SEEDS OF PEACE

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Liberation, Religion and Culture

Asian Active Non-violence Training

Development and Interreligious Dialogue

A Buddhist Visit to Lao

His Majesty the King of Thailand
Bhumipol Adulyadej

To His Majesty the King of Thailand:

We, the National Democratic Front of Burma, repressenting the nationalities of Burma, want to honor and congratulate His Majesty the King on this auspicious occasion as His Majesty becomes the longest reigning monarch of Thailand.

On this special occasion, we extend our best wishes to His Majesty the King. We pray that His Majesty's reign will continue to prosper for many years to come. We pray that His Majesty's health will continue to keep him strong.

We join the people and government of Thailand in celebrating the long and benevolent reign of His Majesty King Rama IX.

Long live the King of Thailand!

Saw Maw Reh
President
National Democratic Front, Burma
General Headquarters
Manerplaw, Kawthoolei
June 30th, 1988.

Seeds of Peace

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This issue is dedicated to the late Mr. S.Chakrapain, a Bhahmin friend of many Thai, who passed away unexpectedly in New Delhi on 9th July, 1988

Objectives of TICD

1. To coordinate work among individuals, groups of individuals and various agencies dealing with religions and development in course of working together.

2. To share experience in and knowledge of religions and development as well as exploring ways and means of working together.

3. To offer training and secure resources in terms of man-power and materials to support and enhance the agencies that need help.

Guest Editor

Ulrich Dornberg

Cover

Vishnu, a Hindu God,
by Chuang Mulapinit, who gave the original to the Sathirakoses Nagapradipa Foundation.

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Editorial Notes

Alternative visions for the future development of our society (and ultimately the world at large) cannot be a clear-cut blueprint. They resemble more a varity of seeds that mutually enhance human growth — like a mosaic is made up from a number of little stones that contribute their specific colour and light to the whole.

In the same way this issue carries a mixture of different accounts of activities, experiences and ideas for a spiritual approach towards development. In their diversity they reveal, however, certain recurrent features: its interreligious and international dimensions as well as the dicisive role of the monks, to mention only a few.

The importance of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's teachings cannot be stressed enough. Chulalongkorn University held a big conference and showed an exhibition in May to commemorate the 82nd birthday of this revolutionary religious thinker. That his thinking remained not just ideas but formed the basis for renewed practice is exemplified in two of our contributions on two abbot monks. TICD has in recent months taken up the task to collect data on Bhikkhus in development work in order to enable Buddhist leaders on all levels to be more aware of social realities and the situation in other localities as well as to establish better links among those Bhikkhus.

That members of all religions not only should but also can work together in order to achieve peace and justice on the basic of common spiritual attitudes was one of the most encouraging experiences of the AANV-Training and Sharing in April. Similarly, ACFOD's 'Liberation, Religion and Culture' Programme will hold an interreligious training seminar for development workers from all over the Asian region here in Thailand in September. It is hoped that its next training seminar will include participants from Indochina as well.

Both AANV and ACFOD have not only an interreligious but also an international dimension which is consequence of spiritual approach to development: transcending the barriers of one's own self, one extends loving kindness and solidarity towards others independant of narrow national, religious or ehthnic limits. Therefore we also hope to later open up the Buddhist-Muslim dialogue in Thailand to other countries of the region. Particularly important is to keep links with the peoples of Indochina though that is not always easy as has been experienced by the group of the Thai Buddhists visiting Lao.

People all over the world are particularly concerned about the absence of peace. Thus it is good to hear that Sukkhothai Dhammatiraj Open University has recognised peace education as one of its responsibilities. For the coming academic year it will offer a course on peace studies as one of three choices for a compulsary course, which is certainly another seed of peace.

Liberation, Religion and Culture



1. Background: Challenges from the present Asian realities

The peoples on the Asian continent are facing tremendous problems. During recent decades, processes of centralisation of economic and political power have taken place at a speed unseen before, while at the same time marginalizing ever-increasing sectors of the Asian societies.

Although being predominantly agrarian the rural sector has been more and more neglected. The stress on capital-intensive production methods as well as the promotion of cash-crop production for exports has caused small farmers to be deprived of their resources such as land and capital. The increasing problem of landlessness and rural unemployment is not tackled by true land reforms but causes migration to the cities which again aggravates the problems of urban dwelling and prostitution. The increasing problem of rural indebtedness and impoverishment is not taken seriously, either. All this contributes to the fact that the agrarian base of the countries' economies is weakened...at the cost of the poor and the small peasants and fishworkers alike.

The lot of the workers in the industrial sector, however, is not necessarily better. MNC's regard Asian countries in particular as a haven to exploit its cheap force, especially women. Besides that, suppression of trade union rights and heavy pollution of the environment are also consequences of this type of industrialisation.

All these processes lead to social and cultural disintegration of our societies. The weakening of the economic base in the villages of rural Asia eroded traditional social structures, cultural expressions and religious beliefs. The other side of the same coin is the simultaneous forced integration of the indigenous peoples in the mainstream of their countries' society, depriving them successively of their land, their languages and cultural authenticity. Powerful mass media and tourism are channels of cultural imperialism as well.

Thus the main trend of development in Asia neglects the majority of our people who are economically weak and poor; it shows disregard of minorities. All the phenomena enumerated above show that this kind of development does ultimately not respect the dignity of human beings and nature; it shows no concern for future generations and does not value the previous ones.

What counts is material development. Development is understood as growth and growth is measured in quantitative terms. This kind of development of material growth, however, does not only show a disregard of human values and basic religious beliefs but more and more reveals

that it is also **caused** by such a disregard: stressing quantitative growth stems from disregard of any kind of qualitative criteria contained in human values and religious beliefs; stressing material development stems from disregard of spiritual development.



2. Vision

In Asia, however, there are still huge resources of human values,as the vast majority of our peoples believe in the values of their religions and cultures. In the name of (falsely understood) secularisation the socio-economic development-process was sought to be divided from our religio-cultural traditions. But as Rabindranath Tagore said, "emancipation from the bondage of the soil is no freedom for the tree.'

Social relationships of Asian societies have been greatly influenced if not principally formed by the religions of Asia. Thus Asia's soil is made up of its religions and cultures. Only **in** this soil can our societies really develop.

Religions and cultures in the course of history have, however, shown a double face. The mighty in all religious institutions have often tended to maintain the status-quo or even cooperated with local and foreign powers to serve their interests. In consequence interpretations of religion were fostered which were oppressive for the masses. But at the same time in all major religions there has always been a stream where the true liberative potentials of these religions has been kept alive.

Our hope is that in reviving and strengthening these liberative potentials of our religions and cultures we can help in transforming our societies towards promoting truly human development as well as transforming organized religions to take care of the real needs of the people. This transformation process will draw its alternative vision and strength only when it is in some way spiritually rooted in a religious tradition.

The intention here is neither to make people "pious" in the traditional sense, nor to suppose that belief in a religious tradition is a kind of medicine to remedy all social problems. In both cases religion would be made a tool for other ends. Unfortunately there have been many dangerous examples of making religion a tool for political ends by the powerful in Asia therewith bereaving religion of its spiritual core.

Having firm roots in one particular religion also does not mean exclusiveness towards other traditions;on the contrary a spiritual experience and attitude opens up towards followers of other traditions. Spiritual experiences and values form a basis for a common vision of an alternative society.

3. ACFOD

Such a vision was the initial thrust that led to the formation of the Asian Cultural Forum on Development (ACFOD). ACFOD's concern is for the poor people of the grassroots who are the victims of the present development trend. Their struggle should be strengthened by activating the potential forces within the religions and cultures of Asia for social justice and human development. ACFOD views socio-economic problems ultimately as a moral question.

For the last 14 years ACFOD has been making an effort to bring together persons and groups in countries of the Asia-Pacific region into a movement which participates in integral human development. This includes the socio-economic and religio-cultural advancement of the people.

ACFOD's main programmes are sectoral programmes among peasants, fishermen, women and workers' groups in the region. As the religio-cultural dimension was meant to be an integral part of all these programmes it was thought that instead of having a separate program on religion and culture, our effort should be to help express the religio-cultural dimension in the activities of peoples' organisations.

However, with the growing trend of fundamentalism, cultural conflict, communal violence and displacement of ethnic minorities and indigenous people it was felt that ACFOD should take

up a programme titled "Liberation, Religion and Culture" (LRC).

It is not meant to be an academic study on the role of religions and cultures in our societies. Rather it is an initiative to work in solidarity with poor and marginalized people in the region who are struggling for their liberation. Therefore the programme would have to relate from the very beginning with grassroot-organizers.

4. LRC Programme

During the ACFOD V Council in October 1986 a "growing interest in the role of religion and culture in the process of development" was recognized and shared by the Council. In order to strengthen this movement it was decided to further explore the religious and cultural dimension of development. Therefore the Council adopted a proposal of the LRC-Team (in collaboration with INODEP-Asia) to start a study-process in a few selected countries collecting local experiences in that field.

This study process was meant to identify both the oppressive and liberative potentials of each religion and cultural tradition in the overall context of a respective country. That process should ultimately aim at supporting the liberative potentials to strengthen the people and the people's groups in their struggles. It should therefore be a process of study, reflection, mutal education and action.

The method approved by the Council involved a number of steps starting from the location of contact persons to oversee collection and documentation of material, to workshops and national consultation to be accomplished by regional consultations, exchange visits and documentation.

Because of several reasons we have not yet proceeded as far as we hoped to. Recently a new and enlarged LRC-Team has been formed including representation from Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Christian backgrounds which will hold its first meeting in September. Immediately after that there will be a training seminar for organizers who are interested in strengthening LRC-work in their own countries at which the team members will also participate. It is hoped that this combined effort of experiences will make it clearer to all participants what is already achieved in the different countries and what could be further done with the help of the LRC program.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu: A Religious Innovator of Undying Fame

Buddhadasa-bhikkhu is an unconventional, unique monk who has broken away from all restrictions of Buddhist sects and institutions in order to find the primordial, perfect, and real essence of the doctrine. His thought is so broad and profound that he is well-known as the Theravada Nagarjuna.

He is a Maha-nikaya monk with an ecclesiastical rank of Phra Dhammakosācārya and now the abbot of a royal monastery in Southern Thailand. Previously, his work had never been recognized by both the Thai government and the Order. But after he had founded Suan Mokkha Balārāma (the Hermitage of the Garden of Liberation), even the Dhammayutika monks of the highest ecclesiastical rank could not help admiring him and willingly gave him their support. Yet, before his innovation was widely accepted, he had worked honestly, perseveringly, and wisely, with his perfect monastic discipline, for quite a long time.

Suan Mokkha is not only the place where Buddhist theories are in harmony with Buddhist practices, but also the place where Buddhist studies can return to the Buddha's original teachings. Furthermore, Buddhadasa and Suan Mokkha are respectively a person and a place beyond the limit of Theravada tradition. Though Buddhadasa adheres firmly to the doctrine of the Pali Scriptures, he still keeps commending Mahyana teachings and practices. At first, his religious ways of



Ven. Buddhadasa with SE Asian Buddhists, Chirstians and Muslims at Suan Mokh, Chaiya, Southern Siam.

life were insulted, laughed at, and made fun of by his opposers. Nevertheless, he could calmly tolerate being an "insane monk" in his Theravada society and let all the "sane monks" live happily with their wealth and gain. This may remind us of the Venerable Somdet Phra Budhacarya (To)'s words: "When the old monk To was sane, they said he was mad. But when the old monk To was mad, they said he was sane." If some monks of rank, however, are insane like Buddhadasa, they will certainly be able to make Thai Buddhism more progressive and beneficial than before.

Though Buddhadasa studies Mahayana doctrine through English publications, he has been assisted by many Chinese scholars and increasingly praised for his work. Buddhadasa's appreciation of Mahayana Buddhism is not as amazing as his admiration of Christianity and Islam. Most Thais feel that Christianity and Islam are alien. If they really understand Christian and Islamic basic teachings, they will be able to appreciate and live peacefully with Christians and Muslims.

Unlike most Thai scholars, Buddhadasa has never tried to understand other religions by means of textbooks. He carefully detects the meanings of all teachings in their sources. His intention to work for all religions is quite honorable. Once, he said: "I have three resolutions. First, I will make all religious followers understand one another properly. Secondly, I will make all religious followers understand the essence of their own doctrines. Thirdly, I will free everyone from materialism."

