studies, Sri Lanka* IV: 259–269.
- Anālayo, Bh. (2011), 'The Development of Insight—A Study of the U Ba Khin *Vipassanā* Meditation Tradition as Taught by S. N. Goenka in Comparison with Insight Teachings in the Early Discourses', *Fuyan Buddhist Studies* 6: 151–174.
- Anālayo, Bh. (2017), *Vinaya Studies* (Taipei: Dharma Drum Publishing).
- Anālayo, Bh. (2020), 'Meditation Maps, Attainment Claims, and the Adversities of Mindfulness', *Mindfulness* 11: 2102–2112. DOI: 10.1007/s12671-020-01389-4.
- Andrews, J. S. (1975), 'Reaching into the Beyond: A Psychic Experience', *New Directions* 2/2: 4. <http://dh.howard.edu/newdirections/vol2/iss2/4>.
- Apple, J. B. (2019), 'Maitreya's Tuṣita Heaven as a Pure Land in Gelukpa Forms of Tibetan Buddhism', in G. T. Halkias and R. K. Payne (eds.), *Pure Lands in Asian Texts and Contexts: An Anthology* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press), 188–222. DOI: 10.2307/j.ctv7r42sn.

- Aravamudan, S. (2007), *Guru English, South Asian Religion in a Cosmopolitan Language* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India), DOI: 10.1515/9781400826858.
- Ba Khin, U (1954), *What Buddhism Is* (Rangoon: Vipassana Research Association).
- Ba Khin, U (1962a [1952]), *The Right Answers to Practice with a Basis of Theory* [*Pariyatti 'akhrekham nham' paṭipatti 'aphre mhan'*] (Rays of Dhamma Series [Dhamma roṇ' khraññ']; Rangoon: Distributed by the Vipassanā Association of the Office of the Accountant General of the Union of Myanmar [Praññ' thoñ' cu Mrammā nuiñ' ṇam ṇve cā rañ'" mañ'" kīrī" rham": Vipassanā 'aphvai' phran'" ve saññ']).
- Ba Khin, U (n.d. [1962?]), *Burmese-language Discourses from a Ten-day Vipassanā Course at the International Meditation Centre, Rangoon*, Seven CDs with two tracks each. (Yangon: International Meditation Centre).
- Ba Khin, U (1969) 'My dear John E. Coleman ...', A letter from Sayāgyi U Ba Khin to John Coleman authorizing him (and five other disciples) to teach courses of Buddhist Meditation, dated April 23, 1969. www.momentum-vitae.it/biografiedarangoon/lettereautografe.
- Ba Khin, U (1969a) 'My life ambition ...', A letter from Sayāgyi U Ba Khin to John Coleman providing guidance on facilitating meditation courses, dated April 24, 1969. www.momentum-vitae.it/biografiedarangoon/lettereautografe.
- Ba Khin, U (1969b) 'My dear Coleman ...', A letter offering advice to John Coleman on taking a refresher meditation course, dated May 16, 1969. www.momentum-vitae.it/biografiedarangoon/lettereautografe.
- Ba Khin, U (1969c) 'You are under our cover always ...', A letter offering encouragement and support to S. N. Goenka in his mission to spread *vipassanā* meditation in India, dated October 11, 1969 (Vipassana Research Institute Archive).
- Ba Khin, U (2003 [?] [1952]), *The Right Answers to Practice with a Basis of Theory* [*Pariyatti 'akhrekham nham' paṭipatti 'aphre mhan'*] (Rays of Dhamma Series [Dhamma roṇ' khraññ'] 1; Rangoon: Distributed by the Buddha Sāsana Service Association of the Department of Accounts and Audits of the Republic of Myanmar [Mrammā nuiñ' ṇam to' cā rañ'" nham' cā rañ'" cac' ṭhāna: Buddhasāsana' 'akyui' choñ' 'asañ'" mha phran'" ve saññ']).
- Benson, H. (1975), *The Relaxation Response* (New York: Avon).
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994), *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge). DOI: 10.4324/9780203820551.

- Bhogal, B. S. (2018), 'Gur-Sikh Dharam', in P. Bilimoria (ed.), *History of Indian Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge), 487–495. DOI: 10.4324/9781315666792-49.
- Bischoff, R. (2003) (trans.), *Selected Discourses of Webu Sayadaw* (Dhamma Text Series 3; Heddington, Calne: The Sayagyi U Ba Khin Memorial Trust).
- Bodhi, Bh. (2010 [1998]), 'A Look at the Kalama Sutta', *Access to Insight* (BCBS Edition). www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/bps-essay_-09.html.
- Boucher, S. (2005), *Dancing in the Dharma: The Life and Teachings of Ruth Denison* (Boston: Beacon Press).
- Brac de la Perrière, B. (2009), 'An Overview of the Field of Religion in Burmese Studies', *Asian Ethnology* 68/2: 185–210. www.jstor.org/stable/25614538.
- Brac de la Perrière, B. (2012a), 'Spirits versus Weikza: Two Competing Ways of Meditation', *Journal of Burma Studies* 16/2: 149–179. DOI: 10.1353/jbs.2012.0005.
- Brac de la Perrière, B. (2012b), 'From Weikzahood to Mediumship: How to Master the World in Contemporary Burma', *Religion Compass* 6/2: 103–112. DOI: 10.1111/j.1749-8171.2011.00329.x.
- Brac de la Perrière, B. (2017a), 'Ritual Tattooing and the Creation of New Buddhist Identities: An Inquiry into the Initiation Process in a Burmese Organization of Exorcists', *Religion and Society: Advances in Research* 8: 129–144. DOI: 10.3167/arrs.2017.080108.
- Brac de la Perrière, B. (2017b), 'About Buddhist Burma: *Thathana*, or 'Religion' as Social Space', in M. Picard (ed.), *The Appropriation of Religion in Southeast Asia and Beyond* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan), 39–66.
- Brac de La Perrière, B., G. Rozenberg, and A. M. Turner (2014) (eds.), *Champions of Buddhism: Weikza Cults in Contemporary Burma* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press). DOI: 10.2307/j.ctv1qv364.
- Braun, E. (2013), *The Birth of Insight: Meditation, Modern Buddhism, and the Burmese Monk Ledi Sayadaw* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press). DOI: 10.7208/chicago/9780226000947.001.0001.
- Braun, E. (2020), 'Emissary of Insight', *Tricycle*, Winter 2020, <https://tricycle.org/magazine/goenka-emissary-of-insight-review/>.
- Byles, M. B. (1962), *Journey Into Burmese Silence* (London: George Allen & Unwin).
- Carrera, Ó. 'A New Career in a New Town: The Graphic History of S.N. Goenka's *vipassana* Lineage', *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 44: 77–118. DOI: 10.2143/JIABS.44.0.3290291.

- Carrol, T. (2022), 'Neoliberalism, Globalization, and Late Capitalism: Capital, Ideology, and Making the World Market', in Z. Cope and I. Ness (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Economic Imperialism*, 135–152 (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Cassaniti, J. L. (2018), *Remembering the Present: Mindfulness in Buddhist Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press). DOI: 10.7591/cornell/97815017-07995.001.0001.
- Chakrabarty, D. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. DOI: 10.1515/9781400828654.
- Charney, M. W. *Powerful Learning: Buddhist Literati and the Throne in Burma's Last Dynasty, 1752-1885*. Ann Arbor: Centers for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Michigan, 2006. DOI: 10.3998/mpub.225773.
- Charney, M. W. (2007), 'Demographic Growth, Agricultural Expansion, and Livestock in the Lower Chindwin in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', in G. Bankoff and P. Boomgard (eds.), *A History of Natural Resources in Asia: The Wealth of Nature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan) 227–244.
- Chaudary, A. (2017), 'Goenka', in K. T. S. Sarao and J. D. Long (eds.), *Buddhism and Jainism (Encyclopedia of Indian Religions)* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands) 515–519.
- Cheah, J. (2011), *Race and Religion in American Buddhism: White Supremacy and Immigrant Adaptation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press). DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199756285.001.0001.
- Chit Tin, U (1982) (ed.), *Anecdotes of Sayagyi U Ba Khin: Real Accounts of the Teachers, Parts I and II* (Heddington, Calne: The Sayagyi U Ba Khin Memorial Trust).
- Chit Tin, U (1985) (ed.), *A Western Student's Meditation Experience Under the Guidance of Sayagyi U Ba Khin* (Heddington, Calne: Vipassana Research Group, Sayagyi U Ba Khin Memorial Trust).
- Chit Tin, U, and W. Pruitt (1992), *The Coming Buddha Ariya Metteyya* (The Wheel Publication No. 381/383; Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society).
- Chit Tin, U (1997), *Knowing Anicca and the Way to Nibbāna* (Heddington, Calne: The International Meditation Centres In the Tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin).
- Chit Tin, U (1999) (ed.), *Truth Must Triumph: A History of the Worldwide Dhamma Mission of Sayagyi U Ba Khin* (Heddington, Calne: The International Meditation Centres In the Tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin).
- Clossey, L., K. Jackson, B. Marriot, A. Redden, and K. Vélez (2016), 'The Unbelieved and Historians, Part I: A Challenge', *History Compass* 14/12: 594–602. DOI: 10.1111/hic3.12360.

- Clossey, L., K. Jackson, B. Marriot, A. Redden, and K. Vélez (2017a), 'The Unbelieved and Historians, Part II: Proposals and Solutions', *History Compass* 15/1: e12370. DOI: 10.1111/hic3.12370.
- Clossey, L., K. Jackson, B. Marriot, A. Redden, and K. Vélez (2017b), 'The Unbelieved and Historians, Part III: Responses and Elaborations', *History Compass* 15/12: e12430. DOI: 10.1111/hic3.12430.
- Coleman, J. E. (2000 [1971]) *The Quiet Mind*. (Onalaska, WA: Pariyatti Press).
- Confalonieri, P. (1999), *The Clock of Vipassana Has Struck, the Teachings and Writings of Sayagyi U Ba Khin, with Commentary by S. N. Goenka* (Onalaska, WA: Pariyatti Publishing).
- Cook, J. (2010), *Meditation in Modern Buddhism: Renunciation and Change in Thai Monastic Life*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Cook, J. (2022), 'Mindfulness and Culture: An Introduction', *Anthropology Today* 38/2: 3. DOI: 10.1111/1467-8322.12705.
- Cook, J. (2023), *Making a Mindful Nation: Mental Health and Governance in the Twenty-first Century*. (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press).
- Crosby, K. (2013), *Traditional Theravada Meditation and Its Modern-Era Suppression* (Hong Kong: The Buddha Dharma Centre of Hong Kong).
- Crosby, K. (2020), *Esoteric Theravada: The Story of the Forgotten Meditation Tradition of Southeast Asia* (Boulder: Shambhala Publications).
- Crosby, K. and Pyi Phy Kyaw (2022), 'Practices of Protection in the Pali World', *Oxford Research Encyclopedias: Religion*: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.764>.
- Davis, J. H. (2004), *Strong Roots: Liberation Teachings of Mindfulness in North America* (Barre, Massachusetts: Dhamma Dana Publications).
- De la Cadena, M. (2015), *Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice across Andean Worlds* (Durham and London: Duke University Press). DOI: 10.1215/9780822375265.
- Descola, Ph. (2012 [2005]), *Beyond Nature and Culture*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press). DOI: 10.7208/chicago/9780226145006.001.0001.
- Deslippe, Ph. (2013), 'Brooklyn Bhikkhu: How Salvatore Cioffi Became The Venerable Lokanatha', *Contemporary Buddhism* 14/1: 169–186. DOI: 10.1080/14639947.2013.785243.
- Dhammasami, Kh. (2004), 'Between Idealism and Pragmatism, A Study of Monastic Education in Burma and Thailand from the Seventeenth Century to the Present' (doctoral dissertation, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford).
- Dhammasami, Kh. (2007), 'Idealism and pragmatism: A Dilemma in the Current Monastic Education Systems in Burma and Thailand', in I. Harris

