

SEEDS OF PEACE

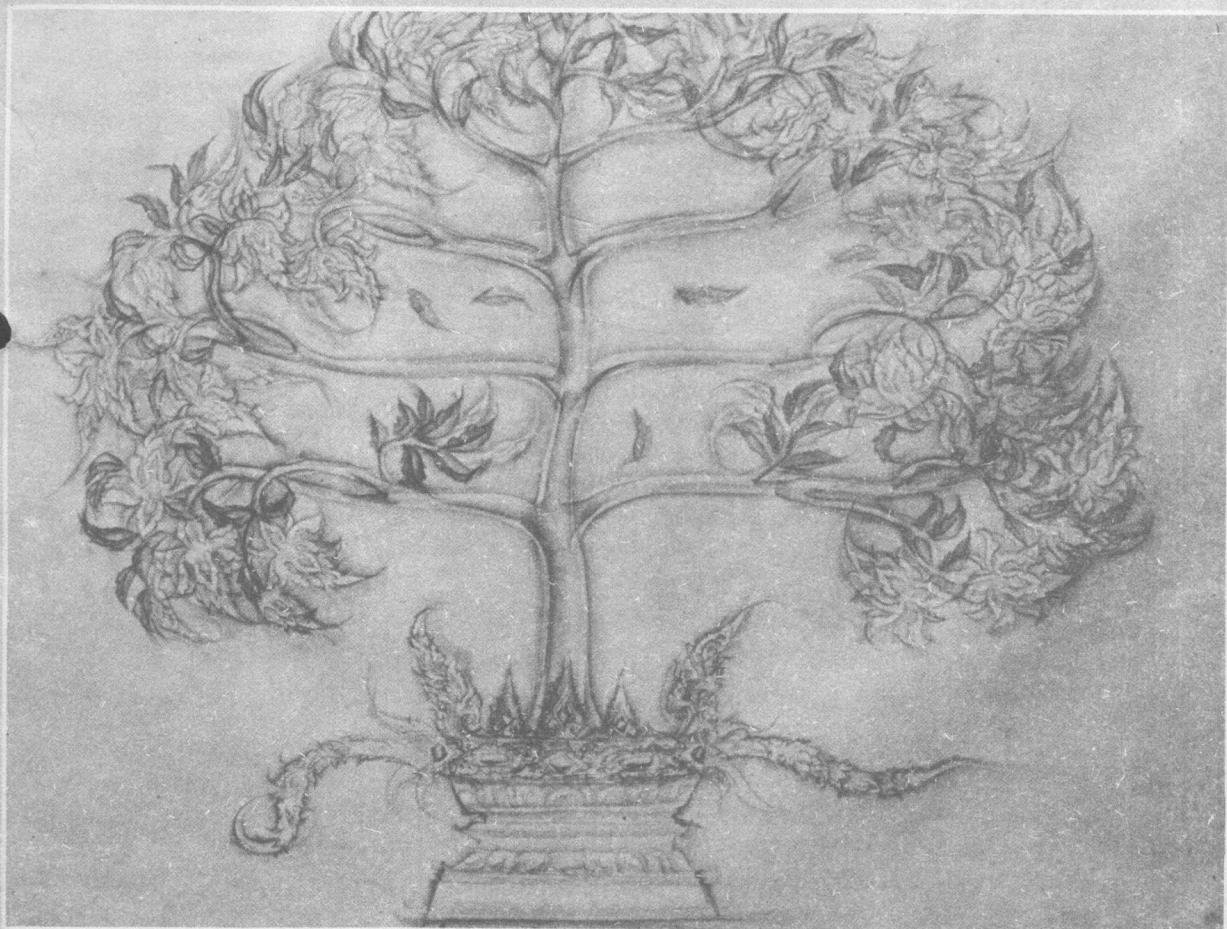
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BUDDHISM IN LAOS

CHURCH IN ASIA

SEARCHING FOR A NEW LIFE STYLE

*THE LEADERS, THE LOTUS
AND THE SHADOW OF THE DOVE*



Seeds of Peace

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Objective 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

Thai Inter Religious Commission for Development was formed in 1979 and has published its Newsletters since 1983. We now feel that the Newsletter should appear in a more permanent form twice annually.

In 1976 the Buddhist Association of Thailand produced **Seeds of Peace** as supplement to its annual **Visakha Puja**. Unfortunately only two issues were published and it was discontinued.

We feel that we ought to preserve that name, as religious development should be for peace and justice. It must have peace on its aim and its means. And in this violent world, the more we sow the seeds of peace, the better it is to lessen suffering and to build harmony, reconciliation and happiness.

In 1976 the name **Seeds of Peace** was given to us by the Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh, Zen Buddhist monk from Vietnam, who is now in France. He is active in the International Fellowship for Reconciliation. His articles, poems and essays appeared in Buddhist and Christian publications alike.

In our first issue, to be published in April to coincide with the traditional Siamese New Year, we are happy to reprint the Venerable author's short article, which appeared in the Info on Human Development, Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference.

Although our organization is Thai, what we publish need not be exclusively on this country. We try to deal with various aspects of human development in Asia personally as well as socially.

We trust our readers would appreciate our undertaking. We would indeed welcome your suggestions and criticism.

We plan to publish our second issue in October, to coincide with the end of Buddhist lent. We hope we shall be able to have the honors of printing some articles, letters, poems etc by our readers from different religious beliefs and nationalities.

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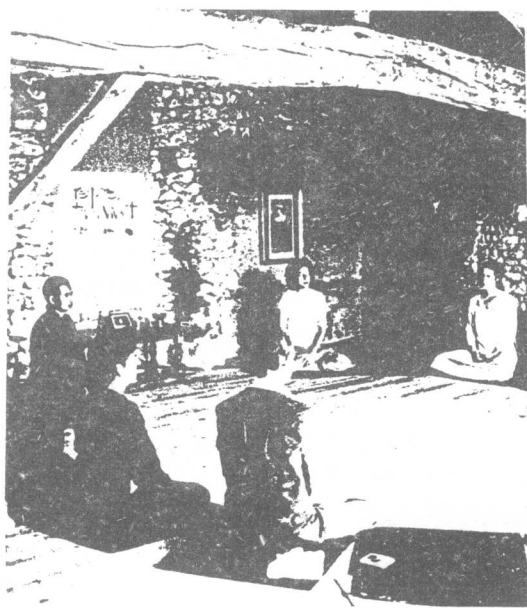
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Thai Buddhism in The Buddhist World

Non-violence

practicing awareness

Thich Nhat Hanh



Drinking a cup of tea, picking up a newspaper, or using your toilet paper has to do with peace. Non-violence has another name, awareness. We should be aware of what we are, and of what we are doing. That is what I was taught the day I became a novice in a Buddhist monastery. They taught me to be aware of every act during the day. Since that day I have been practicing mindfulness and awareness. At first, I thought it was only for beginners, that advanced people would practice other things. But now I have found out that practicing awareness is for everybody all the time, including the abbot. The purpose of Buddhist meditation is to see into your own nature and to become a Buddha. That can be done only through awareness. If you are not aware of what is going on in yourself and in the world, how

can you see into your own nature and become a Buddha?

I would like to draw your attention to the word *Buddha*. It comes from the verb *Buddh* and means "awake". *Buddha* means nothing except "he who is awake" or "she who is awake." Are we really awake in our daily life? That is the question I would invite you to think about. Are we awake when we pick up our newspaper? Are we awake when we eat ice cream?

Society makes it difficult to be awake. I am sure that you know this, but you keep forgetting: Forty thousand children in the Third World die every day of hunger. Forty thousand of them. We know, but we keep forgetting because the kind of society in which we live makes us forgetful. That is why we need some exercise for mindfulness, for awareness. A number of Buddhists practice this — they refrain from eating a few times a week in order to be in communion with the Third World.

There are means to nourish awareness. For instance, to enjoy silence. To enjoy the world. We have lost our taste for silence. Every time we have some quarter of an hour or half an hour, we have to pick up a book to read, we have to pick up the telephone in order to talk, or we have to turn on our television set. We cannot be ourselves without anything to accompany us. We have lost our taste for being alone or silent.

If you are yourself, if you are your best, then you are a real person. And only with such a person, calm, lucid, aware, solid, can our situation change and our danger be avoided. So please, be yourself, and be that person.

BUDDHISM IN LAOS

an interview given by

John Paul Davidson

John Paul Davidson is working for B.B.C television. He has been there for six years. Recently, he has been working on a series called **Every Man**. It is concerned with how and what is happening to religions all over the world.

- Why are you interested in Buddhism in Southeast Asia?

- Well, partly I'm doing a series about religions of Southeast Asia and there will be four programmes in all—two on Buddhism and two on Islam. The Buddhist countries which I chose were Thailand and Laos to see how the Buddhist religion has coped with two very different ideological and belief patterns, i.e. Marxism and Capitalism also want to see how the religion has managed to integrate or not integrate these belief patterns, and to look how the strength of the religion faces the tensions and the changes that are going on to see if religion can cope with these alien influences.

- How many days have you spent in Thailand and in Laos?

- All together I've spent three months, half in Laos, half in Thailand.

- Did you have a chance to talk to many people in Laos?

- It's a lot more difficult in Laos than it is here in Thailand. I had to wait for ten days before I could leave Vientien, because you're not allowed to leave Vientien without permission from the government. Vientien, it is like a little village. You know that every one is there, five minutes away on a bicycle. But you cannot go to see them; you have to go



through public channel. Eventually, I managed to meet the head of the monks called Thongkun Anantasunthorn and the Minister of Education. The latter used to be a monk called Kamton Thepburi.

He is on the executive committee of the National Association for the Union of Buddhists in Laos. Then I talked to the governor of Luang Prabang. What was interesting about monks is that when I talked to them, they all said that from very early, or from 1945, they had been with the Prathedlao. In their spirit, they always wanted to work with the Prathedlao. After 1945, Kamton Thepburi actually fled into a liberated zone and worked as a monk, mainly as a teacher, for the political propaganda. When I asked him whether he actually fought with a gun, he said he didn't shoot anyone. But he worked actively for the Prathedlao on the political side, which was always considered the most important,

because if you have the villagers, if you have their hearts and minds, then you have their support. The same was true with Thongkun Anantasunthorn. He also fled into a liberated zone and then back to Vientien and worked within the sangha.

- What is your general opinion about the sangha in Laos?

- It's very difficult to get an accurate picture because they tell you what they think they should say, that is the problem. Compared with the Thais, it's much more difficult. In Thailand, you have a lot of different opinions within the sangha, but people talk about them. In Laos they made the sangha much more authoritarian. Anyway, they were quite proud of the fact that, before the revolution, each abbot was more or less independent or could do what he liked. Now they centralized this. So when they tell an abbot to do something, he does it. He obeys the order and they think that this is very important. They were also slightly ashamed of the animistic influences in Buddhism although in practice I know it's very important to them, because the first day I went there, I went to what they call **Bai Sri**.

However, I think that whether he is a politburo member or an ordinary person in Vientien, he sees the main role of the sangha as the National Union of Buddhists in Laos. Monks are still the most respected persons in the society, and they should use the monks to further the development of the country - for reconstruction. Initially, when they came to power in 1976, I think that they thought that they could get rid of the sangha. They should try to destroy its power like the Khmer Rouge did in Kampuchea. But then, very soon, they realized that that was counter-productive. If they did that, they would have nothing, no institution, to replace it. And one thing, one positive point about the government in Laos is that they are quite pragmatic. When they see that they made a mistake, they are not ashamed to say that they made a mistake. Now they see that the sangha is very important to the development of the country and that the monks should be used for teaching or as medical workers or even for helping building

new schools.

- Labour work?

- They do. I mean I saw a lot of monks rebuilding the temples. They tried to make the monks slightly less as the important figures so that they have the monks and the cadres working side by side; and if there is a decision to be made, I think it's the cadre who will make the decision.

But, at the same time, there are some Quakers working there who travel a great deal throughout the country. They have been much further north than I went. They went to villages with government people. They wanted to build a new clinic or a new school with money. When they ask the villagers, the villagers said: "*That is alright. No. We want to rebuild the Wat, first.*" Then they went back to Luang Prabang to discuss it. The Quakers thought that the government would say: "*No. No. you can't build the wat. You must build the new clinic or the house for party cadres.*" But they didn't. They said: "*O.K. They want to rebuild a wat, then rebuild a wat*". So, in a sense, they have accommodated Buddhism. But they have not quite done it intellectually. They have not accommodated the ideas of Buddhism with the ideas of Marxism. So when I asked the supreme patriarch, he said they are working on it at the present. They have the seminar to try to discuss how they could link the two together. I don't think they have much academic training in Laos. I don't sense a great tradition of study there. When the monks study in the school they follow the civilian education syllabus.

