

# SEEDS OF PEACE

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ISLAM AND NONVIOLENCE  
ROLE OF WOMEN IN BUDDHISM  
BUDDHISM AND THAI POLITICS  
BUDDHADASA ON PRIDI BANOMYONG



## Seeds of Peace

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### Objectives of TICD

1. To coordinate work among individuals, groups of individuals and various agencies dealing with religions and development in course of working together.
2. To share experience in and knowledge of religions and development as well as exploring ways and means of working together.
3. To offer training and secure resources in terms of man-power and materials to support and enhance the agencies that need help.

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## Editorial Note

The Thai Government and NGOs are taking the International Year of Peace seriously at least for the time being. Particularly in August, there were many meetings, seminars, – exhibitions at many campuses. Buddhist and Christian Universities took part ecumenically. Muslims too were involved positively, at national as well as international levels. In some provincial towns local events also took place. There is an effort to have 16th August as a national day of peace. If that could be achieved, Thai militaism may be decreased and real democracy may be the order of the day.

More significantly, the Ven. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu devoted the whole Buddhist Lent (from 21 July–17 October) to give a series of lectures every Saturday on the theme of peace. And the Pridi Banomyong Foundation has a wonderful research project on Peace Studies Programme 1986–1987 : A Quest for Peace in Thai Society. Hopefully these will help stimulating seeds of peace to grow as trees of peace in the jungle of violent atmosphere.

The United Nations University has a Sub-Programme on Peace and Global Transformation. Under its Regional and Global Studies Division, one of the activities is Visions of Desirable Societies of Religious and Ethical System. In our last two issues, we have already mentioned some of the Buddhist Visions. Hopefully, more will be forth-coming from other religious traditions..

Our last issue was well received in many quarters. Some articles were translated into Thai and other languages. Some churches announced to their congregation as to where **Seeds of Peace** could be bought and subscribed. Our Organization, too, has been mentioned favourably by **Inter-Religio**, a network of Christian Organizations for Inter-religious encounter in Eastern Asia, with its Headquarters at Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture, Nagoya, Japan.

Indeed our foreign friends gave us much encouragement. For those who wish to read something similar, may we recommend (a) **Buddhist Peace Fellowship Newsletter** especially Vol.8 No.3 Summer 1986, which could be subscribed through the BPF, P.O. Box 4650 Berkeley, Cal. 94704, U.S.A. (b) **Peace News** for Nonviolent Revolution, 8 Elm Av., Nottingham NG3 4GF, U.K (c) **Asian Action** by our sister organization, Asian Cultural Forum On Development, (G.P.O. Box 2930, Bangkok 10501, (d) **Gandhi Marg**, 221-223 Deen Dayal, Upadhyaya Marg, New Delhi 110002, India. Last but not least is the **IYP Newsletter** which could be had from the International Year of Peace, United Nations, N.Y. 10017 U.S.A.

For those who wish to have ideas for action fundamentally different from the prevailing materialistic and violent ways of development, you may find these and a few other publications useful platforms.

You are encouraged to write to us as well as to them. The more seeds of peace are planted, the better it is for all concerned for the survival of humankind and for a just and peaceful world.



# BUDDHADASA BHIKKHU

## on PRIDI BANOMYONG



To all of us gathered here to make merit in memory of the Elder Statesman, Pridi Banomyong,

I would like to take the opportunity to join you in saying a few words in blessing today in his memory. I believe the Elder Statesman took an interest in Buddhism, and in adapting Buddhism to suit modern life. He was impressed with the activities at Suan Mokh and consequently asked me to look for a location in Ayuthaya where another Suan Mokh could be set up. I searched to the best of my ability but could find nowhere suitable, so the project was abandoned. If such a location had been found, there would have been another Suan Mokh in Ayuthaya for sure.

He asked me to do everything I could to spread modern Buddhism. I complied, trying to produce books on every angle on Buddhism to meet his request, as can be seen

now. I also responded by giving a lecture on "Buddhadhamma and Democracy". The Elder Statesman listened throughout. Some of the books received special interest, for example, **"Life of the Buddha for Young People"**. He asked how I could write in such detail even though I had never experienced married life. I did not reply because I felt inhibited. Now that he is not here I can reply as if I were replying then. I have lived a married life. I married Vani. The Vani they call a Goddess. That is, the Tripitaka, that was born from the lotus flower — the mouth of the Lord Buddha, the greatest sage, I was tied gladly and unwaveringly, and so I was married. I still lead a married life now with the person called Vani. Therefore let it be said that I can speak about this feeling as well as anyone.

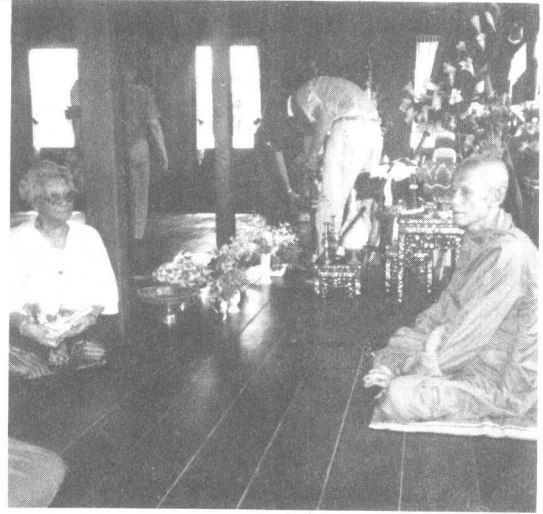
The Elder Statesman asked me to write songs so that Buddhists could have religious

music in the same way that people of other religions do. On this point I was stuck. I could not do it. I do not know how to compose music.

Therefore my contacts with him mean so much that I felt compelled to come and join in this commemoration with genuine feelings.

In national affairs it is recognised that the Elder Statesman acted and led actions to give concrete expression to the spirit of democracy in Siam. In particular, he altered the government system from absolute monarchy to democracy. Everyone knows that. In addition, he reformed the law from an imperfect legal system, unrecognised internationally, into a complete legal system recognised as equal to that of civilised nations. That was the highest achievement. He also abolished completely the commitment to fight on Japan's side, and Siam was released from the status of a country defeated in the War, escaping from danger as has happened from time to time in our history. That was even more valuable than is summed up in the term 'Elder Statesman'.

Another highly important thing that should be remembered is that the Elder Statesman had to suffer from banishment because he advocated socialism as a basis of governing the country. Others did not agree because they did not understand the meaning of the term. So he was defeated. On this point I am suffering the same fate. I have proposed that socialism is the heart of every religion, that every religion preaches socialism so that people can love each other as companions in the cycle of birth, age, sickness, and death, that capitalists love workers, and workers love capitalists, that the rich love the poor and the poor love the rich. This is called Dhammic Socialism. I reiterate that it is the heart of every religion. The Elder Statesman said the same but he was rewarded with banishment. It was strange, unbelievable, tragic and much more. I would like to express these feelings in his memory. I shall continue to try to introduce Dhammic Socialism into the hearts of the



people so that it can be a principle for humanity throughout the world, so that they can be companions in the cycle of birth, age, sickness and death.

It is this that I would like to commemorate as the highest sacrifice made by the Elder Statesman. It should be seen clearly above all. I would like us to feel as if the Elder Statesman has warned us all that we should adopt the spirit of socialism and love all living creatures as companions in the cycle of birth, age, sickness and death, until the workers love the capitalists and the capitalists love the workers, the rich love the poor and the poor love the rich. Love should extend to animals and other living beings such as trees. With the spirit of Dhammic Socialism there should be no more destructions of life out of stupidity.

Let us all commemorate his sacrifices. I would like to do this by saying, may the four blessings — long life, good complexion, happiness and strength (physical and spiritual), — flourish in those who do their duties unflinchingly. This is my commemoration.

(Transcribed and translated by Peter Mytri Ungphakorn from taped sermon given at Suan Mokh, and played before the ashes of Elder Statesman Pridi Banomyong were strewn over the Gulf of Siam on May 11, 1986.)

# BUDDHISM AND MEDITATION AT SUAN MOKH: THE PERSPECTIVE OF AN AMERICAN STUDENT



By a fortunate set of events, and with the help of some very kind people, I enrolled in a ten day meditation course at Suan Mok last summer. It was a lay course for Westerners organized by the Ven. Achan Po and others at Suan Mok under the auspices of the Ven. Achan Buddhadasa. Although ordaining seems very romantic, Suan Mok's lay program probably provides a better introduction to the Dhamma for someone short on time and unable to speak Thai.

My stay in Thailand was less than a month long, and my stay at Suan Mok but two weeks. My experience with Buddhist practice is thus quite limited. Rather than attempt a scholarly analysis of the interaction of Buddhism and the Occidental Psyche, a task at which I, unlike some others, would fail, I will write about my own experience as an American encountering Buddhism for the first time. I will try to identify which of my beliefs are shared with other Americans.

Almost all of the thoughts expressed below come directly out of my experience at Suan Mok. I hope that the Thai reader will see and tell me things which I, as a young American, have been unable to see.

What about Buddhism appeals to Americans? My attraction to Buddhism began with feelings of agitation and unsettledness. This is common in Americans, at least among highschool and college students, and undoubtedly accounts in part for why many (but not enough) of them travel to Buddhist countries each year. In my case the unsettledness was probably not so much understanding of the First Noble Truth as it was being unsure of my role in the world. I lacked the coherent view of life provided by religion.

In retrospect, I was looking for something to **add** to life; life seemed in most respects quite good. The feeling was not "something is wrong," but rather "something is missing." Off I went to Siam to acquire things — good food, friends, gifts, photographs, and the Wisdom of the East.

I was keenly interested in Buddhism, yet one of my first reactions at Suan Mok was suspicion. We were asked not to speak to each other, and not to read or write for the entire ten days. What better way to brainwash students than to let them converse only with their instructors? And how could one hope to sort through the muck of one's thoughts with neither books leading the way, nor paper and pen to record fleeting ideas? On a more humorous level, have you ever seen a group of people wash dishes without talking? Some dishes get washed several times.

It doesn't take long to discover the benefits of Noble Silence. One is soon glad to be free of verbal intrusions from the everyday world. Going without my journal was more difficult; it was odd to discover the extent to which I had become dependent on writing. Without the journal, an insight had to be a true insight to be remembered.

The first thing I discovered when trying to meditate was how creative the mind can

be. Alas, my mind was especially creative when it came to food, and these thoughts tormented me mercilessly. Food is cheap and good in Bangkok and I was used to a life of gluttony. In this condition, it can be quite a while before eating once a day **frees** the mind of food thoughts.

I was surprised by the extent to which my experiences while meditating agreed with what our teachers described. The description is recognized after the fact, just as the taste of durian can be recognized from verbal description only by those who have tasted it. These experiences can be very pleasant, but striving to attain them is like waiting to notice when you've fallen asleep in that it prevents you from getting there.

Let me now turn to the rational, analytical side of my encounter with Buddhism. I was looking for a religious foundation. Clearly, religion works best if it is taken seriously. The Ven. Bhuddadasa Bhikkhu has argued for an essential sameness of Christianity and Buddhism (1), but to get started in practice, perhaps it is best to pick one or the other. My prior beliefs, especially in the scientific methods, made faith in Christian dogma unattainable. The Buddha stressed the importance of seeing reality for oneself, an approach which many feel to be more honest and more consonant with science (2). One should try to follow this advice of the Buddha's, even if the result is not always traditional Buddhist doctrine.

For example, we have learned things since the Buddha's time. That the world is composed of the Four Great Elements: heat, wind, air and movement (3) is no longer amenable to literal interpretation given the success of modern chemistry.

Another alteration is much more drastic — the concept of reincarnation is foreign to American culture, and most Americans would probably have difficulty accepting it. Certainly, there is no more scientific evidence that I know of to support reincarnation than there is to support the Christian Heaven and Hell. When an American atheist dies, that's the End. One could interpret **samsara**

metaphorically, noting that each generation conditions the next. Or one could simply avoid interpretation. But it is hard to escape the conclusion that to the American atheist, release from **samsāra** comes with death.

Yet the Four Noble Truths survive this cultural transplantation; **dukkha** in the present life may not be so bad as **dukkha** forever, but it is reason enough to follow the Noble Eightfold Path. The doctrine of **Anattā** or No-soul still yields its tremendous insight (4). As one practices Buddhism, one doesn't yet know what Enlightenment is. Thus the decision to follow the Buddha is best made as a commitment to practice, and Americans are capable of this.

Grant 'me for now that belief in reincarnation supports, but is not essential to the practice of Buddhism. There are other cultural supports for Buddhism in Southeast Asia that are missing in the West — we have no established Sangha, no Buddhist holidays, and no stories about the Buddha to tell our children. Enlightenment itself is a foreign concept.

There seem to be both advantages and disadvantages in approaching Buddhism as an American. On one hand, the Westerner is less likely to confuse rituals and the emotions they induce with the essence of the Buddha's teaching, because he or she has never experienced any Buddhist rituals (5). On the other hand, the American lacks the familiarity with Buddhism supplied by Thai culture. Also, to practice Buddhism requires self-discipline, and Thai culture surely supports the individual in his or her efforts more than does U.S. culture.