- (ed.), *Buddhism, Power and Political Order* (London and New York: Routledge), 10–25. DOI: 10.4324/9780203947494.
- Dowling, C. (1977), ‘Confessions of an American Guru: Ram Dass’, *The New York Times*, December 4, 1977.
- Dressler, M. and A. Mandair (2011) (eds.), *Secularism & Religion-Making* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press). DOI: 978-0199782925.
- Dube, S. (2021), ‘Academic Privilege and Modern Scholasticism: Secular Transcendence and Worldly Immanence’, *Historia y Grafia* 29/57: 291–322.
- Felder, A. J., H. M. Aten, J. A. Neudeck, J. Shiomi-Chen, and B. D. Robbins (2014), ‘Mindfulness at the Heart of Existential-Phenomenology and Humanistic Psychology: A Century of Contemplation and Elaboration’, *The Humanistic Psychologist* 42/1: 6–23.
DOI: 10.1080/08873267.2012.753886.
- Fields, R. (1992), *How the Swans Came to the Lake: A Narrative History of Buddhism in America* (Boston: Shambhala Publications).
- Ford, E. (2017), *Cold War Monks: Buddhism and America’s Secret Strategy in Southeast Asia* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press).
DOI: 10.12987/yale/9780300218565.001.0001.
- Foxeus, N. (2011), ‘The Buddhist World Emperor’s Mission: Millenarian Buddhism in Postcolonial Burma’ (doctoral dissertation, Department of Ethnology, History of Religions and Gender Studies, Stockholm University).
- Foxeus, N. (2013), ‘Esoteric Theravada Buddhism in Burma/Myanmar’, *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis* 25: 55–79.
DOI: org/10.30674/scripta.67433.
- Foxeus, N. (2016), ‘“I Am the Buddha, the Buddha Is Me”: Concentration Meditation and Esoteric Modern Buddhism in Burma/Myanmar’, *Numen* 63: 411–445. DOI: 10.1163/15685276-12341393.
- Foxeus, N. (2018), ‘Spirits, Mortal Dread, and Ontological Security: Prosperity and Saving Buddhism in Burma/Myanmar’, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 86/4: 1107–1147.
DOI: 10.1093/jaarel/lfy020.
- Foxeus, N. (2019), ‘The Buddha was a devoted nationalist: Buddhist nationalism, *ressentiment*, and defending Buddhism in Myanmar’, *Religion* 49/4: 661–690. DOI: 10.1080/0048721X.2019.1610810.
- Fronsdal, G. (2002), ‘Virtues Without Rules: Ethics in the Insight Meditation Movement’, in M. Baumann and C. S. Prebish (eds.), *Westward Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Asia* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press), 285–306. DOI: 10.1525/9780520936584-020.
- Gajaweera, N. (2022). ‘Creating a Safe Space for Mindfulness: Non-white Practitioner Experiences in North America’, *Anthropology Today* 38/2: 17–21. DOI: 10.1111/1467-8322.12709.

- Levine, S. and D. Gellner (2007), *Rebuilding Buddhism: The Theravada Movement in Modern Nepal* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
- Gentry, J. D. (2019), 'Arguing over the Buddhist Pedigree of Tibetan Medicine: A Case Study of Empirical Observation and Traditional Learning in 16th- and 17th-Century Tibet', *Religions* 10: 530.
DOI: 10.3390/rel10090530.
- Ginzburg, C. (2011 [1966]), *The Night Battles: Witchcraft & Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth & Seventeenth Centuries* (London and New York: Routledge).
- Ginzburg, C. (2013 [1976]), *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press).
- Gleig, A. (2019), *American Dharma* (New Haven: Yale University Press).
DOI: 10.12987/yale/9780300215809.001.0001.
- Gleig, A. and A. Langenberg (2020), 'Sexual Misconduct and Buddhism – Centering Survivors', *The Shiloh Project: Rape culture, religion, and the Bible*. <https://www.shilohproject.blog/sexual-misconduct-and-buddhism-centering-survivors/> (accessed November 25, 2020).
- Gleig, A. and A. Langenberg (forthcoming), *Abuse, Sex, and the Saṅgha* (New Haven: Yale University Press).
- Goenka, S.N. (1974), 'Special Discourse for Old Students—Varanasi 20-Day Course (two consecutive 10-day courses)', Recording of a discourse given to old students of S.N. Goenka on the topic of *satipaṭṭhāna* and *vipaśyanā* during two consecutive ten-day *vipaśyanā* meditation courses in Vārāṇasī, India, December 1974.
- Goenka, S.N. (1976), *Dharm: Jīvan Jīne Kī Kalā* (Bombay: Sayaji U Ba Khin Memorial Trust).
- Goenka, S.N. (1976), *Dharm: Ādarś Jīvan Kā Ādhār* (Bombay: Sayaji U Ba Khin Memorial Trust).
- Goenka, S. N. (1991), *10-Day Discourses—Streaming Video (English)*, (Onalaska: Pariyatti Publishing). <https://store.pariyatti.org/10-day-discourses-streaming-video-english-vipassana>.
- Goenka, S.N. (1999), *Discourses on Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (Igatpuri: Vipassana Research Institute).
- Goenka, S.N. (2004), 'My Friend, Munindraji', *Vipassana Newsletter (VRI Edition)* 14/9: 1–3. www.vridhamma.org/node/1977.
- Goenka, S.N. (2004), 'Munīndra—Merā Mitrā—मुनीन्द्र--मेरा मित्र', *Vipaśyanā* 34/2: 1–3. www.vridhamma.org/node/2309.
- Goenka, S. N. (2006), *The Gem Set in Gold* (Onalaska, WA: Vipassana Research Publications, [an imprint of] Pariyatti Publishing).
- Goenka, S.N. (2007 [2002]), *For the Benefit of Many: Talks and Answers to Questions From Vipassana Students, 1983–2000* (Dhamma Giri, Igatpuri: Vipassana Research Institute).

- Goenka, S. N. and William Hart (1995), *The Discourse Summaries* (Dhammagiri, Igatpuri: Vipassana Research Institute).
- Goldberg, K. (2013), 'Constructing and Contesting Sacred Spaces: International Buddhist Assistance in Bodhgayā', in H. Kawanami, G. Samuel (eds.), *Buddhism, International Relief Work, and Civil Society* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 161–187.
DOI: 10.1057/9781137380234_8.
- Goldberg, K. (2014), 'For the Benefit of Many: S.N. Goenka's Vipassana Meditation Movement in Canada', in J. S. Harding, V. Sōgen Hori, and A. Soucy (eds.), *Flowers on the Rock Global and Local Buddhisms in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press), 79–100.
- Goldstein, J. (1976), *The Experience of Insight, A Natural Unfolding* (Santa Cruz, CA: Unity Press).
- Goldstein, J. (2008), 'Cause and Effect, Reflecting on the Law of Karma', *Tricycle*. <https://tricycle.org/magazine/cause-and-effect/> (accessed September 1, 2018).
- Goleman, D. (1971), 'Meditation As Meta-therapy: Hypotheses Toward a Proposed Fifth State of Consciousness', *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 3/1: 1–25.
- Goleman, D. (1972), 'The Buddha on Meditation and States of Consciousness—Part I: The Teachings', *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 4/1: 1–44.
- Goleman, D. (1972), 'The Buddha on Meditation and States of Consciousness—Part II: A Typology of Meditation Techniques', *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 4/2: 151–210.
- Goleman, D. (1975), 'Mental Health in Classical Buddhist Psychology', *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 7/2: 176–181.
- Goleman, D. (1976), 'Meditation and Consciousness: An Asian Approach to Mental Health', *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 30: 41–54.
DOI: 10.1176/appi.psychotherapy.1976.30.1.41.
- Goleman, D. (1981), 'Buddhist and Western Psychology: Some Commonalities and Differences', *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 13/2: 125–137.
- Gruber, H. (2012), 'Die frühbuddhistische Achtsamkeits- bzw. Einsichtspraxis Vipassanā', in M. Zimmermann, C. Spitz, S. Schmidt (eds.), *Achtsamkeit: Ein Buddhistisches Konzept erobert die Wissenschaft* (Bern: Verlag Hans Huber), 305–324.
- Gruber, H. (n.d.), 'Clear Seeing': https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ugEdRfoD0j1FerJepAnz1_1j3Di3HGVu/view

- Guha, R. (1988), 'On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India', in R. Guha and G. Spivak (eds.), *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press), 37–44.
- Guha, R. (1988), 'The Prose of Counter-Insurgency', in R. Guha and G. Spivak (eds.), *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press), 45–86.
- Guha, R. (1999 [1983]), *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Guha, R. (2002), *History at the Limit of World History* (New York: Columbia University Press).
- Hamilton, W. L. (1995), *Saints & Psychopaths* (San Jacinto, CA: Dharma Audio Network Associates).
- Harris, S., and J. Goldstein (2014), 'The Path and the Goal'. *The Waking Up Podcast* 4, A conversation between Sam Harris and Joseph Goldstein on Goldstein's experience of meditation in historical perspective, October 28, 2014. www.samharris.org/podcast/item/the-path-and-the-goal.
- Harris, I. (2007) (ed.), *Buddhism, Power and Political Order* (London and New York: Routledge). DOI: 10.4324/9780203947494.
- Harrison, P. M. 'Who Gets to Ride in the Great Vehicle? Self-Image and Identity Among the Followers of the Early Mahāyāna', *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 10, no. 1 (1987): 67–89. <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bsz:16-jiabs-87099>.
- Harrison, P. M. 'Is the Dharma-kāya the Real Phantom Body of the Buddha?' *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 15 (1992): 44–94. <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bsz:16-jiabs-87926>.
- Harrison, P. M. 'Searching for the Origins of the Mahāyāna: What Are We Looking For?' *The Eastern Buddhist* 28/1 (1995): 48–69. www.jstor.org/stable/44362047.
- Harrison, P. M. (2018) (ed.). *Setting Out on the Great Way: Essays on Early Mahāyāna Buddhism* (Sheffield, UK: Equinox Press).
- Hart, B., R. Crutcher, J. Beary, and B. Lapping (2019), *From Myanmar to the World: Part 1, Overland to India* (Maṅgala Films). <https://vimeo.com/380890115>.
- Hart, B., R. Crutcher, J. Beary, and B. Lapping (2020), *From Myanmar to the World: Part 2, Caves to Pagodas* (Maṅgala Films). <https://vimeo.com/435024173>.
- Helderman, I. (2019), *Prescribing the Dharma: Psychotherapies, Buddhist Traditions, and Defining Religion*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press).
- Hickey, W. S. (2019), *Mind Cure: How Meditation Became Medicine* (London and New York: Oxford University Press). DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780190864248.001.0001.

- Hislop, J. S. (1979), *Conversations with Sathya Sai Baba* (Tustin, CA: Sathya Sai Book Center of America).
- Hislop, J. S. (1985), *My Baba and I* (San Diego: Birth Day Publishing).
- Hislop, J. S. (1998), *Seeking Divinity* (Tustin, CA: Sri Sathya Sai Publications).
- Hla Myint, U (2019) (trans.), *The Biography of The Most Venerable Mingone Jetavan Sayādawji, A Pāli Commentator, By Venerable Tikkhācāra, Toun-dwin Bhikkhu* (not in print).
- Houtman, G. (1990a), 'How a Foreigner Invented "Buddhendom" in Burmese: From *Tha-tha-na* to *Bok-da' Ba-tha'*', *Journal of the Anthropological Society at Oxford* 21/2: 113–28. www.anthro.ox.ac.uk/jaso-1990-1995#collapse393066.
- Houtman, G. (1990b), 'Traditions of Buddhist Practice in Burma' (doctoral dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London).
- Houtman, G. (1997), 'The Biography of Modern Burmese Buddhist Meditation Master U Ba Khin: Life Before the Cradle and Past the Grave', in J. Schober (ed.), *Sacred Biography in the Buddhist Traditions of South and Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press), 310–344. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt6wqcvj.
- Houtman, G. (1999), *Mental Culture in Burmese Crisis Politics: Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy* (Tokyo: Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa).
- Houtman, G. (2014), 'Vipassanā in Burma: Self-government and the Ledi Ānāpāna Tradition', in H. Eifring (ed.), *Hindu, Buddhist and Daoist Meditation* (Oslo: Hermes Academic Publishing), 91–115.
- Hover, R. H (1966), 'The Human System Project', Unedited rough draft of a project proposal submitted to J. C. Celentano of North American Aviation, Inc., March 1, 1966.
- Htay Hlaing, U. (1987), *Anāgām Sayā Thetgyi: His Life, His Teachings, and His Good Acts* [*Anāgām 'Charā Sak ' -kyī", Sū' bha va | sū' ta rā" sū' kye" jū"*] (Yangon [Ran'kun']: 'A myui" sa dhī" pariyatti ranh' puṃ ṇve).
- Htay Hlaing, U. (1993), *Arahats and Extraordinary Individuals (of the Practice Traditions of Myanmar)* [*(Myan' mā-nuiñ ' -ñam Paṭipattisāsana-van') Rahantā-nhan' ' -pugguil' -thū" -myā"*] (Yangon [Ran'kun']: 'A myui" sa dhī" pariyatti ranh' puṃ ṇve).
- Htay Hlaing, U. (2013), *Theelon Sayadaw (1786–1861), A Great Meditation Master in Old Burma*. Translated by Aggācāra Dhamma Distribution Group. (Yangon: Aggācāra Dhamma Distribution Group).