- What do the authorities think of the sangha now?

- I think it is very clear that they want to control it.

- Do they want to make the sangha meaningless?

- No, I don't think they do. It's very difficult to judge because that is so much inside people's minds, and one has to think that all the people, even the politburo or the member of the government, would be brought up as a Buddhist. So I don't think they want to crush the religion, but they want to use it for their own ends. They are

quite happy for the idea of Buddhism to go hand-in-hand with Maixism. They don't see a fundamental contradiction. It's a contradiction that you can live with. In the same way that you can live with animism and Buddhism. There is a contradiction, but there is no problem.

- Have you seen anything about meditation or something deeper in a religious sense?

- I asked a lot about meditation. Though most of the monks still practise meditation, they are not very serious about it. They practise it, I would say, as a part of the syllabus. I don't think they are very interested in it, because it's not their primary goal. When I asked if there were any similar *araññavāsi*, forest monks, they said they did not really have that. There might be a few of them, but they are not important. I think the role of the wat in Laos is much more similar to the role of the wat in Thai villages and that it is more integrated with the pattern of the spirit and social life.

- When you talk to the monk, do you notice anything that contradicts the basic teaching of the Buddha?

- No. If you like their propaganda, it's very good Buddhism. For about an hour everywhere I got a long speech about peace and nuclear war. It is surprising because with all the monks I talked to in Thailand, we haven't talked about nuclear war very much. But the first thing the chief monk said to me was about peace and nuclear, war, cruise missiles and the U.S. new arms that had been put in Western Europe.

- What about new ordination ?

- Well, now during raining seasons there are a lot of monks in the wats during *pansa* (lent) and a lot will leave after this. But still most families will expect their sons to become monks for three weeks or so. And another friend from the ministry said that he would become a monk for a week because his mother had died. Even the young ones, like my interpreter from the ministry of foreign affairs, when I asked him if his children would become monk, he said : "Well, for me, it isn't so important, but for their mother it is." So it is up to their parents to decide. I think probably one would only see the

change in the next generation, in ten years or fifteen years time.

The parallel with Thailand is quite similar again, because I think there's lessening of interest in religion. I mean whatever you say about the young people here, it is the same in Laos. It will become more secularized.

- What do you think about the conflict between Thailand and Laos?

- I hope that it will be solved. I am sure the current mood is that the Laos would like to be the more friendly with the Thai. It is a big threat to live with influence of either the Soviet Union or Vietnam. I think what I find quite sensible is that the government there is quite pragmatic and they want to mix. They want to have the Laotian way of socialism. Their model is more toward Burma. They don't want this big influence from outside. The only problem is, because they are such a weak country, they are nothing. As they have only 3 million or 4 million people, they feel they have to rely on big brother just to protect them.

- So they try to have their own way?

- Oh, yes, I think they would like that. That's partly why they changed their mind about the sangha because they realized that it was stupid to try to destroy what was Laotian. I mean it is as bad to make an imitation of the Soviet model as to make an imitation of the Western American model.

- They even look toward Burma?

- Yes, they approve of Burma. The monks in Laos have to go to Rangoon quite often for the meeting of the Union of Buddhists. They like the idea of a socialism based on their own culture. Let me tell you one interesting little point, They tried to change one of the religious festivals to be a secular festival. They tried to change the date of the boat race festival. Usually, that would be one day after lent, but they want to make it on Saturday and Sunday. In that way, they would secularize the boat race. But in the end everyone said no, and so they have it on the full moon day as before. So they haven't really managed. Likewise, their independence day is very low key. Nothing happens. It's not very important.

Church in Asia

Past, Present and Future

SERI PHONGPHIT



Asian Reality

Asia has many faces. They have been attracting outsiders throughout its history. As the original home of religions and cultures, Asia possesses a spirit, which has been inspiring for generations those who are in search of values, meaning and truth and it continues to do so even today.

It is true that waves of external influences have shaken this rock. Nevertheless they have not yet been able to uproot the fundament. The only thing that they succeeded in doing was to break the shell of this closed world. Colonial powers were the first and modernization the second. Economically, politically and socially the world may have become one and belong to the same structure, struggles and changes. But culturally, Asia remains Asian. This is not to say that culture is a separate element in man's life and has not

at all been affected by continuing changes in the world during these last centuries. Culture is a way of life, anointed by the spirit, with basic value judgements. Culture, as any other element of the society, undergoes continuing changes. But deep down at its root, the spirit of Asia keeps alive. Religions witness this statement. Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and other local religions and beliefs still play an important role in the daily life of Asian people and its society.

As for Christianity, it has never been considered as "Asian", although its native home was also Asia. In fact, Christianity has been known to the Asians since the 16th century, when the colonial powers started to invade this continent. Along with traders and military, missionaries started their preaching of "the Good News". Saint Francis Xavier was one of the pioneers, who signed the foundation of Christianity in Asia.

"Foreign Religion"

Among the 2,600 mio. people of Asia, the Christians count only about 65 mio. more than half of whom are in the Philippines, the only so-called "Christian" country in this area. The usual question is "Why has not evangelization been successful?" as in other continents. Many answers have been and can still be given. While risking to simplify history, it may be said in a few words that Asia is so much rooted in its tradition and culture that economic, political and social changes have not been able to overwhelm religion. The Asians may change their mode of production from sub-sistent economy to capitalism or socialism, their forms of government from absolute monarchy or feudalism to constitutional monarchy and democracy, their traditional social setting to the modernized one, but at the heart of everything remain "their" religions. Christianity has been and still is considered a "foreign religion". It belongs to Western civilization and culture. For the Asians, especially the Hindus and the Buddhists, who are known to be the most tolerant, all religions are equally good. They are a means for man to liberate himself from suffering and to reach salvation. However, in practice, the Hindus the Buddhists the Muslims as well as the Christians will always consider their religion as an absolute which is better than any other. A few may change their religion for economic, political and social reasons. This is the ordinary explanation of the Asians, while the Christians will refer to "faith" as the only explanation for the "conversion"

However, in order to have a deeper understanding of such phenomenon, a small trip into history may be helpful. This is because the fact that almost the whole continent of South America and a great part of Africa have become Christian does not mean that they had no culture and religion. But if the ways of evangelization in these two continents are considered, then it may be clear that the same "conversion" may also have happened in Asia. Missionaries were those who followed the military, who trod over local culture, which was almost totally destroyed. The conquest was then total, both

physical and spiritual. The only Asian country which fell under such a category was the Philippines, the Spanish colony.

In 1622, the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith was founded in Rome by Urban VIII. This was meant to liberate missionaries and evangelization from colonial powers. The new Congregation was supposed to coordinate the mission works in the newly discovered and colonial countries. Before the foundation, missionaries, though in theory belonging to Rome, in practice were under the control of the kings of their countries. Although the "liberation" was not that easy and the missionaries had then two "masters" at the same time, the process of evangelization became less "destructive" of local culture.

The Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith started its function with the admonition that missionaries should take with them only faith and not Western culture. They should acculturate to the local values and way of life. This admonition lay behind the "Ricci case" in China and the "Lano case" in Thailand. The latter was the first bishop of Siam, the former name of Thailand, who suggested missionaries sent by him to Laos should wear a yellow robe and have their hair shaved for the purpose of propagation of the faith. However, the admonition never materialized in practice. It was in Vatican Council II, three hundred years later, that the issue was taken up seriously again.

Christianity has never been known as an element separated from colonial powers. In fact, missionaries got involved all the time in the political, economic and social questions of the countries in Asia. A superiority complex in all aspects, including Christianity, has been unceasingly put into practice. "Outside the Church there is no salvation" was witnessed not only in proclaiming the Gospel, but also in condemning other religions and local values. If conflicts and persecution of the Christians happened in the course of the history of Asia, then they were due also to all the above mentioned factors. An example may be cited. During the Indochinese war in the early forties, between Thailand and France, all French

missionaries in the Northeast were sent out of the country. Churches were closed down. Seven Catholics were killed for not abandoning their faith. The Catholics were taken to be supporters of France, since they believed in a "foreign religion"

Asia Today

Asia has changed rapidly in the 20th century. In a few decades countries like Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Korea kept up a rapid pace of modernization and stand now on the front row of the industrialized countries of the world. Even though other countries are much behind, one can find in Bangkok, Manila, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur and other metropolis as what one finds in New York, Paris, London and Rome. Asia has been opening itself to the Western sciences, technology and values. Yet she has never been and is not convinced that Christianity is better than her religions. One should go out to the provinces, into the villages and get in touch with the people, who form the majority of the population, in order to realize that Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam are still deep in the heart of the people, who express them in their daily life.

However, it is not true that modernization has had no significant impact on Asian culture and religion. Many values, especially those of community life are destroyed or being threatened. The mass of peasants have to leave their land and villages to seek for survival and to face an unknown fate in the cities. Their new home is the slums. There is no more temple, which used to be the center of their life when they were in the villages. A secularized society is the price of modernization.

Yet, to face this secularization, reform movements have come up one after another. This is the case with Buddhism and Hinduism in particular. Monks and priests have started to preach and talk the ordinary language of the man of today. On the other hand, while some monks will be engaged in social development, other will assist and promote meditation among the lay people as never before. Going back to the source, giving new interpretation of the doctrine and

finding out new expressions are characteristics of these movements.

Quest for Inculturation

The end of the colonial era seemed to be also the end of the propagation of the faith and the prestige of Christianity. Only Churches, schools, hospitals and welfare institutions still marked her past grandeur. The number of the converts reduced as well as the role of the Church in society.

With the Vatican Council II, Christianity, particularly the Catholic Church, is again resuscitated from its seeming decadence. The new era of "dialogue" has started. The local Church opens itself to other religions, appreciating what is "holy and true" and trying to live more in unity with local culture. The quest for inculturation has revived. Immediate action has been to use the vernacular language in the liturgy, local art and cultural expressions being also "baptized". Classic examples used to justify this process are St. John and St. Paul with Greek Philosophy, St. Augustine with Plato, St. Thomas Aquinas with Aristotle; examples of the Church's inculturation throughout its history.

After Vatican Council II, the main interest of Christians in other religions is to acquire a deeper understanding and to find out elements that could be "absorbed" into Christianity. In principle it has always been so, not only for Christianity but also for other religions. However, such a process, which is called "inculturation", may be seen in practice in two ways or two kinds which are different in nature.

Firstly, there have been efforts to "use" more local cultural elements in liturgy, rites and rituals, architecture and other external expressions. At the same time studies and researches in other religions and local cultures are being carried out in order to find out positive elements that could be "used", such as to "explain" Christian doctrine, making it more "understandable" and "acceptable" to other religions. Such a way has had rather negative result. It has been creating doubts on the part of other religions whether the Christians are sincerely trying to

understand and to respect them. They feel that they are not understood as they are, but they are being manipulated. In countries like India, Sri Lanka and Thailand, the Christians are accused of adopting a new strategy for the "*propagation of the faith*". The key word of this "*kripto-proselitism*" is "*dialogue*". Fearful that they will be gradually "*absorbed*" and finally destroyed, many groups in these countries have started to campaign against the Christians, the Catholics in particular. Some have even sent letters to the Pope, protesting that the Vatican is supposed to be the promoter of this new strategy.

Reactions from local Churches in Asia are all similar: they misunderstand us; no explanations will change their prejudice; we better keep silent and continue to give our witness; they are just small groups, which should not bother us too much.

Secondly, there have been also efforts to "*dialogue*" with other religions. This type of dialogue puts more emphasis on being in unity with other religions through ordinary human relationship, study and researches, cooperation in social action and direct experience of the essence of other religions through religions practice, such as meditation. The characteristic of this second kind of dialogue is that the Christians try to understand other religions as they are, without prejudices and pre-concepts, without superiority complex and triumphalism or fundamentalism.

For the Christians who take part in this dialogue, unfortunately a small number, there are hardly any problems or misunderstandings with those of other religions. The only problem they may have is from the Church itself, which considers such a way as going over the line. This is because this small number of Christians is also trying to reflect the faith using such experience of unity with other religions. They find that a relevant theology for the local Church has to be a contextual theology, which is based on an analysis of local reality and reflection of experiences. This cannot be done exclusively within the Church. It has to be worked out together with other people of other religions. This is precisely what this group will consider

as "*respect for what is holy and true in other religions*"

Future

Although the rapid increase of Christians in Korea during these past years has again somehow aroused the sense of triumphalism on the part of the Church, the fact is only exceptional and will be deceiving if the whole continent is taken into account. It will be not only an illusion but also erroneous to think that the future of the Church in Asia should depend on the increasing number of Christians. There are still many questions to be answered, many challenges to be met.