Many elements of American culture directly conflict with traditional Theravada Buddhism. Some of them I readily give up, such as the worship of bodily and military strength (have you seen the popular movie **Rambo?**) and the belief that in order to remain healthy, people must express anger "to get it out of their systems." But other cultural values are harder to shed. The ideal American "lives life to the fullest," for example. He or she is playful and creative. That monks give up dancing and singing

seems odd to me, because these channels for creative expression are widely accepted as activities through which one can "get in touch with oneself." Have you insights to resolve this issue?

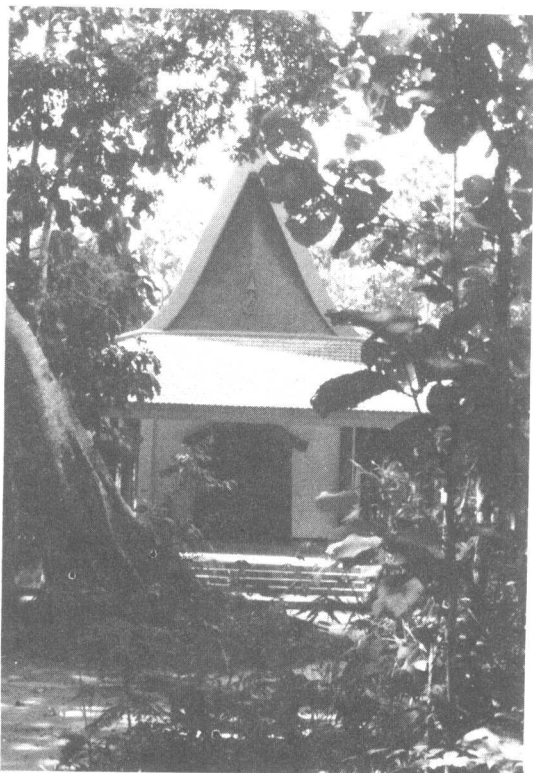
It has been pointed out that Americans who adopt Buddhism sometimes do so as part of a search for "self-fulfilment" (6), meaning approximately "living a life of maximum potential." Such an approach to Buddhism can be seductive; why not have it all? Here again is the notion of adding more to life in the form of religion. It is a trap which Americans must take special care to avoid if they are to practice in anything like the traditional spirit of Buddhism.

Some aspects of American culture can be reconciled with Buddhism in very useful ways. An example: Americans are taught that in order to be happy, they must form mutual attachments with other people, and learn how to depend on them. The easiest thing is to stay by oneself, but to "take the risk" of falling in love is regarded positively. In apparent contrast, the Buddha's basic lesson was detachment. Are not the three refuges places to hide from real life, a cowardly retreat?

Of course a Buddhist would say the opposite: to give up one's attachments is the noblest thing, and requires great emotional strength. The important step for me was to make the distinction between attachment and commitment. Achan Ranjuan advised us one evening that if we get married, we should remember that it will not last forever. The best thing is to be able to make a commitment without becoming emotionally dependent. Thus the fear of losing what one becomes attached to can keep a person from making a commitment.

Suan Mokh is a wonderful place for Western students of Buddhism. There are peaceful meditation platforms scattered about the hill to the west, and a hot springs amid a coconut grove behind the hill to the east. But my clearest memories are of the people. Ven. Buddhadasa, despite the physical difficulty, spoke to us with an equanimity that pervaded our stay. Ven.





Achan Po is a patient teacher, an energetic and wise monk whose example is highly inspiring. Achan Ranjuan's lessons always succeeded in connecting Buddhist thought with everyday life. Phra Pacha at the old Suan Mok had very good advice on meditation and keen insight into the role of Buddhism in the modern world. And several foreign monks and lay persons led our daily practice very well. These people have been so kind that I can hardly thank them enough. When one has far to go in one's mental development, one is very glad that a place so helpful and inspiring as Suan Mok exists.

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### NOTES

- 1 Ven. Bhikkhu Buddhadasa Indpañño, **Sinclair Thompson Memorial Lecture**, Feb. 1967. Translated into English by

Donald K. Swearer.

- 2 See eg. Phra Rajavaramuni, **Thai Buddhism in the Buddhist World**, Bangkok: Unity Progress Press, 1984, p. 136.
- 3 Samyutta-nikāya III (PTS edition) p. 158. Cited by Rahula, Walpola, **What the Buddha Taught**, London: Gordon Fraser Gallery Ltd. 1959, p.20.
- 4 I am not quite sure what happens to the Five Aggregates when they come to America. It is interesting to note, however, the failure of Scientific Reductionism to account for mental life in purely material terms. Modern psychologists and computer scientists now agree that other levels of analysis are required to understand mental processes. Physical processes in the brain are still assumed to underlie all mental activity, but the best description of that activity is not in physical terms, but rather in terms of information-processing, perception, and consciousness, though the last two are rather poorly defined. Perhaps there will some day correspond a level of analysis to each of the Five Aggregates.
- 5 Sulak Sivalaksa has argued that ceremony can get in the way of Buddhist practice in his book **Siamese Resurgence**, 1985.
- 6 Piker, Steven, comment made at the conference **Buddhism Today** (University of Pennsylvania Museum, March 1986).

Woman has been suppressed under custom and law for which man was responsible and in shaping of which she had no hand. In a plan of life based on nonviolence, woman has as much right to shape her own destiny as man has to shape his.

**M.K.GANDHI**

# ISLAM AND NON VIOLENCE

*A Reflective Report on a United Nations  
Seminar in Bali,  
February 14-19, 1986*



## INTRODUCTION: A Man and a Dream

A seminar on Islam and Nonviolence, to many, sounds unimaginable in a world where the term "Islam" ceases to be a simple description. Instead, it means a lot of "unpleasant" things to some non-Muslims. Edward Said, a Columbia University professor, writes, "For the right, Islam represents barbarism; for the left, medieval theocracy; for the center, a kind of distasteful exoticism. In all camps, however, there is agreement that even though little enough is known about the Islamic world there is not much to be approved of there." Needless to say, concerning the issues of violence and nonviolence, Islam is normally perceived as heavily oriented towards the former.

But Glenn D. Paige, a professor of Political Science at the University of Hawaii

thinks differently. The American professor is not a Muslim. People who are around him sense that he has a strong inclination towards Buddhism. The most significant bond between Buddhism and Prof. Paige is, perhaps, the precept that instruct sentient beings to abstain from taking the lives of other living things. He endears this very principle because he is an extremely rare breed of political scientists. He claims to be a nonviolent (or to be more precise — non-killing) political scientist. He has taught and is still teaching a course on "Nonviolent Political Alternatives". Glenn D. Paige is the temporary convenor of the UNU exploratory seminar on "Islam and Nonviolence" held in Bali this past February.

The idea of this seminar grew out of a special relationship between him and one of his students, Qader Muheideen. In 1978, they met in Hawaii where young Muheideen

was being trained as a Ph.D. student in Political Science. It all began when the young Muslim student registered for the course on "Nonviolent Political Alternatives" with Professor Paige.

Muheideen, a Muslim minority from a country in Southeast Asia left his home country one year after a bloody episode of political history in that country took place in his own university. So, the young student went abroad in search of political alternatives to violence. The American professor was read. Together they strolled along the relatively virgin academic path of nonviolence. In the professor, the student found the training in academic sophistication on nonviolence. In the student, the professor found a case of Muslim reception to nonviolence that radically altered his former perception of Islam. Subsequently, the professor met another nonviolent Muslim political scientist, Syed Sikander Mehdi, a University of Karachi professor at the Inter-University Centre for Post Graduate Studies, Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia in 1983.

The meeting of these two Muslim political scientists who took nonviolence seriously primarily led Prof. Paige to dream of a seminar, a meeting place, a forum where those keenly interested in developing Islamic contributions to peaceful global transformation to meet, exchange ideas, and to try to identify feasible future projects of common interests.

Prof. Paige then put his dream into writing and sent a proposal to the Rector of the United Nations University for consideration. It was approved on December 6, 1984. First, it was scheduled to be held in Sabah, Malaysia in May 1985. But the seminar had to be cancelled because of a change of the Sabah Government in April 1985. Then it was rescheduled for Bali, Indonesia in December 1985 only to be again postponed at the Indonesian Government's request until early 1986 so that the Minister of Religious Affairs could officially open it.

Prof. Paige's dream was finally realized when the seminar was successfully held at

Ashram Canti Dasa, Bali, Indonesia from 14 to 19 February 1986. With seventeen participants from India, Jordan (although he is an American), Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Egypt and the United States,—there were 13 Muslim participants altogether. It must be pointed out that Mrs. Gedong Bagoes Oka, the famous Gandhian in Bali and head of the Bali Canti Dasa, provided all the participants with the rare motherly cares that was unforgettable.

### The Exploration

Ten papers were presented although only nine written ones were distributed. These papers covered a wide range of issues. Nevertheless, these varied issues can be grouped into three categories, namely — theoretical, theological and instrumental. Papers by Qader Muheideen's "The Nonviolent Crescent" and Hasan Hanafis (an Egyptian philosopher) "On Coercion" are basically theoretical. The former tries to argue for the Muslim's sacred obligation to fight for justice using nonviolent actions in the modern world. The latter, on the contrary, attempts to explore the origin of violence, or to use Hanafi's term — "coercion", in contemporary Islam.

Papers by Razi Ahmad's "Islam, Nonviolence and Global Transformation" (an Indian historian), Abdulrahman Wahid's "Islam, Nonviolence and National Transformation" (an Indonesian political leader/writer), and Mamoon-al-Rasheed's "Islam, Nonviolence and Rural Transformation" (a rural development activist from Bangladesh), deal primarily from a theological dimension. Taking the issues of social transformation at the global, national and rural levels, these authors attempt to show how Islam is indispensable for human change. Some argue that such transformations need to be carried out nonviolently and there are ample Islamic injunctions which condone peaceful change. One author, however, points out that nonviolence will only be realized in contemporary world when equality becomes a reality. Since Islam values equality very

highly, it can contribute to a nonviolent world. In addition, Islam deals with the root of violence by fighting injustices and seeks to reconstruct the human mind for nonviolence.

Papers by 'Khalijah Mohd. Salleh (a Malaysian physicist) and Baroroh Baried (an Indonesian professor) share the same title: "Islam, Nonviolence and Women", while Yusof Yatim's (a community development officer from Malaysia) paper is on "Islam, Nonviolence and Youth". These three papers together look at Muslim women and youths' potentials for "nonviolence" as well as looking at these two significant groups as agents for social change. Dr. Salleh's analysis in particular, heavily influenced by her training as a physicist, provides a fresh insight into the issue of women and nonviolence. She points out that for Muslim women to work effectively towards nonviolence, Islamic knowledge is badly needed. She concludes, "The contribution of a woman may be small but no matter how small it is, it has a place in society — just like a key to the car, it is small but without it the car cannot run." M. Mazzahin Mohideen's (a Sri Lankan from Marga Institute) paper on "Islam, Non-violence and Inter-Faith Relations" looks at the relationship between Islam and other faiths. It seeks to discern commonalities of perceptions, teaching, or practices as bases for on-going dialogue "for the promotion of inter-faith harmony, human development and global peace and order." Emphasizing the primacy of human beings in the physical universe, he claims that this assertion is shared by people of all persuasions.

These papers together constitute an endeavour to bring into focus a number of issues. First, for the Muslims, Islam is definitely a repertoire of solutions for social ills that is still waiting to be fully realized. Second, even among the Muslims, there is still a severe case of a lack of comprehensive Islamic knowledge. Therefore, the search for more Islamic knowledge assumes paramount importance. Third, on the levels of image, the Muslims must try to project an image of Islam that is genuine and closer to the Muslims' understanding rather than passively

accepting the image portrayed by popular writers whose knowledge about Islam and the Muslims leaves much to be desired.<sup>2</sup> The message of Islam as appeared in the following verse of the Holy **Qur'an** needs to be widely shared. In Surah (Chapter) V, Ayat (verse) 35, The Almighty says:

"And if any one saved a life,  
It would be as if he saved  
The life of the whole people."

It should also be noted that amidst brotherly and sisterly atmosphere, heated debates sometimes did take place. But such "heated debates" signified the seriousness which the participants accorded the discussion. Yet, what does one get out of such an exploratory seminar?

## Of Discrepancies and Solace

This seminar, like so many others that are taking place everywhere at the moment, was attended by participants who are basically different. True, many of them are Muslims. But each of them came from a distinctive social background, class and culture. Even books they read differ. As a result, their perceptions of an issue are at times dissimilar. Moreover, even the terms used in presentations and informal communications sometimes differed. For example, it has been pointed out that the terms "violence" and "nonviolence" are not **Qur'anic** terms. Therefore the term "coercion" is selected for discussion in one particular paper. There are at least two problems, however. First, if a term is **non-Qur'anic**, can't it be discussed? It is certain that "nuclear weapons" is not a **Qur'anic** term. But isn't it a part of human reality at present and therefore should be taken seriously by the Muslims? Second, judging from a sociological standpoint, coercion and violence are two different concepts. Coercion, in fact, can be both violent and nonviolent.<sup>3</sup>

In the discussion, there was a clear case of a lack of knowledge both about Islam as well as nonviolence. For example, most

participants are not familiar with literature on nonviolence. Consequently, they failed to see the fact that nonviolent actions is a form of fightings. As a matter of fact, quite a few thought that nonviolence is an equivalence of submission or passivity. Or, when some of the participants quoted a **Hadith** (Tradition of Prophet Muhammad) horizon, glimpses own argument, the authenticity of that **Hadith** has been questioned. Some participants raised concern about the absence of any genuine Islamic scholar. But it has also been pointed out that what was needed was not a petrified textual exegesis. Instead as ordinary Muslims, it is inspirations from the Words of God and the Traditions of the Prophet that should be embraced.