Buddhadasa respects all other religions. Though he is a devout Buddhist, he regards other faiths impartially. His religious interpretations can be used in Buddhism as well as in Christianity. He explains that the Christian Cross is the symbol of **anattā** (no-self) as it shows a crossing mark on the "I" or "myself." His interpretation of **anattā** in Christianity is similar to that of Professor Masao Abe, a leading Japanese scholar in Buddhist studies. In addition, it implies an expression of Christian mystics. For example, Meister Eckhart (ca. 1260-1327) once referred to God as the Nameless Nothing, i.e., God's isness means "free from becoming" which is similar to the Buddhist **suññatā**. Eckhart's saying — "Let us learn self-forgetting until we call nothing more our own"—is certainly a move toward the Buddhist doctrine of **anattā**. We may compare his saying to that of Master Dogen of Zen Buddhism:

When we practice "bare attention" we just see what is there without adding any comment, interpretation, judgment or conclusion. There is just attending. Learning to see in this way is the basic practice of Buddhist meditation. The

self does not come into it. To forget the self is to be enlightened by all things.

Similarly, Thomas Merton, a contemporary Christian practitioner, once said: "There is just seeing. Seeing what? Not an Absolute Object but Absolute Seeing." Whoever understands these words may be able to enter the stream of enlightenment.

If we want to understand the essence of a doctrine, we need to examine the actual practices accordingly. A Christian friend once said:

We are spiritually paralysed by the fetish of Jesus....His literary image in the Gospels has, through centuries of homage, become far more of an idol than anything graven in wood or stone, so that today the most genuinely reverent act of worship is to destroy that image.

This may remind Buddhists of a Zen teaching: "When you meet the Buddha, kill him, "or Buddhadasa's metaphor: "A Buddha image is a mountain on the way toward Buddha-dhamma."

Buddhadasa's second resolution is a resistance to Christians' intrusion upon Buddhist faith, i.e., an attempt to convert Buddhists to Christianity. Once, I asked a Christian refugee, in his camp, about the denomination he professed. He answered that his was the American denomination because it gave him many privileges, e.g., to be able to enter the United States sooner, and so on.

Buddhadasa is attacked by a considerable number of Buddhists, especially in Sri Lanka. Some Buddhists criticize Buddhadasa's generosity and express their concern that his work may be artfully used by Christians. Some Christians use certain passages of Buddhadasa's work to propagate their own doctrine. They do not realize that a good relationship and understanding among different religious followers should begin with mutual respect, honesty, and modesty.

In Sri Lanka, Buddhism was destroyed by some Christians economically, politically, educationally, socially, and culturally. Sri Lanka Buddhists, however, could survive because some leading Christians, such as Rhys-Davids, Colonel Olcott, and so on, left their own faith for Buddhism.

Fortunately, Thai Buddhism has never been rudely trampled by others. The duty of all Buddhists is to be careful with their own properties and actions. They should support good Christians and follow the way of Buddhadasa. His work is attacked merely by narrow-minded people. Among generous people, on the other hand, his fame is widely known. I have known many Westerners and Japanese who teach Comparative Religion. All of them who know Buddhism well enough always know the name Buddhadasa. Even Professor Hans Küng of Tübingen University, Germany, who is a leading Catholic theologian, used to discuss the dhamma with Buddhadasa at Suan Mokkha.

Any religious propagation which disregards morality in its procedure will never retain its essence. If a religious follower does not understand and respect other religions, how can She really understand his/her own religion?

Buddhadasa's resolutions encourage us to help one another eliminate selfishness and egoism. Those who have read Buddhadasa's writings and are inspired to work with one another for peace and justice are certainly sharing the same path toward the Ultimate Reality. The world today is burning in the flame of war, greed, hatred, and delusion. These are dangerous tools of Satan. Thus, we need to cultivate mutual understanding and respect and fulfill Buddhadasa's resolutions in order to attain purity, justice, and peaceful happiness together.

written in Thai by **S.Sivaraksa**

Translated by **Ms.Bhadraporn Sirikarjana**



Asian Active Non-violence Training and Sharing



Background and Preparation

The Asian Active Non-violence Co-ordinating Team, comprising Fr. Klaus Beurle from Bangladesh, Ms. Tess Ramiro from the Philippines, and Ms. Laddawan Tantiwittayapitak and Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa from Thailand, (AACT) met in Bangkok during October 30 and November 1, 1987, and agreed to set up the office of Asian Active Non-violence (AANV) in Bangkok. The main task of the staff of this office, comprising two part-time workers : Mr. Vira Somboon and Mrs. Ampiwal Chuayunyongkul, was to organize a regional seminar on "Asian Active Non-violence Training and Sharing" to be held in Thailand during 5 and 19 April 1988. The team also discussed a tentative schedule and agenda of the seminar program, including exposure trips which would be the first part of the seminar.

After some months of initial surveys and contacts, the preparation of the seminar formally started around the middle of February. Letters of invitation and application forms as well as details of the seminar were then sent to country representatives of AACT to be distributed to prospective participants.

The staff simultaneously contacted various places where seminars were arranged, and finally chose the Mission Resort of the Church of Christ in Thailand for the venue. Place for exposure trips were also suggested and contacted with the help of many local organizations such as Thai Inter-religious Commission for Development and Traditional Medicine for Self-Cure Project. There were, however, some difficulties in finalizing the accommodations and transportation, both regarding the venue and exposure, since the staff was unsure of the numbers of participants from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

Orientation

Most of the participants arrived at Bangkok before or on April 5, 1988. Altogether there were thirty persons participating in the seminar, some of which only joined the seminar proper (excluding exposure) or parts of it. There were seven participants from Bangladesh, five from the Philippines, five from Sri Lanka, and six from Thailand. Besides, two Thai persons participated as staff-participants and three others participated in parts of the seminar as resource persons. Mr. Jean Goss and Mrs. Hildegard Goss Mayr of International Fellowship of Reconciliation kindly joined the whole seminar as resource persons.

On Apirl 5, most participants (excluding Thais) stayed at Student Christian Center (SCC), where the orientation took place the next morning.

Mr. Chaiwat Satha-Anand kindly gave a

thought-provoking welcome address for the orientation of the seminar, after which participants briefly introduced themselves to one another. Exposure groups were then arranged and described. All participants left SCC that afternoon for their exposure trips.

Exposure

There were four routes of exposure trips as described below. The idea of exposure was to acquaint participants with aspects of Thai life and culture in various parts of the country as well as with some contemporary attempts in peace-making and development. This acquaintance, it was hoped, would form the basis for further discussion and exchange. During the trips, participants in small groups would hopefully get to know each other better as well.

1) The Northeast route was joined by Venerable Devarakkhitta (SL), Brother Jarlath De Souza (BD), Osman Ghani (BD), Lerio Latumbo (PH) and was led by Phra Paisan Visalo with the assistance of Somyot Surawathemin.

The Group visited the following places :

- *Nong Ya Plong village* in Chaiyaphum province, a Buddhist-Christian village, where development work is jointly designed and carried out by both Buddhists and Christians.

- *Sugato forest monastery* in Chaiyaphum, where Phra Paisan is currently the acting abbot. This monastery has been a well-known place for meditation and religious recreation for activists of various fields of work.

- *Phukhao Thong monastery and Tha Mafai Wan village* in Chaiyaphum, an attempt led by Venerable Khamkhien to combine Buddhism and development with a strong emphasis on ecology.

- *Integrated farming, Taback village* in Surin, a project which is now well-known even among various Western development organizations. Mr. Yu Sutornthai's approach to development—again, with a strong emphasis on spiritual and ecological dimensions —is a case of interest for people of various fields.

- *Samakki monastery and Ka Kaw village* in Surin, led by Phrakhru Phiphitprachanat, has long been a successful example of the application of Buddhism to development.

2) The West route was joined by Fr. Jose Blanco (PH), Flora Loquellano (PH), Nasir Uddin (BD), Ghenu Sharma and was led by Mr. Nibondh Jaemduang of TICD, Miss Prungchit Phanawathanawong of SantiPracha Dhamma Institute, and Miss Viphaphan Kaukiatkajorn.

The group visited the following places :

- *Wat Ketummawadi* in Samutsakorn province, a well-known monastery where the typical combination of wealth and merit-making Buddhism is highlighted with its gigantic constructions.

- *Pathom Asoke* in Nakornpathom province, where a contrast to the former was witnessed. Here Buddhist "fundamentalists" live frugally in an attempt to establish a self-sufficient Buddhist community.

- *Nuns' community* in Petchaburi province, This is perhaps the first of its kind in the history of Thai Buddhism. Here a number of nuns set up a community where both physical and spiritual is support given to one another with a strong vision of revitalizing this often-neglected institution in Thai Buddhism.

- *Yok Krabat monastery* in Samutsakorn. For more than a decade, villagers in this area have, under the leadership of Phrakhru Sakornsangvarakit, worked together to uplift their living conditions and to eradicate violence, gambling and other social discases. The attempt continues with the Phrakhru now being a lay person whose name is Mr. Chup.

- *Plak Mailai monastery* in Nakorn Prathom, where a young monk , Phra Somnuk, preaches and practices self-cure in both the physical and spiritual senses. The place is a meditation center and strongly promotes the growth and use of herbal medicine.

- *Muban Dek school* in Kanchanaburi province. Here freedom and non-violence reign in the philosophy and methods of education. Orphans and children in distress are recruited in order to be trained to flourish as free and non-violent members of the future society.

3) The South route was joined by Venerable Vimalasara (SL), Mr. Sivakuranathan (SL), Md. Giasuddin Ahmed (BD), Mrs. Piang Albar (PH), Mrs. Wiriya Noiwong (TH), and led by Miss Phangam Ngaothammasan of Sri Nakarinwirot University, Pattani. The group was also later joined by Phra Dusadee Methangkuro at Suan Mokhabalaram. The group visited the following places:

- *Pratheepsat school* in Nakorn Sri Tham-



marat province, where Islam is at the core of the philosophy and methods of the school, and co-operation with Buddhists is strongly encouraged.

- *Kiriwong village* in Nakorn Sri Thammarat. Here young people with visions jointly work for the development of the village, stressing the harmonious combination of the physical, social, spiritual, and ecological dimensions of human living.

- *Saeng Wiman village* in Nakorn Sri Thammarats, a Muslim village where the religious and communual senses of the community are highly emphasized. The village even resolves its own conflicts by its own traditional means. Peaceful living with nearby Buddhist communities is the natural outcome of such an exemplary village.

- *Suan Mokkhabalaram* in Suratthani province. This world-renowned forest monastery, under the guidance of its founder, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, is undoubtedly one of the most important places of Thai Buddhism. Many consider it to be at the forefront of Buddhist revival in the modern world. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu himself kindly conversed with the group regarding "Dhamma" and peace.

4) The East route was joined by Tess Ramiro (PH), Ataur Rahman (BD), Jagadish Roy (BD), Gnana Moonesinghe (SL), and Vira Somboon (TH), Unfortunately, the trip for this route had to be cut short because the person who would have been the guide for the exposure in Kanchanaburi province could not join the group. However, the following places were visited :

- *Wongsanit Ashram* in Pathum Thani province where young people are attempting to set up an Ashram to be used for agricultural experiments, spiritual recreation, and communal living. The place is also the site of the School for Street Children, a program where education is provided for orphans and poor children in the urban area.

- *Huay Hin village* in Chachoengsao province. Here the head of the village, Mr. Vibul Khemchaloem, sets the trend of self-reliance in community development. His thoughts and experiences have now become one of the major contributions in alternative development both in the country and abroad. The promotion of self-reliant community, the growth and use of herbal medicine, and the adherence to Buddhism as the core of development are among the emphases of this alternative to market-oriented development.

- *Mr. Annop's Farm* in Pathum Thani. Here organic farming is being carried out with new discoveries for Thai agriculture.

- *The Royal Arts and Crafts Center* in Ayudhya province, exemplifies a more established attempt in development sponsored by H.M. Queen Sirikit of Thailand.