Has the Asian Church sincerely recognized values in other religions, cultures and ways of life as also redemptive due to the grace and Spirit of God? Are we not manipulating other religions, taking only parts of them for our own benefit? Does inculturation mean the reflection and expression of the Christian faith from "*inside*" other religions or from "*outside*" as the Church has been doing up to now? Has the Church liberated itself from the powers in the society (political, economic, and social) in order to take option for the poor, who form the great majority of the Asian people?

Answers of such questions should not be rationalized. Principles and words are not enough. Actions will certainly imply risks. And it seems that "*security of the Church*", which is a minority, has top priority for most religious leaders. Following Jesus, who took all the risks to life, on the way to the cross seems to be still far from reality. Isn't it here that the real security should be found?

The Church in Asia has still a long way to go in order to be an "*Asian Church*". A foreigner remains a foreigner even though he may change his clothes or dress. As long as he does not "*speak the same language*" as his host, he will never be considered as friend and partner. Finally, it is not his "*clothes*" and his "*head*" that he has to change first, but his heart.

Searching for a new Life Style

Appropriate Technology

for a Just and Sustainable Socio-Economic Order

S.SIVARAKSA

In my limited experience, I have come across the search for a more alternative lifestyle from people in affluent countries who seem dissatisfied with the mainstream cultural value system in their societies. At present these people are mainly Western. Some individuals and groups have opted out from the Establishment in order to seek for personal freedom, either through their traditional religious beliefs or through new sects and religions. Their numbers, especially including youth, have increased significantly. Some observers have perceived this as a return to the sacred. However, it may be too premature yet to recognise this phenomena as an emerging consciousness for a just society. Indeed at present, there are only scattered pockets of such groups, seeking an alternative lifestyle, appropriate to the industrial or post-industrial era. For some young Americans, to possess only one car and refrigerator for a single family is already considered a search for an alternative lifestyle! They do not realize that refrigerators in USA consume more energy than those in China.

Most people who have opted out from the main affluent western development models seem to have little concern for a just and sustainable socio-economic order. In USA, one sees such groups as Movement for the New Society (based in Philadelphia), characterised by a Quaker traditional background focussing discussion an alter-

native life-style. In England, one sees the EF Schaumacher Foundation and magazines like **Resurgence** and **The Ecologist** which advocate a just and sustainable socio-economic order, through appropriate technology, with a decentralized political theory and real concern for appropriate environmental conditions. Their favourite **gurus** include Copra, Illich and Ariyaratne.

Although the above mentioned groups are small and have not yet achieved much in their search for a just society or for an alternative life-style, the impact of their efforts is fairly significant. Some observers perceive that, in the affluent west at least more and more people appear to have been conscientised and have become aware of a new socio-economic order and a more appropriate atmosphere for the masses. The Green Party in West Germany is an obvious political outcome of this direction.

Furthermore, the alarming fear of global Nuclear holocaust can be seen as a healthy and positive sign for people to move more towards a no-violent approach in solving political conflicts. It has also stimulated groups to lobby governments and demand the decrease of arms expenditures.

Unfortunately, however, most political leaders in affluent western countries have colluded with many religious leaders in the established churches who seek to maintain the **status quo**. While they pay lip service to the peoples' demands, they in fact work for



the benefit of the rich and powerful vested interests. Hence armament industries are still a most important function in USA, the Soviet Union as well as in some western European countries. It has been noted that 87% of armaments are sold to the Third World.

Indeed it is quite evident that the affluent west could perhaps maintain its **status quo**, if it could manipulate and control the political and intellectual leaders of the Third World to implement trickle-down development models, i.e. the poor must catch up with the rich, in order that the few rich people in the Third World will become richer and more powerful at the expense of the masses, and the leaders of the Third World will always have to depend on the First World. This is recognised as the new imperialist mentality.

If you ask most Asian peoples, which life-style they would choose, most would point out the western life-style. Japan of course is perceived as the perfect example of the success story. She imitates the west skilfully, integrating both positive and negative elements in their entirety. Hence Japan has now joined the Richman's Club. Like the west she exports "pollution" to South and Southeast Asia. Cheap labour is utilised relentlessly in those countries, raw materials are purchased and exported to many backward or so-called underdeveloped countries. It is believed that Japan will catch up with the west very soon

in exporting armaments to the world at large.

Despite Japan's exploitative process, especially in South East Asia, leaders of many Asian countries wish to imitate Japan through the so-called 'look East' policy. They do not realize that by so doing, a just and sustainable socio-economic order will not eventuate. In fact, there will be no search for alternative life style for people in this region. They will only end up with imitation. Furthermore this so-called development model degrades human beings, and leaves no room for spiritual development or respect for the indigenous local cultures. It seems that we are forced to drink Coca-cola, wear western dresses and have television sets in every household. Advertising for consumer culture is the new gospel for so-called progress on economic development.

How can people resist this trend? If Japan is the model for a new Life style in Asia, then we have the new gang of four, catching up with Japan very rapidly—namely, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore.

Indeed Singapore plays a leading role in the ASEAN context too. She is the smallest and the richest nation which exploits all other SE Asian nations, politically and economically.

Admittedly the peoples in this gang of four countries are on the whole economically better-off than other parts of the Asian region. However, these countries lack basic

human rights. There is no freedom of expression, especially no legitimate dissenting voices against the governments, and no questioning of the legitimacy of the multinational corporations and superpowers operating in these countries.

Although the Japanese enjoy rights and privileges similar to westerners, plus economic security and political freedom, they suffer from the economic exploitative and operative syndrome in the west. Despite the tea ceremonies and the Zen gardens, which should help to calm them down, they are on the whole restless and insecure. They are greed-oriented and hatred oriented, like most who wish to be successful in life.

The reason is very simple. Their lifestyle depends on an unjust and unsustainable socio-economic order. Japan does not only exploit the rest of Asia, but she also exploits the minorities of her own country, like the South Korean workers, the **buraku** and the farmers, especially those who have lost their lands to Narita airport.

Similarly, in North America the natives are just as oppressed as those in other parts of the third world, and most American citizens are not even aware that the USA is the source of world hunger and world poverty. She consumes more power and energy, wastes more food and dumps everything she does not want in the world market in the name of AID or trade both of which have short term profits as the main goal. It is rightly perceived that we in Asia are guinea pigs of the American medical trade. Exporting medicines and transferring of technologies to the third world are indeed very big and dangerous business enterprises. Witness the Union Carbide disaster in India, 1984.

Those of us in Southeast Asia have been penetrated so much by the Japanese and American models of so-called development that we have more or less lost our deeper consciousness, perhaps with the exception of Burma. Consumerism and complex systems of technology penetrate everywhere. Through advertisements and the mass media, we worship money, power and all the false values that go with them.

Education and the established religions teach us to conform to the **status quo** so that we may become the elites and have the chance to be rich and powerful too. As for the masses many seem deluded that this economic status will improve if they are more diligent, do not gamble, become intoxicants or fatalistic, without realizing that all these negative elements are part and parcel of the unjust socio-economic order, created by the First World. It is further exacerbated by the promotion of local warfare within the third world in order that the armaments industries will flourish and the masses will remain in suffering poverty and ignorance. This is indeed human degradation at its worst.

I used to look up to China and South Asia as alternative models for a just and sustainable socio-economic order. With the establishment of the People's Republic of China and her cultural revolution, one would think that there was a real search for an alternative Life-Style. Currently with the four Modernisations, China will certainly be catching up with Japan and western powers. Perhaps the 'New China' is accommodating herself to fit in comfortably with the Hong Kong situation in the near future and the Taiwan model in the not so near future.

People may not be alarmed that the Chinese are now drinking coca cola and giving up chopsticks. Yet one has to think how dangerous this is to indigenous local cultures and habits. We in SE Asia started with coca-cola, then pepsi cola and numerous other soft-drink derivatives. Now all the junk food chains have come in. All these are not only harmful economically and culturally, but are also bad for our health system.

Worst of all in the four Modernisations is ofcourse Armaments. It is bad enough for Japan to be rearmed, but once the Chinese have caught up in this business, there will be no peace in Asia or the world. With the backward military set-up as it is, China is already interfering with Kampuchea and Vietnam.

As for South Asia, we thought the real search for a New Life Style by Gandhiji would have an everlasting impact. The In-

dian non-violent struggle for liberation is certainly, for a Buddhist at least, better than Mao's bloody victory in China. The spirit of non-alignment, the religious tradition which cares for social ethics and the respect for local cultures and customs, as well as a commitment to democracy, freedom and decentralization, would really contribute to an Asian model of a just society, with less affluence perhaps, but more with self respect and self reliance.

Admittedly India inherited a decadent British bureaucratic system and with the presence of Tartar and Bellah, socialism would find itself difficult to coexist with capitalism.

Yet, until recently many of us looked to South Asia, hoping that its leaders would struggle to break through for a just and sustainable socio-political and economic order.

Even with the loss of Pakistan, which opted out for an American consumer culture, through military dictatorship, while paying lip service to the ideal Islamic model, we still had India and Sri Lanka. Now even Sri Lanka wants to become little Singapore, to join the ASEAN club, and ofcourse the new Indian Prime Minister will soon be in Washington. He may maintain his Indian traditional dress, but the new life style for him and his people will be more like the Americans and the Japanese.

By imitating or joining the First World means that there is no development or support of appropriate technology. For the west, including Japan, technology means controlling and exploiting the masses. The more sophisticated technology becomes, it is more our master than our servant. In the beginning it may appear to serve the few at the expense of the many. Yet it will end up by exploiting the few who actually created it. Nuclear armaments are the perfect example of sophisticated technology.

Yet, technologies, like powers, riches and desires are usually those that people crave for. Once you have these, one may think to use them for the benefit of the masses. Indeed you could, but in most cases, they are very complicated and are bound to link with institutional factors which are

geared to oppress and exploit the masses as well as natural phenomena.

At least religious leaders who preach against greed, hatred and delusion, for love, compassion, collaboration, tolerance, detachment and justice should be aware of the danger from inappropriate technologies which are part and parcel of an unjust and unsustainable socio-economic order.

There is now a danger that just as scientists are seen as becoming more religious, theologians are leaving their medieval retreats to embrace materialism. One has to be aware that the quest for spiritual life in the west as well as in Asia, often-times goes against social justice.

With most cultures, religion plays two roles: the priestly and the prophetic. In times of peace, most priests have traditionally sought to maintain the **status quo** within a stable society. The priest has been portrayed as conservative, sometimes even reactionary. They are usually seen as resistant to change. In trouble times, however, they may become 'prophets'. The prophet seizes upon instability within society and uses it as an instrument. They are visionary Utopians, looking beyond the present to a future they believe may be attainable.

As Michael von Bruck rightly quoted Dom Helder Camara, that "*When somebody dreams alone, it is just a dream. But when we all dream together, it is the beginning of reality.*"

This brings to mind Martin Luther King, who really had a dream and his dream by and large has come true. At least he supported the Gandhian vision as a successful proof that non-violent struggle is even possible in the great and violent United States of America.

India certainly had a prophet in the Mahatma, who combined the best elements in Hinduisim, Buddhism and Christianity, for a new life style, which was rooted deeply in the Indian spiritual tradition. Ghandhiji really searched for a just and sustainable socio, political and economic order. Hence he rejected the western model of development and its arms of oppression — technology.

We need to go back to Gandhi, as we

should go back to the Buddha and to Christ, with proper historical perspectives and with critical awareness, for their messages to be perceived as relevant for a more just society.

Japan and the West need the other countries of Asia as we need them. It is especially with the fear of nuclear holocaust in the First World, that we should work with them for a nuclear free society in western Europe and North America. This process will not be possible unless those concerned for peace in the First World link themselves meaningfully to those of the Third World. Peace and alternative models of development must go hand in hand. For a short term policy, we must work together to stop, or at least to reduce, the 87% armaments export to this part of the world.

Together, we could perhaps build awareness of a more just society. Ideally we do not need technology. We only need techniques and applied sciences - natural science and social science - free from western domination. They will then be appropriate for our society. This will really be a new life style — a real return to the sacred, with social justice as the core for personal spiritual development — each to his or her religious and cultural traditions.

To put it in the Buddhist context, we must reconstitute our consciousness to be less selfish — less greedy, less hateful and less

unaware in order that together, we could reconstruct our society to be more just and participatory.