Despite some of the shortcomings, the UNU exploratory seminar on Islam and Nonviolence accomplishes at least three things. First, it indicates to the world that Islam can indeed offer a peaceful solution to social ills. Second, it provides an opportunity for a broad spectrum of Muslim social activists, academics, and concerned non-Muslims to join forces and penetrates deep into the depth of the problems of violence and alternatives to politics. Third, it helps construct a human bond that would otherwise be nonexistent. This human bond is supported by a strong religious conviction. For the Muslims, Islam provides a comfortable basis relevant to the discussion of the issues related to social and human problems in general. Differences which emerged among the participants, though significant, are primarily hermeneutical. As such the commonality was already there. Conflicts which arose were, then, truly instructive and healthy.

What is more important, perhaps, was a non-Muslim's unusual remark. He told other participants that never before had he experienced the immanence of the Spirit among mortals. The seminar was just the beginning. A lot more works such as research, study and further seminars need to be conducted. But the faith is there, the beginning made and the supportive human relationship established.

## NOTES

1. Edward Said, *Covering Islam*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), p. xv.
2. See for example, V.S. Naipaul, *Among the Believers*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1981).
3. See for example, Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Actions*. (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973).

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# THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN BUDDHISM\*



The given topic gives us a wide horizon to look at the issue at hand. We will not be able to cover the whole horizon, but I'll try to give you glimpses here and there of the whole picture. And I expect, in the discussion period I will be able to share more of your

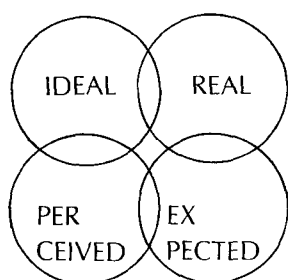
concerns and interests. In an audience like this the discussion is very important and enjoyable because it will really bring out many more hidden issues. At times, the importance lies not in the answers but in the questions themselves. Again in this case, the

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discussion should be very interesting because I am from the east and most of you are from the west with few quasi-westerners. Here, I am actually looking forward to have a real cross-cultural exchange of dialogues to enrich our knowledge on women in Buddhism.

Our concern is really women in Buddhism now, in the present days. In psychology, they talk about the real self, the perceived self and the ideal self. In a perfect person these 3 selves should emerge into one. When we come to look the selves of a Buddhist woman, I would like to add one more, that is the expected self.



The problem here lies in the fact that they do not often know their ideal selves and they are hung up with their expected selves. To make it worse, more often than not, the perceived selves are usually perceived distortedly.

In order to understand the ideal self of a Buddhist woman, we cannot help but to take a time machine back some 2500 years to the time of the Buddha.

With time limitation I will not go into detail, but will discuss only certain points of controversy. Buddhism is the first religion in the world to establish community of ordained women on the basis that women can achieve equal spiritual salvation as men. From the present context, we tend to under-estimate this significant value. But try to imagine yourself in India at that time, when Indian society followed closely to the law of Manu, women were to be under protection of fathers when young, then husbands when married and later on under the protection of their sons. Women were taken as objective possessions to be handed down under the

protection of the menfolk. The birth of sons became religious and social compulsory for women, failing of which would entitle their husbands to take new wives. Women could not perform any ritual on their own etc. Within this social context, Buddhism opened up a new horizon. Women under Buddhism stepped out from their expected role to fulfil their ideal role. Not only as wives and mothers but now as propagators of the new religion in the same capacity as their male partners.

This social and spiritual uplift was not a step but a leap ahead of the time. Hence there were many objections from their counterpart — namely the monks. The Buddha was well aware of this, therefore he was hesitant when his foster mother, Queen Maha Pajapati approached him for ordination. The fact that the Buddha was hesitant to admit women to the Order was often misinterpreted that he never wanted to accept the Order of nuns. This is clearly a bias and using double standard, because the Buddha was hesitant before, yet it was never interpreted that the action he chose to take afterwards was unwanted. If I am allowed to repeat the incident: when the Buddha became enlightened, he hesitated whether he should preach or not because the dharma was so subtle that people might not be able to understand it. He pondered over it for few days and later only decided to teach dharma to people; he continued to do so for the rest of his life for 45 more years. I have not heard anyone saying that because the Buddha was hesitant, therefore the fact that he decided to preach was unwanted!

During his life time, many women from all walks of life, joined the Order. Many of them were capable and successful in learning and preaching. Some of them were good propagators, not ordinary ones, but eloquent preachers, among their frequent listeners were the kings and ministers. As you are well aware in the study of history of religions, royal support has always been one among the key factors responsible for the growth of religions. Here we see Buddhist nuns were as good as monks in the role of propagators

raising faith from the royal families and the people in general. Some of the nuns received special praise from the Buddha—they were outstanding in remembering past lives, in insight knowledge, in observing vinaya (moral code), in eloquent preaching, etc.

In brief one can say that the role of ordained women was as at least intended to be equal to the monks. Subjecting to the prevalent social norms, the Buddha still put the nuns under the protection of the monks, as sisters to be protected by elder brothers. But in the past history we have witnessed numerous incidents revealing that what actually happened was not quite as intended. The Buddha intended that the nuns should be subordinated to the monks like sisters to brothers, not slaves to masters.

The monks, we have to realise, many came from Brahmanical social background. When they joined the Order they often treated the nuns as their servants. The nuns had to wash their robes, their seats, their quarters, etc. until they had no time to attend to their own spiritual practice. When this was brought to the Buddha's attention, he set down rules forbidding the monks to take advantage of the nuns. One particular case was very moving, A young monk was too lazy to go for almsround, so he took food from an old nun; she was 120 years old, for 3 days continuously. The old nun, having given her share of meal had to go without food; on the third day she collapsed. When the Buddha came to know, again he set down the rule that monks are not to take almsfood from the nuns. These, and many more incidents showed how women even after having joined the Order were still often taken advantage of. But as long as the Buddha was alive, he was there to rectify the rules and to protect the well-being of the nuns. He was concerned about the fact that the nuns got lesser support from the society. This was clearly seen in one of the rules set down in regard to the division of offerings between the two communities. If a donor offers 10 robes to both the Sanghas (communities), the robes must be divided equally among the Sanghas. The Buddha

was aware that the nuns usually get lesser chance of invitation and offerings than the monks. But when he passed away, the Order was again guided by the community of monks. The first set of incidents against the nuns may be seen as early as the first council, only 3 months after the passing away of the Buddha.

The council consisted of 500 enlightened monks, no nun was invited inspite of the fact that there were still many learned and enlightened ones. Ananda, the Buddha's attendant and cousin was blamed by the members of council for many things. One among the blames was that Ananda allowed the nuns to pay respect to the body of the Buddha before the community of the monks! Another one was that Ananda was mediator and helped the women to approach the Buddha for the establishment of the Order of nuns. Ananda did not protest but made it clear to the assembly that he did not think that he was wrong.

We see clearly, that the community of monks were not happy with the existence of nuns by their side. These negative feelings were brought out and displayed in public soon after the Buddha's passing away. Their objections indeed, reflected the mentality of the monks then. And we should not be surprised to find such trend of mentality still persist through thousands of years into the present age. Egoism is very strong inspite of the fact that the central teaching of Buddhism is egolessness!

The community of nuns continued in India, in the 3rd century B.C. During the time of King Asoka, an Order of nuns was established in Sri Lanka under royal patronage. Later in 434 A.D. Sri Lankan Nuns in turn established an Order of nuns in China. Through passage of time, the Order of nuns in India died out after the invasion of Muslims. The Order of monks and nuns in Sri Lanka died out with the invasion of south Indian ruler in 1017 A.D. The Order of the monks was soon revived but not the nuns. Only Chinese lineage survived in China, Japan, Korea. When China went through years of suppression during the cultural



revolution in 1940s, majority of nuns escaped and resettled in Taiwan where they are now the strongest hold of the fully ordained Buddhist nuns.

I should mention here also the main reason responsible for the strong establishment of the nuns in Taiwan. Before the communists took over China, many nuns came to settle in Taiwan. The monks remained behind and thought that they would be able to survive under Communism. But as the situation worsen, they had to flee to Taiwan also, some of them from whom I have heard the stories personally escaped without any possession, literally what they had on them were only their underwears. The nuns who had established themselves earlier helped these monks to get settled on the island. The monks, being obligated to the nuns in assisting them with their early establishment, are therefore grateful and in turn pay due respect to the community of nuns. This was the inside story responsible for the success of the nuns on that island.

In other Buddhist countries, the Order of nuns never existed. Countries like Burma, Thailand, Nepal, Laos, Cambodia never had Order of nuns. In Tibet, due to geographical limitation they have only ordination of female novices (samneri, samanerika)

We are now turning to the situation in this present century. There is a strange religious phenomena which repeats itself in each and every Buddhist country in more or less the same form. That is, Buddhist women expressed their desire to lead religious lives. In each country, there developed a group of ordained women. Not to confuse these women with those fully ordained ones which we have discussed earlier, we shall call the earlier group – the bhikshunis and the latter group – contemporary nuns.

In Nepal, they are called Anagarikas, they wear pink robe with a brown robe folded on the right shoulders, they observe 10 precepts. In Burma, Cambodia and Thailand, they wear white robes with 8 precepts. In Sri Lanka, they are called dasasil matas, wearing yellow robes much like the monks and observe 10 precepts. All of them

with shaven heads, a sign of leaving family lives. Among them, the Sri Lankan nuns seem to be holding the highest respect from society. Recently Sri Lankan government showed sign of interest in them and has so far issued identity card as a first step of formal recognition. There is also a movement to bring about the revival of bhikshuni order in Sri Lanka.

In order to understand their status, we should first look at the 4 groups of Buddhist as mentioned by the Buddha. They are monks (bhikshus), nuns (bhikshunis), laymen and laywomen. These 4 groups of Buddhist are responsible both for the development and for the decline of Buddhism. Now where do these contemporary nuns fit in this grouping? They do not really fit anywhere. They are not the bhikshunis as they have no ordination lineage. Generally they are grouped with laywomen. But again we see that they are not laywomen in the full sense for they have left their homes to lead committed religious lives. In my country, they are not accepted legally, they are not propagators; they, therefore, do not belong to the community. In short, they are just a group of awkward minority.

bhikshus (monks)	bhikshunis (nuns)
laymen	laywomen

The next question you will ask, why can't they become bhikshuni? The Theravada Buddhists insist that the lineage is now extinct. The people who can authorise the ordination are only community of monks and nuns. The community of monks is not ready to commit themselves, as it is, it seems, they are only too happy for the extinction of their capable counterparts.

Alright, what happens to the existing Chinese lineage I mentioned earlier? The Theravada Sangha does not accept Chinese lineage taking them to belong to Mahayana. I did some study on this objection and found out that the vinaya lineage as practised by the Chinese Sangha belongs to Dharmagupta

school. If you look up the Sri Lankan Chronicle you will find a list of 18 schools as prevalent during King Asoka's time around 3rd century B.C. you will see that Dharmagupta is subsect of Theravada. So the objection is again groundless.

We see now that Buddhist women are struggling to achieve the ideal self to play the role of propagators and have their equal share in bringing about understanding of Buddhism to the world. But they are much obstructed by the role of expected selves. (I mean the kind of roles expected of them by society often covered with traditional bias)

There is also some other phenomena which I should mention here. That is the spread of Buddhism to the west within the past few decades. When China took over Tibet 25 years ago, there is something positive in it as it forced the Tibetans to spread to different part of the world taking with them Buddhism. In north America now, Buddhism is much better known than say, twenty years ago. As a result many westerners have accepted Buddhism and some of the women wanted to lead a more committed lives. They slowly seek full ordination from Taiwan, Hong Kong and Korea. In 1983 for the first time in Buddhist history, an ordination ceremony for nuns was given in United States. And here in Halifax, there is a Tibetan centre to train both monks and nuns.

The movements and activities of these western Buddhist nuns will eventually be of great impact on the revival of nuns in the east.

We see then, that Buddhist women have been playing the expected roles of supporters, practitioners and are now aspiring to play the role of propagators and teachers of the dharma as they try to attain their ideal selves.

The lives of bhikshunis are serious and very committed, will not fit and will not be advisable for just any woman. But women who join the Order are of different and unique type, therefore they will be few in numbers. But those who have chosen such path of life could really be of great value not

only to Buddhist community only but also to the world at large.

To let the door open for the benefit of mankind, the monks will have to develop compassion to perceive the genuine religious need and commitment of women's part, they will have to be broadminded to accept the possibility of capable women who can actually bring much benefit to the womenfolk and society.