- Htun Thein, U, U Sein Ote, and U Win Pe (1953) (eds.), *Diṭṭhadhamma-vipassanāñāṇadassana, Phrat' lam' pra kyam' nhañ' Vipassanā lak' khvai kyam'* (Rangoon: Icchāsaya piṭakat' cā puṃ nhip' tuik').
- Huntington, C. W. jr. (2015), 'The Triumph of Narcissism: Theravāda Buddhist Meditation in the Marketplace', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 83/3: 624–48. DOI: 10.1093/jaarel/lfv008.
- Huxley, A. (2007), 'Rajadhamma Confronts Leviathan: Burmese Political Theory in the 1870s', in I. Harris (ed.), *Buddhism, Power and Political Order* (London and New York: Routledge), 26–51. DOI: 10.4324/9780203947494.
- International Meditation Centre (IMC) (1954) (ed.), *Practical Buddhist Meditation, Personal Experiences of Candidates (Buddhists and Non-Buddhists)* (Rangoon: Vipassana Research Association). <https://pariyatti.org/Free-Resources/Treasures>.
- International Meditation Centre (IMC) (1961) (ed.), *Introduction to the International Meditation Centre (with Buddhist Meditation in Burma by Dr. Elizabeth Nottingham)* (Rangoon: Vipassana Research Association). <https://pariyatti.org/Free-Resources/Treasures>.
- International Meditation Centre (2019), "One Hour Group Sitting | By Pujya Sayagyi U Ba Khin", YouTube video, 1:00:03. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GafH2JO_qgY.
- Jordan, J. (2010), 'Another Man's Faith? The Image of Judaism in the BBC Television Series Men Seeking God', *Jewish Culture and History* 12/3: 463–476. DOI: 10.1080/1462169X.2012.721493.
- Jordt, I. (2007a), *Burma's Mass Meditation Movement: Buddhism and the Cultural Construction of Power* (Athens: Ohio University Press).
- Jordt, I. (2007b), 'What is a "True Buddhist": Meditation and the Formation of Knowledge Communities in Burma', *Ethnology* 45/3: 193–208.
- Jordt, I. (2012), 'Transnational Buddhism and the Transformation of Local Power in Thailand', in F. Aulino, M. Goheen, S. J. Tambiah (eds.), *Radical Egalitarianism: Local Realities, Global Relations* (New York: Fordham University Press). DOI: 10.2307/j.ctt1c5cjrj.6.
- Josephson-Storm, J. Å. (2020), 'Religious Studies and the Jargon of Authenticity', in L. D. Smith, S. Fährding, A. Hermann (eds.), *Hijacked: A Critical Treatment of the Public Rhetoric of Good and Bad Religion* (Sheffield: Equinox), 23–33.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (1982), 'An Out-patient Program in Behavioral Medicine for Chronic Pain Patients Based on the Practice of Mindfulness Meditation: Theoretical Considerations and Preliminary Results', *General Hospital Psychiatry* 4/1: 33–47. DOI: 10.1016/0163-8343(82)90026-3.

- Kabat-Zinn, J., L. Lipworth, and R. Burney (1985), 'The Clinical Use of Mindfulness Meditation for the Self-regulation of Chronic Pain', *Journal of Behavioral Medicine* 8/2: 163–190. DOI: 10.1007/bf00845519.
- Kabat-Zinn, J., L. Lipworth, R. Burney, and W. Sellers (1986), 'Four Year Follow-up of a Meditation-based Program for the Self-regulation of Chronic Pain: Treatment Outcomes and Compliance', *The Clinical Journal of Pain* 2/3: 159–173. DOI: 10.1097/00002508-198703010-00010.
- Kabat-Zinn, J., and A. Chapman-Waldrop (1988), 'Compliance with An Outpatient Stress Reduction Program: Rates and Predictors of Completion', *Journal of Behavioral Medicine* 11/4: 333–352. DOI: 10.1007/bf00844934.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990), *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness* (New York: Delacorte Press).
- Kaloyanides, A. 2015. *Baptizing Buddhists: The Nineteenth-Century American Missionary Encounter with Burmese Buddhism*. A Dissertation presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School, Yale University.
- Khin Lin Myint, M. (2005), 'The Study of Anāgatavaṃsa Aṭṭhakathā' (doctoral dissertation, University of Yangon).
- King, W. L. (1961), 'An Experience in Buddhist Meditation', *The Journal of Religion* 41/1: 51–61. DOI: 10.1086/485308.
- Kirichenko, A. (2009), 'From Thathanadaw to Theravāda Buddhism: Constructions of Religion and Religious Identity in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Myanmar', in T. D. DuBois (ed.), *Casting Faiths: Imperialism and Transformation of Religion in East and Southeast Asia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan), 23–45. DOI: 10.1057/9780230235458_2.
- Knaster, M. and C. R. Pryor (2010), *Living This Life Fully: Stories and Teachings of Munindra* (Boston & London: Shambhala Publications).
- Jenny Ko Gyi (with the editorial assistance of Daniel M. Stuart) (n.d.) (trans.), *The Right Answers to Practice with a Basis of Theory, A Translation of Sayāgyi U Ba Khin's Pariyatti 'akhrekham nhañ' 'paṭipatti 'aphre mhan'* (unpublished manuscript).
- Ko Lay, U. (1980), *Myanmar's Excellent Person, the Extraordinary Sayāgyi U Ba Khin (His Biography and Sāsana Activities)* [Myan'mā' guṇ'khoṇ' | pugguil' thū" charākri" Ū Bha Khañ' (atthuppatti nhañ' " sāsana prulup' ṇan " myā")]. Rangoon: The Vipassanā Association of the Office of the Accountant General of Myanmar [Myan'mā praññ' ṇve cā rañ' " mañ' " kṛi" ruṃ" | vipassanā 'aphvai'].
- Kornfield, J. M. (1977), 'The Psychology of Mindfulness Meditation' (doctoral dissertation, Humanistic Psychology Institute, California State University, Sonoma).
- Kornfield, J. (2007 [1977]), *Modern Buddhist Masters* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society).

- Kyaw, Pyi Phyo (2014), 'Paṭṭhāna in Burmese Buddhism' (doctoral dissertation, King's College London).
- Ledi Paññāsiha (2012), *A Brief Biography of Anāgāma Sayāgyi U Thet and His Teaching*, Translated by U Nyi (Yangon: n.p.).
- Ledi Sayādaw (1909), *Rogantaradīpanī kyaṃ* " [A Manual for Warding Off Pestilence] (Tharrawaddy [Sāyāvati]: Devacakkhu Publishing House [Devacakkhu cā puṃ nhip' tuik']).
- Ledi Sayādaw (1915), *The Vipassanā Dīpanī or the Manual of Insight*, Translated by U Nyāna (Mandalay, Burma: The Society for Promoting Buddhism in Foreign Countries).
- Ledi Sayādaw (1954), *Laytī Nibbān' [Ledi Nibbāna]* (Rangoon: Jambu Friends Piṭaka Publishing House [Jambū mit' chve piṭakat' puṃ nhip' tuik']).
- Ledi Sayādaw (1955), *Rogantaradīpanī [A Manual for Warding Off Pestilence]* (Rangoon [Ran'kun']: Haṃsavati Piṭaka Publishing House [Haṃsāvati piṭakat' puṃ nhip' tuik']).
- Ledi Sayādaw (1988), *Vipassanādīpanī nhañ' Maggaṅgadīpanī [The Manual of Insight and the Manual of the Constituents of the Path]* (Rangoon: The Publishing House for the Department of Sāsana Affairs [Sāsana re" ṇi" cī" thāna puṃ nhip' tuik' tvañ']).
- Ledi Sayādaw (1995), 'Anattadīpanī', in *Laytī dīpanī poṇ' khyup'—dutiya tvai* [An Anthology of Ledi Manuals—Volume 2] (Yangon: Ratanā'vādi piṭakat' cā 'aup' chuiñ'), 456–568.
- Ledi Sayādaw (1999), *Manual of Mindfulness of Breathing, Ānāpāna Dīpanī*, Translated into English by U Sein Nyo Tun and prepared and presented by S. S. Davidson (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society).
- Ledi Sayādaw (2002), *Vijjāmaggadīpanī nhañ' Lakkhaṇadīpanī [The Manual of the Path of Wisdom/Wizardry and the Manual of Characteristics]* (n.p.: Laytī dīpanī thvan" kā" pran' pvā" re" 'aphvai').
- Ledi Sayādaw (2006), *The 'Ledi' Dhammā on Nibbāna [Containing English Translations of the Nibbāna Dīpanī (Manual of Nibbāna), the Nibbāna Vissajjanā (Answer to the Question on Nibbāna), and Ledi Nibbān]*. (Yangon: Mother Ayeyarwaddy Publishing House).
- Ledi Saydaw (1996), 'Āhāradīpanī', in *Laytī dīpanī poṇ' khyup'—tatiya tvai* [An Anthology of Ledi Manuals—Volume 3] (Yangon: Ratanā'vādi piṭakat' cāpe tvak'), 203–317.
- Ledi Sayādaw (2017), *Bodhipakkhiya Dīpanī: A Manual of the Requisites of Enlightenment*, Translated by Sein Nyo Tun and edited by Bhikkhu Pesala (Essex: Association for Insight Meditation).
- Ledi Sayādaw (2018), *A Manual Nutriment: Āhāra Dīpanī*, Translated by U Tin Shwe and edited by Bhikkhu Pesala (Essex: Association for Insight Meditation).

- Ledi Sayādaw (n.d. [1904]), *Kammaṭṭhān "' kyam "' krī"* [*The Great Treatise on Meditation Objects*] (Yangon: Jvai cāpe rip'mrum).
- Ledi Sayādaw (n.d.[a]), *Treatise on Meditation by Ledi Sayadaw* [*Kammaṭṭhān "' kyam "' krī"*], Translated by U Hla Maung and edited and prepared for publication by James Patrick Stewart Ross, Esq. with the intention that it would be printed by Kusalachando Press, Bangkok (unpublished manuscript).
- Ledi Sayādaw (n.d.[b]), *The Manual for Warding Off Pestilence* [*Rogantara Dīpanī*], Translated by U Tin U (Myaung) from the 1955 edition of the Rogantara Dīpanī (Rangoon: Hanthawaddy Press) and edited and prepared for publication by James Patrick Stewart Ross, Esq. with the intention that it would be printed by Kusalachando Press, Bangkok (Unpublished manuscript).
- Ledi Sayadaw (n.d.[c]), *Lakkhaṇa Dīpanī* [*The Manual of Characteristics*], Translated by U Tin Shwe, edited by U Revatadhamma and Abhiññāṇi, and prepared for publication by James Patrick Stewart Ross, Esq. with the intention that it would be printed by Kusalachando Press, Bangkok (unpublished manuscript).
- Ledi Sayadaw (1998a [1901]), *Paramatthadīpanī* [*The Manual of Ultimates*] (Igatpuri: Vipassana Research Institute). www.tipitaka.org.
- Ledi Sayadaw (1998b [1914]), *Anudīpanī* [*The Manual of Explanation (of the Manual of the Ultimates)*] (Igatpuri: Vipassana Research Institute). www.tipitaka.org.
- Lerner, E. (1977), *Journey of Insight Meditation: A Personal Experience of the Buddha's Way* (New York: Schocken Books).
- Leve, L. (2017), *The Buddhist Art of Living in Nepal: Ethical Practice and Religious Reform* (London and New York: Routledge).
- Li, R. (1996) (trans.), *The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions* (BDK English Tripiṭaka Series. Moraga, CA: BDK America, Inc.). <https://bdkamerica.org/product/the-great-tang-dynasty-record-of-the-western-regions/>.
- Lindahl, J. R., C. T Kaplan, E. M. Winget, and W. B. Britton (2014), 'A Phenomenology of Meditation-induced Light Experiences: Traditional Buddhist and Neurobiological Perspectives', *Frontiers in Psychology* 4. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00973.
- Lindahl, J. R., N. R. Fisher, D. J. Cooper, R. K. Rosen, and W. B. Britton (2017), 'The Varieties of Contemplative Experience: A Mixed-methods Study of Meditation-related Challenges in Western Buddhists.' *PLoS ONE* 12/5. DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0176239.
- Lopez, D. S., Jr. (2002), *A Modern Buddhist Bible* (Boston: Beacon Press Books).