Our religious leaders with proper spiritual self criticism, could become more willing to learn from good friends in other religious traditions as well as from the Marxists and humanists in confronting the unjust socio-economic order of the day mindfully and meaningfully. The Theology of Liberation may be only practical in Latin America or the Philippines, but there is nothing wrong if the Buddhists and Hindus study this and try to integrate its methodology in their own struggles. While trying to solve our daily problems in the short term, we should also look for a common Asian religious approach to liberate ourselves and our society. We shall not overcome unjust systems easily. In turn we shall not be defeated, nor should we hate the oppressors, or become cynics. Daily we must work for our own liberation from desires, while we serve those who suffer like us and more than us, so that we shall sooner, rather than later, be all liberated.

An address at a conference of Asian Inter religious Concern on Emerging Consciousness for a New Humankind, at Gurukul Lutheran Theological College, Madras, 6 January 1985.

“Peace will be assured only if the underlying causes of the prevailing distrust and widespread conflict among nations are successfully dealt with; only if economic and social justice is furthered; and only if the United Nations and other multilateral institutions with responsibility for settling disputes and building the foundations of peace are strengthened and supported. We must dedicate ourselves anew to these objectives today. This is a time for resolution, not discouragement.”

— From the message of the UN Secretary-General on the International Day of Peace: 18 September 1984

Reflections on Near-Death Experience and Rebirth

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It gives me very great pleasure indeed to be with you tonight. I'm conscious of the great privilege of speaking to you because I believe very deeply that progress in religion and psylosophy will only be possible if people of different cultures come closer together and learn from each other. During the past week I have been participating in a conference in Korea in which forty-two researchers in the field of near-death studies from many representatives of world religions participated and it was a tremendous experience for me and it opened my eye to be much more aware of development in other countries.

I would like to address myself to the question of near death experience and the idea of a mind-dependent world and what, perhaps, this may say to us.

For the past fourteen years my research 'has centered on beliefs about life after death and how such claims can be related to the well established knowledge that we have about the place of man within the natural order. If one confines one's attention to the normal evidence of the natural sciences, about what it means to be a person, the case against belief in a future life seems almost overwhelming, and yet if you turn your attention to some less known but very well established elements of human experience there are some well-attested facts which suggest that survival of bodily death is a real possibility of these unusual experiences. By far the most important are near-death experiences. By a near death experience, I mean a report made by a resuscitated person about what happened to him or her at the

moment of apparent death.

For in recent years, many thousands of people whose hearts have stopped beating, whose lungs have stopped breathing, have been resuscitated by the advances of modern medicine. Some of these resuscitated persons tell what happened to them between the moment of apparent death and their successful resuscitation. Furthermore these stories all follow a remarkably similar pattern.

Before commenting on this pattern I must stress that it is only a minority who have experienced anything at all. Most people who have had a close brush with death remember nothing. Secondly, I must make the obvious point that only those who eventually recover can possibly tell us anything. Therefore near-death experiences, however suggestive, can not be regarded as truth of a life after death, since the one thing that the witnesses have in common is that they did not actually die, however near to death they came in the course of their critical illness. But provided these qualifications are admitted it remains significant that almost all investigations of the near-death experience find them remarkably suggestive of the idea that life after bodily-death may be a real possibility. It is these factors that I would like to comment on.

The commonest feature of the near-death experience includes a sense of going out of the body and looking down with interest on the resuscitation attempt. A second stage is a sense of being greeted by deceased relatives and friends, or by a religious figure, or a beam of light. Then there is a sense of seeing incidents from one's past life in a kind of panoramic overview. Following that there is a sense of apparently approaching a frontier and of being sent back.

After recovery it is very common for people to lament being sent back. Sometimes they will say to the doctors, "Why did you drop me back. It was so wonderful there." And in almost all cases the experience leaves the person who had it with a sense of absolute certainty that life after death is real.

Now one may ask, what is one to be

made of these often reported claims. Let me take first the out-of-the-body experience treating it simply as an experience. It is easy to find all kinds of natural explanations as to why people should imagine themselves out of the body at the moment of apparent death; a change of blood pressure in the inner ear gives people a sensation of floating in space. Clearly, every one who has had a heart-attack will have this change of blood pressure in their inner ear. Again, psychologists tell us that in moments of crisis, people frequently visualize themselves as if they were outside their bodies. As we might well imagine, the experience of near-death must be a very intense emotion which can generate visual hallucinations of the out-of-the-body type. So it is easy to give a natural explanation as to why people should imagine themselves outside their bodies. But it is much more difficult to think of any natural explanation which can account for the fact that the persons in question make correct reports about what was going on while they were unconscious on that their observations are correct from the point of view of an observer looking down from above at the unconscious body.

Dr. R.A. Mody one of the pre-eminent researchers in this field comments that, "Physicians have reported to me that they just cannot understand how their patients could have described the thing they did describe unless they really were hovering just below the ceiling, looking down." And there are dozens of well-attested such cases where the ill person describes in detail and with absolute clarity precisely what the doctors and nurses were doing while the body lay apparently deeply, deeply unconscious. When a person has a heart-attack one of the first things that the hospital attendants do is, of course, to draw a curtain around the bed while the doctors and nurses continue with the resuscitation attempt. Yet many of the people who are apparently at the point of death seem to observe from way above the curtain drawn around the bed, and in fact describe, from which ward the nurse rushes in from, and precisely which doctor administered which injection. All kinds of

minute details are given about the resuscitation attempt and they are accurate, and accurate from the point of view of an observer from above. Actually it is this phenomena of accurate observation which is far more important than the act of people thinking themselves to be outside the body.

There is evidence which seems only to be accountable for-on the hypothesis that they really were outside their bodies. Of course, to concede that would make a very significant difference to an overall world view. For those interested in the evidence for all this, perhaps the best account of it is in Professor Micheal Sebonne's book **Recollections of Death**, in which he, as an experienced cardiologist, backed his knowledge of cardiology against the detailed descriptions his patients gave back to him and he concluded that the only way they could have got this data was if they really were observing. For he noted that cardiac patients who did not have the out-of-the-body experience never had any idea about what was going on in an intensive care unit.

But to accept this evidence has enormous implications. Many people nowadays, take for granted that what we call the mind is just a way of talking about our brains, that mind and brain are really identical. But if one single out-of-the-body experience is true, then the mind and brain cannot be identical. If a single person really does correctly report from a different vantage point from his body then the mind and the brain cannot be identical, and the mind must be something other than the brain to observe from a difficult location. Furthermore if the mind is something other than the brain, something capable of leaving the body and observing from a different position; and if a mind can do this, even if only for a couple of minutes near the point of death, the principle has then been established and there is no reason in principle why the mind should not permanently leave the body and survive the body's dissolution. Consequently, if a single out-of-the-body experience is verified and we have hundreds of apparently well-attested such cases, then the greatest obstacle across the road to immortality has been removed

and life after death has been shown to be a plausible possibility. I now turn to a second element in the near-death experience; the claim to be met by deceased relatives and friends. Now, obviously, these visions are hallucinatory, mind-dependent visions because the relatives are seen in the form they were remembered by the recipient. Yet almost all who had this experience are certain of their authenticity. One evidential feature of the experience is that only deceased relatives are seen. That fact might perhaps be accounted for on psychological grounds in many cases. But there are two cases where a psychological explanation will not suffice. The first of these cases is where the person claims to have been met by deceased relatives concerning whose death he was ignorant. For example, a relative who had died after the ill person had been admitted to hospital and concerning whose death he had never been informed of.

There are several cases on record where a person claims to have been met in the world beyond by someone who was dead but whose death he had not been informed-and that is an evidential feature.

A second evidential feature is where children apparently remember being greeted by deceased relatives whom they hardly knew. Now this is very significant because psychologists generally agree that children of say five, six or seven cannot understand about death. They do not know as they are dying that must only see visions of deceased relatives, they could not understand the distinction between the deceased relative person they knew and those who are still alive. And in moments of crisis little children would almost always, on a psychological understanding hallucinate comforting vision of their mother and father. Yet little children never have hallucinatory visions of their mother and father in the near-death experience unless the father or mother has actually died. Instead the children report being greeted by deceased relatives, sometimes by relatives whom they did not know. And these cases become particularly significant when afterwards the child correctly describes the relative to her bewildered parents.

Perhaps the best attested case of this is something which was recorded in the British Doctor's Journal where a child claimed to have been met by his grandfather's mother of whom she had no previous knowledge but whose photograph she recognised with enthusiasm a few weeks later, after her recovery, when she visited on uncle's home. Apparently she had never seen the photo before, because she had never visited her uncle's home before and no other member of the family had any photographs of the grandfather's mother. Nevertheless as soon as the child saw the photo, she rushed forward and said "The was the lady I was telling you about, who met me."

The mention of some people who have died meeting not only relatives but religious figures must at once arouse our suspicions. This we might feel is one of the most unlikely features of the near death experience. Why is it that some people who happen to be Protestant Christians claim that Jesus met them. While Catholic Christians say that Mary met them or that Hindus are always met by Rama, the God of death, or that atheists see a beam of light. How can such culturally conditioned imaginations be regarded as evidential. Interestingly enough, whatever personage is seen its always described as being bathed in radiant light. Clearly these visions are culture-based hallucinations and the fact that each tradition identifies what they see with their own tradition indicates that there has to be a cultural element in the interpretation of the experience. But it is possible that the experience itself is not culture-bound. For the religious figure fulfills the same function in each case. Furthermore this is not the function which the religious traditions of the world have attributed to that figure.

For example, Jesus does not appear as either Judge or mediator. Mary does not appear as intercessor. Although named in accordance with each personal tradition the religious figure has a single and uniform function.

This is why atheists may see a beam of light, and Protestants, a radiant picture of Jesus, and Catholics, Mary, or angels. But the

heart of the experience is the same. And it is this uniformity of the experience rather than the difference in the interpretation which seems to be significant. That Jews, Sikhs, Hindus, Christians and Atheists have recognizably the same experience of meeting a transcental figure is more important, I suggest then the fact that they describe that figure in the language of their own tradition, or as in the case of Atheists, in their lack of tradition in speaking about such matters.

I now turn to a final evidential feature of the near-death experience. This is the effect it has on those who have it. In virtually every case they become absolutely convinced of the reality of life after death. They believe on the basis of their experience that life after death exists. After the experience people entertain no longer any more doubts about their own survival and they treat their own survival not just as an abstract possibility but as something which is a living fact of their experience. It is this sense of certainty, which often influences those who research such cases. The famous American Pathologist, Dr Kublavas, has stated that after two decades of studying dying people she is now certain of a future life. She said, "Before I started working with the dying, I didn't believe in life after death. Now I believe beyond a shadow of a doubt." All who study this phenomena find it impressive, whatever their own personal views are.

Recently in Korea, I discussed this with Professor Kenneth Reng, the President of the International Association for Near-Death Studies. As a professor of psychology he experienced many difficulties with this phenomena, yet he states that for him the most impressive factor is the sense of certainty of those who had this experience. And he says "I do not believe that anyone can be unaffected if hundreds of people are profoundly certain that as a result of what has happened to them they know there is a life beyond", and he has ascertained that there is not any other psychological experience that people have which has so profound an effect on so high a proportion of people who undergo it. In virtually every case it

transforms a person, e.g. from an Atheist who has denied life after death, who didn't even consider it possible, into a person who takes for granted there is life after death. The utter change in those who have had this experience is perhaps one thing which suggests this experience is something absolutely real. But what is one to make of these strange tales, those of us who have not had the experience ourselves. We may be moved when people talk to us about it. But no one can make a judgement on second hand evidence. Nor can we always be swayed by the convictions of others. Those of us who merely observe the phenomena cannot take over the testimony of those who have had the experience. We might perhaps feel that there are medical psychological factors which could account for all of these things. After all we might think anyone hovering between life and death must be suffering very profound psychological and physical stress. A brain which is starved of oxygen, drugged by hallucinatory pain killers, or excited by fever is hardly likely to be functioning normally. Who knows what visions might not be accountable for by the bizzare condition of the dying brain?

I've already tried in part to reply to this kind of objection by indicating that, of course, there are good natural reasons to explain why people think they have the sensation of being out of the body and why people might have hallucinations. However this kind of explanation cannot do justice to correct observation from outside the body. Nor can it do justice to the features, the evidential features of the hallucinations to which I have drawn attention. But we can also give a fuller reply and say that detailed research has shown there is no psychological or physiological correlation between the state of the body and the actual event of a near-death experience.

