

Brief biographical sketch of Luang Phor Mongkol Thepmuni, late Chao Khun of Wat Paknam, Basicharoen, Bangkok Thailand (1885-1959)

Luang Phor Mongkol Thepmuni the late Venerable Chao Khun (Abbot) of Wat Paknam, Basicharoen, Bangkok, Thailand is regarded as the re-discoverer of the Vijjā Dhammakāya and its Dhammakāya Method of Meditation. This is the Method used by Buddhas to attain to Enlightenment and Nibbāna.

He was born on 10th October 1885 as Sodh Mikaynoi, the second son of a rice merchant in Supanburi Province. By age 22, young Sodh ordained as a bhikkhu. He soon realised that there were few, if any, accomplished meditators or teachers of the Dhamma. He felt that he was not making progress.

Finally, he resolved that if he was going to be of benefit to the Buddha Sāsana, he himself must strive to know a little of the Truth that Buddhas behold. On the full moon night of September 1918, in the 11th year of monkhood, he determined that the time had come for him to carry out that resolution. Invoking light and assistance from the Buddha in the Uposatha (Ordination Hall) of Wat Bangkuvieng, he vowed that he would not rise from his meditation seat until he succeeded in seeing a little of the Sublime Truth; and, if he succeeded, he would spend the rest of his life as a bhikkhu in the service of the religion, otherwise let him perish in the endeavour.

Luang Phor was triumphant and the Vijjā Dhammakāya that he re-discovered was so profound that he initially almost despaired as to whether there would be worthy recipients of the Sublime Dhamma. He started his more than 43 years of ministry by teaching at Wat Bangpla, converting 3 monks and 4 laypeople to his Method. Initially the re-discovery of the Vijjā Dhammakāya caused a degree of controversy within the community of monks but with an ever growing number of proficient practitioners testifying to its efficacy in investigating the Sublime Truth, it quickly subsided and later disappeared.

Some years later, with the popularity of the Method rising, Luang Phor was appointed Abbot to Wat Paknam to reinvigorate the 500 odd-year old decrepit temple. At the time it had only 13 monks, novices and lay preceptors (upasikas and upasakas) and discipline was lax and ruffians and scallywags almost took over the temple. With characteristic zeal and administrative toughness, he transformed it within a short few years into a respected seat of Dhamma learning and Meditation.

At Wat Paknam, he established the Pali Institute and rebuilt the Viharn (Uposatha or Ordination Hall). New quarters for monks, novices and upasikas were also built. He instituted the acclaimed 24-hour relay teams of advanced meditators – monks, 8-preceptors (generally know as mae chi or upasikas) and laypeople, which he personally supervised. Other laypeople were also taught Meditation at different times during the week. On holy days (full moon, quarter moon days), Luang Phor would also deliver sermons on the Dhamma. In this way, the population of monks, novices and upasikas and upasakas grew to about a thousand as devotees gravitated to Wat Paknam.

Until his passing on 3rd February 1959, Luang Phor never tires to teach and exhort all to learn and practise the Method saying that the merits made on just seeing the sphere at one's 7th position for a moment shorter than that of the flap of an elephant's ear, the merits gained would be greater than building 10 temples. Whilst the merits of meditation engenders the means to attain to enlightenment, that of building temples and so forth guarantees only heavenly rewards.

During his lifetime and after, accolades were lavished on Luang Phor, who earned the posthumous praise of the Thai Supreme Sangha of being the Meditation Master without peer, and the great, wise compassionate sage.

His life was absolutely without blemish of any kind and his life long work was his total devotion to the Sublime Dhamma which could be plumbed by any earnest seeker with the Method. Today almost 50 years after his passing, adherents to the Dhammakāya Method of Meditation have multiplied by the tens of thousands at home and abroad. Wat Paknam itself has prospered and many temples either directly or indirectly associated with Wat Paknam have been built within Thailand and in a number of countries around the world, to promote the Method and the learning of Vijjā Dhammakāya.

In the tradition of Luang Phor we now place at your disposal English translations of the Teachings of this Great and Compassionate Sage as rendered by the Venerable Phra Terry and wish that you profit immeasurably from it.

Yours in the Dhamma,

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The Dhammakāya Method of Meditation

In essence, a meditator must 'stop' his mind at the centre of the sphere in the 7th position at the centre of his body by cutting off all effervescent thoughts, knowledge, perception and memory. The 7th position is two-finger breaths above the navel in the centre of the body which may be regarded as the core of one's being.

With the mind so 'stopped' the first sphere (of Pathama Magga) will emerge therefrom, to be quickly followed by 6 others - the spheres of Dhammanupassanā Satipaṭṭhāna (Intent Mindfulness), Sila (Morality), Samādhi (Concentration), Paññā (Wisdom), Vimutti (Release) and Vimutti Ñāna Dasana (Knowledge of Release). Then, the meditator's own astral form (Manussa Kāya Panīta) which is the refined opposite form of his crude physical self (Manussa Kāya Hīna) can be seen.

Concentrating at the 7th position of this form, he progresses to the next form of Dibba Kāya Hīna (Crude Celestial Form) and Panīta; and, in this manner, through the remaining forms until he reaches that of Dhammakāya Arahatta Panīta (the Refined Dhammakāya Body). There are 18 forms or Kāyas to penetrate in ascending style. All forms are to be penetrated with the perfectly 'stopped' mind through the 6 spheres as first encountered in the human (Manussa) forms.

Having attained to the Dhammakāya Gotrabhū form an aspirant can well and truly begin the practice of Samatha Vipassanā (Insight Meditation) into the Sublime Truth that Buddhas behold. The meditation process itself, being a process of refinement, can be carried on ad infinitum.

Luang Phor prescribed the mantra 'Sammā Araham' to be chanted silently and sustainedly as an aid to achieving one-pointed concentration together with a crystal ball as an object (nimitta) to aid visualisation and expedite the process of 'seeing' the sphere at the 7th position. (See details of the Method in *Vistas*)