- *Luang Pho Sothorn* in Chachoengsao. Here the merger of Buddhism and "Superstition" is nicely displayed by thousands of wish-makers paying homage to one of the most sacred Buddha-image as groups of dancers are hired to dance in the surrounding area when the wishes come true.

Seminar

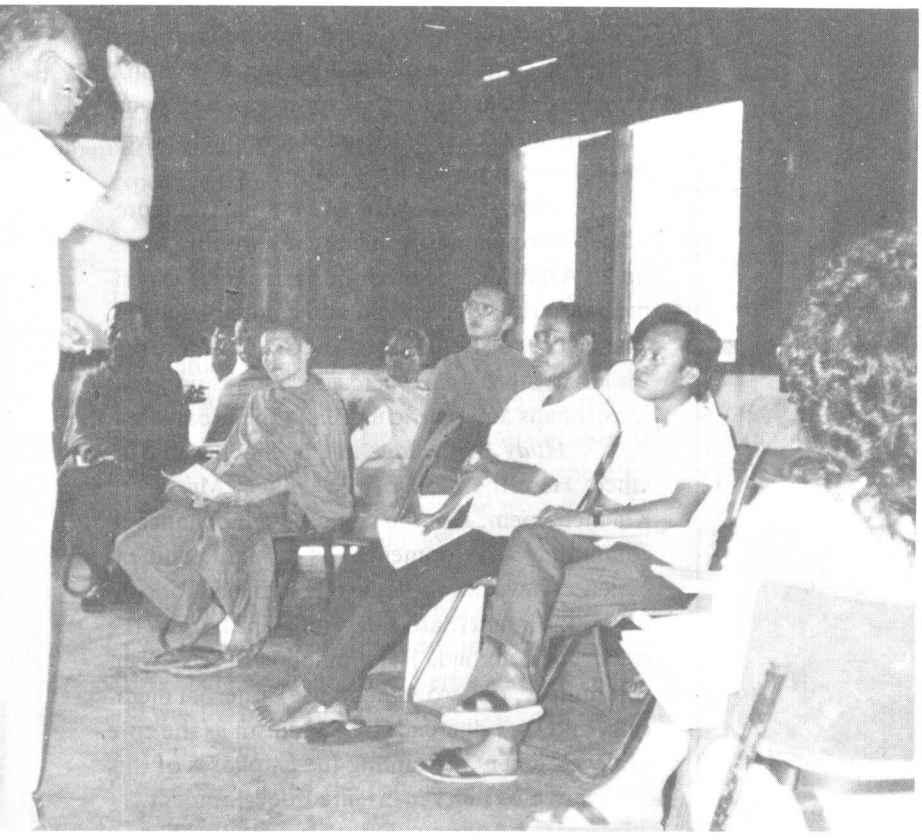
The details of the seminar will be discussed under four headings :

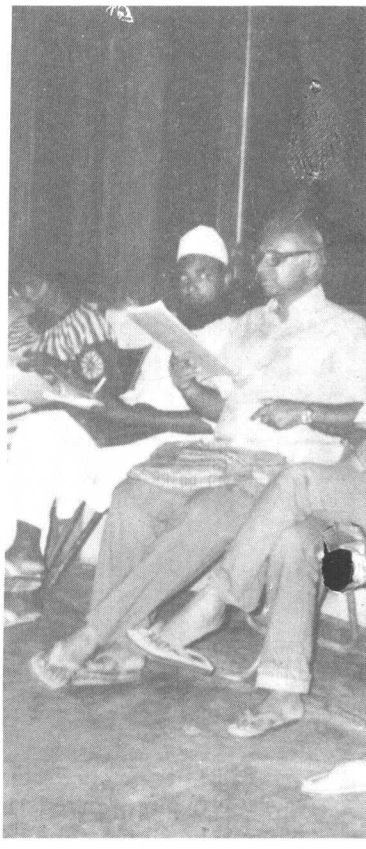
I Daily Schedule and Arrangement.
II Presentation, Group Sharing and Plenary
III Meditation, Prayer, and Socials
IV Proposals for AANV Network

I Daily Schedule and Arrangement

The seminar started on April 13th, the traditional Thai New Year Day, and ended at noon on April 18th.

Participants were arranged into three base-groups, each of which comprised those from different countries and exposure routes. These base





groups took turns in handling certain tasks of the seminar, viz., meditation and prayer, service, and socials. Their compositions were also used for group-sharing sessions.

Two steering committees were also set up to oversee the schedule, content, and procedure of the seminar. The first one was in charge from April 13 to 15, and the second one from 16 to 18.

The daily schedule was made up of a mixture of presentations, group sharings and plenaries as well as of meditation and prayers in the morning and the evening. The night sessions were comprised of national presentations and socials.

II Presentation, Group Sharing and Plenary

13 April

Participants introduced themselves to one another and separated into base groups to share (and reflect on) their experiences and ideas which they gathered on their exposure trips.

These groups came together again in the afternoon and exchanged their findings.

14 April

Morning: presentations: - 'Respect and Love for the Human Person' (Jean Goss),
- 'Non-violence in the Thai Context' (Chaiwat Satha-Anand), group sharing;

Afternoon: group reports and plenary discussion;

Night: national presentation Bangladesh (Bro. Jarlath De Souza).

15 April

Morning: presentation: 'Truth as a Basis for Non-Violence and Social Justice' (Fr. Jose Blanco), group sharing (also in relation to the previous day's dicussion on respect and love for the human person) and plenary discussion,

Afternoon: presentation: 'Islam and Non-Violence' (Giasuddin Ahmed), plenary discussion, involving some general issues concerning religion and politics,

Night: national presentation on Philippines (Tess Ramiro).





16 April

Morning: presentation: 'Methods of Non-violence' (Hildegard Goss-Mayr), group sharing on (a) effectual methods of non-violence and (b) difficulties in applying non-violent methods, plenary,

Afternoon: presentations on methods of non-violent training by country (Fr. Blanco/Philippines, Phra Paisan Visalo/Thailand, Bro. Jarlath de Sonza/Bangladesh, Sivakurana/Sri Lanka),

Night: national presentation on Sri Lanka (Sivakurana).

17 April

Morning: presentation on Thailand (Laddawan Tantiwittayapitak), plenary, background information about AANV

- up to AACT-meeting in October 1987 (Tess Ramiro)
- from November 1987 up to now (Vira Somboon)

group dicussions on prospects of non-violence in each country and concrete proposals for further networks in Asia

Optional lunch session: video-film // Victims of War in Sri Lanka ,

Afternoon: plenary on the possibilities of an Asian network for non-violence,

Night: members of AACT met and discussed proposals.

18 April

Morning: presentation: 'Non-violence from a Thai-Buddhist Perspective' (Sulak Sivaraksa), plenary discussion.

report on the results of AACT's meeting the previous night (Tess Ramiro) to which some participants made supplementary suggestions, evaluation session.



III Meditation, Prayer, and Socials

There was a meditation-prayer session at 7:00 AM and 6:00 PM each day. The session included songs, prayers, meditation techniques, and recitals from different sources. A large part of the session was also devoted to silence and reflection.

A short social session was also arranged at the beginning of the evening session. A variety of songs, games, poem-readings were included.

IV Proposals for Asian Active Non-violence Network

The followings were proposals made and agreed upon by participants and AACT.

1. AACT is composed of one representative and one alternate from each member country. At present it is composed of Tess Ramiro (PH) (alternate to be designated), Vira Somboon (TH) with Laddawan Tantiwittayapitak as alternate. Representatives and alternates from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are still to be determined.

2. AACT's meeting is held on a yearly basis. Representatives from other countries are welcome to join this meeting together with existing member countries. The term of Representation is two years.

3. There is an Asian Active Non-violence office in Bangkok with a full-time or part-time worker acting as secretariat to AACT. AANV also functions as communication center of Asia, where news, reports, etc., are submitted for further distribution. This includes the collection and editing of writings submitted by AACT members for publication in **Seeds of Peace.**

4. AACT at present uses **Seeds of Peace** for its exchange of news and articles. Each member country submits at least a two-page summary of news or an article to be published. **Seeds of Peace** is issued tri-monthly; each member country receives five copies minimum per issue.

5. Member countries are highly encouraged to ask for support from others in their activities. Information should be adequately given, and a statement of how other member countries may support the activity should be clearly stated, by the requesting country. This may be done via either direct contacts or AANV office. The office, however; should at least be informed of the request.

6. Exchanges of training resources and/or resource persons are highly encouraged.

7. There will be a regional training and sharing program every second year.

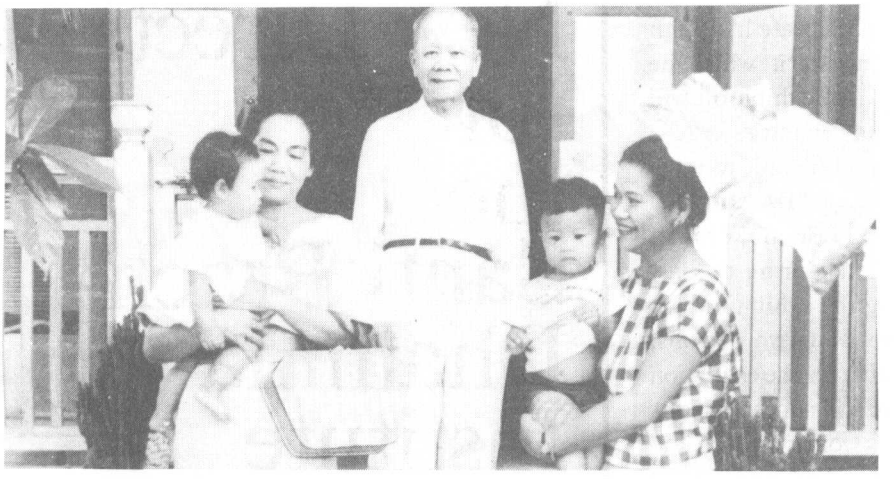
8. AANV will apply for an affiliate status with International Fellowship of Reconciliation. Each member country may decide to link with IFOR either as an affiliate or to establish an IFOR representative of its own.

9. At this point, AACT honors Shanti's agreement to give financial support for AANV office on a half-year basis for two years. A project proposal will also be written to be used by member countries to raise funds for their joint activities.

Evaluation

Most participants felt positive about the seminar as a whole and its components. There were, some critical comments about the preparation of the seminar and the venue. With regard to the preparation, a number of people thought they should have received more information about the seminar and the exposure trip, and should have had more time in preparing for the seminar. Readings and country reports should also be given prior to the seminar. With regard to venue, although some of them thought that the place provided an informal atmosphere, many others felt that a more formal place for seminar, with adequate equipment and appropriate setting, would have been better. All in all, most participants agreed that the seminar and training of this kind is essential to the growth of non-violence in Asia.

Phya Anuman Rajadhon's Centennary



Phya Anuman with his daughters and grand children

During the last one hundred years and more, Asian countries have been confronted with the introduction—in many cases, the intrusion—of Western culture and civilization. This confrontation, whether in the name of progress, modernization, consumer culture or development, has caused people of Asia to focus almost exclusively on how they would emulate Western models, including their paradigms of knowledge, patterns of technology, economy, culture, education and so forth. For better or for worse, this situation has led to cultural discontinuity in many regards. Younger generations, partly due to the pressures of modern life to which they have to adopt, partly due to the fascination of the West itself, cease to look at their own cultural heritages and other cultures surrounding their countries. Some countries succeed in modeling themselves after the West in certain aspects, but fail to preserve and enrich their own heritages; others have attempted to maintain their cultural identities, yet fail either politically or economically. It is, however, worthwhile for Asian countries to start to learn from their neighbors, to look at the diversity and depth of other cultures in Asia, and to understand how others have coped with the challenges of modern situations.

Phya Anuman Rajadhon grew up in Bangkok during the time when Siam fully embarked on the path of Westernization. He had attended a Catholic school, worked for a European boss, and studied Western cultures before he became a well-known author and one of the leading scholars in Thai studies. He attentively discussed etymological matters with his maid and people in the streets, while corresponding with princes and members of the nobility on historical and literary subjects. His writings ranged from an Introduction to Graeco-Roman civilizations to an early pioneering survey of Ancient states in mainland Southeast Asia, from a series of study on Thai spiritual beliefs to a monumentous work on "Our Asian Friends' Faiths".