Let the door be opened to them so that the 4 groups of Buddhists be completed, so that the spirit of equality prevails. Give the women the place they have been entitled. What authority do we have to obstruct the religious growth of women as a community — the privilege given to them by the Buddha himself?

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*This kingdom was known as Siam until 1939, when its name was changed to Thailand. Then it reverted to the original name again in 1946. Two years after the coup d'état of 1947 it was decreed that the country would be called Thailand, and it remains so officially. Ironically the kingdom has since been ruled by one dictator after another—with very brief liberal democratic intervals. The name, Thailand, signifies the crisis of traditional Siamese Buddhist values. By removing from the nation the name it had carried all its history is in fact the first step in the psychic dehumanization of its citizens, especially when its original name was replaced by a hybrid, Anglicized word. This new name also implies chauvinism and irredentism.*



*The Siamese, Cambodian and Laotian Buddhist Era seems to be one year later than that of Burma, Srilanka and India. In fact this is not so. The difference is that while the latter regards the year of the Maha Parinibbana as B.E.1, the former takes it to be the first anniversary after the Master's Passing Away. For example this year is B.E. 2529 according to the Siamese, Cambodian and Laotian Calendar, but it is B.E. 2530 according to the Burmese, Ceylonese and Indian Calendar*

# Buddhism and Thai Politics



Since the focal point of Buddha's teaching is "nirvana", or the ultimate liberation of self, many people have been drawn to conclude that Buddhism is an individual, personal matter, with little concern about this 'worldly' world, least of all politics. But, if religion, as Durkheim asserts, is a vast symbolic system encompassing every aspect of society, both stabilizing and maintaining its continuity, social effect rather than individualistic aspect should be the center of our explaining religious phenomena. Taking Christianity in such light, Weber has discovered the inherent motivation for 'work ethics'—the source from which western capitalism has sprung. He, however, has rejected that there scarcely exists any teaching pertaining such significant social revolution in Buddhism. Yet, a prominent anthropologist on Southeast Asia has noted that ".....in all the societies where Theravada Buddhism become dominant, Buddhism has been construed as fundamental to the legitimacy of power". Moreover, in time of social crises, there have arisen in these

societies men who have claimed to possess exceptional Buddhist merit to restore the world back to peace (Keyes 1978:147).

From the point of view of our interest, the Thai case will be taken to illustrate the above premise. The attempt will be to examine the position of Buddhism in its interaction with the existing political establishments i.e. the monarchy and various regimes at various times in history. Significant political concepts, systems and phenomena with Buddhistic influences will be discussed in order to understand the underlying beliefs, factors or motivations and the system that have accommodated change through time. It is hoped that certain data and some fruitful implications would be gained, and further discussion in the direction of a well-balanced relationship between religion and politics in Thai society will be pursued.

## Traditional Thai Concept of Righteous Ruler/ "Dhammarājā"

It is generally known that up until fifty three years ago when western style democracy was introduced, the monarchy was the absolute ruling institution in Thai society. There were basically three models which the Thai monarchy selectively followed at each period of history, generally with one dominant over the other. And all three were differently affected by Buddhism.

The first model was the patriarchy which existed in some of the early Thai communities before the 15th century. What was significant about such a state lay in the principle of its righteous ruler. Not only that the welfare of the people was the prime concern of the king, but the king himself had to follow the five Buddhist precepts. On the Sabbath days, Ramkamhaeng practiced charity and led his people to listen to the Dhamma teaching, preached by a venerable monk invited from a far away land. Obvious-

ly, the king acted as royal patron of Buddhism as well as the moral leader of the people. Since this type of government was in contrast to the **Devarājā**, Hinduistic Khemer autocracy of the time, Professor Sulak has rightly put that Ramkamhaeng's inscription was "...a legitimization of a new state to be created with the backing of Theravada Buddhism". (Sivaraksa 1985 : 30).

**The Ngen Yang Chieng Saen** chronicle of a northern Thai state revealed a similar condition. The title of the ruler of that old state was evidently Khun Chom Dharm (Lord of Supreme Dhamma). The lord was taught by an angel to predict the future of his state by keeping watch on 3 conditions :

1) whether the ruler kept the five and eight Buddhist precepts, learned the traditional laws and brought prosperity to the people and the Buddhist order.

2) whether there were good ministers and

3) whether there were good monks and sages.

So long as these three conditions were in practice, the state would be prosperous. In addition, Khun Chom Dharm instructed his ministers and officials to profess Traditional Laws (Prapeni Dharm) and Vajji Dhamma (Apparihaniyadhamma) (Chandravongs and Smudhavanit 1980:40-45). Both Traditional Law and Vajji Dhamma, in fact, dealt with righteous society.

The Traditional Laws indicated the duties of just rulers i.e. having loving-kindness towards the people, giving alms, keeping law, respecting the people's rights, treating all people equally, providing patronage to deserving ministers and refraining from taking property from 3 groups of people: doctors, astrologers and magistrates. The Vajji Dhamma, on the other hand, emphasizes people's role in keeping the cohesion of their society by preserving seven conditions i.e. frequent meeting, acting in unison, respecting traditional laws, respecting the elder and their advice, refraining from taking or confining women, revering holy places and providing protection to arhats and monks (Ra-

javaramuni, *Dictionary of Buddhist Science* 1984).

The above-mentioned evidences of moral or Dhamma codes ruled in early Thai patriarchal communities render us some points of interest here. First, the state's destiny was tied up with the conduct of the ruler : only a moral-practiced and just ruler could assure the well-being of his people. And second, it was essential that the people uphold the representatives of Dhamma : monks and sages to keep the stability and prosperity of the state. These two points would continue to be the ideal principle of **Dhammarājā** (King of Righteousness) to develop later on.

Now, we turn to the second and evidently the most significant model of monarchy in Thailand, that is the **Dhammarājā**. The core of this principle was the ideal monarch who was described as righteous king, elected by the people due to his merit and his ten kingly virtues i.e. alms giving, morality, liberality, rectitude, gentleness, self-restriction, non-obstruction. Along with these rules of conduct was the concept of "**Chakravartin**", the universal sovereign, drawn from a Pali Buddhist canon (Digha Nikāya). As it appeared, a king, by keeping the rules of conduct, justified himself as a righteous king or **Dhammarājā**, and thus could attain the status of **Chakravartin** (Rabibadhana 1969 : 40-43).

This concept of Chakravartin, the wheel-turning monarch, the monarch who conquers not to expand his kingdom, but to teach Dhamma has become the ideal Thai kingship from the Sukhothai period of the 14th century. It was synthesized along with Buddhist cosmology and the concept of karma and first appeared in "**Trai Phum**" (The Three Worlds According to Phra Ruang). This **Trai Phum** which was written by King Li Thai, the grandson of Ramkamhaeng, has become the first comprehensive treatise of Buddhist cosmology in Theravada tradition, and has been of great influence on the beliefs, attitudes and behaviour of the Thai regarding the interwoven relationship between merit and power, religion/morality,

ethics and kingship/state.

Within the scope of our interest, the **Trai Phum** is significant on 3 points. First, it propagated the principle of ideal universal monarch who conquers through Dhamma. Second, considering that many of Li Thai's inscriptions were identical in their moral teachings to those of King Asoka who was regarded as exemplar of the ideal king in many Theravada states, Li Thai's **Trai Phum** can be seen as having been written with the intention to justify himself to the same image. As Andaya has noted, "Added weight was lent to Li Thai's claim to authority by emphasizing the less tangible sources of power, his spiritual attainments and moral excellence" (Andaya 1978:9). Some contemporary critics even went further in suggesting that Li Thai intended to use the **Trai Phum** for his political aims, in other words, to socialize people to accept his power. The latter based their theory primarily on the interpretation of our third point, that is the **Trai Phum**, by glorifying happy conditions in heaven, and horribly depicting life in hell as the results of Bun (Merit) and Bab (Sin) from the previous life has led to the fatalistic attitude of the people. People were persuaded to do merit in this life in order to be better off in the next life. And as far as politics is concerned, they were led to believe that the king justified his power and status because he had accumulated considerable merit in his previous life. Thus power has become equivalent to merit. The interpretation of this type has become the well-known explanation of Thai political passiveness. However, as a Buddhist authority argues, the description of heaven and hell when concluded in the universal, wholistic objective of the book shows the path from which man must free himself before he can attain Nirvana: the ultimate liberation (Rajavaramuni 1983:17-18).

Now, let's come to the third model of Thai monarchy : the **Devarājā** divine kingship which the Thai derived from their contact with the Khmer in the early-Ayudhya period. Since a Devarājā king was regarded

as the incarnation of Hindu Gods (Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma), he was thus held sacred and with the majestic aura of mystery provided by Brahmanic elements (i.e. the coronation ceremony). The status of a god-like king at the highest Brahmanical influences during the Ayudhya period was put in the Royal Decree to be "*the highest in the land*".....and his orders were "*...like the axes of heaven "which" trees and mountains.... cannot withstand...and will be destroyed*" (Rabibadhana 1969:44). Nevertheless, the Khmer concept of Devarājā was modified by Buddhist moral principles to insure that he should be measured against the law" (Ibid, 43).

Therefore, we witness King Baromatrai-lokhat who tries to follow King Li Thai's Dhammarājā image and King Naresuan who refrained from punishing his war commanders according to the Buddhist patriarch's sanction.

The early Bangkok period showed a less apparent devarājā influence and an innovative role of kingship in their patronage of Buddhism. Both Rama I and King Monkut (Rama IV) were well-known for their intellectual interest in Buddhism and their quests for clarification and new interpretations from the Buddhist Pali canon. As a result, Rama I had ordered the eradication of certain Hinduistic elements from traditional Ayudhya rituals i.e. in the oath of allegiance ceremony, and emphasized instead Buddhist implications. Of more significance was his purification of the Sangha, sponsorship of a revised canon and rewriting the legal codes. These acts may suggest Rama I's concern on his duty as protector of Buddhism. Their political implications should be noted for loyalty of the Buddhist orders was a political necessity after destructive wars with Burma and ecclesiastical dissents during King Taksin's reign. The reform of the legal codes using the Pali canon as its "*charter*" has, in fact, set a new direction on legal evolution of the country: it was thus legitimized, as Tambiah put, "*in self-consciously Buddhist politics*" (Tambiah 1978:118). As for King Mongkut, the founding of a new sect :

**Dhammayut** with the revived orthodox practices, has rendered him, as a scholar terms, "a champion of scripturalism." There is no question that his well-versed knowledge of Pali text including the inspirations from dialogue with the missionaries contributed to his religious and political reforms. Many of his decrees showed the effort to return to the Dharmmarājā principle while doing away with superstition and impure ritual accretions.

### Buddhistic Claims in Modern Thai Politics

The encounter with the west in the late 19th century and early 20th century has led to internal political systemization in modern Thai society, and increasing political control of the Buddhist order. The three Sangha Acts promulgated since, though in a different political context, all reinforced the centralization and creation of ecclesiastical hierarchy along its civil administrative structure (Tambiah, *ibid*, 120). In effect, considering the structural-functional relationship between the Buddhist order and the state, the former tends to be subjugated to the latter (See Suksamran 1981). Never-the-less, due to its being the deep-rooted traditional source of power legitimation as already discussed, Buddhism was revived by King Rama VI's nationalistic fervor, to be propagated as a kind of "civic religion", incorporated in the new national ideologies comprising : **Chāt** (The Nation), **Sāssana** (Religion) and **Phra Mahākasat** (the Monarchy). This triad has since been held as the 3 pillars of modern Thai identity, the sources of Thai cohesion and stability. The exact inter-relationship between the three corner stones is however ambiguous, variedly changed at different political contexts.

For Rama VI, the nation and monarchy are identical. He once wrote that to be a true Thai is to be loyal to the king. In such light, it was not inconsistent that he once deposed a high ranking monk for having published a book with elaborations against militarism and World War I. Yet, here Rama VI was not

against the idea of peace *per se* for he himself used to advocate peace. But when his wish became the state's policy, criticism, even in accordance with buddhist teachings, must be abolished. With such analysis, Satha-Anand was led to conclude that "One of the results of this peculiar relationship which has been going for centuries is that Buddhism has been deprived of the teaching that would not coincide with state policies. Consequently Buddhist teachings in Thai society have generally been contained at the individual level. Significant social messages of Buddhism such as the issue of peace and war lose their visibility in the eyes of Thai Buddhists". (Satha-Anand 1985:30).

My argument here is that, on the contrary, Thai history from the Ayudhyan period up to the Bangkok time has witnessed several uprisings with close relationship with traditional Buddhist beliefs. Since there are several research both by Thai and western scholars on the topic i.e. Millennialism or the "Holy Man" movement (see Huntrakul and Kamutpitsmai 1984), only some notes on its characteristics suffice to be mentioned here as follows.

First, as Keyes has pointed out, the "Holy Man" movements in Thai society were always related to the concept of power and "Phu Mee Bun" (Holy Man). However, though generally the king was regarded as the one who had accumulated great merit in the previous life, **Phu Mee Bun** could be anybody besides the king i.e. religious men, **setthi** or **kahabodi** (wealthy men) (see Keyes 1977, and Kasetsiri 1976:44-7). The latter could claim legitimation of power on the basis of their "merit".