Two leading researchers, Dr Zosis and Harroldson, have examined detailed questionnaires from 2,000 doctors and nurses in the U.S.A. and in India about the experiences of their dying patients. They have then related the claimed experience which the patients describe to their doctor or

nurse with what the doctor or nurse knew of the patients bio-medical and psychological state. The advantage of this procedure was that it ensured that all the data came from trained medical personnel who were in a position to correlate any claim to a near-death experience with the known facts of the person's medical condition and could describe this in a standard manner as an appropriate basis for detailed computer analysis. Their research published in book, *"At The Hour of Death"* established that no significant correlations could be found. All attempts to explain away near-death experience as the product of any particular physiological or psychological state breaks down when one actually looks at the medical records of the people involved.

Well now, what happens if we accept these travellers' tales from the dying as evidential. My own view is that if these experience cannot be related to the medical nature of the patient's terminal illness as they cannot be related to his psychological state as well.

That relatives are seen in the forms they are remembered, that a being of radiant light is visualised within their own religious tradition, that people have a review of their panoramic life, that people learn to evaluate their past life in a new way; all these features suggest the start of a mind-dependent existence. The idea of a mind dependent existence in Western science goes back to the influential paper by HH Price, Prof. at Oxford University. It was an attempt to describe what kind of future life might be regarded as intelligible. His basic theory was that our minds might survive bodily death and in the absence of any future sensory stimulation from our sense organs our minds would think into existence a world of mental images just as they do now when we dream. It is not true that we can only have experiences when sense data comes through because we all have experiences when we dream which are real to us while the dream lasts and perhaps this analogy might help us to see how the mind could have genuine experiences in the absence of any fresh physical stimuli. These post mortem dreams would naturally be

largely shaped by the memories and experience of our past life but they would also project into fulfillment our desires and longings, conscious or unconscious, as formed by our character. This might seem an idealistic prospect, but in practice it would probably prove to be profoundly disturbing. For if our ideas were uninhibited or fulfilled their true value would be revealed to us, and as we relived our memories and threw into light our inner most desires we might well re-evaluate the judgements and decisions of our past earthly life. Reliving our past or imagining out our deepest longings, projecting them into fulfillment might have a reformatory power over us. Some have objected that a mind dependent world would imprison us forever within the confines of our own memory and imagination however to meet this objection we can postulate the possibility of rapport with other minds through a process analogous to telepathy. At present, we receive such a flood of information through our senses that only on rare occasions such as times of great crisis does anyone receive direct impressions from other minds through telepathy but it is possible that if the supply of sensory data were cut off as it would be at death then perhaps telepathic rapport might come into its own and become vividly real to us, and through this channel there might be real communication in a mind-dependent world in which individuals would imagine others as they had known them and enter through telepathy into mutual recognition and exchange of ideas. It might perhaps be pointed out that only through some process as described could there be any communication across the generations, for each person would imagine the person as they had known them before and this would enable communication to take place across generations and between people who had moved frequently from one community to another. An added feature of this theory is that it can do justice to the claim that in the next world religious experience might be more dominant than it is at present. The witness of mystics of all religious traditions is that the practice of mental prayer and the life of contemplation has greatly enhanced a

sense of communication with the divine. These conditions would be particularly realized in a purely mental existence, where religious experience might be thought to come into its own. Now when Prof. Price put forth his theory he was postulating a logically possible philosophical speculation about what kind of next life could sensibly be discussed by an analytical philosopher. It was however realized later that this speculation coincided very well with the near death experiences which came to public cognizance from 1975 onwards. Public knowledge did not come about until popular literature came out in the mid 70's. Part of this is due to the fact that modern medicine is able to call an increasing proportion of people back from situations where in the past they would have died. A mind-dependent world is precisely the kind of world that the near-death experience seems to point to. In particular, the descriptions of being welcomed by deceased relatives and friends, descriptions of seeing a transcendent figure of light, a panoramic review of past life and evaluating it in a new way. All these elements fit the picture precisely. But how does this picture relate to the teachings of other world religious traditions? In my book I have tried to show how this data is compatible from an overall Christian perspective. "Bazate" with Muslims is an after death state shaped by the thoughts and memories of one's life and that also corresponds with this picture. Nevertheless, although a mind-dependent world may be reconciled with Christian or Muslim thought, it is in fact, very far removed from what is normally thought to be the teaching of these religions.

Among the worlds' religious scriptures the one which is closest to this picture is the Tibet and *Book of the Dead*. In recent years this has been increasingly studied by western philosophers and theologians who realize that in many respects the teaching given in this book seems to run parallel to what the latest research appears to be uncovering. For example, in the near-death experience almost all participants claim to look down on their apparently deceased corpse and watch the frantic efforts made by doctors and

nurses to revive it. They watch the lamentations and mourning of the immediate family gathered around the body while they differentiate between their true identity and the apparent corpse. This process fits very well the description of the "Bardo" which states: When you look down on the immediate family wailing over the corpse and feel it odd that they cannot communicate the fact that they are not there, that they are outside the realm of that kind of activity. Then take the vision of the religious figure in radiant light, this corresponds amazingly closely to the radiant immutable light of the Amitabha Buddha with the statement that, "The clear light will appear in whatever shape will benefit all beings." This means appeals to "shivits" where the light appears in the form of "shiva." To a Buddhist, Buddha, to a Christian, Jesus, or, Mother Mary, and so on to many religious devotees or as Lama Govinda. It also relates to illusory visions of the "Bardo" which vary in keeping with the religious and cultural traditions in which the participant has grown up. This seems remarkably close to the phenomena of an apparent universal experience among the newly dead which they interpret in their own tradition, but always remember that they see the religious figure as radiant light. Only in, *The Book of the Dead*, is the figure Buddha perceived to be described explicitly as that which people would observe. Then the Tibetan, *Book of the Dead*, explicitly describes the next life as being, "mind dependent", it uses the expression of a, "thought body", and it describes in detail the Karmic illusions which give expression to the inward thoughts and feelings of the participant's past life. Subsequent western speculation that a world of mental images might reflect a person's past character, is so close to this idea that vision produced Karmic illusions deriving from a past life and shaping the next is remarkably perceptive. They then see this as a preparation for the world beyond, the person has this "mind dependent" world as a temporary stage in an ever onward journey. For in Tibetan Buddhism the mind dependent state is only one stage for reflection between successive lives.

The picture for the Tibetan *Book of the Dead* has been given attention from Professor Hick, author of *Death and Eternal Life* which represent one of the first sustained global theologies. It is a global theology because Hick believes Theology in the future must include in the source of its experience the religious experience of mankind as a whole and seek to learn from any tradition which appears to have valid insights into the nature of reality. Hick also believes that science, psychic research and religious philosophy must be weighed carefully and that it can be woven along with the Tibetan *Book of the Dead*, into a speculation about a possible future life.

He also argues that the idea of rebirth or reincarnation is opened to serious objection when thought of as something which always takes place on this planet. But many Hindu and Buddhist writings make reference to rebirths normally taking place in other worlds.

Professor Hick suggests that given this modification, the theory would correspond to a modern Christian understanding of the resurrection of the body in a resurrection world.

He further suggests that at death we temporarily enter into a "mind dependent" world as described by the speculation of H.H. Price and Tibetan *Book of the Dead*. We might then proceed into other embodied existences in a succession of other worlds. Professor Hick believes that such successive lives, with intervals for reflection and self-knowledge are a most suitable means for providing for man's spiritual pilgrimage towards God. The author puts this forward as a new speculation, drawing from insights of other world religious traditions and attempting to incorporate some Christian ideas and although these are new ideas, he points out that the man who wrote the final draft of the Christian's Communion Creed, St. Gregory of Nyssa said "Moving from one new beginning to the next, the soul will make its way towards the transcendent."

The purpose of this discussion then is not just to commend Hick's findings or speculation, but to suggest one example

where a serious scholarly attempt has been made to draw into unity what he has learnt from Western and Eastern beliefs. Recognizing that the, *Tibetan Book of the Dead* has ideas and insights from which the West needs to study and learn and at the same time, ideas from the East which many may feel to be outmoded. All of these findings gain support from the latest medical research into near-death experience and also philosophical speculations as to what kind of

future life may be logically possible.

It is argued that the ideas of rebirth and reincarnation is opened to serious objections when believed to take place only on this planet. Many Hindu and Buddhist writings make references to rebirth normally taking place in other worlds. Professor Hicks suggests that given their modifications, this theory corresponds more to a modern Christian understanding of resurrection of the body in a resurrection world.

A Lecture delivered at the Siam Society 21 August 1984

The Leaders, The Lotus and The Shadow of The Dove: The Case of Thai Society

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According to the unbroken age-old tradition in Buddhist countries, to be a Buddhist means, among other things, to take **'The Triple-Gem'** as one's refuge and to observe the Five Precepts (Panca-sila). These precepts are "*the minimum moral obligations of a lay Buddhist.*" (Rahula 1962: 80) The first of these five precepts is : "*I undertake the precept to abstain from the taking of life.*" (Saddhatissa 1970: 87) Observing this precept means that a Buddhist would abstain

from destroying, causing to be destroyed, or sanctioning the destruction of any living being. It should follow that a Buddhist society such as Thailand would have regarded **"peace"** very highly had the first precept been strictly adhered to.

This paper is an attempt to examine the position of **"peace"** in Thai society by utilizing Thailand's formal leaders as but a point of departure. If a leader can lead (Paige 1982:

1), then he or she should more or less reflect what his or her society is. In this paper, three Thai leaders will be selected as examples. They are Gen.Arthit Kamlang-ek, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief / Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Army; Gen. Prem Tinasulanond, the Prime Minister of Thailand and Minister of Defence; and Somdej Phra Ariyawongsakatayan, the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand. These Leaders are chosen from a formal-positional perspective. These leaders cover three basic dimensions of Thai society, military-security, government-politics, and religion. The military has to be included because they have always been considered an integral element in Thai society. Recently, Gen.Arthit himself used the Army television stations to broadcast his emotionally-charged speech concerning his strong dissension against the Thai government's devaluation of the Thai currency¹. Besides, judging from modern Thai political history, to examine Thai society without taking the Thai military into serious consideration seems to be a grave mistake.

The leaders' most recent public speeches (during 1982-1984) will be used in order to delineate their positions on the idea of "peace"². It is important to point out that whether these leaders believe in what they spoke or not is besides the point. What is at issue is the message they wish to convey to their followers. If the followers are to be led, then analysing these messages may shed light on where they are led to. These data are merely indicators of the ways the Thai leaders portray their public images by leading the public to think of the ideas they regard as most significant. In this sense, public speech serves as a line of communication between the leaders and the led.

Finally, Buddhism itself will be questioned concerning its relationship with the concept of peace in the Thai social world.

From the position of "peace" in these leaders' thoughts it is possible to raise question concerning Buddhism and Peace. If the concept of peace is relatively absent in Buddhist society, there must be reasons. Historical examples will also be used to crystallize the analysis.

The Concept of Peace and Contemporary Thai Leaders.

The Military and Peace.

From an almost 400 pages of speeches delivered on different occasions, the General discusses a wide varieties of subjects ranging from school system, Buddhist temple as socializing agents, children today-adult tomorrow, business, to human development and pollution problems. From all there are only two places where the word "peace" appear in the text. (Kamlang-ek 1984: 200, 210) Interestingly enough, both appear in one of his speeches discussing national security. Gen. Arthit points out that the military has succeeded in fighting the communists by utilizing political means as the primary approach while military measures become secondary. He concludes, *"In fighting to conquer the communists, it can be seen that we have used peaceful means to create better understanding so that they (the jungle fighters) will come out to help us."* (Kamlang-ek 1984: 210) In any event, these statements should not lead to the conclusion that the Thai military is a peace-oriented organization which prefers nonviolent actions to military methods. Peaceful means are employed only because they are most appropriate under certain circumstances. Military measures will be immediately used whenever a situation requires. (Kamlang-ek 1984: 201)

Taken as a whole, Gen. Arthit's basic concepts center around the issues of security

¹ The way he spoke to the public is quite indicative of his self-understanding. He said: "While still abroad, I learned from the newspaper that the Government announced the devaluation of the baht. I felt sorry and hurt that my advice was not heeded, making me think about resigning from the service". (Bangkok Post. November 8, 1984 : 1)

² The quantity of each leader's public speech differs. Gen.Prem is quite well known for his mild-manner, and preference for silence, whereas Gen. Arthit is much more vocal. In addition, even data such as these public speeches are quite difficult to obtain. It is quite an experience to have to go all the way to Gen. Arthit himself to obtain a copy of his published speeches while Gen. Prem's speech have to be authorized by one of his deputy political secretaries before public accessibility.

and discipline. He points out in an interview on "Educational Trends in the School System during the 6th. and 7th. National Education Plans" on June 8, 1984 that, *"Security does not only mean military matter, but it means an appropriate proportion of everything. Therefore, when speaking of security, we should include economic, political, international and military, all four types of security at the same time."* (Kamlang-ek 1984: 80) But then when speaking on *"military education in state universities"* he points out straightforwardly that, *"Everyone should favor military matters because without them, the country is no more."* (Kamlang-ek 1984: 88)

Besides *"security"*, *"discipline"* is another concept that is quite prevalent in his speeches. He indicates that consciousness for social responsibility can only be possible after discipline has been created. (*Ibid.* : 119) A nation-state can only develop if its citizens possess virtue and discipline. (*Ibid.* : 144) Most importantly, perhaps, is when he links the two concepts together. As he puts it tersely, *"National security depends on understanding and discipline... Discipline enables the people to live with order and to be capable of following the rulers' commands effectively."* (*Ibid.* : 158)

These examples are brought up to suggest that it is normal for a military leader to emphasize the notions of security and discipline. It is also logical that the notion of *"peace"* seldom appears in his public speeches. To be a soldier means, among other things, to live life that may have to take away others' lives. Such a life contradicts the notion of *"right livelihood"* in Buddhism. A Buddhist is supposed to abstain from making his/her living through a profession that brings harm to others, such as trading in arms and lethal weapons, intoxicating drinks, killing animals and should live by a profession which is honourable, blameless and innocent of harm to others. (Rahula 1962 : 47) In Gen. Arthit's case, *"peace"* seems to be relatively absent from his thought process.