This year and the next the Thai Government will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the late Phya Anuman Rajadhon. He will be remembered not only as an honest clerk of the Customs Department, a knowledgeable Director General of the Department of Fine Arts, a dedicated professor, a respected president of many Thai academic institutions, including the prestigious Royal Institute and the Siam Society, but also as a sociocultural thinker. Phya Anuman Rajadhon did not theorize about society, nor did he present a utopian vision of a new society. His message is simple, a message which he lucidly preached and exemplified by his own career and life. The message is to know and appreciate one's own heritage, to critically understand the new, and to wisely combine both.

It is this spirit and the dedication that flows

from it that make him "an important person of the world", as UNESCO will declare to eulogize him this year.

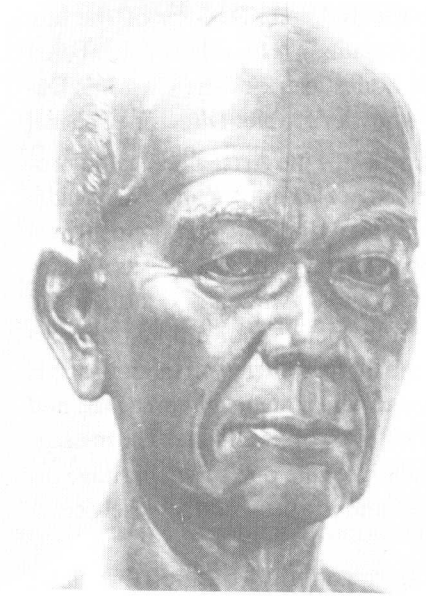
Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation, which is named after Phya Anuman Rajadhon's penname and that of his co-author and co-translator Nagapradipa, intends to celebrate his 100th anniversary by following the spirit which he pursued throughout his life. An exhibition will be set up and displayed in many countries in Asia and the Pacific in order for their people to learn about his life,his works and relevant issues in Thai culture such as Buddhist monastic life, drama, the farmer's life and Bangkok during the last five decades. Accompanying the exhibition will be an organizing staff comprising two persons, one of which will be responsible for the exhibition and the other, a lecturer, who will address aspects of Phya Anuman Rajadhon's works, of Thai culture and of Thai literary works to people of the host country so that they will become more acquainted with Siam and its culture.

This is in addition to exhibitions, discussions and lectures at many colleges and school as well as temples in many provinces within Siam.

Those interested in hosting the exhibition should contact :- The Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation, Tel. 437-9445. GPO Box 1960 Bangkok 10501

from *Art and Culture Monthly*

Bangkok, June 1988



A Workshop to Seek New Directions for the Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute

In the evening of 13 May, Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa, Director of the Institute, told everyone the history of the Institute, which dated back to Mr. Pridi Banomyong, on his 80th birthday anniversary, as a number of Thai intellectuals felt that his pioneering ideas, on democracy, peace, social justice and self reliance should be reapplied to Siam. The Senior Stateman then living in Paris gave as a blessing that his ideas would be carried out appropriately by members of the younger generation. A few research projects on the above subjects were drawn and carried out. Unfortunately, Mr. Pridi passed away in 1983 and the projects were interrupted. However, the Pridi Banomyong Institute was founded soon afterward to continue those projects.

The Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute in a way is an outcome of the Pridi Banomyong Institute; we fell however that we must not glorify his name, but translate his ideas to democratize this country nonviolently towards peace and justice.

These two days were devoted to brain storming among concerned intellectuals from various walks of life so that the new institute will have clear directions for itself as well as for the benefit of Siam in the future.

After some discussions the meeting was adjourned very late at night.





In the morning of 14 May, Mr. Uthai Dulyakasem said that staff members of the Institute had prepared our objectives and activities, which were presented to all in order to seek their comments so that the Institute's new directions would have the sanction of those presented at the workshop.

After the presentation, there were many questions and answers as well as serious discussions on many topics presented.

In the afternoon, the workshop was divided into 4 groups dealing with

1) training 2) research 3) propagation 4) alternative lifestyle and new models on development.

In the evening, staff members drew conclusion from reports of the 4 groups, trying to set up priorities and practicality for the Institute to undertake its courses for its new directions.

On 15 May, Mr. Vira Somboon presented findings to the whole assembly, which approved that the Institute should proceed as follows :-

1) The Institute would collect ideas from leading Thai intellectuals—not only Mr. Pridi Banomyong —starting from Mr. Tienwan in the reign of Rama V to Mr. Puey Ungphakorn, as well as from non —Thai who share our ideas that peace should be our means as well as our ends to improve our society - with full public participation.

2) We must develop our knowledge, our ideas and our understanding of peace, nonviolence and democratic rights as well as disseminating our findings to the public as much as possible.

3) We must seek and develop human resources, within and outside academic circles, so that social forces could be built to move the society righteously and peacefully. The more the people participate in decision-making would be the sign that our Institute is moving towards the right direction.

4) We should like to concentrate our activities on training, on research works and on spreading democratic ideas on peace and nonviolence.

5) On training, our hidden criteria is to build in ideas on our objectives as well as to train in special areas where no other institutes could offer such training e.g. training young people to work effectively in NGO activities.

6) Our researches will be conducted for the benefit of the grass roots, and for the grass roots to participate in the research itself. Ultimately, our finding is towards self reliance - unlike those conducted to support the government which tend to rely more and more on superpowers and multinational corporations.

7) Our propagation activities will include publishing books, newsletters, public debates as well as using radio and television, when appropriate.

8) We will support Ashram projects so that young people can have alternative lifestyles in rural areas using appropriate technology for self reliance—rather than depending on market economy.

One Day in the Life of a Monk

'Phra' Paisan, a monk and NGO advisor, gives an account of a day in the life of 'Phra' Kamkhian Suwanno, who is the head monk in the forest temple, Wat 'Pa' Sukato, Chaiyaphum Province, in the North East of Thailand.

The old abbot opened his eyes and looked at the clock. It was 4 o'clock in the morning, and he practised meditation for almost one hour. The weather at dawn was cool and fresh. The sound of cocks near the *sala* , the open hall of the temple, could be clearly heard from his small cottage.

Thirty minutes later, the bell of the monastery was sounded at intervals. It was time for all monks and novices (boys living in the monastery) to recite Buddhist scriptures, known as the *Dhamma* . This was how the sacred text had been preserved since the time of the Buddha 2,500 years ago, when printing technology was absent.

The chanting which lasts 20 minutes, is followed by the abbot's preaching in order to give instruction not only to the monks and novices, but also to laypersons who come to practise the *Dhamma* . In the last few years, a lot of laypersons from the city, especially Bangkok, have come to seek advice and guidance for meditation from this old abbot whom they call with great respect *Luang poh* (which literally means 'Great Father').Some have stayed for months, and some for years.

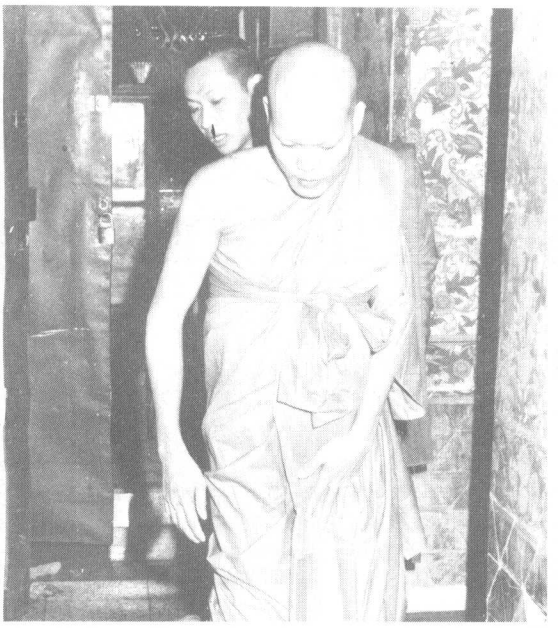
All the food that nourishes the monks, novices and these laypersons, is offered by villagers living around the temple. Every morning, around 6 am, monks and novices usually go out for alms-gathering in the villages. As instructed by the Buddha, monks and novices should undertake such practice every day. It is intended not only to relieve them of the burden of food, so that they have more time for meditation, but to initiate and maintain the close relationship between monks and villagers, otherwise total separation would be likely to occur if the monks lived on their own food.

In one sense, through morning alms, the lives of the monks more or less depends on the villagers. The monks are therefore obliged to observe the precepts and morality as expected by the villagers, otherwise, villagers can protest by stopping the presenting of alms. Similarly, the monks can sanction corrupt villagers by refusing to take their alms. Morning alms is therefore a symbol of the interdependence and mutual relationship between monks and villagers.

Being a monk of the *Theravada School* of Buddhism, *Luang Poh* takes his daily meals only before midday. There are two meals a day,



Ordination ceremony



one early in the morning, and the other at eleven o'clock in the morning. *Luang poh* usually takes his food with a group of monks in the 'sala'

After breakfast, *'Luang poh'* proceeds to inspect and observe the child care centre, which has been run by him for almost a decade. It was his initiative to help the villagers who are occupied by so much work in the fields that they cannot afford to give proper care and nutrition to their children. Without this centre, the villagers would have to take their children with them to the fields far away from home. Many children inevitably get sick, especially with malaria. During the early years, *Luang poh* was the only teacher. The situation right now is improving as more people are involved in the project under his supervision.

It is not uncommom for him to have some villagers as guests throughout the day. They come to seek his counsel for different affairs. Some have problems in their family, many have quarrels with their neighbours, the others have occupational difficulties. *Luang poh's* daily work is to give advice, settle the dispute and give support to the villagers who have strong faith in him. His function in the community on many occasions is no less than that of a doctor and a psychiatrist. This is not far from the expectations of the villagers, since the temple has been for many centuries the centre of the community, both temporal and spiritual, both secular and religious.

.The school hour of the temple begins in the afternoon after the last meal of the day. Education is in demand by the monks, who previously being villagers from remote areas, cannot have access to higher education which is limited only to cities and towns. Since temples previously functioned as the educational centre of the village, it is regarded even now by the villagers, that such a role should continue without any interruption. Monkhood is therefore the only chance of higher education for the sons of farmers and peasants in rural areas. It is said that education in many temples not only provides monastic learning for the monks, but serves the educational needs of Thai society as a whole as well, despite the fact that no support is given by the Government.

The chanting starts again in the evening. It is more than a rite, since it provides a good opportunity for all inhabitants in the monastery to meet together. It strengthens monastic as well as communal life where everyone is responsible for the well-being of each other, i.e. it helps to create an atmosphere and setting which favours the spiritual development of oneself and others.

Many decades have passed, and the old abbot still has a lot of things to do. The chanting may be followed by meeting with the villagers until late in the night. The topics of discussion vary, from the situation of the temple, to the development of the village. During the last two decades, drastic changes have been introduced to the village through modernization, which is alien to most villagers. Many new things have occured that they have not been able to comprehend, or deal with efficiently. The villagers are increasingly in need of *Luang poh's* advice. But he is well aware that he is an ordinary monk with low education. He is wondering how he can cope with such problems. The only thing he knows, is that information is crucially important in such circumstances. He needs to learn and listen more.

It is not an easy task for an old village monk, like him, but so far, it is what he is trying to do.

from *Thai Development Newsletter*
No.14, 1988

Development and Interreligious Dialogue

Some Preliminary Remarks for Discussion[1)]

The context in which Christianity in Asia is situated can be characterized by both the massive poverty of the Asian people and their deep adherence to (non-Christian) religions, which make the Christian Churches a tiny minority in Asia.[2)] Therefore Christians in search for a new identity in Asia have often been turning either to 'development' activities or to dialogue with other religions. The question however is, whether there is also a relationship between development and dialogue, and if so, how it works and what are its implications.

I. What do we mean by 'development' and 'dialogue' ?

The first problem in discussing the interrelationship of development and dialogue results from the unspecified character of both terms used. One might regard this notion as a typical predilection of German science, but nevertheless I believe in its validity. Without being able or willing to offer precise definitions I want to point to some of the problems involved instead.