- Loss, J. (2010), 'Buddha-Dhamma in Israel: Explicit Non-Religious and Implicit Non-Secular Localization of Religion', *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 13/4: 84–105.
DOI: 10.1525/nr.2010.13.4.84.
- Loss, J. (2011), 'Between Universalism and Relativism: The Acquiring of a Continuously Liberating Self by Buddha-Dhamma Israeli Practitioners', in B. Huss (ed.), *Kabbalah and Contemporary Spiritual Revival* (Beer-Sheva: Ben-Gurion of the Negev Press), 329–356.
- Maltese, G. and J. Strube (2021), 'Global Religious History', *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 33: 229–257.
DOI: 10.1163/15700682-12341517.
- Maung, Khit Sann (1972), 'The Last Rites of Guru Ji', *The Maha Bodhi* 80/4: 55–57. <https://pariyatti.org/Free-Resources/Treasures>.
- Mayhew, Ch. (1954), *Men Seeking God: Programme 2 on Burmese Buddhism*, aired on May 3, 1954 (London: British Broadcasting Corporation). <https://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/702b4148e0a3413db3c74a2ff3da124d>.
- McMahan, D. L. (2008), *The Making of Buddhist Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press).
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195183276.001.0001.
- McMahan, D. L. (2017), 'How Meditation Works: Theorizing the Role of Cultural Context in Buddhist Contemplative Practices', in D. McMahan and E. Braun (eds.), *Meditation, Buddhism, and Science* (Oxford University Press), 21–46. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780190495794.003.0002.
- McMahan, D. L. (2020), 'Buddhism and Global Secularisms', in J. S. Harding, V. S. Hori, A. Soucy (eds.), *Buddhism in the Global Eye: Beyond East and West* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic), 42–55.
- Medhāvī (1938), *Catugiri rhubhvay' kyam'*, Vol. 1 (Ran'kun'": Sudhammavati cā puṇṇhip' tuik').
- Melnikova, N. (2014), 'The Modern School of Vipassana—a Buddhist Tradition?' (doctoral dissertation, Department for the Study of Religions, Masaryk University, Brno, Czechia). <https://is.muni.cz/th/tb1pv/>.
- Nuiṇ' ṇaṃ to' buddhasāsana aphvai' (Ministry of Religious Affairs) (1958), *Saṅgāyanā cī cac' khaṇ'": Aṭṭhakathā Saṅgāyanā*, Vol. 1 (Ran'kun'": Nuiṇ' ṇaṃ to' buddhasāsana aphvai').
- Mohnyin Sayādaw (1955), *Diṭṭha Vipassanā: Cognitive Insight—Exercises*, Translated by U Hla Maung (Rangoon: Mohnyin Patipatti Propagating Society).
- Morrison-Reed, M. D. (2011), *Darkening Doorways: Black Trailblazers and Missed Opportunities in Unitarian Universalism* (Boston: Skinner House Books).

- Munindra, A. (1972), 'Dear Respected Sayagyi', *The Maha Bodhi* 80/4: 91–92. <https://pariyatti.org/Free-Resources/Treasures>.
- Ñāṇamoli, Bh. (1991 [1956]) (trans.), *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society).
- Needham, A. D. and R. S. Rajan (2007) (eds.), *The Crisis of Secularism in India* (Durham and London: Duke University Press).
DOI: 10.1215/9780822388418.
- Nyanaponika Thera (1962), *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation: A Handbook of Mental Training Based on the Buddha's Way of Mindfulness* (London: Rider & Co.).
- Ober, D. (2023), *Dust on the Throne: The Search for Buddhism in Modern India* (Stanford: Stanford University Press).
- Odgers, M. M. (1960), *Souvenir Program of the Twelfth Burma-Bucknell Weekend* (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania: The Bucknell University Christian Association and The Asia Foundation of San Francisco).
<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/burmabucknellconnection/pamphlets-of-the-weekends?path=the-burma-bucknell-weekends>.
- Odgers, M. M. (1963), *Souvenir Program of the Fifteenth Burma-Bucknell Weekend* (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania: The Bucknell University Christian Association and The Asia Foundation of San Francisco).
<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/burmabucknellconnection/pamphlets-of-the-weekends?path=the-burma-bucknell-weekends>.
- Odgers, M. M. (1964), *Souvenir Program of the Sixteenth Burma-Bucknell Weekend* (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania: The Bucknell University Christian Association and The Asia Foundation of San Francisco).
<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/burmabucknellconnection/pamphlets-of-the-weekends?path=the-burma-bucknell-weekends>.
- Ogden, E. (2018), *Credulity: A Cultural History of US Mesmerism* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press).
DOI: 10.7208/chicago/9780226532479.001.0001.
- Pandita, Sayadaw U (1987), *On the Path to Freedom* (Selangor: Buddhist Wisdom Centre). www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/path-free.pdf.
- Pandita, Sayadaw U. (1993), *In This Very Life* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society).
- Pagis, M. (2019), *Inward: Vipassana Meditation and the Embodiment of the Self* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
DOI: 10.7208/chicago/9780226639413.001.0001.
- Patton, T N. (2014), 'Bearers of Wisdom, Sources of Power: Sorcerer-Saints and Burmese Buddhism' (doctoral dissertation, Department of Religious Studies, Cornell University).

- Patton, T. N. (2016), 'The Wizard King's Granddaughters: Burmese Buddhist Female Mediums, Healers, and Dreamers', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 84/2: 430-465. DOI: 10.1093/jaarel/lfv077.
- Patton, T. N. (2018), *The Buddha's Wizards: Magic, Protection, and Healing in Burmese Buddhism* (New York: Columbia University Press). DOI: 10.7312/patt18760.
- Petranker, J. (2020), 'What You Know to be True, Learning from the Kalama Sutta', *Tricycle* (Winter 2020). <https://tricycle.org/magazine/kalama-sutta/>.
- Pryor, C. R. (2006), 'Anagārika Munindra and the Historical Context of the Vipassanā Movement.' *Buddhist Studies Review* 23/2: 241-8. DOI: 10.1558/bsrv.2006.23.2.241.
- Quli, N. F. (2009), 'Western Self, Asian Other: Modernity, Authenticity, and Nostalgia for "Tradition" in Buddhist Studies', *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 16: 1-38.
- Quli, N. F. (2019), 'On Authenticity: Scholarship, the Insight Movement, and White Authority', in S. A. Mitchell and N. F. Quli (eds.), *Methods in Buddhist Studies* (London: Bloomsbury Academic), 154-172. DOI: 10.5040/9781350046894.0021.
- Rahmani, M. (2017), 'Drifting Through Samsara: Tacit Conversion and Disengagement in Goenka's Vipassana Movement in New Zealand' (doctoral dissertation, University of Otago).
- Rahmani, M. (2019) 'Leaving Vipassana Meditation', in D. Eisenstadt, G. Larsson, and T. Mantsinen (eds.), *Handbook of Leaving Religion* (Leiden: Brill), 130-141. DOI: 10.1163/9789004331471_011.
- Rahmani, M. (2020), 'Goenka's Vipassana Movement: From Conversion to Disaffiliation', in M. Farias, D. Brazier, and M. Laljee (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Meditation* (London and New York: Oxford University Press). DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198808640.013.31.
- Ram Dass (1976), 'Egg on My Beard', *Yoga Journal* (November 1976): 6-11.
- Rhys Davids, C. A. F. (1975 [1920 and 1921]) (ed.), *The Visuddhi-magga of Buddhaghosa* (London: The Pali Text Society).
- Rozenberg, G. (2010), *Renunciation and Power: The Quest for Sainthood in Contemporary Burma*. (New Haven: Yale University Press).
- Rozenberg, G. (2015), *The Immortals: Faces of the Incredible in Buddhist Burma* (Topics in Contemporary Buddhism; Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press).
- Savransky, M. (2022), 'Ecological Uncivilisation: Precarious World-making After Progress', *The Sociological Review*. DOI: 10.1177/00380261221084782.
- Schedneck, B. (2013), 'The Decontextualization of Asian Practices in the Context of Globalization', *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 12/3: 36-54. <https://jcrt.org/archives/12.3/schedneck.pdf>.

- Schedneck, B. (2015), *Thailand's International Meditation Centers* (Routledge Religion in Contemporary Asia Series; London and New York: Routledge).
- Schedneck, B. (2019), 'The Promise of the Universal: Non-Buddhists' Accounts of Their *Vipassanā* Meditation Retreat Experiences', *Religion* 49/4: 636–660. DOI: 10.1080/0048721X.2019.1584130.
- Schmithausen, L. (1976), 'Die Vier Konzentrationen der Aufmerksamkeit: Zur geschichtlichen Entwicklung einer spirituellen Praxis des Buddhismus', *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 4/76: 241–266.
- Schober, J. (1995), 'The Theravāda Buddhist Engagement with Modernity in Southeast Asia: Whither the Social Paradigm of the Galactic Polity?' *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 26/2: 307–25. DOI: 10.1017/s0022463400007128.
- Schober, J. (2007), 'Colonial Knowledge and Buddhist Education in Burma', in Ian Harris (ed.), *Buddhism, Power and the Political Order* (London and New York: Routledge), 52–70. DOI: 10.4324/9780203947494.
- Schober, J. (2008), 'Communities of Interpretation in the Study of Religion in Burma', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 39/2: 255–67. DOI: 10.1017/s0022463408000209.
- Schober, J. (2012), 'The Longevity of *Weikza* and Their Practices', *Journal of Burma Studies* 16/2: 283–307. DOI: 10.1353/jbs.2012.0008.
- Scott, A. (2023), 'The Politics of Pali Commentary: Canon-making, Monastic Reform, and Religious Revival in the Mingun Jetavana Sayadaw's *Milindapañha-aṭṭhakathā*' (doctoral dissertation, Department of The Study of Religion, University of Toronto).
- Scott, D. (1992), 'Anthropology and Colonial Discourse: Aspects of the Demonological Construction of Sinhala Cultural Practice', *Cultural Anthropology* 7/3: 301–326.
- Scott, D. (1994) *Formations of Ritual: Colonial and Anthropological Discourses on the Sinhala* Yaktovil (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press).
- Seager, R. H. (2002), 'American Buddhism in the Making', in M. Baumann and C. S. Prebish (eds.), *Westward Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 106–119.
- Sheehy, M. R. (2021), 'The Offering of Mount Meru: Contexts of Buddhist Cosmology in the History of Science in Tibet', *Journal of Dharma Studies* 3/2: 319–348. DOI: 10.1007/s42240-020-00089-5.
- Skilton, A., K. Crosby, and Pyi Physo Kyaw (2019), 'Terms of Engagement: Text, Technique and Experience in Scholarship on Theravada Meditation', *Contemporary Buddhism* 20/1–2: 1–35. DOI: 10.1080/14639947.2019.1666342.

- Sharf, R. H. (1995), 'Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience', *Numen* 42/3: 228-283. DOI: 10.1163/1568527952598549.
- Sharf, R. H. (2015), 'Is Mindfulness Buddhist? (and Why It Matters)', *Transcultural Psychiatry* 52/4: 470-484.
DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780190495794.003.0010.
- Shattock, E. H. (1958), *An Experiment in Mindfulness* (London: Rider & Co.).
- Silberman, S. (2015), 'Wise Heart: A profile of Jack Kornfield', *Lion's Roar: Buddhist Wisdom for Our Time* (June 13, 2015). www.lionsroar.com/jack-kornfield-wise-heart-november-2010/.
- Skilling, P. (1992), 'The Rakṣā Literature of the Śrāvakayāna', *Journal of the Pali Text Society* XVI: 109-182.
- Skilling, P. (1997), *Mahāsūtras: Great Discourses of the Buddha, Volume II, Parts I & II* (Oxford: The Pali Text Society).
- S.N. Goenka – Topic (2016), "Group Sitting - Setu - Chennai - Hindi-English", YouTube video, 1:05:01. www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNMt_WdvZuc.
- Spiro, M. E. (1982 [1970]), *Buddhism and Society: A Great Tradition and Its Burmese Vicissitudes* (Berkeley: University of California Press).
- Spiro, M. E. (1967), *Burmese Supernaturalism* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall).
- Spivak, G. C. (2006 [1987]), *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York and London: Routledge).
- Streat, K. (2005), *Captain Buddha and His Amazing Dukkha Machine: A Seven Year Journey* (Totnes, Devon: Vasana Publishing).
- Stuart, D. M. (2017a), 'Insight Transformed: Coming to Terms with Mindfulness in South Asian and Global Frames', *Religions of South Asia* 11/2-3: 158-181. DOI: 10.1558/rosa.37022.
- Stuart, D. M. (2017b), *The Stream of Deathless Nectar: The Short Recension of the Amatarasadhārā of the Elder Upatissa, A Commentary on the Chronicle of the Future Buddha Metteyya, with a Historical Introduction* (Materials for the Study of the Tripiṭaka 12; Bangkok and Lumbini: Fragile Palm Leaves Foundation and Lumbini International Research Institute).
- Stuart, D. M. (2020), *S.N. Goenka: Emissary of Insight* (Boulder: Shambhala Publications).
- Stuart, D. M. (2024), 'Local Cure, Global Chant: Performing Theravadic Awakening in the Footsteps of the Ledi Sayadaw', *Numen* 71.2-3: 256-302.
- Sumaṇa, A. (trans.) 2021, *A Manual of Not-self, Anatta Dīpanī* (Ilford: Association for Insight Meditation). www.aimwell.org/anatta.html.
- Tambiah, S. J. (1976), *World Conqueror & World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