Second, though the concept of Sri Ariyamettra Bodhisatta, the coming of the Buddha-to-be, was evident in most "Holy Man" movements, it has also been used to support kingship in Buddhist societies i.e. Thailand and Ceylon. Therefore, we need to know more about other related factors i.e. socio-political and economic before we can explain particular phenomena.

Third, the concept of millennialism was apparently propagated through the Buddhist

Pali canon and literature i.e. Phra Malai Chant which were in popularity in the central plain. Yet, this area witnessed none of the Holy Man rebellions. On the contrary, the area of the Korat plateau was the core of at least 6 Holy rebellions (Suntharavanit in Huntrakul 1984:15).

All these points seem to suggest that the viability of any political system depends on the ability of the ruler to justify its legitimization. In the central plain, the rulers were successful in making its system acceptable to the mass. One of their achievements lay in the creation of certain political ideology that would sustain and propagate its system i.e. the political ideology supported by religious motivations....The concept of Dhammarājā kingship which is tied to the law of karma and merit as it appeared in **Trai Phum**. The **Trai Phum**, though includes the Sri Ariyamettra idea and indicates the inequality between the ruler and the ruled, emphasizes the virtues of the good government and points out that the wrong could be corrected. The millenialism, on the other hand, suggests the overthrow of the existing system for a better utopia (ibid., 26-28). At the final analysis, it should be reminded that the government in the central plain had taken considerable measures (i.e. state ceremonies) to assure that no major social, economic or political unrests would occur to disrupt its status quo.

To conclude, the discussion on the Holy Man rebellions in Thai society has illustrated that it is important to consider Buddhism both in its universalistic and individual aspects. For Thai society, in the normal condition, Buddhism serves as individual's rule of conduct and provides the context within which political order is conceptualized and maintained. But in circumstances faced with societal dissents and disorders, certain traditional Buddhist beliefs could be used to accommodate for changes, through force. Though all Holy Man rebellions failed, evidences of militant Buddhism have survived in contemporary Thai politics. The case of Kittivudho, a famous monk who, at the highest political tension in

1976, advocated a holy war on "communists", justifying with the analogy drawn from the Pali canon that "to kill communists is not a sin" attests to the inherent vitality of political exploitation of Buddhism (see Keyes 1978).

This paper examined the force which Buddhism has exerted in Thai society. It is significant that any attempt to envisage the course of Thai politics cannot discard a thorough understanding of the role Buddhism has had in relation to other Thai institutions.

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# **BUDDHIST INFLUENCE** **ON THAI EDUCATION**



Buddhism had played the most important part on Thai education for more than seven centuries. That is from the early Kingdom of Sukhothai in the 12<sup>th</sup> century up to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when King Rama IV and Rama V brought Thailand to the new era of modernization. We can say that throughout this long history Buddhism was the way of life of Thai people. A temple was the center of a village and town. It served the community on religious, educational and recreational purposes; contributed facilities for the townfolks in festive occasions. Apart from being a leader in intellectual activities a monk was also able to treat those who suffered from both mental and physical illness

by applying Buddhism, superstition and the simple way of medical care that is the using of herbs and so on. A temple used to be everything either a school, a playground, a clinic or an art center for the Thais.

However, after the introduction of the secular education in the reign of King Rama V the role of Buddhist institutions continually declined. Modern schools and universities are run by the state. The needs to prepare man power to serve many sectors of the state organs and new jobs force those in charge of national education to emphasize school and university syllabus on technical and skilled knowledge.

Now after a century of trial, we learn



that this modern education naturally has considerably served Thai society at the time when we had to tackle problems brought by colonialism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. But now quite a lot of the Thais begin to question the value of this modernized or westernized education system. Don't we give too much importance to the advancement of knowledge and academic excellence and ignore the traditional Buddhist way of educating people?

From the decade of 1970's to 1980's onwards scholars, educators and man from other fields of interest have paid much attention to Thai system of education. Never before have these people asked themselves and the society as much as this about the outcome of our education system today.

Why come these voices? We can summarize as these.

Now our society is facing with bundle of problems. Like the mainstream of the world today, Thai people are trapped in a competitive society with quite high exploitation. People are confronted with new disease that is frustration and alienation, not necessary to mention those of poverty and the gap between the rich and the poor. Many wonder whether the education system we have now has any responsibility with this crippled society.

This awakening is a good sign for the Thai to get up, to retrospect and to seek the right path for their society. The first thing to look at is the education system we exercise now. This has brought to many disputes and discussion. Among those concerned with seeking the way out for the Thai society are the two leading Buddhist scholars, the Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and the Venerable Phra Rajvaramuni. They see that the right mean to solve the problems we are facing now is to go back to our traditional Buddhism and the Buddhist way of learning.

In his **Thai Philosophy of Education** (Kled Thai, 1975) the Venerable Phra Rajvaramuni clearly stated that the roots of evils in our society now are that we neither know ourselves nor our society. We are excited with all the new things from the



West, we appreciate technology and all sorts of extravagant life style. So we are trapped all the time to the advancement of ourselves materially and are less concerned with other people. This phenomena is prevailing. He tries to point out that the real education must be the process that makes man free, free from the surrounding factors and can choose the way of living by himself as much as he can. In details he said that education must help man to understand the mechanics of his life, to understand the mystery of the surrounding natures and to know the means to cope with those natures harmoniously. He said that this is the basic freedom of life. And for the social reform, he said "man must learn to live together, learn to help each other and contribute good things to the society, co-work for the creation of a just and peaceful society. Only when a society come to this state can we call it a free society: freed from oppression. It is great in itself, great in creating and enjoying the fruits of its prosperity. People in this kind of society are the real socially free ones."

According to him free people and free society could come out only when man are rightly educated. There are two factors that will be helpful for education which is free and full of wisdom. The first is **paratoghosa** which means learning from others through good company and good surroundings including friends, teachers, all kinds of mass media and physical surroundings. Another Buddhist term for these is **kalayānamitta**. The other one is what he calls **yonisomanasikāra**; systematic attention or analytical reflection.

Those who are surrounded with a good

**paratoghosa** and empowered with **yonisomanasikāra** would be the one who can free himself and free the society. The real education must aim at this goal. Education must empower man with wisdom (not academic knowledge): and with this wisdom the loving kindness (**mettā**) will shine, one has a mind for others.

This analysis attacks at the heart of the mismanaged education system in Thailand. I don't think many educators in my country disagree with this interpretation of the Buddhist thought of education.

After years of seeking, many sectors in Thailand now realize that it's time to go back to our roots. To learn the Buddhist way of learning and to live the Buddhist way of life. However, even this trend which grows with firm steps to bring it into practice is rather limited. But this idea is increasingly accepted.

The present time is a highlight of Buddhist movements in Thailand. Apart from the scientific study of Dhamma led by the Venerable Buddhadhassa Bhikkhu and the Venerable Phra Rajvaramuni, there are other monks and groups of religious believers who call for Buddhism as the way of social reform with their own way of interpretation of Buddhism.

Schools as well as universities have improved their syllabus, and Buddhism is widely taught. But we cannot highly hope for the society with wisdom just because of these movements. Misinterpretation of Buddhism might lead to more ignorance.

To implant the Buddha Dhamma and ethics to the young people is a duty every Thai should concern. The three main social organs, a family, the sangha and an education system, are directly responsible for the deed. But the real situation today, each of these organs is going with its own way. Each with its problems and all are lack of proper co-operation. If we take a look at a family life, how far could parents bring the Dhamma to their children? As I have said from the start, Buddhism had strongly been our way of life, but not now. Nowadays, many Thais say that they are only registered Buddhists. They rarely know the Lord

Buddha's words. And less still is to bring them into practice. Sure, a lot of parents now rear up their children with the guidance of Dhamma. But most of them touch only at the facial level of the five moral precepts. That is to avoid committing evil and to do good. Don't kill because it is a sin etc. The struggle in life for the economic needs always take away parents' time. More and more people turn their back to a temple. They don't see and don't quite understand whether the religion has any thing to do with their life. When they think of Buddhism the things that come to their mind are the religious rituals which are less and less practical for this modernized society. So we could not expect much from a family though it is the closest institution to the children and should be the best **kalayānamitta** to them. In the former time children were encouraged by the Buddhist atmosphere. They could follow their parents to the temple. Therefore young people had more opportunity to be near a good **paratoghosa**. But now due to a new mode of living their attention are shifted away. Fewer and fewer young people go to a temple. Why? Some say because of the lack of time while others because a temple can not help them much in solving problems they face. Now the society has changed but monks remain as ever. They are not well-informed, so how could they talk and share the problems of those in the wordly society.

Monks, the ones who used to bridge the people's gap in education, are now behind those secular ones in many fields of knowledges. Therefore, the role of the sangha in the field of education is lessened, especially in towns and cities. The situation is a little better in a village, but it cannot be compared with that in the past.

So what contributions Buddhist institutions can offer now in the area of education? Statistically, the sangha annually helps educate about 130,000 novices, most of whom come from a poor family. Each year only 43% of students from elementary schools go on studying in secondary level.

The 400,000 monks and novices

(Department of Religious Affairs, 1984) can do much for the Thai society if they themselves realize the real situation and learn to develop themselves in accord with the Dhamma and the needs of society. Thus education for monks is necessary as well.

While fewer people pay attention to the religion, old way of thinking and belief are still significant in the way parents instruct their children especially those in rural areas. They believe in **kamma** and rebirth. So they socialize their children with this belief too, i.e. you shouldn't do that because it would cause a bad result in the next life. This old way of teaching Dhamma is still dominant in Thai society. Anyway, for those who are educated, the interpretation of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu about the **kamma** according to the law of conditionality, **Idappaccayatā**,<sup>1</sup> also is widely accepted now.

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<sup>1</sup>Idappaccayatā or the Chain of Causation or Dependent Origination, i.e.

Conditioned by ignorance is the Will-to-Action;  
conditioned by the Will-to-Action is Consciousness;  
conditioned by Consciousness is Psychophysical Existence;  
conditioned by Psychophysical Existence are the Six-sense-fields;  
conditioned by the Six-sense-fields is Contact;  
conditioned by Contact is Feeling;  
conditioned by Feeling is Craving;  
conditioned by Craving is Grasping;  
conditioned by Grasping is Becoming;  
conditioned by Becoming is Birth;  
conditioned by Birth there come into Being,  
Aging and Dying, Grief, Sorrow, (Bodily) Suffering,  
Lamentation and Despair. Thus is the origin of the whole mass of suffering.

This scientific way of teaching Buddhism attracts the young generation more and more. Side by side with the Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, the Venerable Phra Rajvaramuni represents the new era of Buddhist learning. They have greatly influenced Thai intellectuals and educators to realize and to introduce the Buddhist way of learning to the education system of Thailand today.

One example of a school which proceeds along this Buddhist line is the Children's Village School in Karnchanaburi. While most schools and universities are drifting away with the western philosophy of education, emphasizing on academic achievements, the Children's Village School (founded in 1979) is looking deep down into the Buddhist way of education. In my talk with Mr. Pibhop Thongchai, the director of the school (4 April

1986) he said that the school started off as a boarding school with an inspiration from A.S. Neill's Summer Hill School in England. But the most important influence now has come from Buddhism, which emphasizes the need for a good environment and the importance of human relationships (**kalayānamitta** or good **paratoghosa**). The school sets up favorable environmental conditions for the growth of **kusalamūla** or the root cause of natural inclination for goodness in man and help it to overcome the **akusalamūla** or the natural inclination for evils. So they give the importance to the arrangement of the school surroundings to fit in with the students, not moulding the students to fit the school. The students here are brought up freely among lovely nature. They grow up without pressure. Though most of them came from poor families, bearing with emotional problems and violent background, they can live happily here in the atmosphere full of friendliness. Mr. Pibhop said that a person with happiness in his heart will not kill or harm himself and others.

Apart from being a school, the Children's Village School is now on its way to an ideal Buddhist community. That is a community with self-sufficiency. On some parts of the 38 acres of land, they now grow plants and trees and raise poultry for their own need. The next to come is a cow farm and other necessary cultivation. They are stepping forward along the line of the Right Livelihood of the Buddhist teaching.