The Prime Minister and Peace³

From the three speeches delivered on New Year's Day (1983); September 14, 1984 when he went to the United States for a special medical check up and on September 26, 1984 when he returned from the said trip, the one problem that seems to concern Prime Minister Prem the most is poverty. The concepts that seem to be central to his thought process are happiness or well-being and tranquility. The Prime Minister underscores the significance of economic factors that would reduce the level of poverty in this country. In this sense, it is possible to suggest that Gen. Prem is working towards *"positive peace"* (i.e. towards and absence of structural violence such as poverty.) (Galtung 1969 : 1983) At the same time, the notion of *"tranquility"* somehow connotes an idea of a shady-cool refuge where one can safely reside.

Another characteristic that stands out saliently in Gen. Prem's public speeches is the bondage between himself and his followers. He said, *"We care for one another, all kinsfolks must have cared for me. I do care for all of you too."* Then towards the end of one of his speeches, he said, *"I want to emphasize that I will not forget the love we had among all of us relatives. I will not forget the care you had given me."* It should be noted that Gen. Prem is called *"Pa"* among the Thais. As suggested earlier, Gen. Prem is a soft-spoken, mild-mannered and normally quiet gentleman. Therefore, it seems that the few words he say to his followers may mean a great deal to them. Although a former military man himself, he has shown a remarkable capacity in relating to the Thais in a seemingly non-aggressive way.

Nevertheless, the word *"peace"* itself did not appear in his speeches at all. The fact that he emphasizes *"positive peace"* does not mean that nonviolent means will be used. Besides, it is also difficult to detect a

³ An official at the Prime Minister Office informed me that to obtain the Prime Minister's speeches one also needs authorization. In addition, there are very few public speeches available.

direct Buddhist influence in his speech. This difficulty may basically due to insufficient data, among other things. Nevertheless, it can still be argued that the existence of peace as a unity between both positive and negative qualities is still shadowy in his overall thought process.

The Supreme Patriarch and the Concept of Peace.

Based upon one collection of his writings (1982) and two small booklets (1982 and 1984), it is safe to suggest that his speeches are geared to educate the Thai Buddhists. At times, he went into detail to explain Buddhist rituals. (1982 b: 1-13) But the theme that occurs repeatedly from the available materials is to practice Buddhism. The Five Precepts have consistently been emphasized. What is most interesting, however, is the fact that he underscores what lies within the minds of men. (1984 : 7)

While acknowledging the discrepancy between Buddhist teachings and what the Thai Buddhists practice, he attributes this problem to causes within the minds of the Buddhists. He speaks, *"One can easily see that killing is prohibited in Buddhism, yet we kill all over the country."... "Buddhism is not something we construct. It is a teaching. Teaching needs people to practice it otherwise it will become lifeless."* (1984 : 5-6)

As a Buddhist monk preaching Buddhism to his followers, it is natural that he occasionally conveys the idea of the first precept to the public. Yet the concept of **"peace"** in the Supreme Patriarch's thought process is far from being a social one. He does speak about social ills but their solutions are basically personal. While it is quite true that Buddhism is interested in the happiness of men which will not be possible without leading a pure life based on moral and spiritual principles, the Buddha did not take life out of the context of its social and economic background. (Rahula 1962 : 81)

At this point, it seems legitimate to ask whether it is possible for a Buddhist leader in Thailand to publicly talk about **"peace"** from a social perspective. As a religion of nonviolence, it is only logical that a Buddhist

leader such as the Supreme Patriarch can be expected to contribute to the cause of peace more than the General or the Prime Minister. One way to solve this enigma is to look back into the recent past. There was a fascinating case which certainly points to the shadowy existence of peace in "Buddhist" Thailand.

A Buddhist Monk with a Message of Peace.

In the year 1915 during World War I, Thailand was under absolute monarchy with the British-trained Rama VI (1910-1925) as the King of Siam. A high ranking monk by the name of Phra Thep Moli Sirichantoe published a book for the cremation of the wife of one of Thailand many princes. One thousand copies of the book were distributed. The thesis of that small but significant book was : *"Good knowledge leads to progress while bad knowledge leads to corruption."* (Phra Thep Moli Sirichantoe 1915 : 6)⁴

The above thesis sounds religious enough not to render any problem to its author. But then the unusual monk elaborated his thesis. He pointed out that an example of evil knowledge is military study. Knowledge in shooting to kill is also included as it entails lack of the compassion to other human beings. Knowledge how to make guns, swords, and all kinds of weapons such as man-of-war, aircrafts, submarines, explosions and torpedoes is evil knowledge which will certainly lead to ruin and corruption. (1915 : 18) The author also cited a then contemporary example of World War I. *"Each side did not want to solve the cause of the conflict. Instead, they intend on exercising their power which finally leads to violent war between each other. War then spreads all over the world. People die because of weapons of destruction or starvation or other*

⁴ This is an extremely rare document. I wish to express my gratitude to a colleague of mine, Chalong Suntharavanich, Department of History, Faculty of Arts; Chulalongkorn University for introducing me to this invaluable material.

It should be noted also that monks in Thailand can have rank depending on their qualifications. These ranks are bestowed upon them by the state. (e.g. Phra Thep)

diseases as a result of dirt and pollution. Not only soldiers die, but old people, women and children who flee for safety also die because of hunger. The number of people died in this war is impossible to count." (1915 : 20)

The monk then went on to explain to his followers that such was the atrocity of evil knowledge. People took pride in their knowledge of producing killing weapons and they went to battle without mercy. In the eyes of one another, they become just "meat" and "fish" (not human being). (*Ibid.* : 21) The more human beings know about destructive technology, the more harm will befall humanity.

One would normally think that such insightful teaching was in accordance with the spirit of Buddhism itself. Therefore, in a Buddhist society with a Buddhist ruler, Phra Thep Moli should be duly rewarded. But what occurred to him afterwards reveals a great deal about the kind of "Buddhist society" examined here.

Phra Thep Moli (later on he was promoted to become Phra Ubali khunupamacharaya, abbot of Baromnivas Temple, Bangkok) briefly discussed the demotion incident in his *Autobiography*⁵ published in 1947. He wrote,

"That book was against the country's public policy because it was not in accordance with the royal wish. Therefore, when His Majesty the King (Rama VI) became aware of this book, he gave order to deprive me of my rank and then I was under house arrest (or, rather temple arrest) at Wat Bovornnives Wiharn". (1947 : 33)

Then on January 4, 1916, King Rama VI granted the monk his amnesty.

A proper question at this point could be : why is it that when revered Buddhist monk preached peace in accordance with the Buddha perennial message, he was demoted by the power of a "Buddhist" king? To meaningfully deal with this question, it is important to briefly discuss King Rama VI's idea concerning violence and nonviolence.

Rama VI and his inclination towards Peace?

Born in 1880, Rama VI was the 29th.

son of the great Rama V. When he was 13, he went abroad to enroll at the naval College, Great Britain. In 1894 he became the Crown Prince of Siam. Then he underwent a military training at Sandhurst and furthered his study by reading history at Christchurch College, Oxford. There, he chose to write a dissertation on, "**The War of Polish Succession**". Trevor Ling points out that, "*This Buddhist prince, Vajiravudh (Rama VI) did not drift into an army career : he chose it, and he enjoyed the life.*" (Ling 1979 : 138) As soon as he came down from Oxford, he went to the school of Musketry at Hythe and obtained a special certificate for marksmanship. He became the King of Siam in 1910. When the war broke out in 1914, Thailand was not in any military danger. Nevertheless, as an Anglophile, the King showed strong support for England and France by his extensive journalistic writings and with gifts of money to his old regiment, the Durham Light Infantry. In July 1917, Thailand entered the war and a small volunteer expeditionary force, about 1,200 strong, was sent to Europe. The troop arrived too late to take part in the actual fighting, but they were able to join in the victory parades in Paris and London, and then in Bangkok. (Ling 1979 : 138) The King himself was also a dramatist, a poet and a journalist. There was an abortive military uprising against the monarchical regime in 1911. But his reign continued until he passed away in 1925.

In spite of Prof. Ling's analysis of King Rama VI's attitude towards war and peace remains ambiguous. For example, the 1911 incident was a abortive attempt by a group of junior military officers to change the ancient Thai monarchical regime into either "**limited monarchy**" or "**republic**". (Noonmond 1979 : 88-90) The committee investigating the incident concluded that the 1911 group also planned to harm the King and the people.

⁵ It is also interesting to note that this book which was published in 1947 and had been in Thammasat University library for some time has been left undiscovered. From the library card, I seem to be the only one who borrowed this book out. It also points to the possibility of future research on the nonviolent or peaceful tradition in Thai society.

(*Ibid.* : 90) Such “**crime**” in an absolute monarchical state could only face capital punishment. (*Ibid.* : 111-112) From among the 91 military and civilian officers accused in this case, three were sentenced to death.

Two days after he was informed of this verdict, Rama VI gave the following comment: *“But one of their basic crimes is to harm me personally. However I do not hold personal grudges against them. Therefore, their punishment should be mercifully reduced which is within the domain of the royal power of a King.”* (Noonond 1979 : 120) As a result, the three officers received life sentences. It should be noted that only 25 out of the 91 accused were really imprisoned. These prisoners were later on granted amnesty by King Rama VI. Taken together, they were imprisoned for 12 years 6 months and 6 days. (*Ibid.* : 129) This relatively mild punishment is quite unusual or even unthinkable in any Southeast Asian “**absolutist state**”.

Besides this incident, some of his writings strongly connote the idea of peace and nonviolence. He has written some 100 pieces on a wide variety of issues using quite a few pseudonyms. Among these materials, his collection of proverbs titled “**Assawabhasit**” (Proverbs of the Horse) is of particular interest to those concerned with “**peace**”. The followings are remarkable proverbs written and/or compiled by King Rama VI himself.

“Those who came to power through military force will be destroyed by military force.”

“A tree planted with force, fertilized with force and nurtured with force, Fruits of this tree cannot be otherwise but violence.”

“To take the life of an evil man is as sinful as to kill a good man”

“Peace can be easily maintained between and by equally civilized nations”

“If all the nations of the world agree to sign a contract abolishing all violence including wars, all of us human beings will be a lot happier.” (Assawabhahu 1951)

The least one can say about the author of these proverbs is that he thinks of peace quite seriously. However, his consideration

does not seem to be influenced by Buddhism. Rather, one senses a strong Western influence which probably resulted from his long years of training in Europe.

A question arises : why is it that an intellectual-king who wrote seriously about peace punished a monk who delivered a similar message? Why was he not consistent in his thinking about peace and allowing other to promote the very idea he seemed to favor? There questions are traces which indicate that it is important to probe deeper into the complex relationship between a Buddhist leader, and the idea of peace in Buddhism.

Neither the Dove nor the Peaceful Lotus.