To give you an example of these problems I would like to refer to an article that appeared in the West-German daily newspaper 'Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung' about a year ago. In this article on 'Buddhist ethics as foundation of economic activity in East Asia'[3)] the author relates the economic progress made in Japan and South Korea in particular to Buddhist religion. His argument is that the Buddhist appeal to having a clear mind as being most important enables the workers in these countries not to be mentally affected by exploitative structures and hard working conditions. The question however is, whether that is the kind of 'development' we should ~~talk~~ about? And is it the kind of interpretation of the Buddha dhamma we should have dialogue with? - For my part, I have my objections against functionalist approaches to both development and religion as offered in the mentioned article, although they have become very much en vogue in recent years.

Then, what kind of dialogue should we talk about? Lots of things on dialogue have been written in recent years and many conferences have been held on this topic. In the course of the discussion of dillogue, questions like - for instance - the understanding of Jesus Christ, the role of the Bible, the relationship of dialogue to mission and evangelisation have played a prominent role. Considering these topics, which are without doubt of great importance, it seems to me that one often pursues a concept of 'dialogue with **religions**' and not

1) This is a revised version of a talk which I gave at the 'Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue' (Colombo/Sri Lanka) in June '87. I am grateful to Rev. K. Fernando and the EISD for having offered this opportunity to me as well as to all participants for their helpful comments.

2) Cf. Aloysius Pieris (Towards an Asian Theology of Liberation : Some Religio-Cultural Guidelines, in : V. Fabella (Ed.), **Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity**, New York 1980, 75-95, here : 75f.), to whom I am deeply indebted for many inspirations on the whole topic.

3) See : Carl Graf Hohenthal, Der Weg ist das Ziel. Buddhistische Ethik als Grundlage für wirtschaftliches Handeln in Ostasien, in : **Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung**, 25.4.1987.



Fr. Michael Rodrigo O.M.I., founder of 'Suba Seth Gedera' at Buttala, a centre of Buddhist-Christian village dialogue of life in a neglected rural area in Sri Lanka.
While celebrating the eucharist he was shot dead in November '87 due to his uncompromising commitment with the rural poor, especially the youth.

of 'dialogue with **people**' belonging to different religions. Thus, for example, one often colloquially speaks of 'dialogue with Buddhism' and not of 'dialogue with Buddhists'. Although I believe that one can use that phrase, I only want to indicate that one might subconsciously be trapped by its implications. Dialogue with religions 'as such' is impossible simply because a 'religion as such' does not exist. There are only living human beings with their concrete history, whose beliefs constitute their living religions. Thus we should talk about dialogue with living religions of people.

That the people are the subjects of dialogue has, however, two fundamental consequences:

First, that one should respect other people and try to understand them in his/her own religious self-understanding. You can (and have to !) doubt the logic and consistency of concepts as long as they remain pure concepts; but when they constitute the beliefs of people that makes a difference.

The second major consequence, which I see here, is that when the people as subjects of dialogue matter, their culture and languages, i.e. their ways to express themselves, are of great importance as well as the places where they live and have their experiences. The cultures, languages and places of life thus constitute the framework of dialogue.

The Roman Catholic Secretariat for the Non Christians distinguishes in its statement of 1984 on 'The attitude of the Church towards the followers of other religions'[4] between 'dialogue of life', 'dialogue of deeds', the 'dialogue of specialists' and the 'dialogue of religious experience' and is thus obviously taking into account the fact, that a living faith is one of living people. And also the WCC declaredly wants to understand dialogue as a 'dialogue with people of living faiths and ideologies' as is even the name of the respective subcommission of the WCC.

Thus the importance of the question of who enters into dialogue, with whom, where, and how has been acknowledged. One therefore cannot talk any more in an innocent way of dialogue 'as such' without answering these questions.

The same set of questions emerges in the case of 'development', where also a big diversity of concepts exists: What are the subjects, places and 'languages' of development? The concerned Buddhist intellectual Sulak Sivaraksa in his article on 'Buddhism and Development'[5] has pointed to the fact that development in its Pali and Sanskrit equivalent also means disorderliness or confusion and refers either to progress or regress. The French term 'development' as well as the German 'Entwicklung' are however more clearly defined by meaning a process of unfolding. But what should be unfolded, i.e. what development are we talking about, what are its criteria?

It is my conviction that judging development only from the criterion of quantity is much too narrow. For example in the discussion

4) Printed in : **Bulletin Secretariatus pro non Christianis**, Vol. 19 (1984), 126-141, here : 136-138.

5) See : Sulak Sivaraksa, Buddhism and Development, in : id., **A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society**, Bangkok 1986, 52.

of development theory it has been widely acknowledged that the annual growth rate of the Gross National Product (GNP) is not an appropriate criterion to measure the progress of development but has to be accomplished by so-called 'social indicators'. But even then the problem remains that figures are not enough. For example, not only the number of medical physicians and hospitals are important, but the degree of a broad and general availability of medical care and the general knowledge of hygiene and preventive medicine. And whether the GNP is relatively equally distributed is more important than the annual growth rate. Or doesn't it matter whether the rich become richer and the poor poorer? Thus true development is not a matter of quantity but of quality. This has often been overlooked as the predominant practice of development has made this term appear as an imposed western concept of 'modernization' even to the degree of the total rejection of the term. One instead often prefers to talk about 'liberation' or 'emancipation'. As we have seen already, the original meaning of development can neither be equated with modernization nor is it exclusive of liberation.

Development, where quality matters, however , poses a problem : what is quality? You can easily measure the GNP growth rate, but how do you measure quality of life?

II. Development is about dialogue - dialogue is about development

That leads us to the hypothesis which I would like to put before you. I am convinced that there is no development without dialogue, and no dialogue without development. Let me explain.

Development, in which quality matters, makes it necessary to come to a mutual understanding of what quality is. Development therefore is in need of communication: What are the sorrows, needs and aspirations of the people? Only when the people communicate about these questions among themselves will there be development. Experiences in the past show that many development projects failed or even made the situation worse because there was no people's participation in the process of decision-making and implementation.

In Sri Lanka for example this can clearly be seen in the case of the Mahaweli Development scheme. The Mahaweli dam complex is presently the biggest single 'development' project in the world. The government's decision - facilitated by political and financial incitements from industrialised countries - to implement the Accelerated Programme reducing the time period to complete the whole scheme from 30 to 6 years meant that people's participation was totally excluded. The planners - to a great extent foreign experts - were the subjects, the people became the objects.

It has been argued that the curtailing of individual freedom and rights of participation is the price people have to pay for large scale progress in development. But this assumption has proved to be erroneous. The Mahaweli scheme has not (yet?) been successful because it relied on technocratic planning alone, which was thought to be more efficient and faster than people's participation. It was slowly realised that a " 'human element' is therefore the missing link in the Mahaweli scheme"[6], as it simply did not work without it. "The lesson in being heard that active participation and social organisation of the people is as necessary for development as water is for land."[7]

Thus there is no development without communication with people on their needs and aspirations. The structure of this communication must necessarily be just, recognizing all communication partners as having equal rights and equal say, otherwise there would be no real communication.[8]

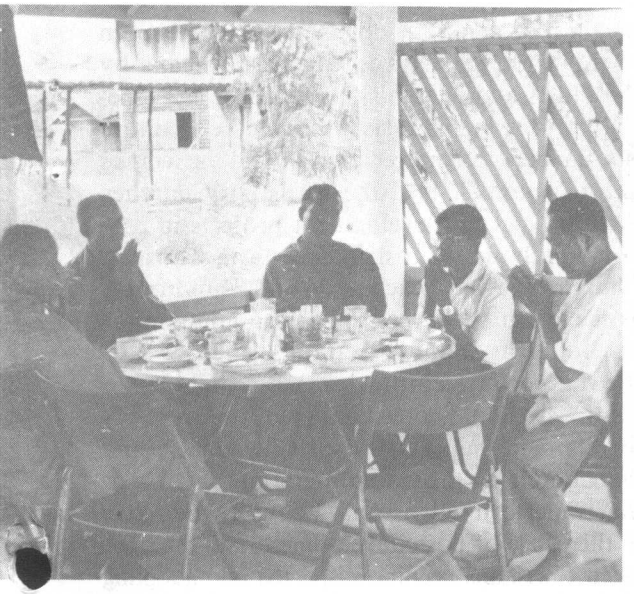
A just communication like this implies two important consequences. First, it demands as a prime aim of any communication process that people who have been denied proper representation in this process have to be enabled to participate in it with equal weight. That means, that any development process particularly has to care for the participation of the poor and the weak, i.e. of all those people who have so far been denied this participation.

The other consequence is that the inner attitude of the communication partners should

6) Shoaib Sultan Khan, The Missing Link, in : **New Internationalist**, No. 105 (1981), 26f, here : 27.

7) Ibid.

8) Most of my ideas in this paragraph have been inspired by Helmut Peukert's thinking. See : Helmut Peukert, **Science, Action, and Fundamental Theology. Toward a Theology of Communicative Action**, Cambridge (Mass.) 1984 ; id., Fundamental Theology and Communicative Praxis as the Ethics of Universal Solidarity, in : **The Conrad Grebel Review**, Vol. 3 (1985), 41-65.



be one of respect for the other as the other (and that means at the same time: for myself, i.e. not to loose one's roots in one's own tradition or identity !) without patronising him and taking him in for my own purposes. Development needs the respect and valuing of the other.

This knowledge, however, that the other and I have unconditional value as human persons as such can be found in all the religious traditions. Religious beliefs and practices are expressions of the experience of (what can be called) an 'absolute reality'. This 'absolute reality' can be a source of an unconditional affirmation of others, of solidarity, which respects and values them in anticipation, that is: as others. Herewith I am not saying that only religious people can foster development. I only mean that this selfless valuing of others, which could also be called love, must be there.

Although the origins of the experience of an 'absolute reality' lie beyond the narrow limits of a particular religious affiliation, it is however always expressed in specific religions and ideologies. These specific beliefs and practices are the 'language' in which people express their needs and aspirations, the language, in which they articulate ultimate goals of development. Religions contain dreams of the new order and of new humankind, which are both a vision and a motivating force behind the actions of the people. At the same time religions, due particularly to the (natural) process of their institutionalisation, can also contain a destructive potential. [9]

Any lived religion is in itself an ambivalent reality: it can be liberative but also enslaving ! Too often history has shown that religions (and not least Christianity !) are not a motivating force for total human development, but have turned into its contrary, becoming rigid or even totalitarian or legitimising the status quo. To avoid aberrations of one's initial liberative intentions a religion therefore always needs to be self-critical, a precondition of which is to be open to others, to listen to and to communicate with them. Herewith the fact of enslaving forms of religion ultimately asks for communication, which consequently implies - as I have argued - an attitude that can be called 'religious'. Thus the deviations of religion should lead again into the very heart of religion, but not away from it !

In this self-critical sense, therefore, "people's....awareness of their own religio-cultural heritage should be the basis for development activities"[10]. Or as Aloysius Pieris has put it, "no **true** liberation is possible unless people are 'religiously' motivated towards it"[11]. For him to be religiously motivated means "to be drawn from the depth of one's being"[12]. - What else does development really mean than developing the human potentials, unfolding what is deeply within ourselves?

But without doubt there exists resistance to these processes of development that might put my whole argument in question as being too idealistic, not taking into account what the Christian tradition calls 'sin'. Are there not many processes going on in every society that deny equal rights to the communication partners and hence make a just communication (and therefore the unfolding of human potentials) impossible? Has not the problem of inequalities of distribution of individual power, i.e. has not the problem of power structures been neglected which is responsible for the problem of distorted communication?

Although I am very well aware of the

9) Speaking about the field of development, institutionalized religions often have a tendency to overstress quantity at the expense of quality, too, for example, when one points to the number of projects, the increase on the budgets etc.... and tends to forget about the people !

10) Seri Phongphit, Dialogue, 4.

11) Aloysious Pieris, The Place of Non-Christian Religions and Cultures in the Evolution of a Third World Theology, in : **East Asian Pastoral Review**, Vol. 19, No. 2 (1982), 5-33, here : 19.

12) Ibid.

problem,I doubt that this legitimate objection that might be raised has at the same time a legitimate alternative at hand. Or can individual or social sin be overcome by a counter-sin? Or can we, on the contrary, only (hope to !) overcome sin by its analysis ('repentance') and by tackling it ('penance'), in theological terms: by love that is aware of the reality of sin? Thus communicative development and participatory people's organisations should not deny the existing realities of power distribution in society but should analyse and face it.