- Tambiah, S. J. (1984), *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Tandon, S. N. (2001), *Sutta Sār (Dīghanikāya Evaṃ Majjhimanikāya), Pratham Bhāg* (Igatpuri: Vipassana Research Institute). DOI: 8174142118.
- Tandon, S. N. (2001), *Sutta Sār (Samyuttanikāya), Dvitiyā Bhāg* (Igatpuri: Vipassana Research Institute).
- Tandon, S. N. (2001), *Sutta Sār (Aṅguttaranikāya Evaṃ Khuddhakanikāya), Tṛtīyā Bhāg* (Igatpuri: Vipassana Research Institute). DOI: 8174142134.
- Thompson, E. (2020), *Why I Am Not a Buddhist* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press).
- Tiloka, A. (Sekkhyatoṇ' Charāto') (2009), *Paṇḍitavedanīya dīpanī kyaṃ* " (Yangon: Khañ' khyui thvan'" cā pe).
- Tin U, U (1989) (ed.), *Diṭṭhadhammavipassanāññānadassana, Phrat' lam* " pra kyaṃ " nhañ' " Vipassanā lak' khvai kyaṃ " (Rangoon: Nelañ' " pum nhip' tuik').
- Than, U (2005), *Anāgām Sayā Thet Kyee's Meditation-Methods, His Pupil Kammaṭṭhānācariya Sayagyi U Than's Lectures on Samatha & Vipassanā Ways, 7-Day-Course*, Translated by Situn Myanmar (Yangon: Yonkyigyek Sarpay).
- Than Tun (1989) (ed.), *The Royal Orders of Burma, A.D. 1598–1885, Part Nine, A.D. 1853–1885, Edited with Introduction, Notes and Summary in English of Each Order*. (Kyoto: The Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University).
- Thanissaro, Bh. (2012), 'Lost in Quotation', *Access to Insight (BCBS Edition)* (29 August 2012).
www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/lostinquotation.html.
- Thant Myint-U (2001), *The Making of Modern Burma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Turcan, R. V. (2016), 'Exploring Late Globalization: A Viewpoint', *Markets, Globalization & Development Review* 1/2, article 4.
 DOI: 10.23860/MGDR-2016-01-02-04.
- Turner, A. (2011), 'Religion-Making and Its Failures: Turning Monasteries into Schools and Buddhism into a Religion in Colonial Burma', in M. Dressler and A. Mandair (eds.), *Secularism & Religion-Making* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press), 106–119.
- Turner, A. (2014), *Saving Buddhism: The Impermanence of Religion in Colonial Burma* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press).
<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/43192>.
- Turner, A. (2021), 'Colonial Secularism Built in Brick: Religion in Rangoon', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 52/1: 26–48.
 DOI: 10.1017/S0022463421000114.
- Veazey, C. W. (2019), *Pilgrimage in Clay Feet* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse).

- Vimalaramsi, Bh. (2006), “Munindra Visits Calif 1977 full version—Soundtrack Missing”, YouTube video, 9:30.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrYjIkEMIOU.
- Vipassana Research Institute (VRI) (1994 [1990]), *Sayagyi U Ba Khin Journal, A Collection Commemorating the Teaching of Sayagyi U Ba Khin, Published to Mark the Twentieth Anniversary of His Demise* (Dhammagiri, Igatpuri: Vipassana Research Institute).
- Vipassana Research Institute (VRI) (2008), *Mahāsatiṭṭhānasutta (Bhāṣānūvād evaṃ Samīkṣā Sahit)* (Igatpuri: Vipassana Research Institute).
- Vipassana Research Institute (VRI) (2011), *Param Tapasvī Śrī Rāmsiṃh Jī (19 September 1918–18 December 2010)* (Dhammagiri, Igatpuri: Vipassana Research Institute).
- Vipassana Research Institute (VRI) (2015), *Vipassana–Addictions & Health, A Seminar, December 1989, Dhamma Giri, Igatpuri* (Dhammagiri, Igatpuri: Vipassana Research Institute).
- von Hinüber, O. (1996), *A Handbook of Pāli Literature* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter).
- Walsh, R. N., D. Goleman, J. Kornfield, C. Pensa, and D. Shapiro (1978), ‘Meditation: Aspects of Research and Practice’, *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 10/2: 113–133.
- Walton, M. J. (2017), *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought in Myanmar* (New York: Cambridge University Press).
- Wen, Tz. (2009), ‘A Study of *Sukkhavipassaka* in Pāli Buddhism’ (doctoral dissertation, School of History, Philosophy, Religion & Classics, University of Queensland).
- Wen, Tz. (2012), *The Direct Path of Mindfulness: Pure Insight Meditation in Theravada Buddhism* (New Taipei City: DarChen Publisher).
- Williams, P. (1989), *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations* (London and New York: Routledge).
- Wilson, J. (2014), *Mindful America: The Mutual Transformation of Buddhist Meditation and American Culture* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press).
- Wilson, J. (2017), ‘Mindfulness on the Move: A Translocative Analysis of Global Mindfulness Flows’, in J. Borup and M. Q. Fibiger (eds.), *Eastspirit: Transnational Spirituality and Religious Circulation in East and West* (Leiden: Brill), 61–79.
- Wright, L. E. (1958), ‘Dear Gurugyi ...’, A letter from Leon E. Wright to Sayagyi U Ba Khin, dated July 19, 1958. www.pariyatti.org/Free-Resources/Treasures.
- Yelle, R. A. and L. Trein (2020), *Narratives of Disenchantment and Secularization* (London: Bloomsbury Academic).

- Zysk, K. G. (1991), *Asceticism and Healing in Ancient India: Medicine in the Buddhist Monastery* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Zysk, K. G. (2017 [1985]), *Religious Medicine: The History and Evolution of Indian Medicine, With a New Introduction by the Author* (London and New York: Routledge).

Index

- A Treatise on the Shortcut to Knowledge and Vision of Insight Meditation in This Very Life*, 6, 35, 55, 57, 59–60, 63, 66, 68, 245, 265
- Abhidhamma, 28, 30, 32–38, 43, 45–46, 50–51, 56, 61, 68, 71, 82, 87, 98, 128, 141, 153–155, 167, 230, 259, 262
- Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*, 50, 82, 85
- abhiññā*, 63, 85, 192
- absorption, 28, 36, 38, 63, 82–88, 92–93, 230–232, 236
- access/semblance concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*), 83, 230–231
- agency, 130
- aggregates, 55, 58, 60, 76, 93, 260, 263–264, 267–269, 273, 280
- Āhāradīpanī*, 31, 33, 55, 259–262
- Ānāpānasati Sutta* (MN 118), 197–198
- Anattadīpanī*, 37, 62, 146, 148, 255–257
- anicca*, 34, 38, 75, 106, 138, 167, 229, 235, 277, 279–280, 285, 289
- anti-Dhamma, 122, 126, 128
- anti-intellectual, 67, 156, 198
- anti-intellectualism, 61, 67, 222
- appanā-samādhi* (absorption concentration), 230–231
- arahant*, 112, 199, 229, 235
- arahantship, 281
- arahat*, 44, 82
- Aravamudan, Srinivas, 118
- arhat*, 75, 113
- ascetic, 242, 261
- Asoka, 128, 132–133, 202
- assistant teacher, 8, 119, 155, 201, 205–211, 213–214, 236
- Assistant Teacher program, 213–215
- attainment, 16, 30, 57–58, 62, 82–86, 88, 94, 108, 111, 129, 134, 171, 201, 203, 227–228, 236, 245
- Australia, 23, 26, 120, 141, 142, 153, 172, 177, 179–180, 199
- authority, 68, 79, 113, 135–136, 138, 149–150, 153, 155, 160, 161, 166, 168–170, 174, 185–186, 192, 213–214, 218–219, 226
- authorization, 7, 65, 116–117, 126, 160, 162, 170
- authorized, 21, 113, 116, 118
- avijjā*, 103, 229
- awakening, 30, 33–34, 83, 86–87, 91, 93, 105, 108–109, 111, 196, 199, 202, 204, 230, 236–238, 241, 246
- awareness, 35, 37, 48, 57, 60, 63, 89, 91, 95, 101, 103, 106, 110, 126, 127, 147, 148, 167, 218, 232, 263, 270, 275
- Ba Khin, U, 5–7, 9, 18, 22–26, 29, 44, 49, 54, 60–61, 63–64, 67–69, 71–113, 115–118, 120–141, 145–146, 148, 150–155, 157–160, 162, 166–169, 171–172, 174–175, 178, 180–181, 186–

- 195, 197–199, 202, 208–209,
212–214, 217–218, 221, 224,
227–228, 231–232, 235, 237,
239–241, 243, 246, 249, 275,
278–279
- Beary, John, 187, 208
- bhāsā* (religion), 49
- bhāvanā* (meditation, cultivation),
36, 284
- bhāvanā-mayā paññā*, 284
- bhavaṅga* (also *bhavaṅga*), 60,
86, 123, 235, 272
- bhavaṅga* consciousness, 60, 86,
272
- biography, 24, 51, 56, 60–62, 64,
73–74, 76, 151–152, 201
- birth, 52–53, 69, 94, 111–112, 234,
236, 241–242
- birth of insight, 20, 23, 29, 32, 52,
53, 60, 73, 194, 227, 238
- Birth of Insight* (Braun 2013), 5,
13, 19, 20, 28, 150
- Bodh Gaya (also Buddhagaya),
138, 165, 209
- bodhipakkhiya*, 46
- bodhisatta*, 68, 111, 229
- bodhisattva, 25, 111–113, 115,
133–134, 136, 190, 199, 214
- body, 32, 36, 57–60, 62, 76, 78,
89, 91–92, 96, 103, 105, 108,
110, 123, 125, 138–139, 144,
147–148, 155, 160, 193, 227,
229, 235, 241, 246, 254–261,
263, 265–271, 273, 276–278,
280–281, 283–288
- Body-consciousness, 260, 265
- brahmā* (also *brahma*), 36, 83, 97,
103, 125
- Brahma realm, 83
- Braun, Erik, 11, 13–14, 17, 19–20,
28–34, 37–41, 43, 51, 60, 66,
71, 73, 80, 96, 97, 119, 130,
150–151, 161, 168, 169, 227,
237, 238, 240, 241
- break through, 95–96, 110, 157
- breath, 57, 64, 74, 101
- British colonial, 22, 28, 32, 72,
190
- Buddha, 25, 33, 36, 45, 49, 54, 64,
78–79, 83–84, 87–92, 94–95,
97, 103–104, 106, 110–113,
121, 125, 131–134, 139–140,
145, 148, 153, 155, 169, 188,
191–193, 199, 201, 202, 214–
215, 217, 222–224, 228–229,
234, 241–242, 245–246, 249–
252, 254, 263–264, 268, 272,
276, 278–279, 281, 286–287
- buddhabhāsā*, 99–100
- Buddha-Dhamma, 104
- buddhas*, 47, 91, 108, 249, 251–
254
- Buddhism, 9, 15, 17, 19–21, 23, 26,
30–31, 42–45, 47, 49, 53, 66, 79,
81, 84, 86, 90, 96, 99, 100, 104,
112, 114, 116, 118, 119, 128,
130, 134, 140–141, 151, 161,
171, 184, 194, 199, 214, 218,
223, 237, 239–240, 245, 291
- Buddhist meditation, 14–15, 17,
19, 23, 26, 30, 34, 79, 100, 102–
103, 107, 118, 120, 150, 168,
170, 194, 238
- Buddhist modernism, 9, 19, 20,
119
- Burma, 9, 15–16, 18, 20–26, 28–
31, 33, 40, 50–52, 54, 61, 63–64,
66–68, 72–73, 79, 81, 90, 96–
100, 106, 113, 115, 120–121,
124, 126–127, 129–130, 132–
139, 141, 150, 153, 155, 157,
166, 172–174, 176–179, 185–
186, 189–191, 197–198, 200,
202, 227–241, 246