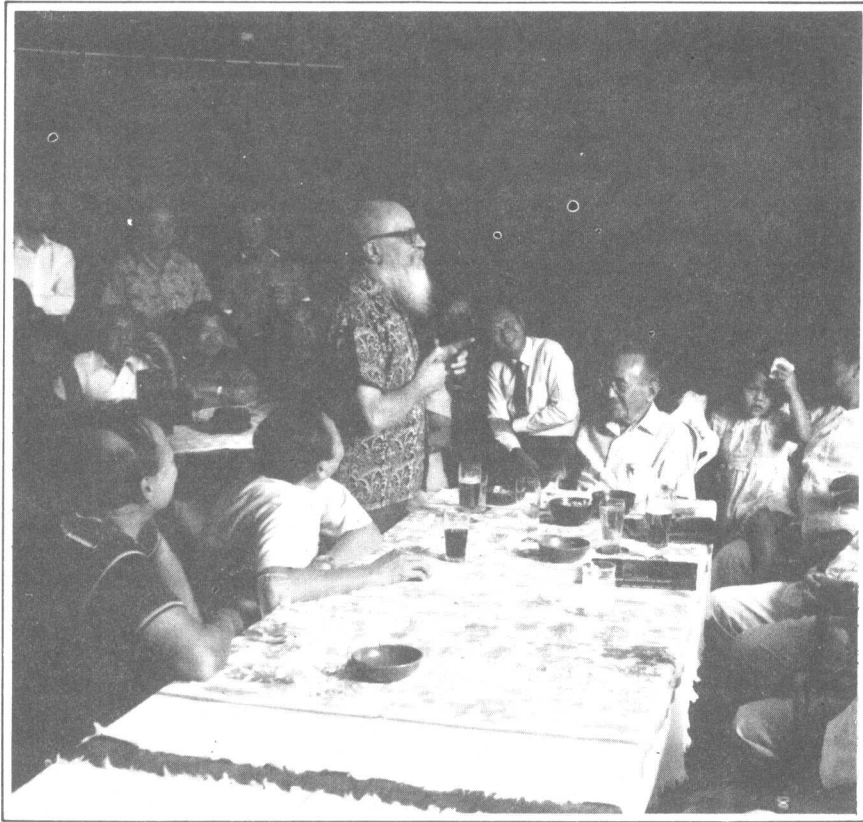
The Children's Village School is one of the communities growing up with the Buddhist view and practice. It naturally is a fruit of the seeking for the better educational and social systems of a group of people who still have a faith in Buddhist way of solving personal and social problems.

What I have said is only example of the rising consciousness of self-education and self-help according to a Buddhist proverb "One must rely on oneself". There also are other groups and individuals who try to educate the mass to be less dependent neither on the misleading social values nor technology. The Folk Doctor Foundation distributes a monthly magazine informing the folks how to treat and look after themselves when they get sick, not to rush to a doctor. Few farmers are looking back toward the simple ways of farming, and avoid using high technology which often bring them to debt. There also are monks with social spirit who work with perseverance in the development of villages; namely Luang Paw Nan an abbot in Surin province, Prakrue Mongkol Silawongse and Phra Devakavi in Chiangmai. They educate and encourage people to improve their farming, education and the way of living in accordance with Buddhist condition. Their successes are remarkable.

All these are only some aspects of Buddhist movement in Thailand today. They really are a new trend of implanting a social education to the society with an ever increasing aspiration for the generation to come.

**Ms. SODSAI KHANTIWORAPHONG**  
**Teachers' College, Songkhla**

## MY PERSONAL VIEWS ON EDUCATION



*A French Catholic teacher with his former Thai students.*

My formal education was spent mostly in Christian institutions, for which I am grateful. I think Christian education helped me to be a good Buddhist and my encounter with Christian friends assisted me in evaluating my own religion and culture as well as preparing me for my ecumenical works later in life.

Let me give you a brief sketch of my family and up-bringing, as well as a Thai historical background.

My father was the first generation to be exposed to missionary schools, as western education or Christian schooling for non Christians only started in Siam just over one hundred years ago.

Before that, when King Mongkut started employing English teachers to coach his children to be aware of western scientific

knowledge and technical knowhows, he made it clear that no Christian teaching would be allowed in the Grand Palace.

Before ascending the throne, as Rama IV, when he was a Buddhist monk for 26 years, Mongkut learned English from American Protestants and Latin from a French Roman Catholic Bishop, Vicar Apostolic of Bangkok. Hence he was the first oriental monarch to master the English language and knew quite enough of western mathematics and astronomy. Yet he felt that western science and technology made sense and they confirmed logically his own faith in Buddhism, whereas he felt that Christianity, as presented to him by the missionaries, were fictitious and yet they were put to him with so much arrogant as if his own religion was a false one. Unfortunately this tendency has

not been improved very much by many so-called Thai Christians.

When Chulalongkorn succeeded his father as Rama V, he expanded the Palace School for the public and he welcomed missionaries to establish educational institutions for his subjects, provided that they did not use education as a means of converting the Thais to Christianity. By and large, the missionaries respected the King's wish; and even if they did not, not many Thais were converted through formal educational institutions.

As I said, my father's generation was the first to benefit from this new venture, as it was the Government's policy that Thais must be educated to show to the western imperialists that we could run our own country — be it our bureaucracy or our commerce. If need be, westerners would be employed in key positions — but certainly not ministerial ranks which were reserved for the top Thai elites — and those positions occupied by westerners would eventually be replaced by Thai nationals.

My father, for instance, went to both American Protestant and French Catholic schools. Although he came from a Sino-Thai family background, I think Christian schooling made him more aware of his Thai Buddhist heritage.

After graduation from the most senior class of the Assumption College, he was regarded as one of the best educated persons within the country, as there was no university education available then. Besides most of his contemporaries left school long before reaching the final year, as they were in demand by the Government as well as by foreign firms.

My father started his career as a clerk in a German company, eventually he became chief clerk in the British American Tobacco Monopoly which was perhaps the biggest foreign enterprise in Siam. When the company was bought by the Thai government, my father replaced his former British boss as the Chief Accountant of the Thai Tobacco Monopoly.

My father's career was an example of a

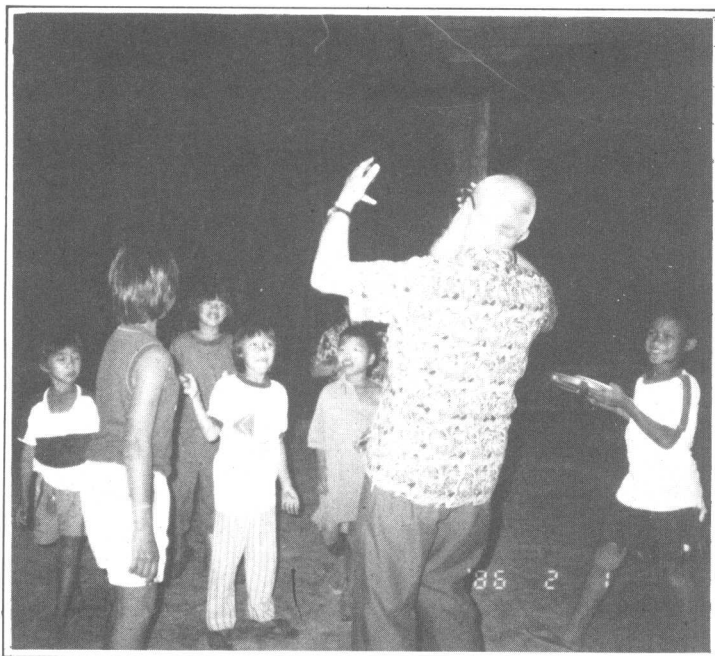
middle class Bangkok society, which must have appealed to the public that to be educated in Christian schools, meant (1) you could have the command of a foreign language (2) you knew somewhat, perhaps not too inferior to a westerner (3) with diligence, ability and honesty, you might even end up as a westerner.

Christianity does not come to the mind of the average Thai who goes to Christian schools. Yet Protestant ethics may influence subconsciously, especially to the Sino-Thai, who want worldly success, through hardworking and honest dealing.

And that, which was never acknowledged openly is that Christian rites, rituals and preaching which were so western and hence so foreign to us, made many of us dig deep into our own culture — at least to reply to their arrogant charges against our religion and way of life.

My father, for instance, felt that Christian education (or western education run by missionaries) was good for him and he sent me to both Protestant and Catholic schools. Then he felt that I might not be strong enough to resist Christian postilization. Hence he sent me to be ordained as a novice, living with monks in Buddhist monasteries after my graduation from primary schools. To me this is an everlasting influence, without being exposed to Christian institutions before or after; would it have the same impact on me or not, I have no idea.

Take another example from my own family. My cousin who was two years younger than my father, went to a boarding school run by Miss Cole, the famous American Protestant educationalist, in Bangkok and became her favourite. Later she joined teaching staff of the Anglican mission and was converted to Anglicanism. Her opinion, fifty or sixty years ago, was that Buddhism was superstitious, and Thai culture was something decadent. To be a Christian meant to be educated, to be westernised, to speak English and to belong to the one and only true religion. We who were her cousins were not bad but had to be redeemed through Jesus Christ, the one and only



*At Children's Village School*

Redeemer of the World.

Later in life, she changed her opinion. She is still grateful to her Christian education, but she feels that to go back to her own root in Buddhism and Thai culture is not a sin. She finds mindfulness in Buddhist practice and generosity as well as compassion great Buddhist virtues. Although she calls herself Buddhist, she never repudiates her Christian upbringing. She still finds those Christian friends **KALAYĀNAMITTA** in the Buddhist context.

To me the storeis of my family, although not of significant, are relevent to the topics of our discussion. At least I have often been thinking about them and draw some conclusions that there is not one single superior religion, or superior educational system.

Although I am a Buddhist, and find Buddhism most helpful to me, I see that improvement must also be made to make Buddhism alive to serve mankind right now and in the future. Indeed we could learn a great deal from Christian and even materialistic non-Christian education..

Unfortunately for people like us, we

equate Christian education with western education, which may be partly true only. More unfortunate however was that Christianity was used to formalize public school education and university education in Britain, which became part and parcel of the Empire i.e. the British were educated to serve their God, King and Country, so that Ruld Britania.

Britain rule the waves. So when the First World War broke out, the Germans who worshipped the same God also sacrificed their lives for their God, King and Country.

Although this concept has more or less gone from Europe, the Thais have inherited it in the name of the Thai Nation, the Buddhist religion and the Monarchy. If we trace this sacrilege Trinity, it all goes back to British education, whether minus Christianity or not, through nationalism and chauvinism.

The unfortunate aspect of Christian education is that when it went along with the empire, God became the Whiteman, and Christianity meant arrogance, aggression, superiority, materialism and militarism.

Now, we inherited this negative elements in Siam, in Sri Lanka and in Burma

too.

Christians as well as Buddhists need to go back to our respective roots to be more humble, to be more mindful, to work for our own spiritual growth or salvation by serving the society so that social justice would be possible with compassion and nonviolence.

People like Adam Curle, with his brilliant book **Education for Liberation** could speak both for Buddhists and Christians. Although Curle is a practising Quaker, we Buddhists would find the education prescribed there could also be authentic Buddhist, or if I may say so, it could be Buddhist with a small b i.e. the essential message of the Buddha for liberating oneself and one's society is much more meaningful than those institutions – whether Buddhist or Christian – which try to maintain themselves, sometimes oppressively in the name of Buddha or Christ.

For Buddhism, education or **Sikkhā** is the keyword. Everyone must be educated to be liberated from the three root causes of suffering, namely greed, hatred and delusion.

To be able to do this, one must first of all take the minimum precepts not to exploit oneself and not to exploit others – human, animal or ecological phenomena. These precepts or **SĪLA** are possible as much as one is aware of oneself – knowing one's potentiality, one's strength, and one's weakness. Hence one must cultivate mindfulness, through meditation practices or **SAMĀDHI** in order to be calm so that one really knows who one is critically, deeply, subconsciously – no false modesty, no pretension, no arrogance – leading to no conceitedness or selfishness.

Right concentration helps one to be normal. Normality should be ethical standard for all in clearing with oneself as well as with others. This normality is only possible if concentration or mindfulness is developed towards wisdom **PAÑÑĀ** or **PRAJÑĀ** i.e. knowing reality, understanding things as they really are. The whole natural phenomena is indeed **PATICA-SAMUPPADA** or interdependent origination. Each individual is interdependent on society and vice versa.

If our thought is clouded by greed, hatred or delusion, our speeches and actions will be likewise. Unskillful means will be the result, hence suffering.

If our thought could be educated or conditioned towards wisdom instead of ignorance, we could train our mind, hence our words and actions to be skillful, i.e. wisdom will produce compassion, which will overcome suffering.

Hate is overcome by love, lie is overcome by truthfulness, stinginess is overcome by charity, arrogance is overcome by humility and honesty. Competition is overcome by collaboration and friendliness.

This may sound too idealistic. Many of my compatriots also complained that there was no such ideal Buddhist education or society anywhere. Unfortunately those critics were brought up in western educational institutions, without real exposures to Buddhist culture.

I think for Christianity, without Christian witness, without the community of the saints and the ideal Christian individual as well as ideal Christian society, there could not be Christianity. Likewise, in Buddhism, the **Ariya Sangha** was and still is the ideal society.

We realize of course that our **Sangha** or Buddhist society existing on the whole is not yet ideal, but we strive to our **summum bonum**. Even if the society has imperfection and shortcoming, it allows its members to achieve personal liberation and that liberation brings compassion and wisdom to other members in society.

I maintain that prior to colonial expansion, Buddhist education prevailed in most Buddhist societies in Asia, with many drawbacks and imperfections. There were even exploitations and social unjust every now and again. In the past Buddhism mixed too much with Confucianism in East Asia and too much with Hinduism and animism in South and Southeast Asia – sometimes with positive result, and often-times with very negative result. Indeed Buddhism disappeared from India because of inappropriate mixing up with Hinduism rather than because of Muslim conquest.