To sum up the argument up to now: Development is a matter of quality, where people (and especially the poor) count. As their understanding of quality is important, there has to be communication among people. Real communication, however, needs an attitude of unconditional respect of other human beings as part of one absolute reality - an attitude that can be found in all religious traditions.

That has far-reaching consequences : In Sri Lanka (as in most Asian countries) people express their sorrows and aspirations not in Christian terms, but as Buddhists, Hindus etc. As Buddhism is the main language of expression of sorrows and aspirations,Christians interested in the development of the country necessarily have to learn this language first. This is where dialogue starts. You cannot impose your minority language on the others. Either you then have to exclude yourself from the majority of the people (and then there cannot really be development) or you have to understand their language, a process that cannot happen in a passive and distant attitude but involves attempts to speak it and thus experience its mystical roots. By this process Christians could also understand their own religious language better and therewith contribute to the search for a renewed Christian identity.

Thus development in Sri Lanka (and other Buddhist countries) predominantly has to happen in this 'language', and that also means by Buddhists and Buddhist institutions, as - especially in the rural areas - the people's culture is a Buddhist culture centered around the temples and the monks.[13] If the Christian Churches therefore set up development projects in predominantly non-Christian areas **as a Christian Church,** it won't reach very far, I am afraid, as it cannot really communicate about what development should be about. There is also the dangerous temptation which Christian Churches should carefully avoid, i.e. to verify the claimed 'superiority' of Christianity and the Church by providing material 'proofs' of that superiority. It is only counterproductive to the cause of both development and dialogue when Christians become suspected of "adopting development projects as new means for evangelization, or rather proselitism". [14]

At this point I would like to come back to the structure of communication. It must - as I said - ultimately respect others, who, by definition cannot be restricted to a limited number of people. There are always other 'others'. Hence it is not enough to restrict oneself in the process of communication to the direct counterpart. Thus any communication must in tendency have a universal horizon. The consensus of one group at the expense of another is no real communication. (In the case of the Mahaweli project, for instance: has one really taken proper account of the rights of the Tamil people living in the Northeast of Sri Lanka? And have the rights of the coming generations who might suffer from the ecological consequences of the project, been sufficiently considered?).

As communication has a universal dimension also development has. In a world, where the problems are universal, development is no more restricted only to the so-called 'developing countries'. Development is a universal task. We have reached a 'planetary age' where we cannot afford to confine ourselves on partial perspectives alone. [15] That is what Pope Paul VI meant when he wrote in his encyclical 'Populorum Progressio' that true development "has so permate the goad of every man and of the whole man. ('cuiuslibet hominis ac totius hominis')" (PP 14).

Also the 'religious' cores of each 'whole man' have a universal dimension consisting of

13) One often talks about the necessity of approaching other religions in order to discover the kingdom values outside the Church in Asia. But has it been sufficiently reflected that this can only happen when one also has the courage to work outside the Church? Is leaving the narrow structures of the tiny Christian Church in Asia in development work (i.e. supporting non-Christian development organizations) in order to participate in the development of the (non-Christian) people not the appropriate way of serving the kingdom of God in Asia?

14) Seri Phongphit, Dialogue, 3.

15) See : Tissa Balasuriya, **Planetary Theology,** London 1984.



their universal visions for a new world and a new humankind. When we therefore want to communicate on worldwide development we cannot restrict ourselves to our own religious visions for the future world alone. Otherwise there will be no common development. If one only considers one's own opinions, be they rooted in a Christian or Buddhist or any other belief, that can even lead to conflicts. Thus there has to be the attempt to find an interreligious language of integral development, a language, that does not exclude the convictions of the followers of other religions. The role of interreligious dialogue is thus to help to communicate between peoples of different religious convictions in the different parts of the world about the future of their villages, their countries and ultimately the world as a whole.

Therefore one could say that development is about dialogue and dialogue is about development. This is not a substitution of dialogue by development (or vice versa). Both tasks mutually qualify each other. If true dialogue happens today it results from the common search for true development.[16] Development is a reminder of the social/sociological dimension of dialogue: who are the people involved (and so on)? It is also a reminder of the fact that cultures and societies 'develop' in the sense that there is social change. One therefore cannot really have dialogue when one's picture of the dialogue partners remains static and does not take account of the changing self-understanding of the partners due to social changes. On the other hand dialogue broadens one's own vision of the future society and the attitude towards human beings. It pays regard to the spiritual basis of total human development.

III. Some Consequences

(1) Development in dialogue starts with living human beings in their concrete historical contexts, i.e. with the people, especially the poor.

(2) Development in dialogue needs participation of the people. Thus people's organizations which aim to achieve self-reliance are the only possible form of positive development work. Only this form enables the weak to become a self-conscious partner in the communicative process of development.

(3) Therefore development in dialogue needs small groups. These communities and groups are the main actors in a real development process, not only, as 'small is beautiful' (E.F. Schumacher) but also because development in dialogue needs the experience of communication. It needs an atmosphere, where people get to know each other well. It needs space and time where they start telling stories[17], singing songs and praying. Development in dialogue is therefore opposed to any community-destroying processes that take place in any society.

(4) Development in dialogue has a universal tendency. That includes also the 'First World' and the Churches in those countries. Both local Churches and NGO's in Asia should contribute to tell their experiences to their brothers and sisters in the other parts of the world.

To give you only a few examples: I believe that we in the West can gain a lot from Asian experiences made, for example, on a Buddhist background: what it means to reduce thirst and greed, what salvific force is in voluntary poverty and non-violence, what a mystico-political spirituality really is, what role self-perception (and introspection) play.

(5) And finally there should be a kind of spirituality or spiritual attitude of development in dialogue, an attitude, that starts with experiencing - in silence and by listening - and not with talking and actions. Only then can people grow and develop in deep and real interaction.

by **Ulrich Dornberg**

16) Cf. : "If interreligious dialogue is possible in the field of development (in Thailand ; U.D.) today, an important reason could be that both Buddhists and Christians are searching for an alternative model of development." (Seri Phongphit, Dialogue, 2).

17) "In the telling of a story we have the blueprint for an alternative world, a world which competes with existing reality and in so doing shatters its giveness." (Helmut Peukert, Fundamental Theology, 60).

Ladakh



Model for the Future?

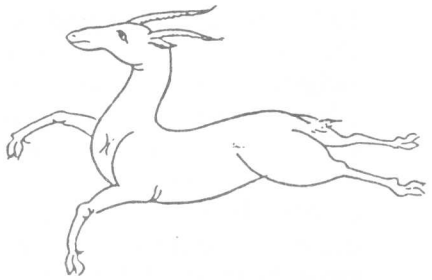


As one of the few societies that has remained outside the influence of the Western mono-culture that threatens to engulf the whole planet, Ladakh is tremendously important for the rest of the world. Everywhere else the same blue jeans, the same hamburgers, the same American rock music ... and the same bloated and polluted cities. The Western model imposed on a myriad of diverse cultures is showing signs of breaking down. More and more people are beginning to feel that it cannot work - neither in the developed nor in the developing countries of the world.

Now that we are faced with the threat of self-destruction, the search for alternatives is gaining ever greater momentum. There is a growing concern with the environment, with sane and sustainable development; there is an awareness of the interrelatedness of all life, and the need to take a more holistic and systemic view of the world around us.

Few existing cultures are as close as Ladakh to the ideal of an ecologically balanced human-scale society. Unaffected until now by the West, traditional Ladakh embodies the principles upon which any sustainable and harmonious society would have to be founded: decentralised, co-operative communities dependent largely on perpetually renewable resources.

Ladakh now stands at a crossroads. Either it can try to follow the West, and become an impoverished



backwater of the modern world, or it can follow an ecological path, and find sustainable prosperity, despite its fragile environment and limited resources it is chooses the latter way Ladakh will be unique, and in its success will stand as a globally relevant model — a demonstration that it is possible for human beings, in the twentieth century, to live without destroying their natural resource base.

by **Helena Norberg-Hodge**



Abbot Sompong and the Solution of Juvenile Delinquency Problem at Ban Klong Ple

Ban Klong Ple village is located adjacent to the municipal boundary of Hadyai District, with a total of 200 houses. The majority of the villagers earn their livings by rice farming and planting of Para-rubber. Their livelihood is relatively convenient and comfortable, fully provided with electricity and water. Young men and women of the village are mostly upper secondary school graduates.

Villages in the vicinity, characterized by their nearness to the town, are in large part under the influence of the urban society. The control of traditional mores has begun to subside, such as of a typical community and the seniority system. In addition, there are many migrants from other locations and the presence of strangers caused tacit suspicion for one another. Furthermore, as there are more and more upper secondary school graduates, unwillingness to earn a living the way their parents did has arisen because education has made them think of such occupations as degrading while finding it difficult for them to find other kinds of job. This problem sends them into gangs which attack each other, becoming rowdies or burglars. As the traditional social influence has become weak, no one has control over them now. Moreover, since the town of Hadyai is the home of some influential people protecting and nurturing hooligans in the surrounding villages as their proteges, when crimes are commited they tend to act as protectors to bail out these criminals or even exert their influence to set them free.



Abbot Sompong is a native of a nearby village. Now 37 years of age, he was once a notorious young rowdy because of family problems. Later, he became a Buddhist novice and was then ordained monk. Repenting his former life, he started a new one by concentrating on studies. He attended several educational institutes, some in Bangkok. And while preparing himself for a further study tour to Sri Lanka, he fell sick in 1976 and had to return home for treatment, staying at Wat Klong Ple.

The former abbot was then advanced in age. As soon as Phra Sompong got well, he was requested to act as the supervision of novices at that wat who were rather unruly. (Their parents had put them in novicehood for that reason.)

As a former unruly youngster, Phra Sompong understood the mind of those novices very well. His supervision proved to bear fruits. The novices loved him and their behavior changed positively.

His thoughts then extended to efforts to solve the juvenile delinluency problem in the village by accepting an increasing number of unruly children to novicehood. He held a summer novice ordination ceremony each year. After a period of training, some of them would leave novicehood, others would stay on to continue studies and training under him. At pre-



Abbot Sompong Leads in walking meditation at a seashore.

sent, he has about 70 novices with him.

The study courses he organizes for his novices deal with both theology, Pali and the Tripitaka. He acquires funds for all their expenses and encourages to the highest possible level of learning any novice possessing talent and determination to learn. But this is not his outstanding piece of work. The most outstanding one is the arrangement for his novices to supervise one another among themselves and the distribution of responsibilities and work, including finance and accounting control. The purpose is to make them acquire full practical experience. Feeling proud that they are playing important roles and are part of the wat, the novices are attentive to their responsible jobs to the effect that several visitors commented that the novices at Wat Klong Ple work like adults.

Moreover, he has organized several special activities, such as the establishment of an oratorical speech training club for training the novices in how to make public speeches and spiritual sermons, and subsequently giving them opportunities to put it into practice in village and schools in the vicinity. He also takes them for study and observation tours to various locations from time to time.

In another aspect, he makes himself an example of non-possess or of personal money. Even the money given to the novices by their parents and guardians is put into the common fund, prompting all of them to turn over the monies obtained from chanting requiems or from performing religious rites to the common fund.

From training the novices he has expanded his work to improving the conditions of the community by paying regular visits to the novices parents, and by making available a broadcasting tower to speak to the parents, asking them repeatedly to stop gambling and alcoholic drinking, and stressing unity within the village.

The fact that he is hard-working and dedicated has won him the villagers' faith and confidence as well as sympathy. For example, his announcement that there must not be gambling at any house having a funeral or else he would not allow his monks and novices to perform funeral rites there has brought to him both love and fear of the villagers.

This growing charisma enables him to control the conduct of children in the village too, because almost all of them have been in novicehood under him, even if for a short time in some cases. When they do wrong or behave unruly he sends for them to warn them and request that they give up such wrong-doing. Most children are afraid of offending him. Hence, the society steadily became peaceful and desirable values were restored. Although the village is near an urban society, this one can maintain much of the identity of a rural community. It does not adopt the values of an urban society so much.

The Business of Raising Spirits

BANGKOK, the City of Angels, is living up to its name as the booming business of spiritualism uncovers highly communicative ghosts in every nook and cranny.