- calm/calming, 28–34, 37, 38, 45,
 50, 57, 61–65, 71, 73, 75–77,
 82–84, 86, 88–89, 92, 95–96,
 102, 105, 110, 139, 146, 227–
 230, 232, 236–238, 271, 281
 calmness, 89, 92, 96, 109–110,
 228, 231
 cessation, 85, 93, 259
 chanting, 39, 91, 93, 115, 128, 157,
 213, 216
 charismatic healer, 24, 116
 charismatic healing, 24
 Charney, Michael, 29, 42, 112
 Cheah, Joseph, 18, 240
 Chit Tin, U, 7–8, 63, 72–73, 75,
 88, 92, 95–96, 102, 105, 109–
 111, 113, 118, 127, 130–131,
 134, 159, 172, 175, 177, 179–
 180, 182–188, 190, 199
 Christian, 100, 103–104, 116, 132,
 203
 Coleman, John, 73, 103–104, 116,
 118, 120–121, 141, 145, 149,
 151, 169, 176, 179–180, 182,
 185, 189, 199
 commentaries, 84, 99, 103, 198,
 224, 230
 concentration, 28–31, 38, 57, 62–
 64, 72, 74, 76–77, 82, 84, 88–
 90, 92–93, 95, 101, 108–110,
 124, 134, 145, 152, 157, 227–
 228, 230–232, 236, 245, 266–
 267, 272, 275, 278, 280–281
 conflict, 103, 127, 129, 149, 152–
 155, 172, 177, 181–183, 185–
 187, 190–192, 194, 223
 consciousness (*viññāna*), 35, 37,
 94, 123, 154, 259, 260–263,
 266, 268, 271, 277–278
 contemplative, 27, 241–242, 246
 Cook, Joanna 13, 18
 coolness, 57, 108, 110, 265
 ‘corruptions of insight’, 145
 (counter)-missionary, 100, 113,
 115, 118, 128, 219, 239, 245
 cover, 45, 58, 113, 121, 125, 127,
 129, 157, 164, 175, 216, 265
 cult, 15, 22, 25, 69, 71, 78, 108,
 110, 112–113, 122–124, 129,
 134, 137, 150, 155, 191
 cultic, 113, 134–135, 138, 150,
 152, 192, 214
 Daw Mya Thwin (see also
 Sayama, Mother), 93, 174
 defilement(s) (*kilesa*), 76, 78, 86,
 93, 102, 104–105, 167, 233,
 280–281
 demons, 40, 45, 47–48, 92, 128,
 242, 252
 Denison, Ruth 7, 116, 118, 120,
 141, 149, 151–153, 160–161,
 169, 172, 199, 201
 destined, 111, 133, 137, 198, 202,
 246
deva, 36, 40, 57, 91, 94–95, 97,
 103, 107, 193
 Dhamma, 5, 25, 26, 45, 56, 60, 64,
 65, 67–68, 72, 74, 77, 80, 82,
 90–91, 97, 100, 103, 106, 107,
 113, 115, 121–123, 125–126,
 128, 131–140, 150, 152, 155,
 157, 160, 162, 167, 173, 180–
 181, 185–189, 192, 202–203,
 208, 212–213, 219, 221, 229–
 231, 234–236, 243–244, 246,
 267–268, 271–273, 275, 278–
 279, 281, 283–284, 286–288
 Dhamma decision, 180
 Dhamma discourses, 55, 122, 152,
 168
 Dhamma-father, 174, 186
 Dhammagiri, 7, 8, 123, 126, 128,
 173, 175, 177–179, 196, 210,
 218, 224, 225

- Dhamma-mother, 173–174, 186
Dhammasaṅgani (*Enumeration of Phenomena*), 97
 Dharma, 6, 91, 123, 139, 141–143, 150, 154, 163, 173–175, 178, 196–198, 206, 208–210, 214, 217, 221–222, 226
 Dharma discourse, 155, 181
dhāt ‘, 76–78, 104, 107, 181, 189, 266, 271, 276, 279–280
dhātu (also *dhatu*), 37–38, 77, 104, 121, 167, 229
Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta (MN 140), 198
 Dīpa Mā, 161, 165
 discernment (see also wisdom), 35–36, 57, 82–84, 89, 92, 98, 148, 216, 227, 230, 258, 263–264, 267
Discourse to the Kālāmas (*Kālāma Sutta*), 242
 disenchantment, 40, 58, 269
 dispensation (*sāsana*), 35, 52, 84, 131, 279
 distant control, 126
Diṭṭhadhammavipassanāñāṇadaśsaṇa Phrat ‘*lam*’ ‘*kyam*’’, 55
 doctrine, 26, 43–44, 46, 48, 67, 112, 156, 216
 donation, 179–181, 183, 186, 245
 dry insight, 81, 83, 85–87, 230
dukkha, 59, 95, 105, 108, 255–256, 271
 “East–West Psychology”, 170
 EEG-EKG, 154
 element, 37, 104, 125, 138, 167, 254, 256, 258, 263, 265, 271, 276–277, 280
 element, 255, 271
 element of awakening (*bodhi-dhātu*), 249–250, 254
 element of nirvāṇa, 249–250, 254
 element of the Dharma (*dharmadhātu*), 91, 249–250, 254
 elemental matter, 266, 275
 English, 10, 21–22, 26, 30–32, 51, 55, 72, 78, 97–100, 104, 106, 118, 122–124, 136, 179, 183, 209–210, 214–215, 221, 224
 enlightenment, 30, 76, 82, 96, 131, 227, 245
 epistemic injustice, 24
 equanimity, 58–59, 234–235, 258–259, 269–270, 289
 equanimous, 59, 234, 270, 289
 erasures, 171
 esoteric, 31, 43, 77
 esotericism, 88, 110
 esotericized, 108, 113
 ethno-nationalist, 190
 ethno-racial, 190
 experience, 13, 16, 17, 25, 33, 48–49, 52, 58–59, 63, 68, 76–77, 80–81, 84, 90, 103, 105, 108, 110–111, 120, 123, 125–126, 131, 138–139, 141, 144–145, 148–150, 153, 155, 166, 168, 180–189, 194, 202, 219, 222, 224, 226, 228, 233, 235, 245, 257, 259, 267, 269, 271, 278, 280, 283–284, 287–289
 experience of signs in meditation, 57, 102–103, 231, 279
 experiment, 77, 121, 155, 208
 experimental, 24–25, 155–156, 170
 faith, 92, 99–100, 102, 106, 108, 131, 174, 193, 229, 273, 279
 feeling, 35, 59, 85, 110, 122, 132–133, 203, 229, 233, 255, 256–261, 263, 266–268, 270, 280, 284, 287
 force (*dhāt* ‘), 26, 39–40, 45–48, 71, 75–78, 88, 92–96, 103–107,

- 110, 115, 121–123, 125–126,
128, 152, 155, 157, 167, 174,
175, 189–190, 228, 235–236
- Gajaweera, Nalika, 13, 18
- Gleig, Ann, 11, 13, 18, 158, 171
- global, 9, 14–16, 18–20, 22–23,
25–26, 34, 42, 53–54, 67, 69, 79,
87, 97, 115, 117–118, 120, 126,
129, 141–143, 149–152, 161,
166, 168, 175–176, 192, 194,
199, 208, 211, 214, 218, 237–
239, 241, 246
- globality, 22, 25
- globalization, 16, 21
- globalized, 13, 19, 22, 30, 54, 67,
71, 98, 117, 130, 170–171, 218,
238, 241
- Goldstein, Joseph 7, 130, 143,
144–148, 151, 160, 162, 166,
210, 245
- Goleman, Daniel, 168, 218
- guru, 5, 96, 108, 115, 118, 122–
123, 134, 142, 157, 173–174,
188, 192, 196–197, 208, 242
- Guru English, 118
- Gurujii, 94, 96, 111, 142, 178, 179,
206
- Gyatso, Janet, 17, 42
- healer, 64, 228
- healing, 44, 64–65
- health, 48, 154, 168–169, 222, 226
- heart, 108, 148, 251, 254, 257–
258, 260, 262–264
- heart-base (*hadayavatthu*;
hrdayavastu), 60, 123, 235,
260, 262–263, 272
- heart-base matter, 263
- heart-mind, 258
- higher order, 92, 103
- Hindi, 10, 21, 26, 68, 116, 122–
124, 139, 142, 172, 185, 214–
215, 221, 223–224, 244, 245
- Hindu, 54, 78, 101–102, 116, 132,
134, 140, 186, 193, 203, 224,
229, 242, 246
- Hinduism, 101, 118
- Hislop, John, 91–92, 94–96, 101–
102, 113, 126
- historical memory, 171
- historiography, 14, 20, 22
- householder, 32, 96, 105, 231, 288
- Houtman, Gustaaf, 15, 17, 48, 73,
81, 89, 119
- Hover, Robert, 7, 116, 118, 120,
141, 142, 145, 149, 151–161,
165, 168–169, 172, 199, 218,
239
- Htay Hlaing, U, 52, 55–56, 60–
62, 64–65, 82, 115
- identity, 11, 19, 50, 61, 64, 66, 69,
73, 94, 105, 111–112, 133–134,
136, 138, 140, 150, 159, 161,
165, 172, 175, 184, 186, 190,
194–195, 198–200, 202, 225,
241, 291
- ignorance, 41, 49, 103, 240, 262,
272
- impermanence, 32, 34, 38, 57, 59,
96, 105–106, 141, 167, 256–
260, 262, 270, 277, 279–280
- IMS (see also Insight Meditation
Society), 20, 130, 142, 149,
151–153, 157–159, 162–166,
170, 172, 238, 292
- India, 7, 8, 10, 14, 21, 23, 25, 29,
53, 54, 67, 81, 93–94, 101, 103,
116, 118, 120–122, 130–133,
136–137, 139–44, 150–151,
153, 155, 161, 163–165, 172–
179, 184, 186, 194, 198–200,
202–204, 208–209, 211–213,
223–224, 229, 237, 239, 243,
291
- Insight Meditation Society (see

- also IMS), 5, 7, 20, 130, 141–145, 149–150, 152, 159–162, 166, 169, 170, 172, 238, 292
- intention, 80, 219, 245, 261
- Internal Moving Healing (IMH), 154
- international, 22, 25, 181
- International Meditation Centre (IMC), 7, 8, 71, 88, 90, 93, 99, 108, 110, 116, 121, 126, 128, 135, 177–178, 184, 201, 249, 292
- Jain, 78, 132, 140, 203, 224
- jhāna*, 28, 37, 63, 82, 84–85, 87, 88, 93, 95, 128, 229, 230–232, 236, 285
- jhānic, 88, 230, 236, 246
- Jordt, Ingrid, 18
- Kabat-Zinn, Jon, 154, 218, 238
- kala*, 190
- Kālāma Sutta (Discourse to the Kālāmas)*, 49
- kalāpa*, 139, 233, 266, 276–278, 280, 285, 287
- karma*, 91, 132, 203, 223, 236, 242–245, 249, 251
- karmic, 29, 38, 60, 64, 73–74, 76, 90, 94, 102, 106, 202, 235, 246
- kāyagatāsati*, 38, 195, 227
- Khema, Ayya, 157
- Khit Sann Maung, 111
- Ko Lay, U, 61, 65, 76–77, 88, 90, 93, 95, 116, 125, 137
- Kornfield, Jack, 151, 160, 162, 164, 166, 167–171, 243
- laity, 54, 92, 97
- Lakkhaṇadīpanī*, 35
- Landie, Forella, 116
- lay, 33, 35, 51, 67–69, 73, 95–96, 134–136, 163, 166, 179, 192, 239, 241
- lay community, 29, 63
- lay meditation, 18, 29, 51–54, 63, 65, 66, 69, 80, 98, 227
- lay people, 34, 37, 51–55, 106
- lay woman, 60
- lay-controlled, 14, 16, 21–24, 26, 66
- layman, 22, 33, 55, 62, 73, 81, 98, 113, 137, 246
- Ledi Sayādaw, 5, 6, 9, 18, 20–22, 24, 25, 28–56, 60–62, 65–67, 71–74, 80, 83, 86–87, 91, 96–97, 117, 128, 130, 146, 190, 195, 227, 235, 238, 241–243, 245, 251, 255–257, 259, 260–262, 275–276
- liberation, 36–37, 52, 67, 82–84, 89, 94–95, 103, 121, 131, 200–201, 205, 211, 231–234, 279
- light, 88, 102–103, 108, 144, 269
- lineage, 18, 21–22, 27, 50, 53, 96, 130, 134, 139, 150, 153, 160–163, 166–167, 170, 175, 184, 195, 237, 239, 241–242
- liturgy, 215, 236
- Lopez, Donald, 19
- loving kindness (*mettā/metta*), 39, 64, 124, 140
- lower order, 103–105, 190
- Mahāsatipaṭṭhānasutta* (also *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*), 146, 195, 196–198
- Mahāsī Sayādaw (also Mahasi Sayadaw), 5, 7, 18, 34, 50–54, 89, 97, 130, 133–135, 137–138, 144, 146, 161–162, 165–166, 169, 197–198, 227, 238, 240
- Mahāsiva, 112, 280
- maṅgal-maitrī* (also *maṅgal maitrī*), 123–124
- Mandalay, 29, 35, 47, 54, 100, 116
- Manual for Warding Off Pestilence*, 7, 39–49