Yet by not resisting Muslim conquest violently it also gives credit to Buddhism. The recent events that the Tibetan positively withdrew at the Chinese aggression and expansion should also be taken note of.

The Tibetans may have lost their country and their independence as a nation state, but they have helped the world by propagating Buddhist mindfulness, through Buddhist education, more than any single ethnic entity. They do so with humility and sincerity, without wanting to convert anybody to Buddhism. They could do it because they suffered so much at the hands of the Chinese, and, although their country was regarded as backward economically, it was well advanced spiritually and educationally that there are still many enlightened beings, who have liberated themselves from greed, hatred and delusion. Hence they could help us all towards wisdom and compassion.

In my country, prior to western expansion in the reigns of Rama IV and V, we might not be as backward economically and politically as Tibet, measuring from western materialistic standpoint, and perhaps we did not have as many enlightened **gurus** as in Tibet. Yet our Buddhist societies and education made us happy, generally proud and humble.

Although we did not lose our independence politically, we lost it intellectually, that most of our top elites are still aping after the west, without real awakening to our own spiritual and cultural heritage. They only use Buddhism, nationalism and Monarchism as political tools to oppress those who challenge the legitimacy and legality of Thai military which is of course unBuddhistic.

However, more and more of the younger generations have realized that western education as applied to our primary, secondary and higher education is a failure. Christian educational institutions in our country have also become so materialistic and worldly that they all become inferior to public education. So many of us are now seeking alternative Buddhist education – not

only by going back to the past, but also for bringing the timeless message of the Buddha to be relevant to contemporary Siam and our future. We are now learning from our abbots and our village headmen upcountry, and with them, we hope to educate our own public to be more self reliance, to be less dependent on western technologies, materialism and consumer culture, using our own indigenous Buddhist culture, Buddhist values and Buddhist ways of life, give us much strength to build our own education and our society.

Although our nation was not taken over as in Tibet or Vietnam, our people suffer so much from malnutrition, from prostitution, from child labour – indeed from social unjust system.

The good thing about Buddhism is that when we face so much suffering, we will find out the root cause of it and then we want the elimination of suffering. The Buddhist approach to overcoming individual suffering as well as social suffering is through Buddhist education – the Middle Way – to be normal physically, mentally, socially and spiritually, so that wisdom and compassion will be possible.

We are now also learning from our Tibetan brothers and sisters, as well as from our Vietnamese friends in exile. They have done admirably to educate their own people as well as others who need not be Buddhist. We are also hoping to work with our friends in Sri Lanka, Burma, Lao and Cambodia to share our common heritage and to lessen suffering in the name of chauvinist Buddhism.

Last but not least we want to learn from our Christian friends who could help us avoiding their past mistakes and now learn from each other as well as strengthening each other from our different religious perspectives in order that education will really be less institutional but be more to liberate humankind.

**S. Sivaraksa**  
*A talk at Bad Boll Academy*  
*Germany 13 April 1986*



# THICH NHAT HANH—AN APPRECIATION

BY ANDY COOPER

A Zen Master, poet and peace worker, Thich Nhat Hanh is a leading exponent of "engaged Buddhism"—the actualization of the twin ideals of insight and compassion through the integration of meditation and work for the peace and protection of all beings.

As war engulfed their country, a nonviolent movement developed within Vietnam's Buddhist community that responded to the devastation and misery with projects that both brought relief to the war's victims and demonstrated a refusal to cooperate with the machinery of the war itself. In the course of their work, thousands of Buddhists were executed or imprisoned.

Nhat Hanh was instrumental in the emergence and development of the Buddhist nonviolent movement. He helped found and direct two of its principle bases — Van Hanh University and the School of Youth for Social Service — out of which grew such activities as antiwar demonstrations, an underground press, village reconstruction projects, anti-draft counseling, an underground for draft resisters, and care for countless innocents suffering in the wake of war.

In the foreword to Nhat Hanh's *Vietnam: Lotus in a Sea of Fire*, Thomas Merton wrote:

"While many of his countrymen are divided and find themselves, through choice or through compulsion, supporting the Saigon government and the Americans, or formally and explicitly committed to communism, Nhat Hanh speaks for the vast majority who know little of politics but who seek to preserve something of Vietnam's traditional identity as an Asian and largely Buddhist culture. Above all, they want to live and see an end to a brutal and useless war."

In 1966, Nhat Hanh came to the U.S. to speak to the American public on behalf of the Vietnamese people and their wish for peace. As he told an American audience at

that time, "If you want the tree to grow it won't help to water the leaves. You have to water the roots. Many of the roots of the war are here in your own country. To help the people who are to be bombed, to try to protect them from this suffering, I have come here."

In a letter written in 1965 to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Nhat Hanh sought to demonstrate the underlying unity of the struggles for peace in Vietnam and justice in America:

"I believe with all my heart that the monks who burned themselves did not aim at the death of the oppressors but only at a change in their policy. Their enemies are not man. They are intolerance, fanaticism, dictatorship, stupidity, hatred, and discrimination which lie within the heart of man. I also believe with all my being that the struggle for equality and freedom you led in Birmingham, Alabama, is not really aimed at the whites but only at intolerance, hatred, and discrimination. These are real enemies of man — not man himself. In our unfortunate fatherland we are trying to plead desperately: do not kill man, even in man's name. Please kill the real enemies of man which are present everywhere, in our very hearts and minds."

One year later, during Nhat Hanh's speaking tour, he met with Dr. King. At a press conference following the meeting, Dr. King, ignoring the advice of many opposed to his "mixing issues," announced his opposition to the war. In 1968, three months before he was assassinated, Dr. King nominated Nhat Hanh for the Nobel Peace Prize.

For sixteen years, through regimes of the right and left, Nhat Hanh has lived in exile from his homeland. Living in France, he has continued to work for peace and reconciliation as head of the Vietnamese Buddhist Peace Delegation in Paris and as

vice-chairperson of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. A prolific and versatile writer, he has authored many books, both in Vietnamese and English, among them: *Zen*

*Keys* (Doubleday), *The Cry of Vietnam* (Unicorn Press), *The Miracle of Mindfulness* (Beacon), and as coauthor with Daniel Berrigan, *The Raft Is Not the Shore* (Beacon).

# THE OLD MENDICANT

BY THICH NHAT HANH

*Translated from the Vietnamese by the author.*

Being rock, being gas, being mist, being Mind.

Being the mesons traveling among galaxies with the speed of light,

You have come here, my beloved one, your blue eyes shine, so beautiful and deep.

You have taken the path traced for you by both the non-beginning and the never-ending.

You say that on your way here you have gone through millions of births and deaths;

Innumerable times you have been transformed into fire-storms in outer-space;

You have used your own body to measure the age of the mountains and rivers.

You have manifested yourself as trees, as grass, as butterflies, as single celled beings, and of chrysanthemums;

But the eyes with which you looked at me this morning tell me you have never died.

Your smile invites me into the game whose beginning no one knows, the game of hide-and-seek.

Oh, green caterpillar, you are solemnly using your body to measure the length of the rose branch that grew last summer.

Everyone says that you, my dear one, were just born this spring.

But tell me, how long have you been around?

Your deep and silent smile – why wait until this moment to reveal yourself to me?

O, caterpillar, suns, moons, and stars flow

out each time I exhale,

Who knows that the infinitely large must be found in your tiny body?

Upon each point on your body thousands of Buddha-fields have been established.

And with each stretch of your body, you measure time from the non-beginning to the never-ending.

The Great Mendicant of old is still there, on the Vulture Peak, contemplating the ever-splendid sunset.

Gotama! How strange! Who said that the Udumbara flower blooms only once every three thousand years?

That sound of the rising tide – you cannot help hearing it if you have an attentive ear.



## AMINAH KALYANOND (1943? - 1986)

### An Obituary

It is with much sadness and an inevitable sense of loss that we record the death of Aminah Kalyanond who, after a long illness cheerfully and patiently borne, passed away peacefully at Amaravati in the early hours of Wednesday, 5th February, 1986, shortly after her 43rd birthday.

Aminah came from an Islamic background in Thailand and left home, as so many have before and since, with a youthful curiosity and sense of adventure to see something of the West and England in particular. Reading one day some advice given by Queen Sirikit of Thailand for Students overseas, she began to visit the Buddhapadipa Temple at Wimbledon. Here her love of the Dharma was kindled and deepened as time passed. By now seriously ill with cancer, she joined the Chithurst Community under the guidance of the Ven. Sumedho and remained there for about one year. At various times when she felt able to, she also took part in a number of retreats,

both here and abroad, as well as in other functions, and attended the Society where members and friends will remember her radiant smile. It was in this period of her deepening love for the Dharma that she effort-lessly made so many friends. To meet her was to become her immediate and cherished friend. Brim full of love, compassion, joy in the lives of others, and peace, we saw in her life the meaning of the Brahma Vihara, the four sublime or divine states of mind. She was, in a word, good – good by the highest standards of any religion and of any age. Catherine Hewitt, who knew her well, has dedicated the following beautiful lines to her memory – lines which remind us of some of these sublime qualities – and perhaps these should serve as her epitaph:–

**RON MADDUX**  
from *The Middle Way*  
May 1986

## REVIEWS

### **DHAMMIC SOCIALISM,**

*By Bhikkhu Buddhadasa.*

*Translated, edited and introduced by Donald K Swearer. (Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development, Bangkok, 1986) 142 pp. Baht 80 (Distributed in the UK by Buddhist Peace Fellowship Publications, 36 Victoria Parade, Preston, Lancs PR2 1DT at £3.50 incl. postage).*

'Bhikkhu Buddhadasa has been and continues to be the most influential Buddhist thinker in Thailand, and he has certainly been the most creative and controversial Theravada interpreter in the modern period of world history'. However Dr Swearer's

claim is estimated, **Ajahn** Buddhadasa's writing certainly deserves to be much better known in the West than it appears to be. A few readers may have come across his excellent little **Handbook for Mankind: Principles of Buddhism Explained** (Bangkok, 1984), informally published and distributed. Also, available from libraries, there is his **Towards the Truth** (Philadelphia: Westminster P., 1971), edited by Dr Swearer. The present volume comprises four essays and a valuable 43pp **Introduction**. Most of the **Ajahn's** extensive output consists of taped talks given on various occasions and are the suggestive and inspirational guidance of the sage rather than the rigorous and specific exposition of (in this case) the social scientist.

Buddhadasa's Dhamma teaching is experientially and meditatively based and is much concerned with the crisis in traditional

Thai Buddhism. Eroded and devitalised by Western secularism, this, beyond the fringe of forest monasticism, appears to be an increasingly empty shell of public ceremonial combined with quasi-magical ritual designed to bring personal good fortune (p25).

Dhammic socialism is to be distinguished from the earlier Asian 'Buddhist socialism', which Swearer defines as 'an attempt to integrate a sense of cultural-national identity represented by Buddhism...into the political and economic structures and programmes of the modern West' (p20). Dhammic socialism, on the contrary, claims to be a direct application of Dhamma, and part of the goal of every religion, (which is) to put an end to self-centredness, to a 'me' and 'mine' kind of thinking' (Buddhadasa, p67). 'To be freed from the preoccupations which define one as a self separated from and over against others opens one to the fundamental inter-relatedness of life.. **paticca-samuppāda**' (p27). The morality (**silā**) of nature (**dharmajāti**) is an ethic of sufficiency and moderation which is readily observable in the natural order, but from which mankind has become alienated by the defilements (**kilesa**) of delusion. Dhammic socialism is the political and economic restoration and manifestation of this natural order of things, which Buddhadasa equates with Dhamma, God, Tao (p48). A Dhammic society is sustained by the three principles of the good of the community in place of selfish individualism; a pervasive spirit of restraint and generosity; and mutual respect and loving-kindness (**mettā**) among its members.

For Buddhadasa 'politics is a moral system addressing the problems arising from the need for social co-operation, (and) since a political system should be essentially a system of morality (**silā-dhamma**), politics and religion share a common ground' (pp 78-9). The 80 – year – old socially conservative Thai **bhikkhu** writes – quite independently – in the same vein as the Buddhist Peace Fellowships in the West: 'If we hold fast to Buddhism we shall have a socialist disposition in our flesh and blood,

we shall see our fellow humans as friends in suffering...and hence we cannot abandon them... Buddhists, in particular, have the responsibility of bringing the light of dhammic socialism into a world in which the forces of communism and liberal democratic capitalism seem poised on the edge of world destruction' (pp29 and 31).

For socially engaged Buddhists in both East and West the above thinking logically points towards some kind of egalitarian democratic and decentralised commonwealth which we can begin to create here and now, through the active and creative practice of **silā** in our relationships and in the various organisations and projects to which we belong. Such a **sangha** comomwealth of modest individual wealth and power would oblige each to take full responsibility for herself or himself and to relate positively to others, without the present encouragements to deny, exploit or just walk away. Exceptionally, however, **Ajahn** Buddhadasa harks back to the Asokan paternalism of the enlightened despot (**dhammarāja**), 'This kind of government', he believes, 'an enlightened ruling class..is in fact the kind of socialism which can save the world' (p99). Given the corrupting power of the modern State apparatus, surely in the last hundred years the world has suffered enough from the benevolent intentions of Platonic ayatollahs and other saviours-turned-monsters? 'If you see someone striding towards you with the fixed determination to do you some good, make off in all haste', was the advice of that great dhamma-farer Anton Tchekhov. Even the term 'socialism' has for many of us heavy **adhammic** overtones of ideology, polarisation and authoritarian collectivism.