New cults both from the East and the West have meanwhile been sprouting up here at an unprecedented rate.

Indeed, it seems as if Bangkokians are going holy.

But according to prominent social critic Sulak Sivaraksa, all of this has very little to do with heaven. On the contrary, it is an indication that the city is in deep trouble.

"It means that we are spiritually lost," he says. "It means that the new religion — materialism — cannot provide us with the answers. Meanwhile, old religions cannot communicate with new generations. It is natural that people will have to seek new answers for their own survival."

But amid the mushrooming of mediums and foreign cults, says Sulak, the biggest threats come from within, the ones disguised in saffron robes.



"Cults that adopt the superficial characteristics of Buddhism are perfectly placed to manipulate the traditions accepted by the masses," he warns. "In such a disguise, their power to exploit has no limit."

He says people turn to mediums or new beliefs in order to escape from harsh competition and from the inhumane system which relentlessly forces us to do more and to perform better in order not to be counted out.

Given the deep-rooted animism in Thai society, it is natural that mediums with their self-proclaimed magical powers will continue to gain popularity. To make it in this material and competitive world, people feel they need all the help they can get.

To those whose disillusionment is so deep that it drives them to reject the system itself, new cults that offer alternative values and ways of life are often powerfully attractive.

"The increasing number of people interested in religious beliefs does not always correlate with positive inner changes among the population," Sulak observes. "People may just want to escape."

Blessed with religious tolerance, Thailand is open to the influx of new cults and sects from both the West and the East, Sulak suggests.

The Children of God, who recently made headlines with defectors' stories of questionable sexual morality, came here from the United States. At the same time, conservative cults from Japan, Taiwan and India are amassing large followings without fanfare.

The fast-spreading popularity of these new cults among Thais is startling, Sulak says.

Johrei, from Japan, with its "healing power", for example, is said to have more than 40,000 members in Thailand, he says. "And look at the Church of Christ. It has been around for more than 150 years now, yet there are fewer than 30,000 members.

Also from Japan is a new form of Buddhism



with more than 40,000 local members, he adds. "This is not to mention the followers of Hare Krishna, Saibaba and what not."

There are no figures on how much money is sent abroad in donations to the head offices of these organisations overseas.

It is evident that the main targets of these cults are the young, the alienated or the minorities.

"These groups indicate their advantages as well as their limitations," Sulak points out. "It is easy to attract the young who are not happy with their system. But by the same token, propagation of these doctrines among the young cannot shake the roots of society because these young people often don't even know what their roots are."

The secret of success, he says, depends mainly on hypnotism.

"The main strategy is idhiriddhi You have to possess certain 'magical' powers in order to produce a hypnotic effect. People have an emotional and irrational need for the unexplainable. And these cults exploit this human weakness with all sorts of 'magical' powers."

The spartan Santi Asoke sect and the international-spirited Bah'ai are the two cults which operate solely on ideological grounds without claiming any magical powers.

"They demand a lot from their followers in terms of rationality and discipline. There are no frills of supernatural powers. And that is why I think the two cannot operate on a larger scale than they do now," the social critic comments.

For Sulak, mediums and foreign cults pose less of a threat to society than the organised sects which present themselves in the guise of Buddhism.

Foreign cults, he contends, do not understand the roots and cultural structure of the Thai society, and this is an obstacle to their wide propagation. The mediums, meanwhile, are only operating on an individual basis.

"The more efficient the organisation, the more efficiently it can exploit people," he says. "The more disorganised, the greater the limitations to this exploitation."

A staunch critic of the Dhammakaya Temple, Sulak says its simplistic interpretation of Buddhism, its powerful media presence, its sleekly modern organisational structure, and its gigantic, carefully designed public relations campaign, complete with magic tricks, can shake Thai society more than all the foreign cults here combined.

He thinks it is difficult for the ecclesiastic order to win followers among the younger generation if it keeps on preaching the Five Precepts as it has done for centuries.

"Because it is no longer relevant. The monks must be able to challenge the consumer culture, to question the lies in advertisements, the roots of social injustice even the military's budgets. Which I don't think is possible.

"In the meantime, all we have is a variety of preaching that promise us the answer if we run away from society. We are taught to escape."

The invasion of the spirits and the burgeoning of foreign cults are only the symptoms of the current social cancer — materialism.

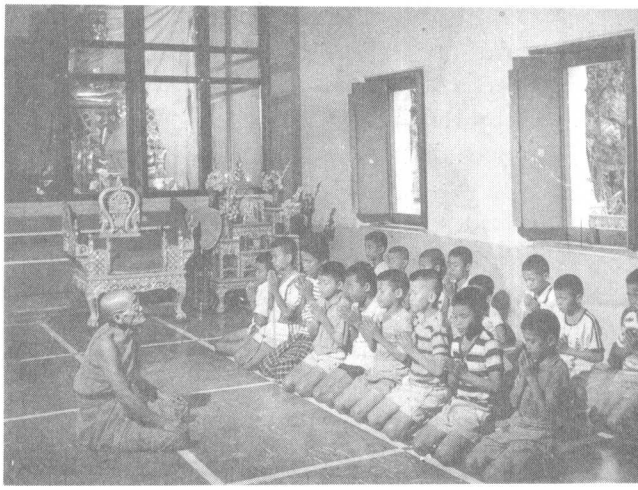
"It robs people of spiritual fulfilment; it robs us of humanity," Sulak concludes. "If we cannot strike a balance between spiritual and material development, I don't think these social symptoms will ever go away."

Report by **Sanitsuda Exachai**
from *Bangkok Post*
Tuesday May 17, 1988

It's time to change Thai Education -but how?

The system of Thai education currently in place has changeed little from that institued by King Chulalongkorn a century ago.

It served a purpose at the time it was introduced. But now it has become irrelevant. And that means Thailand and Thais are ill-prepared to cope in a rapidly changing world.



Development in Thailand is leaving the country's education system — and the students passing through it behind.

That is the conclusion reached by the National Education Council after extensive research and consultations with education experts. The current education system is outdated and inappropriate for the changing world. It has removed graduates from the reality of their communities and lowered morale in the society.

And so the bureaucracy is creaking into action. A major revamp of Thailand's education is underway.

Part of that revamp took place last week in Pattaya. About 60 education experts and critics gathered there to discuss the present system and future prospects of Thai education. It was agreed that challenging new targets for education should be set up in line with the goals of the country's development. In sum, education should play a vital role in developing human resources.

But agreement on which routes to take to reach those targets is less easy to achieve. Some experts call for a return to traditional values and methods of education. Others call for more active participation in the education system by the private sector.

Dr Kosit Panpiemras, deputy secretary-general of the National Economic and Social Development Board, says the NESDB sees education as one part of the development process. He says the amazing growth of the country in the past year was not caused by chance. It took place because quality personnel were strategically situated in the private sector.

"These entrepreneurs are well-educated and far-sighted. So, their projects are well-planned," he says.

However, he points out that growth in rural areas has not been able to catch up with that in the cities. This is because of the lack of a modern and dynamic education system which can accelerate increasing productivity in the countryside.

This has been partly responsible for one of the most disruptive phenomena in Thai society — the internal brain drain from the provinces to big cities where major public and private organizations are located. The phenomenon, says the respected Phra Devavedi (formerly Phra Rajavaramuni), can be seen even in the Buddhist monks' society.

Phra Devavedi says the Western education system introduced by King Chulalongkorn to develop a country which, at that time, was trying to escape being colonized, had the important objective of producing educated people for public administration. But when the



colonization fears faded, the objective of the Thai education system was not changed.

"The system is based on the assumption that one studies to become superior in government organizations," says Phra Devavedi. "With this misconception, education becomes a tool to upgrade a person's status in the society. The younger generations gradually disappear from remote villages to find better education and life in the cities."

Temples, which used to be the main educational institutions in Thai society, have become less relevant in communities. In the meantime, the curriculum in schools stresses knowledge from textbooks that also have little relevance to the community.

Graduates from provinces thus feel like aliens in their home-towns and end up emigrating to the cities.

They become one of society's problem groups because most of them fail to find work in the cities. And when they return homes, they cannot live in harmony with their former neighbours and friends.

Phra Devavedi also points out that the privileges have a better chance to go to the cities where courses in rewarding fields such as medicine and engineering are available.

Meanwhile, the underprivileged struggle to succeed in many other ways, such as by entering the monkhood in cities like Bangkok. He cites a survey which indicates that 97 per cent of Buddhist monks in Bangkok's temples are the sons of farmers from rural areas.

Phra Devavedi grants that more people are educated these days. However, he says they also have lower morals.

He says that is because the present systems of education, modernization and industrialization build up consumerism and materialism. People become greedy and do anything for their own interest and comfort.

"It's true that we're in the information age in which a lot of electronic communication equipment is in use. Do we use it appropiately?" he asks.

"No," he answers. "People do not apply it to develop quality of life. We're using it to save time so that we can have more time to be lazy. And we're using it just for the sake of entertainment." he adds.

"Our society needs an education system that creates morality, discipline, diligence and endurance to build up productivity," he says.

According to his vision, education should be a flagship for social development. He says it is high time that education should be planned in harmony with other activities of community development. In the past, he says schools have become too far removed from the villages.

"We have to look back at our traditional education system in which temples — the country's first kind of education institute — and households were very close. A good education system must get participation from all groups in a community. Temples, households and schools should be brought together under an education system.

"However, the government should first pay attention to the development of religious institutions because they have been neglected for a long time," he suggests.

Dr Sippanond Ketudadt, former secretary-general of the National Education Council and currently president of the National Petrochemical Corporation, says the appropriate education system is balanced between education and modernization.

He says the present elementary education system has been successful in distributing many more resources to remote areas. Unfortunately,

education at the post-elementary level is not affordable for the poor. Nor does it produce graduates who can become entrepreneurs on their own, he says.

University and college education should be more dynamic and have different patterns, he recommends.

"About 30 teachers' colleges throughout the country should play a greater role as centres of expertise in several subjects in the provinces. Their functions should be expanded to include modern research and development, and adapting modern technology for provincial productivity. Producing master's degree and PhD graduates is not necessary," he says.

He also sees modern vocational education as part of an important national development. He opposes the Education Ministry's idea of creating factories in vocational schools for students' apprenticeships, saying that the idea should be reversed.

"Instead of building factories in schools, creating schools in factories is better. Students can become apprentices in private factories. The government, the students and the factory owners would all benefit," he explains.

Dr Sippanond also says non-formal education must be emphasized more to enhance the livelihood of people who cannot afford the formal education system or who are out of school already.

But he says that none of these ideas can be implemented until the education administration system is decentralized to the provincial authorities.

from *The Nation*
Wednesday, May 4, 1988

IN MEMORIAM

VIKASBHAI

When we mention the name Vikas Bhai in Siam there are not apt to be many people who recognize it. But amongst Indian and other international development workers he is well known as a person who gave his all for, and stood beside the poor. Even though he used Marxist theory to understand the weak and the strong points of society and various religions, he never joined any communist party nor other political organisations. We can consider a person like him rare indeed and he was a close and wonderful friend of mine.

An old Thai saying is "When you meet an Indian and a snake at the same time, you should strike the Indian first." A person like Vikas could easily destroy this kind of prejudice since true friendship doesn't have National, Religion or Philosophical bias. Most important is to have a basic trust in each other and avoid any kind of back-stabbing.

This moral I received from Vikas Bhai and other Indian friends such as Victor Anant, Chakrapani, Swami Agnivesh and Ramesh Gupta etc. even though not one of them is a Buddhist.

It's a pleasure that these friends are still with us, though Vikas is gone, having been killed in an automobile accident on December 29, 1987.

Vikas was nearly my age, a big man with a beautiful full beard. He dressed informally, rather like poor, lower class Indian people even though he was born into the Brahmin caste. His father was a progressive man and never had the ceremony performed which would have made Vikas a true Brahmin.So we cannot say he was of high caste but neither can we say he was of low caste since his parents were Brahmins.

Vikas was quite satisfied to be "casteless" as it enabled him to remain single and be able to stand on the side of marginalized people, either they are the "Sudra" or the "Canaaala". He can also present himself smartly with high class people. But he really despised the affected mannerisms of all the castes. There are some, who regard themselves to be on the same side with the poor, use the trick to take advantage in the name of grassroot people, the same as high class people who pretend to perform like the so called "good people" using many tactics.