- Manual of [Meditation on] Respiration*, 28
- Manual of Insight*, 20, 28, 30–31, 34, 36–37, 51, 105
- Manual of Not-self*, 37
- Manual of Nutriment*, 31, 33, 55, 73, 259–262
- Māra, 95, 189, 278
- mass meditation, 13, 28, 33, 50, 96–97, 105, 113, 189, 200, 241
- Mātāji, 178, 197
- materiality, 28, 37, 276
- matter (*rūpa*), 57–58, 65, 87, 91, 94, 110, 139, 155, 215, 233–234, 256–257, 260–261, 263–264, 266–269, 271, 273, 276, 280, 288–289
- Maung Po Thet (also U Po Thet; see also Sayā Thetgyi), 5, 9, 21–22, 24, 29, 35, 54–55, 61, 65, 271
- MBSR (Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction), 154, 238
- McMahan, David, 19, 79
- Medawi (Medhāvī) (see also Ton' le"lum" [Catugiri] Sayādaw), 52
- medicine, 42, 46, 168, 222
- meditation center, 7, 20–22, 25–26, 51, 53, 55, 64, 66, 75–79, 88–90, 97–98, 104–105, 108, 113, 118–119, 126–130, 149–150, 160, 166, 168, 175–181, 201–202, 209, 213, 218, 225, 227–229, 231, 235–236, 238, 244, 283–284, 286, 288
- meditation object, 36, 57, 74, 87, 93, 101
- meditative experience, 17
- Meghiya, 103–104
- Men Seeking God* (1954 film), 90, 93
- mental health, 168
- merit, 91, 93, 115, 223, 249, 251–252, 254, 288
- mettā/metta*, 64, 103, 124, 127, 138, 186, 211, 213, 228
- Metteyya/Maitreya, 111–112, 131, 136, 199, 214, 246
- mind, 9, 30, 38, 57–61, 65, 73, 76, 82, 86–92, 94, 95, 96, 101–102, 105, 107–108, 110, 118, 122–123, 135, 138, 144, 148, 155, 157, 188, 192, 215, 227–228, 230–235, 241, 246, 256, 258–259, 261–272, 278, 280–281, 283, 285–288
- mind science, 48
- mind-consciousness, 262, 268
- mindfulness, 9–10, 13–16, 18–20, 22, 23, 26, 28, 33, 69, 71, 79, 117, 130, 146, 159, 168, 169, 171, 194, 218, 231, 238–239
- mind-stream, 235, 278
- Mingun Jetavana Sayādaw, 34, 50–54, 56, 97
- mission, 23, 25–26, 53–54, 108, 116–118, 120, 123, 126–128, 130–131, 133, 136, 139, 146, 152–153, 169, 175–176, 192, 194, 199–200, 202, 209, 211, 213, 218, 229, 236–237, 246
- missionary, 7, 13, 67, 106, 118, 121, 129–130, 138, 187, 192, 193, 200, 203, 206, 209, 214, 219, 222–224, 226, 238, 246
- modern Buddhism, 15, 119
- modernity, 9, 15, 26, 30, 171
- Mohnyin Sayādaw, 34, 53–54, 97
- momentary concentration, 83, 231
- monk, 9, 18, 21, 33, 50–52, 55, 62, 66, 68, 80–81, 83, 89–90, 92, 95, 97, 103, 106, 112, 132–133, 137–138, 160–163, 203–231, 238, 241–242, 245–246, 263

- morality (*sīla*), 38, 41, 64, 76, 82, 88–89, 272
- Munindra, Anagārika, 5, 7, 130–134, 136–146, 150–151, 160–166
- mythology, 108, 110, 112–113, 128, 131, 134–135, 138, 150
- Nāgā, 111
- New Age, 23, 141, 152–153, 163, 170–171, 238
- nibbāna*, 75–76, 78, 82, 86, 115, 174, 229, 232, 264, 280, 285
- nibbānadhātu* (also *nibbana dhatu*), 121, 125, 153, 167, 280
- nibbānic, 43, 58, 94, 157, 189, 235, 285
- nimitta* (sign), 33, 74, 87–88
- nirodha*, 285
- nirodhasamāpatti*, 229, 230
- nirvāṇa*, 59, 87, 89, 125, 200, 202–203, 250, 270
- non-Buddhist, 25–26, 40, 53, 66, 99–100, 103, 106, 115, 186
- non-interference, 101–102, 104, 107, 243
- non-modern, 23, 42, 246
- non-sectarian (*sampradāyiktā-vihīn*), 10, 53–54, 116, 140, 186, 194, 218, 237, 241
- North America, 10, 13, 18, 21, 23, 26, 120, 130, 153, 159, 168, 171, 177, 179–181, 201, 239, 291
- Nu, U, 64, 112
- observation, 28, 235, 258, 264, 267
- observation, 256, 258
- once-returners, 53
- one-pointed, 91, 101–102, 236
- one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*), 59, 101, 228, 270
- one-pointedness of mind (*cittēkaggatā*), 93, 228
- ontology, 25, 107
- ousted, 157, 160–161
- ouster, 7, 151–153, 157, 172
- Pagis, Michal, 18
- pain, 58, 118, 255–257, 260–261, 263, 267, 269, 273
- Pakkusāti, 37
- Pāli (also Pali), 20, 30, 31, 41, 44, 62, 66, 71, 76–77, 82–83, 91, 100, 104, 133, 141, 215, 222–225, 230, 234, 245, 251–253, 266, 276, 277, 284, 292
- Pāli canon, 223–225
- paṇḍita*, 195
- Paṇḍita, Sayādaw U, 66, 165, 170
- paññā* (wisdom; discernment), 36, 38, 45, 76, 78, 82–84, 88, 148, 229–231, 283–284, 288–289
- Paramattha sam khīp* ‘, 60
- Paramatthadīpanī*, 83, 87
- pāramī* (perfection), 30–32, 36–37, 75–76, 94, 105, 107, 109, 129, 133–134, 193, 198, 229, 281, 288
- parinibbāna*, 131
- paritta*, 41, 45, 92, 115
- pariyatti*, 45, 66, 68, 71, 84, 99, 245
- Pariyatti ‘akhrekhamṇaṇ’* ‘*paṭipatti ‘aphre mhan*’ (*The Right Answers to Practice with a Basis of Textual Theory*), 79–87, 80, 94, 96
- paṭipatti*, 45, 71, 76, 80, 93
- paṭivedha*, 45
- Paṭṭhāna Pāli*, 45, 128
- perception, 85, 260, 262, 268
- perfection (*pāramī*), 30–32, 36, 50, 76, 96, 105, 108
- pleasure, 233, 260, 273
- pluralistic, 105, 119, 227

- post-colonial, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22,
 23, 25, 27, 49, 54, 61, 67, 72, 79,
 87, 117, 141, 161, 166, 184, 186,
 194, 227, 229, 237–239, 241
 Pranke, Patrick, 146
 pristine Dhamma, 25, 26, 136
 prophecy, 131, 133, 136
 protection, 8, 45, 47, 92–93, 125,
 128, 177, 193, 228
 protective, 41, 44, 47, 78, 92, 95,
 121, 128, 215, 228, 236
 proxy, 26, 121, 212–213
 psychic, 57, 61, 75, 94, 110, 128,
 174, 184, 189, 191–192, 228,
 231, 245
 psychic power, 61, 110, 174, 184,
 192, 245
 psychology, 168, 170, 243
 psychotherapist, 170
 pure Dhamma, 64, 271
 purification, 58–59, 78, 102, 167,
 181, 231–232, 234, 267, 270
 purification by overcoming doubt
 (*kaṅkhāvitaraṇavisuddhi*), 267
 purification of knowledge and
 vision of the path (*paṭipadā-
 ñāṇadassanavisuddhi*), 59, 270
 purity, 38, 78, 86, 93, 132, 157,
 202, 228, 235
 radio waves, 211, 246
 Ram Dass, 157, 168
 Rangoon (now Yangon), 8, 21, 25,
 35, 47, 71–72, 75, 89, 97, 103–
 106, 111, 113, 121, 126, 128,
 134–135, 142, 150–151, 178,
 180–181, 189, 191, 204
 reality, 23, 40, 51, 104, 167, 233,
 246, 259–260, 269, 288–289
 rebirth, 111, 131, 192, 198, 203,
 241, 243, 245–246
 recitation, 39–45, 47, 67
 refuge, 90, 108, 190, 192, 252
 relic, 113
 religion, 27, 43, 48–49, 99–100,
 104, 118, 122, 186, 192, 239,
 242–243
 religion-making, 40
 religious, 16, 26, 29, 41–42, 44, 47,
 49, 98–99, 101–102, 104–105,
 112, 118, 140, 165, 194, 198,
 200, 215, 224, 240, 242–243
 respiration (as meditation object),
 33, 101, 286–288
 retreat, 55, 88, 90, 94, 103, 108,
 112, 140, 143, 149, 155, 159,
 163–164, 177, 188–189, 193,
 215, 229, 231, 235, 283–284,
 286, 288
 rhetoric, 16, 26, 43, 67, 102, 107,
 118–120, 123, 157, 186–187,
 194, 219, 226, 243
 ritual, 17, 39, 41, 43–48, 67, 122,
 175, 192, 213, 215–216, 236
Rogantaradīpanī, 31, 39–49, 81,
 91, 128, 190, 251, 252, 253
 Salzberg, Sharon, 130, 160, 162,
 166, 210
samādhi, 29, 45, 57, 64, 74, 76, 82,
 88, 92, 211, 227, 230–232,
 266–267, 275, 278–289
samatha, 29–31, 45, 61, 63, 65,
 73–74, 84, 88, 227
samathayānika, 84
saṃsāra, 102, 133, 193
 San Tun, U, 64–65
santisukha, 76, 86
(buddha)sāsana, 34, 43, 45, 47, 50,
 52, 75, 84, 99, 104, 128, 131–
 133, 202, 241, 243, 279
satipaṭṭhāna, 146–148, 197–198
Satipaṭṭhānasūtra, 148
Satipaṭṭhānasutta (also *Satipaṭṭh-
 āna Sutta*), 141, 146, 195–199,
 214, 216, 222–223

- Sayā Thetgyi (Sayāgyi Maung Po Thet; see also Maung Po Thet), 21, 54–68, 72, 74–75, 82, 96, 98, 105, 235, 246, 265
- Sayagyi U Ba Khin Memorial Non-Profit Corporation, 153
- Sayaji U Ba Khin Memorial Trust, 217–219, 221
- Sayama, Mother (see also Daw Mya Thwin), 5–8, 87, 93–94, 103, 109–111, 118, 121, 129–130, 141–142, 151–161, 166, 172–191, 194–195, 198–200, 202, 209, 212–214, 228–229
- science, 154–155, 157, 170, 215, 219
- scientific, 7, 23, 76, 78, 132, 154–156, 167–168, 170–171, 203, 208, 215, 217–219, 225
- scripture, 44–45, 47, 56, 66, 80, 89–91, 146, 198, 242, 250, 259
- sectarian, 132, 135, 137, 203
- secular, 24, 40, 84, 99, 218, 239
- secular pluralism, 26
- secularized, 18, 22, 103, 130, 143, 166, 194, 237
- seed of Dhamma, 115, 132–133, 203, 246
- seed of Dharma, 226
- self-awakened, 252
- sensation, 57–58, 62, 91, 110, 147–148, 225, 229, 232–234, 265, 267, 269, 283–285, 287
- sense faculties, 37, 104
- sense objects, 259
- sense spheres, 58
- seven purifications, 58
- sexual abuse, 165
- sexual misconduct, 157–159, 163
- Sharf, Robert, 11, 16–19, 119
- Sheehy, Michael, 43
- spirit, 14, 40, 47, 57, 102, 252
- spiritual, 9, 61, 78, 79, 93, 104, 107, 127, 131, 142, 170, 198, 209, 221, 246
- stream entry (*sotāpatti*), 230, 279
- stream-enterer, 105, 281
- Streat, Ken, 188–189
- subatomic particles, 233, 266, 268, 284
- subconscious mind-stream (see also *bhavaṅga*), 35, 235
- suddhavipassaka*, 38
- suffering, 35, 38, 57–60, 67, 94–95, 102, 108, 148, 167, 243, 255, 259–260, 262, 267, 269–273, 278
- Sujata, Anagārika, 163–164
- sukkhavipassaka*, 38, 53, 81, 83, 85–89, 230
- supernormal agent, 23, 104
- supernormal being, 40, 242
- supernormal entities, 25, 39
- supernormal force, 40, 46, 48, 71, 76, 88, 92, 96, 107, 116, 125, 174, 215
- supernormal obstacle, 47
- supernormal power, 24, 31, 62–64, 72, 76, 85, 93, 96, 108, 152, 175
- supernormal reality, 47
- surrender, 188, 192, 243
- sutta*, 29, 33–36, 38, 41, 44, 50, 56, 87, 89, 92, 103, 115, 215
- Suvaṇṇa Bhūmi, 132, 202
- Tambiah, Stanley, 15–16, 119
- tape recordings, 210–211
- tape-recorded instructions, 210
- tax exemption, 225
- tax-exempt, 219, 223, 226
- teacher, 19, 33, 57, 61, 63–68, 72, 76, 78, 86–88, 90–93, 95–96, 102–109, 111, 113, 115–116, 118, 122–126, 129–145, 148,