King Rama VI punished Phra Thep Moli for preaching peace not because he was against the idea of peace as evident from his own writings. Yet, the monk had to be punished because to preach something against the state policy is a challenge to the power of that state. In an absolute monarchical state, government policy was the King's wish. Again, how a given policy comes into being is besides the point. State policy or the King's degree was the direction the public should follow. Any challenge cannot be tolerated. In leading the followers, leaders often limit their choices. To criticize the direction taken is to invite the public to think about alternatives. With alternatives, the followers may cease to be loyal followers. As a result, the leadership of a leader could be undermined.

King Rama VI once wrote that to be a Thai means, among other things, to be loyal to the King of Siam. A true Thai must not prefer freedom of oneself to loyalty to the King. (Rama VI : 1963 : 141) In this sense, loyalty to the King without reservation is an equivalent to national loyalty. He also wrote that to destroy a nation is the utmost sin which would inhibit man's possibility to go to heaven and even to attain Nirvana. (*Ibid.* : 134)

Consequently, the concept of the state, be it manifested in the form of an absolute monarch or an abstract nation, seems to be

much more significant than peace. Here, a concrete example should be instructive.

At the coronation of King Rama VI in 1910, the Buddhist Patriarch delivered an interesting sermon. Among other things, he said, "People who live in different countries in close neighbourhood must inevitably have disputes and quarrels, either on account of territory, or of the rights of the subjects thereof, or of commercial rivalry and so forth... Such being the case, each nation finds it necessary to organize some of its own citizens into a class whose duty it is to fight against its enemies." (Ling 1979 : 136) This monk also pointed out that since wars usually occur without warning, "*Wars must be prepared for even in time of peace, otherwise one would not be in time, and one would be in a disadvantageous position towards one's foe*" (Ibid. : 137) The Patriarch also lamented the fact that the citizens had "*become totally inexperienced in warfare, and even the military were none too proficient.*" (Ibid.) It is fascinating to note that the preface to the printed edition of this sermon urges the reader to remember that it is "*an erroneous idea to suppose that the Buddha condemned all wars and people whose business it was to wage war.*" (Ibid.)

The lengthy point made by the Patriarch in 1910 seems to be incomprehensible if viewed from canonical Buddhism. However, if the relationship between Buddhism and the state in Thailand has been construed, these forbidden statements will be understood. Throughout Thai history, Buddhism as personified in the form of the Sangha has not been separated from the state. The Sangha sought to secure the adherence of political rulers (such as the king or a government) to Buddhist values. For this would guarantee their virtual monopoly as "*spiritual leaders and religious professionals of the state.*" On the other hand, political leaders needed to secure the cooperation of this Sangha. The state needs to be morally legitimized while the people need to be morally controlled. Such analysis leads Somboon Suksamran to conclude that, "*It is very likely that the interests of the political rulers and the Sangha coincided — that an*

ideology which needed supportive political power met a political ruler looking for a legitimating ideology. What developed was a peculiar type of state based on the reciprocal relationships between the political rulers and Sangha" (Suksamran 1982 : 158) To sustain such relationship, the state has never allowed the monks to govern themselves. Instead, the monks have been incorporated into the structure of the state. One of the results of this peculiar relationship which has been going on for centuries is that Buddhism has been deprived of the teachings that would not coincide with state policies. If one dares to be true to Buddhism and preach what he thinks is right, then he cannot be left unpunished. 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 the Thai Buddhists.

This situation is also true concerning issues other than peace and war. One prominent Buddhist meritical doctor in Thailand laments, "*The temples have been almost cut off from useful social functions. Left with largely ceremonial roles, they have shifted more towards superstitious practices. The monks and the people are thus more stupefied both in religious principles and in social mechanisms.*" (Wasi 1984 : 60) This observation is quite common among serious scholars in search of new social meanings from Buddhism.

Messages concerning merit and sin at the individual level form themselves into a wall whereby a Buddhist can learn against while protecting him from venturing inside to find the hidden social messages. In a society such as this where Buddhism is deformed, peace becomes irrelevant.

This paper was presented at the second international seminar on "Buddhism and Leadership for Peace", Tokyo, Japan.

December 2 - 7, 1984

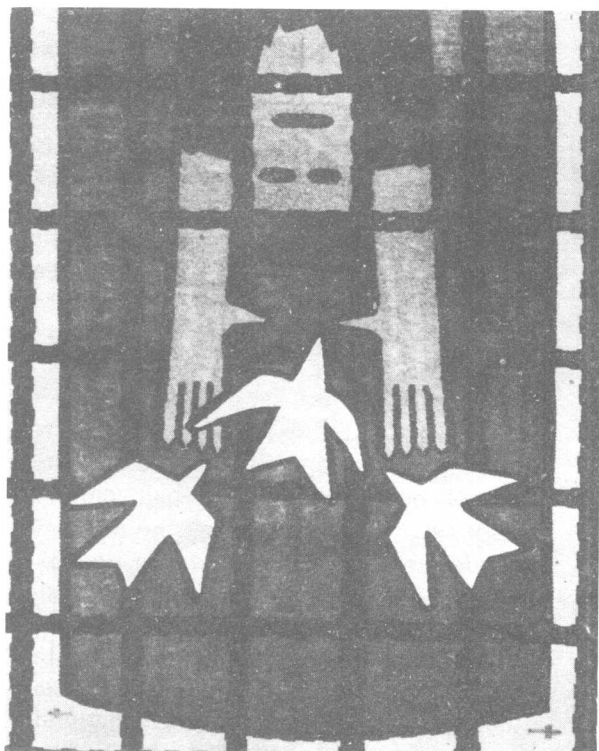
THAILAND

Military Factional Politics behind Arrests of "Communists" and Buddhist Scholar

In what Thai sources believe was an attempt to incite demonstrations that would serve as the pretext for a right-wing military coup, in July 1984 22 persons were arrested under the Anti-Communist Act and in August internationally well-known Buddhist scholar and social critic Sulak Sivaraksa, a university lecturer, and the printer of one of Sulak's books were charged with lese majesté for statements about the monarchy in Sulak's latest book, copies of which were confiscated by the police.....

Human rights activists in Thailand have criticized the Anti-Communist Act as violating civil rights and liberties, in violation of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. Several lawyers, including noted human rights defender Thongbai Thongpao, pointed out that the Anti-Communist Act contradicts the 1980 amnesty policy, so that thousands of former students and others who fled to the jungle in 1976 and have returned to seek normal lives have no assurance they will not be prosecuted. They have urged the repeal of the Act and passage of an Amnesty Law.

Lt.General Chaovalit Yongjaiyut, Vice Military Chief of Staff, was instrumental in persuading the government to adopt the amnesty policy, and may be said to head the moderate military faction. He is well-placed to become the next Military Chief of Staff or Army Commander in Chief. Opposed to him is the militantly anti-communist faction,



which is believed to be behind the arrests. The daily newspaper *Matichon* reported on July 17 that the Director General of the Police Department called for former students and others who returned from the jungle to present themselves to the authorities.

Several members of Parliament, including the President of the elected lower house, called for abrogation of the Anti-Communist Act, which they said was a tool

used for the elimination of opposition politicians. The President charged that the Act is too broad, saying that anyone can be accused of being a communist for just smiling at a known communist.

On July 17, the Thammasat University Student Union sponsored a panel discussion on "Human Rights and Freedom in the Present Situation," which included as speakers the Vice Rector of Thammasat University and the Rector of Ramkhamhaeng University. The same day, the Special Branch police confiscated over 900 copies of a newly-published book by Sulak Sivaraksa, *Unmasking Thai Society*. On July 26, about 1,000 members of a right-wing organization, the Village Scouts, demonstrated in front of Government House in Bangkok, demanding Sulak's arrest. Police arrested Sulak on *lesé majesté* charges on August 5th. The Deputy Speaker of the Parliament asked the government for an explanation of this arrest, as well as those of the alleged communists, stating that in the past, arrests of communists took place in the name of national security, but the political regime has become increasingly dictatorial and individual liberty had deteriorated to the extent that even a university lecturer was arrested on this charge.

On August 8, when the law required the police to present Sulak before the court, the police refused to grant bail, citing as reasons that he might escape, he might not be safe while at liberty, and that he was a powerful person who might use his influence to alter the case in his behalf. On August 10 the Criminal Court, acting as a military tribunal, authorized the police to detain Sulak for 12 more days, a request that under the law may be repeated seven times. However, that evening the Chief Justice of the Criminal Court authorized bail of US\$ 23,000 (in baht).

The prosecutor's indictment, handed down on September 26, charged Sulak with libel, insult of the King, and conspiracy in printing, advertising and distribution of printed matter which violates the King. *Lesé majesté* carries a penalty of 3-15 years imprisonment, but the five charges against

Sulak could amount to 15-75 years. His co-defendants were Chittrakorn Tangkasemsuk, a lecturer at Udonthani Teachers College, who interviewed Sulak in 1983 about Thai education for a book commemorating the College's 60th anniversary, *Looking AT Thai Education: Past, Present and Future*, and the book's printer.

Soon after the book's publication, a former Minister of Education lodged a complaint that Sulak's interview contained defamatory remarks about King Rama VI and the present King, Rama IX. The Ministry ordered the College to remove Sulak's interview from the book, and the Special Branch police concluded after investigation that there was no case against the printer, the College (the publisher), or anyone else. Sulak was informed orally, however, that while he could make remarks about the monarchy as a private citizen, this time his views had been published by a government agency (the College), which implied that what he said was consistent with government policy. Hence it was better to leave remarks of this nature out of official publications.

On this basis, Sulak felt confident in having the deleted interview included in a new book published by the private Komol Keemthong Foundation, *Unmasking Thai Society*. In it he criticized past Thai rulers and the current King for not understanding the Thai people and culture, because they had been sent abroad for their education at an early age and thought like foreigners. The printer of this book was not arrested.

On November 6 and 7 the first hearing of Sulak's case took place in closed session before a military tribunal. Members of the local and foreign press, foreign embassy personnel and hundreds of representatives of Buddhist, Christian and Muslim faiths and human rights organizations were ordered to clear the courtroom. The judge, who had handed down a heavy prison sentence in another *lesé majesté* case prosecuted by the same Public Prosecutor, set December 20-21 as the date of the next hearing. However, on November 8 Sulak heard unofficially that his case would be withdrawn from court. Nothing happened until November 30,

when the judge informed Sulak and his co-defendants in closed session that the public prosecutors had asked the court to have the case withdrawn. This was the first time lese majesté charges had been dropped, and no reason was given. However, the Thai Government had been bombarded with protests from abroad. In a statement to the press, the Director-General of the Public

Prosecution Department said that he had been ordered "from above" to drop the case and had no choice in the matter, adding that he did not believe in Sulak's "innocence."

*From HRI Human Rights Internet Reports
Washington DC, USA 10: 1 & 2 (September-
December 1984)*

SPECIAL RELEASE ON LESE MAJESTE CASE

Santi Isrowuthakul

We are very pleased to inform you that Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa's case of Lese Majeste has been officially withdrawn from the Military Tribunal in Bangkok on November 30, 1984.

CG RS would like to thank you all, individually and organizationally, for all the help in campaigning for the release and the subsequent withdrawal of the case. This is the first in Thai legal history that a case of Lese Majeste was officially dropped from the military court.

Without any doubt, the outcome of this case was mainly the result of your sincere effort in sending letters, cables, telexes of appeals for his release. Never before that a Thai citizen accused for such crime had enjoyed such international support of this scale and nature. For this reason alone that we, as the organization, would like to express our utmost gratitude for your concern and sincere support for Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa, one of our most respected Committee Member.

However, Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa's triumph over serious charges must be considered as the triumph over injustice by all of us. Indeed, it is the case of victory for all who is working for the principle of human rights and freedom of expression.



Despite all the joy and the common sense of victory for the good cause, we, the Coordinating Group for Religion in Society, could not fully enjoy the celebration for Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa's release alone, simply because there are, at the moment, at least 20 more political prisoners still being detained without trial on various charges against the state in Bangkok.

Most of these political prisoners were detained even before Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa's arrest. They all have been denied of their rights for temporary release on bail by the Thai authorities, even when the investigation and interrogations carried out by the related authorities were fully completed.

