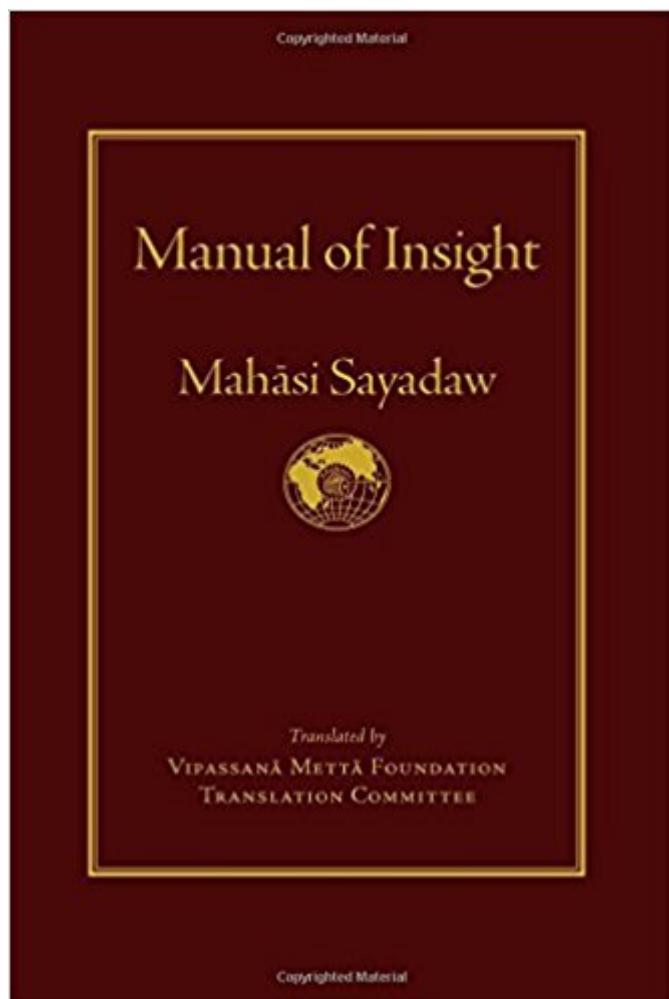


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Manual Of Insight



Synopsis

The most comprehensive manual of the practice of insight meditation (vipassana), written by one of its foremost 20th century proponents, is translated into English for the first time. Manual of Insight is the magnum opus of Mahasi Sayadaw, one of the originators of the “vipassana movement” that has swept through the Buddhist world over the last hundred years. The manual presents a comprehensive overview of the practice of insight meditation, including the foundational aspects of ethical self-discipline, understanding the philosophical framework for the practice, and developing basic concentration and mindfulness. It culminates with an in-depth exploration of the various types of insight and spiritual fruits that the practice yields. Authored by the master who brought insight meditation to the West and whose students include Joseph Goldstein, Jack Kornfield, and Sharon Salzberg, Manual of Insight is a veritable Bible for any practitioner of vipassana.

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Customer Reviews

“The teachings of Mahasi Sayadaw formed the essential context in which I learned, practiced and studied meditation. That context is beautifully expressed in this book. I owe an inexpressible debt to Mahasi Sayadaw’s scholarship, understanding, and courage of transmission. It is a great gift to have this translation available.” (Sharon Salzberg, author of Lovingkindness) “Having ordained under Mahasi Sayadaw, I know him as one of the most influential Theravada Buddhist teachers of the 20th century. If your temperament is toward strong

samadhi and precise noticing, this book will be an invaluable resource in progressing through the Stages of Insight. (Rodney Smith, author of *Awakening*) A truly important work of one of the greatest contemporary masters, with rich detail and profound insight. (Jack Kornfield, author of *The Wise Heart*)

The Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw (1904-82), U Sobhana Mahathera, was one of the most eminent meditation masters of modern times and a leader in the contemporary resurgence of Vipassana meditation. He quickly distinguished himself after ordination as a scholar and teacher of the Buddhist scriptures. Placing himself under the guidance of Venerable U Narada Sayadaw and undertaking intensive training in Vipassana meditation, he mastered the technique and went on to popularize vipassana as a systematic practice beneficial for monks and laity alike.

Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw held Burma's highest scholastic honor, the title of Agga Mahapandita, awarded to him in 1952. During the Sixth Buddhist Council, held in Rangoon from 1954 to 1956, he performed the duties of Questioner (pucchaka), a role performed at the First Buddhist Council by the Venerable Mahakassapa. Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw was also a member of the executive committee that was responsible, as the final authority, for the codification of all the texts edited at the Council.

Thousands of people have been trained at his Thathana Yeiktha Meditation Centre in Yangon and many more have benefited from his clear-cut approach to meditation practice available through his voluminous writings and through the teachings abroad of his disciples, including Joseph Goldstein, Jack Kornfield, Sharon Salzberg, Rodney Smith, and many others. More than a hundred branch centers of the Thathana Yeiktha Centre have been established in Burma and his method has spread widely to other countries, East and West.

Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw is the author of numerous works on both meditation and the Buddhist scriptures in his native Burmese.

I believe that Mahasi Sayadaw's text is a major contribution to the serious student of the Theravada Tradition of Buddhism. It looks and feels like a manual, but the reading has the type of personal tone to it that one would find if the teacher was within reach. *Manual of Insight* captures, arranges, and develops the ancient teachings of the Buddha in a way that the reader can grasp and retain and apply. It takes a skillful teacher to convey material for his/her students in this fashion. Mahasi Sayadaw does just that! While I do not think this text is for beginners, I do think that at some point he or she should make the manual an important resource for learning and memorizing. And the

Index and other materials at the back of the book will further support such a cause.

I've bought many books on different techniques of insight meditation. This one is epic and what a bargain at \$25. I would not have hesitated to pay full price for it either. Even if a person didn't want to practice this technique the first 260 pages have invaluable information. This insight technique is probably one of the few that a person could have good success without having access to a meditation teacher or meditation center.

This is one of the best books available for serious students of Mindfulness, IMHO. The Manual has great credibility: its methods helped teach many current Western Buddhist practice leaders, and even today the Burmese meditation schools are greatly respected as possibly the most serious Vipassana schools. The book begins with a simple style -- simply noting and attending to the simple act of breathing -- but before you know it, you are investigating some of the most subtle activities of the mind. I found it very useful for noticing mental activities during the entire day, and not just the time on the cushion. The Manual suggests remembering to be aware during the day, and to develop a persistent habit of observing one's reactions and choices. The Manual also suggests one does not need to be "Enlightened" to experience glimpses of Nibbana. I first read this book during an on-line class, and highly recommend this method if you have a chance, because of the book's depth and because the organization is not always easy to assimilate. If you don't use this manual in conjunction with someone who knows something about the method, don't be discouraged if you find yourself sort of lost. I would suggest scanning a chapter, and then a section, before you read more attentively, so you will have a better appreciation of the overall direction of the section you are reading, and not get too bogged down in detail.

Although mindfulness in its secular applications has tremendous benefits, it's helpful to remember that the original teachings of the Buddha are about liberation. (Introduction to the text at xvii). And it's helpful knowing that the goal of this 710 page missive. Here a master approach to a path for the practitioner who wants to closely follow the original teachings of the Buddha. The Burmese monk Mahasi Sayadaw is legendary in the Theravada tradition. To have this foundational work available in English is an extraordinary opportunity for anyone wanting a serious spiritual practice. At a time when much of today's Buddhist literature comes from sources from the second and third turning

of the wheel, Mahasi Sayadaw draws directly from the original Suttas taken as the words of the Buddha. How has Mahasi Sayadaw laid out the path? It begins with conduct. It stands to reason: You can't be poisoning the ground while planting seeds. It's difficult to make progress when your day to day conduct conflicts with the beliefs you are trying to implement. After that it's about wisdom and means, meditation. After the initial discussion about purification of the mind and reality, the text turns to meditation as means, encompassing the four foundations of mindfulness, mindfulness of breathing and insight meditation, all based on key suttas from the days of the Buddha. These are supplemented with information packed appendixes with inserted folio. There's an amazing English-Pali, Pali-English Glossary that follows. It's always great to see a book published as a sturdy hardback fit for the ages. It's a text to be read and pondered over time, a text to be kept close and turned to again and again. If Buddhists started leaving books in hotel rooms this would likely be the book, a Theravadan Bible for a practice leading to awakening.

It's a jewel of a book, but absolutely not suited for beginners to meditation. It's technical, not easily accessible, and not exactly easy to read either. I would recommend several years of practice before you try reading it. The book gives an overview of a particular style of meditation, and the various stages of progress, culminating in enlightenment. It's essentially a roadmap and 'how to' guide for experienced meditators. The author was a Burmese monk and his particular style of teaching has strongly influenced many Western Vipassana/Insight Meditation teachers, in particular those at Spirit Rock and IMS. It's likely one of the best books on (a sub-strand of) Theravada Buddhism. Next to the Pali canon itself, I'd consider it 'essential' reading for experienced practitioners.

Sayadaw is as original as Ajaan Chah, but with a somewhat more 'stringent' tone to his writing (NOT in his practice!). This is a wonderful tome, nonetheless...

Possibly the most important meditation book ever published. And that's saying a lot since there are so many great titles out there. Of course, this is an advanced text and would require a lot of fundamentals before it will yield much of benefit to the reader. It would most suit those who have done a retreat in the Mahasi technique and want to advance their practice. Highly recommended!

Great book for the advanced reader

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