- 150, 153, 157–158, 160–172,
174–175, 177–178, 180, 182,
186, 188, 192–195, 198–202,
211–213, 219, 221, 227–229,
231, 239, 241, 249, 254, 262,
265, 271, 286
- textual learning, 44, 50, 67, 71, 222
- textual theory, 5, 71, 79–80, 82
- the group of five (*pañcavaggi*),
106
- The Non-returner Sayā Thetgyi:
His Life, His Teachings, and
His Good Acts*, 56
- The Path of Purification
(Visuddhimagga)*, 28, 30
- The Psychology of Mindfulness
Meditation*, 168
- The Right Answers to Practice
with a Basis of Textual Theory
(Pariyatti 'akhrekham nham' 'paṭipatti 'aphre mhan')*, 79–87,
94, 96
- the unconditioned, 78, 95
- Theravāda, 25, 29, 31, 53, 68, 81,
102, 105, 111, 133, 145, 154,
161, 166, 214–218, 223, 225
- thought waves, 121
- three characteristics (impermanence, suffering, and not-self),
36–37, 57, 77, 86, 258, 272, 278
- threefold training (morality, concentration, wisdom), 64, 76, 272
- Tikapattihāna*, 128
- Tiloka, U, 58, 61, 62, 63, 235
- Tint Yee, U, 109–110, 174, 199
- Tipiṭaka, 84, 99, 224
- Toṇ 'le 'lūm' (Catugiri) Sayādaw
(see also Medawi), 52
- tranquility, 33, 63
- transmission, 18, 23, 123–124,
126, 139, 150
- Tusita (also Tusitā), 111–112
- ultimate truth, 148, 224, 233
- universal, 9, 41, 123, 137, 140
- universalism, 5, 96
- universalist, 99, 123, 186
- upacāra-samādhi* (access
concentration), 230–231
- Van Amersfoort, Jan, 77, 88, 105,
108, 116
- vedanā*, 58–59, 148, 225–256, 267,
269–270, 278, 280, 284–289
- vibration, 78, 122–124, 126, 167,
178, 188–189, 267, 283, 287
- vibrational field, 88
- vibrational force, 76, 93
- vijjā*, 62, 78, 103, 229
- vijjādhara*, 62, 113
- vijjādhāt'* (the force of wisdom),
76, 77, 78, 93, 121
- Vijjāmaggaḍḍipāṇī (The Manual of
the Path of Wizardry)*, 35
- Vimutti* Era (see also *vimuttikhet'*),
131
- vimuttikhet'* (see also *Vimutti
Era*), 131
- vipassanā*, 20, 28–30, 37–38, 45,
48, 52–54, 57, 62–64, 67, 71, 74,
77, 83, 88–89, 92, 96, 97, 101,
103, 107, 115–117, 120, 123–
124, 126, 131–134, 136, 140–
142, 144, 148–149, 153–157,
159–162, 165, 168, 175, 193–
195, 201, 203, 218, 228, 232,
235–236, 241, 246, 265, 268–
269, 275, 278
- Vipassana Newsletter* (English),
142
- Vipassanā Research Association
(also Vipassana Research
Association), 76, 79–80
- Vipassana Research Institute
(VRI), 8, 98, 135, 214–215,
218–226, 291–292

- Vipassanāḍīpanī*, 33, 35, 60
vipassanāñāṇa, 58, 76, 93, 148,
 269, 275
vipassanāyānika, 84
vipaśyanā, 140, 147–148, 169,
 178, 196, 205, 208–209, 211,
 216–218, 221–222, 224–225
*Vipaśyanā (Sādhakoṃ kā Māsik
 Prerṇāpatra) (Vipaśyanā [A
 Monthly Inspirational News-
 letter for Meditators])*, 142
Vipaśyanā newsletter (Hindi), 142,
 172, 174, 179, 185, 195, 204,
 206, 214, 216, 218–219
Visākhā, Mother, 87, 191–192
visuddhi, 58, 232, 235
*Visuddhimagga (The Path of
 Purification)*, 28, 30, 56, 59, 71,
 76, 102, 232, 269
 Webu Sayādaw (also Webu Saya-
 daw), 75, 82, 112–113, 135
weizzā (see also *vijjā*), 57, 62, 77–
 78, 104, 109, 131, 235
weizzā traditions, 78, 131
weizzādhāt ‘, 77
weizzā-dho (see also wizard), 62,
 64, 113
 West, 10, 115, 130, 150, 153, 157,
 159, 163, 170, 179, 218
 Western Europe, 10, 21, 26
 Wilson, Jeff, 18, 169
 wisdom, 37–38, 45, 49, 50, 64, 76,
 77, 82–84, 87, 89, 93, 103, 121,
 124, 147, 155–156, 160–161,
 208, 227, 229, 233–237, 242,
 272, 279–280
 wisdom-power of impermanence
 (*aniccavijjāññāṇ* ‘), 279–280
 wizard, 5, 55
 world tour, 179–180, 186
 Wright, Leon E., 100, 113, 116,
 127



Band 1:

Anālayo: **The Genesis of the Bodhisattva Ideal**

178 pp., 12 illustrations, hardcover, 22,80 EUR

ISBN 978-3-937816-62-3 (printed version)



Band 2

Anālayo: **The Dawn of Abhidharma**

229 pp., 12 illustrations, hardcover, 25,80 EUR

ISBN 978-3-943423-15-0 (printed version)



Band 3

Lin, Chen-kuo / Radich, Michael (eds.): **A Distant Mirror**

Articulating Indic Ideas in Sixth and Seventh Century Chinese Buddhism

565 pp., hardcover; 39,80 EUR

ISBN 978-3-943423-19-8 (printed version)



Band 4

Silk, Jonathan A.: **Buddhist Cosmic Unity**

An Edition, Translation and Study of the
"Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśaparivarta"

252 pp., hardcover, 28,80 EUR

ISBN 978-3-943423-22-8 (printed version)



Band 5

Radich, Michael: **The "Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra" and
the Emergence of "Tathāgatagarbha" Doctrine**

266 pp., hardcover, 28,80 EUR

ISBN 978-3-943423-20-4 (printed version)



Band 6

Anālayo: **The Foundation History of the Nuns' Order**

278 pp., hardcover, 29,80 EUR

ISBN 978-3-89733-387-1 (printed version)



Band 7

Jim Rheingans: **The Eighth Karmapa's Life and his Interpretation of the Great Seal**
A Religious Life and Instructional Texts in Historical and Doctrinal Contexts

243 pp., hardcover, 25,80 EUR

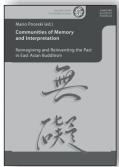
ISBN 978-3-89733-422-9 (printed version)



Band 8
Anālayo: **Buddhapada and the Bodhisattva Path**
180 pp., hardcover, 18,80 EUR
ISBN 978-3-89733-415-1 (printed version)



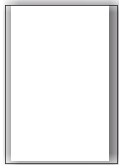
Band 9
Susan Andrews/Jinhua Chen/Cuilan Liu (eds.): **Rules of Engagement**
Medieval Traditions of Buddhist Monastic Regulation
522 pp., hardcover, 26,60 EUR
ISBN 978-3-89733-428-1 (printed version)



Band 10
Mario Poceski (ed.): **Communities of Memory and Interpretation**
Reimagining and Reinventing the Past in East Asian Buddhism
XIV; 217 pp., hardcover, 25,80 EUR
ISBN 978-3-89733-425-0 (printed version)



Band 11
Achim Bayer: **The Life and Works of mKhan-po gZhan-dga' (1871-1927)**
rDzogs-chen Master and Educational Reformer of Eastern Tibet
XXI; 435 pp., hardcover, 32,80 EUR
ISBN 978-3-89733-495-3 (printed version)



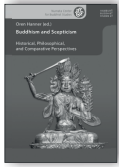
Band 12/Teil 1
Lambert Schmithausen: **Fleischverzehr und Vegetarismus im indischen Buddhismus bis ca. zur Mitte des ersten Jahrtausends n. Chr.**
Teil 1 · Studie und Übersetzungen
381 pp., hardcover, 27,80 EUR
ISBN 978-3-89733-503-5 (printed version)



Band 12/Teil 2
Lambert Schmithausen: **Fleischverzehr und Vegetarismus im indischen Buddhismus bis ca. zur Mitte des ersten Jahrtausends n. Chr.**
Teil 2 · Endnoten
606 pp., hardcover, 34,80 EUR
ISBN 978-3-89733-504-2 (printed version)



Band 12/Teil 3
Lambert Schmithausen: **Fleischverzehr und Vegetarismus im indischen Buddhismus bis ca. zur Mitte des ersten Jahrtausends n. Chr.**
Teil 3 · Editionen
226 pp., hardcover, 24,80 EUR
ISBN 978-3-89733-505-9 (printed version)



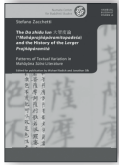
Band 13

Oren Hanner (ed.): **Buddhism and Scepticism**

Historical, Philosophical, and Comparative Perspectives

183 pp., hardcover, 25,80 EUR

ISBN 978-3-89733-518-9 (printed version)



Band 14

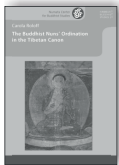
Stefano Zacchetti: **The Da zhidu lun 大智度論 (*Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa) and the History of the Larger Prajñāpāramitā**

Patterns of Textual Variation in Mahāyāna Sūtra Literature

Edited for publication by Michael Radich and Jonathan Silk

301 pp., hardcover, 25,80 EUR

ISBN 978-3-89733-543-1 (printed version)



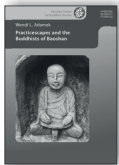
Band 15

Carola Roloff: **The Buddhist Nuns' Ordination in the Tibetan Canon**

Possibilities of the Revival of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Bhikṣuṇī Lineage

375 pp., hardcover, 27,80 EUR

ISBN 978-3-89733-526-4 (printed version)

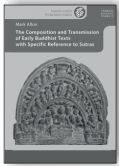


Band 16

Wendi L. Adamek: **Practicescapes and the Buddhists of Baoshan**

604 pp., hardcover, 34,00 EUR

ISBN 978-3-89733-515-8 (printed version)



Band 17

Mark Allon: **The Composition and Transmission of Early Buddhist Texts with Specific Reference to Sūtras**

Patterns of Textual Variation in Mahāyāna Sūtra Literature

142 pp., hardcover, 17 EUR

ISBN 978-3-89733-552-3 (printed version)



Band 18

Serena Operetto: **The Reception of Genshin and his Ichijō yōketsu in Japanese Medieval Buddhism**

An Intertextual Analysis

319 pp., hardcover, 34,80 EUR

ISBN 978-3-89733-582-0 (printed version)



Band 19

Vincent Eltschinger, Jowita Kramer, Parimal Patil, Chizuko Yoshimizu (Hrsg.): **Burlesque of the Philosophers**

Indian and Buddhist Studies in Memory of Helmut Krasser, Part I and Part II

918 pp., (Part I and Part II), hardcover, 39,80 EUR

ISBN 978-3-89733-585-1 (printed version)

This monograph interrogates a dominant teleological narrative about the history of modern global insight meditation and mindfulness: namely, that modern mass meditation movements were the inevitable result of the work of a handful of modern reformers who were in large part responding to colonial forces in Asia.

Focusing on the figure of S. N. Goenka (1924–2013) and his Burmese lineage, the book redescribes the development of twentieth-century lay-focused insight meditation and mindfulness emergent from Burma (Myanmar). By recovering the historical background, lineage relationships, and practice contexts of Goenka's teacher, the Burmese lay meditation master Sayagyi U Ba Khin (1899–1971), the book elucidates the historical dynamics that gave rise to one of the most influential global meditation institutions of the twentieth century. Daniel M. Stuart shows that an appreciation of the cosmological, political, and personal motivations of the meditation teachers in S. N. Goenka's lineage brings to light occluded aspects of the history of modern global insight meditation.

ISBN 978-3-89733-606-3



ISSN 2190-6769

ISBN 978-3-89733-606-3

EUR [D] 27,80