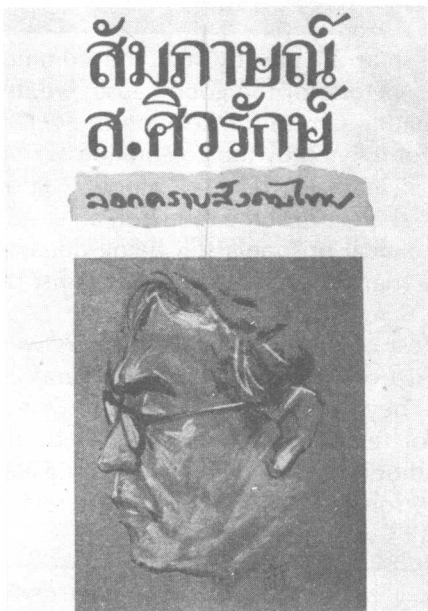
*From Impact Asia Magazine for Human Transformation
Manila, Feb. - March 1985*

SULAK RELEASED

The charge of **Lese majeste** against Sulak Sivaraksa was dropped by the Military Tribunal in Bangkok on November 30. Special thanks go to all who sent appeals for his release. Never before has a Thai citizen accused of such a crime has such widespread international support. This is the first time in Thai legal history that a case of **lese majeste** was officially dropped by the military court.

In the midst of the feelings of joy at the outcome of this case, we are reminded of at least 20 other political prisoners still being held without trial, who lack the unusual international recognition and support which a prominent person such as Sulak enjoys.

*from Friends of the Orient Committee
Pacific Yearly Meeting, Religious Society
of Friends, Salem, Oregon, USA*



Charges dropped against Sulak Sivaraksa

BPF, along with Amnesty International and other concerned groups, has been writing to the Thai authorities to ask that charges be dropped against Sulak, who is on the BPF International advisory panel. He was facing up to 30 years in jail for Lese Majeste - it was considered that he had written about the King with less than due respect.....

The charges of lese majeste have been dropped against Sulak Sivaraksa and his two co-defendants, but there are six people at present serving prison sentences for the same offence. They are : Anant Senakhant, Kant Kijkraiwan, Saman Kongsuphol, Thawan Saengkanchananon, Pongthep Manopipatpong and Rat Uttapan. They have been convicted of defaming the monarchy in writing or speech, but Amnesty International considers them to have been imprisoned on account of the peaceful expression of their nonviolent political opinion, and has adopted them as prisoners of conscience. Letters written by Buddhists to a Buddhist monarch asking him to exercise his compassion and pardon these people, might just help.

Letter to : His Majesty the King of
Thailand,
Chitrlada Palace,
Bangkok,
Thailand.

*FROM DOWN BY THE RIVERSIDE
Published by the BUDDHIST PEACE
FELLOWSHIP U.K. Summer Autumm
1984*

BOOKS

Siamese Resurgence: A Thai Buddhist Voice on Asia and a World of Change,

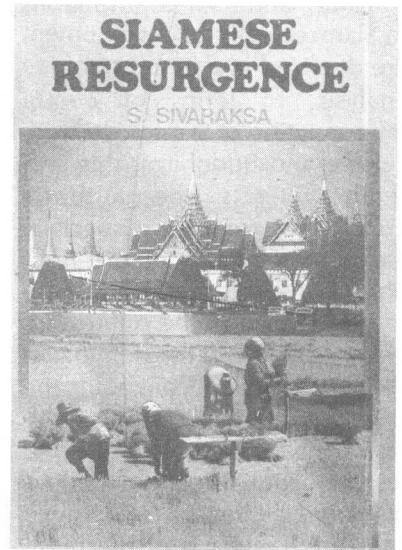
by S. Sivaraksa

464 + XVIII pp and illustrations

ACFOD, Bangkok (1985)

paperback US\$10, hard cover US\$15.

(postage included)



In his much-praised and perhaps the most outstanding books written in English, **SIAM IN CRISIS, A BUDDHIST VISION FOR RENEWING SOCIETY, RELIGION AND DEVELOPMENT** etc., Professor Sulak Sivalaksa has described and expressed his deep and continuing concerns and insights on anguished realities of contemporary Asian and Thai society with his critical mind and constructive thought based on a Theravada Buddhist intellectual, moral and spiritual point of view.

Now, here, in his newest book in English, **Siamese Resurgence: A Thai Buddhist Voice on Asia and a World of Change**, he addresses again the question of contemporary crisis of society, culture, values, religion and qualitative human life in a world of rapid change and presents his Buddhist intellectual and beliefful perspective and vision on this question in the universal as well as South-east Asian regional context.

This volume is also a col-

lection of recent essays, lectures, public addresses and talks delivered by Professor Sivaraksa on many special occasions, which presents his comprehensive and cohesive view as a genuine Siamese eminent Buddhist social and cultural critic about depth realities of religion, society, and human life in today's Asian context.

The volume has six parts. The lecture texts and papers in the first part deal with the living issues of contemporary rapid historical change of societies and values in our world and cope with these issues in terms of the fundamental attitude, role, and tasks of Siamese Buddhist monks, Sangh Authority as well as Buddhist laymen and women in the midst of this changing world. Professor Sulak's own current, constructive, Buddhist thought on these matters is fully and explicitly revealed.

In the second part, the new and alternative paradigms of development in a Buddhist perspective based on Asian

realities are fervently pursued, not only in the realm of politico-socio-economic situation, but also in the view of quality of human life itself.

In Part III, Professor Sulak discusses a very important issues of culture and development based on his profound understanding of traditional Asian cultural values in the context of its cultural pluralism. The basic philosophy and idea of **The Asian Cultural Forum on Development** (ACFOD) is also clearly stated. The author comments that *"it is time to Think Again, and to Think People, to put people first in our political, social and economic life, and to examine some of the alternative development strategies which would encourage to this happen."* (p.169)

In Part IV author's four series of lectures on some leading Siamese personalities given at **Siam Society** meetings held between September 1981 and April 1983 are compiled. And important historical and

present day's leading personalities and their contributions to Siamese cultural development are depicted in a form of unique analysis. In terms of depth-interpretation of Siamese history, culture and Buddhism, this part really reflects the author's epitome of wisdom. Especially the author's voice of the Buddhist conscience and response toward the poor, the oppressed, the exploited and the dominated vividly echoes throughout the pages of this part. And it is the result of his incredible, academic research into those biographies of leading personalities. Author's reference to Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's latest contribution to the development of his thought on Dharmika Socialism is very much suggestive as an alternative future for new social order in Asian countries. (See p.244)

Eight miscellaneous collection of articles and essays in the fifth part includes also various kinds of cultural issues and bring out Professor Sulak's intellectual, critical thought on many concrete issues in contemporary Thai society.

And then, Part VI Appendices!! This part makes this volume the most historic documents for readers in English in relation to the suffering and unexpected experiences of a today's famous Siamese intellectual, that is, Professor Sivaraksa himself. As most of the conscientious intellectual people all over the world know it well, Professor Sulak Sivaraksa had gone through the tough trial and suffering on a charge of lese majeste almost four months last part of the year 2527 B.E.(1984). In spite of Millitary Court Prosecutor's strong charges against

Professor Sulak Sivaraksa's so-called offences of lese majeste, the case was finally withdrawn on the 30th of November, 2527(1984) just naturally because of his innocence and unchainging personal integrity as a conscientious Siamese thinker and man of justice. Several legal documents regarded with this case, chronicle of the events and author's own views as well as the various voices of supporters and friends of him are orderly compiled in this Apendix part.

Professor Sulak Sivaraksa is one of the most conscientious, social and cultural critics in contemporary Thai society. He is a famous writer and editor, and an exemplary Siamese Buddhist patriot. He wrote almost hundreds books and articles in Thai and in English. He is also internationally renowned and respected scholar, especially in his capacity as an advisor for the United Nations University.

I have had a great privileged to be acquainted with Professor S.Sivaraksa and enjoy his warmest friendship and guidance for many years since the days when my wife Kahoru and I were in Chiang Mai, teaching at Thailand Theological Seminary, Payap University and Chiang Mai University. I along with many other people see this newest book as a living witness of the truth and justice, vision and compassion, challenge and commitment which have been lived by his selfless devotion to true Buddhist teachings and even self-sacrificing commitment to the true development of people and culture in the great process of Siamese resurgence.

Kenichiro Mochizuki

Professor, Keisen Jogakuen Junior College Tokyo, Japan
Visiting Researcher
Chulalongkorn University
Social Science Research Institute

THAI BUDDHISM IN THE BUDDHIST WORLD :

**A survey of the Buddhist situation
against a historical Background.**

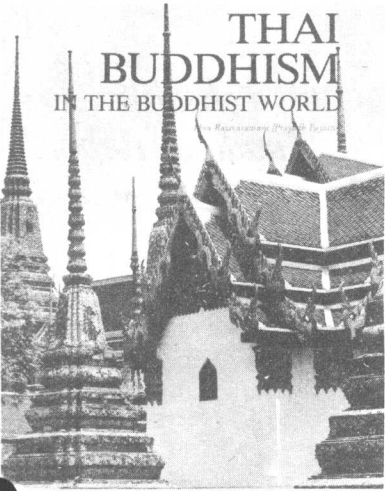
Phra Rajavaramuni (Prayudh Payutoo)
*Makachulalongkorn Association,
Makachulalongkorn University,
Bagkok 1984 180 papes plus index*

Even if the author modestly said that this book was "*intended for the beginners and meant to be a general survey of the Buddhist situation, not a scholarly treatment in depth of the mat-*

ter", it is, in my view, a very important book for a serious student of Buddhism, be it Theravada or Mahayana. The value of this book lies not only in its content, but also in its ap-

THAI BUDDHISM

IN THE BUDDHIST WORLD



proach to the matter. Indeed, if Buddhism (or any religion for that matter) is to be studied and understood as a living system rather than exclusively as a body of conomical doctrines, it must be studied in its historical and cultural contests. Better still, if it can be studied in a comparative fashion.

This book was divides into four Parts, namely, Thai Buddhism; The Overall Picture; The Spread and Development of Buddhism; Buddhism in the Modern World; and Buddhism in the Western World.

For the readers who are unfamiliar with Buddhism and quickly want to know what Buddhism is all about, the topics on the Buddha and the basic teaching of Buddhism (Chapter 1,) are quite useful. In Chapter 2, the author presents the general situation of Buddhism in Thailand by discussing its historical development, its relationship with the state and its influence on the lives of Thai people.

Part Two is comprised of three chapters. The first chapter, early development of Buddhism (chapter 3) deals with the development of Buddhism of the southern school (ie. Theravada) in Ceylon, Burma, Cambodia,

Thailand and Laos. In addition, The origin of Mahayana (the Northern School) is also briefly discussed. Chapter 4 deals with the Indian Buddhism in later centuries which includes the spread and development of Buddhism in China and Tibet. Aslo, the decline of Indian Buddhism and the disappearance of Buddhism from India were discussed. Chapter 5 presents the emergence of Chinese and Korean Buddhism as well as the ups and downs of Japanese Buddhism.

Part Three consists of eight chapters. The discussion in these chapters centre around the situation of Buddhism in various modern Asian countries. The author critically looks at the revival and the struggle of Buddhism in India, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, China, Korea, Japan and Thailand.

As a Buddhist Thai, I find the organization of this Part particularly interesting. The author begins his presentations with the situation in India. Followed by other Asian countries, and ends this Part with the discussion on Buddhism in contemporary Thailand. I believe that such organization is very useful to a Buddhist reader, be it a Thai or non-Thai, because the discussion in the foregoing chapters has laid down the background for comparison when the chapter on Thailand is read. Moreover, I find that by treating the matter in such order, he achieves his unstated aim. That is, a Buddhist reader is constantly, which reading this chapter, reminded that the fate of Buddhism in Thailand may be in serious trouble unless proper measures

are throghout and implemented in due course. And whatever measures to be used for the improvement of the country in general and of the situation of Thai Buddhism in partionlar, they must be based on the Middle Way. Since the Middle Way begins with Right understanding as its first factor, the critical discussion by the insider of the Sangha shrned help all the Buddhist rightly understand the situation in Thailand.

Part Four consists of three chapters, namely: The Scholarly Beginnings of Western Buddhism; Buddhism gains Public Interest, and Buddhism and the West: Subsequent to a Friendly encounter. The discussion in this Part centres around the spread and development of Buddhism in certain Western countries especially in Great Britain, West Germany and the United States of America.

By way of summing up, this book is markedly different from other publications on similar topics, particularly those published by the National Identity Board and the Tourist Organization of Thailand. This book, unlike those published by such agencies which usually treat the matter superficially and are meant for casual reading, is meant to help creat the Right Understanding of the situation of Buddhism and the socio-cultural environment in which Buddhism is interdependent. I sincerely hope that the book of this kind will be cherished amidst the influx of the sensual and sensational reading materials in Thailand today.

Uthai Dulyakasem
Silpakorn Universtiy
Nakorn Pathom



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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. 2528 according to the Siamese, Cambodian and Laotian Calendar, but it is B.E. 2529 according to the Burmese, Ceylonese and Indian Calendar.



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