The above contentious point arises in fact only in the closing pages of one of the essays in the book. It has not been possible in this brief review to do full justice to the impressive sweep of **Ajahn** Buddhadasa's thinking. **Dhammic Socialism** will be of interest to all concerned with contemporary developments in Theravada Buddhism and to all who wish to explore the social

implications of the **Buddhadhamma**.

**Ken Jones**  
from *The Middle Way*,  
London

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**AMPORN SAMOSORN reviews a collection of essays by one of the country's leading – and most controversial – intellectuals.**

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The indomitable and inimitable author, Sulak Sivaraksa, had his new publication in English, "A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society," sent to us to be reviewed before this year's Visakha Puja Day.

The book, a collection of articles and lectures by this eloquent writer, was first published in 1981 by Thai Wattana Press. This reprint was undertaken by Tienwan Publishing House Part Ltd., which obtained permission from the author. Although an improved edition was not made possible, the publisher decided to go ahead with the reprint, due to increasing demand for the publication from many quarters.

A resumé on the inside of the front cover, which shows the author at a Lama monastery in Shigatse, Tibet, reads: "In this volume, the author pleads for a more democratic, more equalitarian society. He is withering in his criticism of privilege, abuse of power, exploitation and corruption. He rebukes the posturing, the pretense, the posing so much a part of grasping materialistic society. And yet he often postures and poses, uses hyperbole and sometimes intemperate language. Granted it is for effect, for he often takes a somewhat extreme position so as to elicit reaction, to create intellectual controversy.

"The author displays a deep knowledge and appreciation of Buddhist philosophy, disciplines, ritual, education, and art. He is concerned that Buddha-Dhamma be made meaningful to the younger generation. He wants to have 'A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society'."

To appreciate the articles and lectures, one needs to know about the author and to be truly objective and open concerning

norms and set ideas. William L. Bradley of the Edward W. Hazen Foundation, great grandson of Dr Dan Beach Bradley, the physician-missionary who was the first publisher in Siam, makes a valuable appreciation of Sulak and his works on pages XI-XVII, starting with: "The road that Sulak travels is one with few companions, for he is an intellectual in a land of pragmatists. As such he walks in the footsteps of a sparse but distinguished company of seers who have deepened their countrymen's understanding of the Thai ethos, and in so doing have contributed as well to the universal culture of mankind."

Bill Bradley proved himself a keen and informed observer of Thai society, with strong, though subtle, links established by his great grandfather who spent a good part of his life in this country. He analyses the dilemma of Thai intellectuals and the path chosen by Sulak Sivaraksa, who, he points out, chose to maintain the freedom of an outside while exerting his influence on the inside. The author gives the clue to this decision in his essay on "The Role of Siamese Intellectuals," written for the Philippine journal, *Solidarity*, in 1971, also included in this book. As Bradley points out, Sulak distinguishes the intellectual community in Thailand into three types: the Royal Traditionalists, who are conservative, the Social Technicians, who are liberal, and a third group that is conservative regarding cultural values and progressive in respect to social change. Bradley goes on to say that while Sulak did not mention names, M.R. Kukrit Pramoj, a leading journalist and former prime minister, would represent the first type, the cadre of foreign-trained economists and social scientists within government ministries and universities would represent the second group, and Dr Puey Ungphakorn, former governor of the Bank of Thailand and former rector of Thammasat University, would represent the third type. Likewise, Bradley says, so would Sulak.

Bill Bradley says in his analysis: "We see in Sulak's writings a constant attempt to come to terms with modernization, and an

increasing preoccupation with religion as a means of dealing with this problem. Two influences seem to have been at work on him: the one indigenous and the other international. On the one hand he has been profoundly influenced by a learned monk in the south of Thailand, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, who has reinterpreted the traditionally individualistic teachings of Theravada Buddhism to include important elements of social activism customarily associated with Mahayana. On the other hand, as a member of an international body of intellectuals, Sulak has been influenced by Gandhian and Quaker social theory based upon the principle of non-violence."

The content of the book is in four sections. The first, under the title "The Role of a Critic in Thai Society," has two articles under it: "The Role of Siamese Intellectuals" and "Cultural Freedom in Thai Society."

Section two "Underdeveloped-Overdeveloped" deals with "Thai-US Relations," "A Thai Image of Japan" and "Buddhism and Development." Section three on "Religion and Social Justice" looks at "Some Aspects of Youth in Asia," "Declaration by CGRS — the Coordinating Group for Religion in Society" and "Buddhism and Non-Violence." And Section four entitled "Future Goals" tackles "Tasks for Modern Buddhists," "Religion and Development," and "Buddhism and Society." Sources of the materials are given on page 209, with appendices as the final chapter giving samples of Buddhist writing by learned Thai Bhikkhu translated by Sulak Sivaraksa. The appendices are "The Right Approach to Dhamma" by the Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikkhu "Bahusaccadikatha" by Somde Phra Yarnasamvara of Wat Bovornnivesviharn, and "Ordination" by His Holiness Prince Vajirananavamsa the late Supreme Patriarch.

Reading the articles in this collection, one finds Sulak as he is, has been, and will always be — thoughtful, eloquent and provocative in his speech and writings. Talking about "Cultural Freedom in Thai Society," he asserted, "We Thais are in the

habit of boasting that we have never been subjects of the rule of any Western country. It is admitted that this is something to be proud of, but conversely, not having been a colony means we have not been exposed to the worthwhile aspects of independence as practised in the West. Thai society is still feudalistic, a society in which everybody must think alike and act alike, making individuality virtually a fluke.

"Money and power are therefore the paramount wishes of all persons, for each is a factor dependent on the other. Thai society, at present, is furiously in pursuit of these two ideals. Whoever is outside the circle of affluence and power, if he is poor and lives quietly as such, well and good for him; if he expresses views antagonistic to persons in the two circles, though the views be in the common interest, in the interest of a minority or merely creative, the person expressing them may well be branded a traitor to his country, a communist, or a person who cannot be trusted in anything."

As already mentioned, his is a lonely path, and to really appreciate the book, one needs to know the author well enough, and to be in the right frame of mind. Intellectuals cannot hope to be generally understood and appreciated. A man of vision, wisdom and courage such as Sulak Sivaraksa is a rare person in any society. His book, "A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society," clearly testifies to this point. It is available in all major bookstores and at Suksit Siam bookshop at 120 baht per copy.

(from **The Nation** 20 April 1986)

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**A STILL FOREST POOL: The Insight Meditation of Ven. Achaan Cha. Compiled and edited by Jack Kornfield and Paul Breiter. (Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton, Ill. U.S.A.). 192 pp. £5.96.**

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Ven. Achaan Cha is of immense importance to Buddhism in England, and ultimately probably in the whole of the West, for it was he who trained Ven. Achaan Sumedho, Abbot of Amaravati and President of this Society, and almost all of his bold and

persevering group of about 25 monks and 15 nuns, that is growing all the time.

Reading this book recalled to me vividly my own discovery of Ven. Achaan Cha and his splendid pupils. This radically altered my picture of Theravada Buddhism. Previously every good book on Buddhism originating in the Far East had turned out to be by a German or Englishman with a Pali name. Buddhist monks in Thailand had struck me as being indolent and uninspired, their sermons parrot-talk. Then came the Forest Monks of Ven Achaan Cha, who "know and see for themselves", guided by the Buddha's Dhamma, and talk from what they themselves have learnt.

The editors have done a good deal more than merely transcribing and translating the talks: having both studied under Ven. Achaan Cha, they have been skilful in their editing, and kept the items brief. The message comes across with extra force as a consequence.

Perhaps it should be irrelevant, but it does make a difference to have a book in hand as well produced as this. And particular thanks to the anonymous illustrator.

**Garry Thomson**  
*from Middle Way*  
May 1986

## **Popular Buddhism in Siam & other Essays on Thai Studies**

*By Phya Anuman Rajadhon*

*(TRCD,, Bangkok 1986) US\$10 post free.*

Phya Anuman was an authority on various aspects of Thai studies. Despite the fact that he passed away almost two decades ago, his writing is still useful to those who wish to understand Thai culture.

Many scholars have written about Buddhism as it should be, but the late Phya wrote on what it was — very useful and fascinating. He described the temple, the ordination, life of a monk as well as different Buddhist ceremonies and festivals.

In this volume, the learned author also

introduced animistic belief to the readers. Unless one understands the *Phii* properly, one would never understand the Thai people. Here Phya Anuman helped us a great deal.

You may order a copy for yourself or for your library through us by making your cheque payable to TICD.

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**PILGRIM KAMANITA: A Legendary Romance** by Karl Gjellerup, translated by John E. Logie. New edition in Thai and English by Matichon Press, Bangkok 1985 pp 646 Baht 200.

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This is an unusual book with a still more unusual history. The author was Danish and originally published his book in German around the beginning of this century. It was then translated and published in English and sometime after rendered into Thai by the two famous literary figures Sathirakoses (Phya Anuman Rajadhon) and Nagapradipa (Phra Sarprasert).

After its translation into Thai it proved so very popular that it was eventually adapted for Buddhist sermons which to this day can be bought in Bangkok printed on the traditional palm-leaves. The Thai version is also a prescribed textbook on modern literature for secondary school students. This is high praise indeed for a Western novel on the Buddha's times. It has now been presented in a bilingual edition, which may be ordered through TICD at US\$10. — including postage.



## Ecology and Buddhism : A Thai perspective

- 20—minute color slideshow
- Purchase Price : US\$ 65
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  - 90 color slides
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Since the Buddhist era and according to the Buddhist values, people lived in harmony with nature. They earned their living by the barter system which meant they had only the minimum necessities for their existence.

Times have passed, when the colonial powers came into Thailand, the Buddhist values have changed to modernized values. Lifestyle of people was changed to cope with the new technology which draws people close to artificial things and to be unaware of human potentials to live with nature. Meanwhile, forests and streams are destroyed in order to extend the areas to build tall buildings and also roads for various kinds of vehicles. When there are no forests, there are no wild animals. So Thailand becomes a desert. It brings about the drought and floods which destroy the crops and causes erosion of the soil. So the impact of this calamity makes the farmers whose lives depend on nature get into deep debt because the yield of the crops is not enough for earning their living. The Government and some private sectors realize this situation but they cannot solve the problem since Thailand has the policy to make the country developed by new technology. Hence, it cannot avoid doing away with the natural resources.

As a result, some monks, who are held in much reverence by the people, take interest and start working on conserving the ecology. They want the people to turn back to live closer to nature and follow the Buddhist values as before. Some try to preserve

## ACFOD's SLIDES

the grounds of the temples to be forests such as Buddhadasa Bikkhu of Suan Mokhapalaram. Others try to grow the forests on their temple grounds and feed wild animals, hoping that once the forests are restored, there will be wild animals which will find their homes there. If monks and lay persons join together to perform good deeds, an ecologically sound environment will not be an impossibility.

### Buddhist Road to Development

- 23 minute color slideshow
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- Each slideshow set contains :
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Following is the story of two Buddhist monks, who have only a traditional education, and have started rural community development in their own Buddhist way.

The first monk is Prakrusakorn Sangvorakit, the abbot of Yokabat temple. He succeeded in helping the villagers to have a more viable economic base by planting coconut trees besides growing rice. But afterwards he faced the problem that the villagers who became rich separated themselves from those who were poor. As a result, it created selfishness among villagers. So he thought that he should develop their spirit by returning to the spiritual pillar of the Buddha together with the development of the economic aspect.

The other is Luangpaw Nan, the spiritual father of the Northeast of Thailand. Since the material development invaded into the village such as new roads, electricity, radios, mobile film shows, chemical fertilizers and so on, it made the villagers fall into debt. They became alcoholics

to forget their sorrowful fate. He felt that material and spiritual development should move together. He emphasized the inner self development by meditation which is the key element in learning to understand oneself. So he organized a meditation course. It slowly built up a strong sense of community and made many of the villagers give up their addiction to alcohol and work more constructively for the common good. Meanwhile he initiated to organize a rice bank as sometimes the villagers have no rice for their own consumption. They had to borrow rice from a middle man at a high rate of interest. This drove them into debt. He also helped other villages to organize rice banks. At the same time, he emphasized to the people that the rice bank was not for profit making, but was to help each other reduce their debts so they could become self-sufficient. The effort of Luangpaw Nan shows that harmonizing material progress with spiritual progress can prove successful, even in the poorest village.

### Angkarn Kalyanapong : A Contemporary Siamese Poet (Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation) Bangkok 1986.

Angkarn's collection of poetry was highly acclaimed for its richness in both the style and content. It talks about the universe, the world and local society, reflecting human's faith in Buddhism as well as belief in the immortality of art and literature in particular.

Unique in its style, his works blend traditional Thai literary techniques with modern writings and are free from Western influence.

It could be ordered through TICA US\$ 4 a copy (post free).