Being free of a caste lable, Vikas was called "Bhai" which means Brother. He was a brother who always made good suggestions and offered others his help without any thought of something in return, whether it be money or honor. International development organizations could not buy him, but could only respect him.

I first met Vikas Bhai where I start "Klet Thai" Publishing House which was being set up in 1972, then we met again to form **the Asian Cultural Forum on Development** in Bangkok.

We can say that he was the one who assisted this organization to follow a democratic course and to keep it from adopting any dictatorial or fraudulent methods of operation. It was he who requested me to administer the organization for 7 years. And after leaving this position he invited me to join in with the Liberation Religion and Culture program as a way of promoting freedom for people. He was worried about the possibility of politicians and business interests using religion as a tool, especially the new religion of the consumer culture, in which shopping centers become the new temples.

Vikas also pointed out the dangers of leaders of old religions who, no different from other reactionary groups, use their religious base for political control, as in the case of some Muslim leaders in Iran or in some Protestant sects in America.

We should also take notice of some groups of Sikhs and Hindus in India and Buddhists in Sri Lanka, of which we may follow the method, who, in the name of "Love of country" and "Love of religion" forget about truth and morality, as in the case of the preacher who said that "it's not a sin to kill a communist"
All the time that I associated with Vikas I received a great deal of knowledge and encouragement from him. I would sometimes visit him at his home in Varanasi. And when I was travelling to other cities in that country, he would often come to greet me warmly.

Vikas was a vegetarian. But whenever he came to Siam he would indulge in every variety of pork, crab and fish, but never beef (showing that some of his Brahmin heritage was still deep in his character). He loved Thai food and would say that Bangkok was both the loveliest and the ugliest city. Thai women, he said, were the most beautiful and Thai fruits the most delicious. Never before had I heard all these things come out of the mouth of an Indian.

But more important than all was his great sense of humor and his ability to pick out the faults of anyone, including his own hero, Mahatama Gandhi. Moreover he could laugh at himself and the history of his country. Even though he was very proud of Indian culture, when he saw a problem that needed to be eliminated he would want to wipe it out completely.

I belive I'm very lucky to have had a friend like Vikas he who was not afraid to advise or admonish me. He could accept that I liked his country even though I could never understand it as well as he. And even though Vikas could accpet the truth of my belief that the Great Enlightened Buddha was India's greatest gift to the world, yet he couldn't grasp the depth of his teachings.

So now that I'm entering the last period of my life and many of my friends have passed away, I think about Vikas that if he hadn't met with the accident he might very well would pass away after me. Who knows? At least I believe that had I died first, he would have been able to write me a farewell piece better than this short appreciation that I want to dedicate to him.

"In this remaining time we should conduct our activities to the very best of our ablity."

Translated from **S.Sivaraksa's** article in Thai from *Asian Action* No. 67/1988

Alexandra David - Neil



Mrs. David - Neil's work has caused many academics to err in claiming that she was a fraud. When they write of her reference to certain magic formulas, for example and to holy men walking on air. But there are others who say that she was always accurate in her writing and wrote only the facts.

Alexandra David-Neil may be considered to be the first Western woman to have studied the Tibetan Vajarayana School of Buddhism and popularised it in the West. Before her there were other Westerners who knew something of Tantric Buddhism and who also probably knew the Tibetan Language better than her. However they were of a small circle of Western academics who specialised in Tibetan religion and who viewed it as a confused mix of spirit worship and Tantric sexual ritual.

When Mrs. David-Neil died at the age of 101,Tibet had already been occupied by China for over a decade. With Tibet under occupation,accurate knowledge of the country was very limited and writings concerning Tibet could only reach the outside world in small quantities. However, gradually such works have been forthcoming from a wide range of viewpoints, and with increased quality. Mrs. David-Neil can be regarded as one of the most clear headed writers on Tibet, and additionally, she wrote from a standpoint which is of great value both to Buddhist scholars as well as to social scientists. Her idiomatic style of writing is found to be easily readable for those who are interested in Tibetan religion in the West. For these reasons her books have become very popular for English and French readers throughout Europe and America. Up to today many of her books, some of which are 50 or 60 years old, are still being reprinted. It is a shame, however, that her works are as yet unavailable in Thai translation.

Alexandra David-Neil was born in October 1868. Her father was French, and held strong Republican views. He hated the institutions of the Monarchy and Religion. Her mother however was a devout Christian. They attempted to bring her up to see things as they did but she showed her rebellious character at an early age and ran away from them. She later studied Sanskrit and Tibetan in Europe, and then travelled to India, inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's peaceful liberation movement.

It is not known whether it was the impact the East had on Alexandra David-Neil which made her change her ideas when she arrived, or whether other factors were involved, but she gradually lost her interest in Brahminism and eventually sought her refuge in the Buddha. She went to Sri Lanka and India to study Theravada Buddhism at a number of universities, and made comparative studies of Buddhism with other religions.

The first time the young Miss David came to Asia she did not travel as the other Westerners of the day did. She stayed with holy men, travelled with wandering ascetics and she refused to carry





herself as the Westerners did, which was to assume a superiority to the native people.

When she returned to Europe she began teaching at Pritzel University in Belgium and got married to Phillip Neil. However she was unhappy with her married life. Her husband was very traditional in outlook and did not understand her ideas and learning at all. He was also more than 23 years older than Alexandra. As a wife, Alexandra did not enjoy looking after a home and dressing in the fashions of the day, as was expected of her, and so she left Europe for Asia once again in 1910. This was the most important step in her life.

The French Ministry of Public Instruction sent her abroad to study in India where she studied under the 13th Dalai Lama (who preceded the 14th Dalai Lama of today). He had fled his country after the Chinese occupation and had made camp in the Himalayas, along the British frontier (at the Indian border). The Dalai Lama invited her to visit Lhasa, which at that time was a closed city. It had remained so as both the British (for political reasons) and the Tibetans (for religious reasons) wanted to prevent easy passage across the border.

Alexandra David-Neil tried many times, but without success to cross the border into Tibet, both from the Indian side and the Chinese side. John Blofeld met bell boys at a hotel where she stayed in Peking who thought her strange because she would not sleep on her bed at night, but would sleep on the floor. They did not of course realize that she was devoutly observing the Eight precepts of Buddhist principles she followed.

In those days travellers going to Tibet would have to take a caravan of horses, mules and donkeys to carry the food supplies, clothing, medicines and so on. They would have to arm themselves to prepare against attacks by highwaymen. It would take over a year to reach Lhasa travelling in this way. The travellers would camp on the outskirts of towns to avoid the possibility of arrest or detention inside the town. They could be told to turn around and return unless they were on an official trip or were, for example, part of a group led by Young Husbands, a British soldier who turned towards the spiritual path after having been to Tibet, and who had permission to travel inside Tibet.

Despite these official restraints Mrs. David-Neil managed to get into Tibet by disguising herself as a monk. She disguised herself as a man first in India in order to go to the places where women were forbidden to go. Inside Tibet she disguised herself as a nun.She adopted a Tibetan child who had been ordained as a novice, and they travelled together. They had two attendants to take care of the supplies and their belongings, but spent most of the time travelling on foot as the terrain was unsuitable to use mules and donkeys.

It was not long before she returned to Europe. She spent

little time there and she went back once more to Tibet via the Trans-Siberian Railway, from Russia to Peking, and then onto Japan. She travelled to temples set in the holy mountains of China, where the religion and customs of Tibet and Mongolia were still being upheld. She then returned to Europe at the outbreak of the Second World War.

It has been said that Mrs. David-Neil held many secrets for producing magic powers, although she herself never openly revealed this ability, nor did she make any mention of them in her writings. Some Westerners have claimed that she once made a flower disappear simply by pronouncing a magic formula. It has also been claimed that after her adopted child died she used her spiritual powers to maintain contact with him. She lived over a hundred years and still she was able to read without the aid of spectacles. She also had the abilities of a healer and was able to take away pain and suffering from those who went to seek her.

Some of her better works in English include *Journey to Lhasa, with Mystics and Magicians in Tibet* and *Initiations in Tibet*. Some of her books have been translated and are available in many Western languages, but unfortunately not in Thai. The religious moral standards of the Tibetans are of great importance if we are able to reach a full appreciation of them. They will help us to realise the importance of our own traditional beliefs which had existed before we accepted the religion from Sri Lanka. Many of the beliefs and practices of the ancient religion of Tibet are surprisingly similar to some of the findings that Western scientists are coming across today. This is all explained in the introduction to one of Alexandra David-Neil's most important books, which was written by the Head of the French Royal Academy to verify her work.

We might well question when China will ever really understand the Dhamma of the Buddha and the importance of the traditions of Tibet? If this was ever to come about they might stop the destruction of the Tibetan people's customary way of life. Perhaps, however, this is too much to ask of the Communist Party leadership.

Mrs. David-Neil's work has caused many academics to err in claiming that she is a fraud. When they write of her referrence to certain magic formulas, for example, and to holy men walking on air. But there are others who say that she was always accurate in her writing and wrote only the facts. This reminds me of King Rama Kamhaeng's inscription, which some scholars claimed to be a fake. Therefore, I invited a group of Language experts both from the West and from Siam to my home for discussion. Amongst these was Professor William Gedney who maintained that the inscription was genuine. Besides another Western scholar, at a meeting on the state of Thai Studies in Canberra, made a proposal which acts in opposition to some of the Thai academics who have erred in the past. This proposal will be published in the Journal of the Siam Society 1988.

Going back to the subject of Tibet. There have been some very interesting accounts on the country written by Westerners who know little of the religion and who do not have much experience of the country. Heinrich Harrer, an Austrian who took refuge in Tibet from India during the Second World War was one such writer. Whilst in refuge he wrote Seven Years in Tibet , a very readable book which also goes through the work of Alexandra David-Neil. It is a valuable work as he was able to stay in the country until the Chinese invaded in 1959

His recent return to Tibet has resulted in his book Return to Tibet: Tibet after the Chinese Occupation , an extremely interesting work. In this book he shows us how the Chinese have, sadly, destroyed the cultural and religious life of the country and have attempted to brainwash the people and the various tribes. Every where you walk in the country your eyes meet with Party propaganda posters from China, which propagate political doctrine as well as the current political situation of the country.

It is at least a little comforting to know that Alexandra David-Neil did not have to experience any of this. Recently Arthur Waley refused entry into China because his interest in the country was primarily to study the ancient poetry of the Tang Dynasty and poems and Tun Huang Care, rather than in the politics of the country as the Leadership would have wished. These Chinese politicians whose claims that development is all taking place in the name of the people are, not even worth listening to. They are only cheating the poeple.

from *Living in Thailand*
March, 1988

Religious Mission for Peace A Reflection on the Thai Sangha Visit to Lao

Up to now the old belief has still been left among the Thai-Lao people that they came from the same forefather, Khun Borom, the great ancient king who preached to his descendants to spread out and build up their own countries in the Indo-China Region, and not to be at war with each other, or else they both will be driven into disaster.

Even today, Thailand is still the Royal Kingdom and Lao has been changed into the People's Democratic Republic since 1975; the difference in political ideologies cannot cut off the long-standing brotherly and cultural relationship between the peoples on the two sides of the Mae Khong River.



Thai monks at That Luang, the most sacred Buddhist monument in Vientienne.

It was not before last year that the Lao government of the new regime invited Thai non-governmental delegations to visit Lao officially. Among these delegations was also the Thai Sangha; 7 monk leaders headed by Pra Rajaprichānānamuni (Nuan Khemacārī), The Sangha Governor of Nongkai Province, who visited Lao between 29 March - 7 April this year. This helped, in some measure, in the recovery of the religious and cultural understanding both between the Sangha and the peoples of Lao and Thailand after they had no formal communication for nearly 13 years when Lao became a Republic.

Since the hidden objective of the Laotian authority in inviting the Thai Sangha delegation to visit their country was to have Thai monks as the witnesses (if not to say, as the propagandists) to the real situation of Buddhism and the Sangha in present Lao , the delegation was brought around to visit all the important temples and education centres for monks as well as novices in Luang Prabang and Vientiane, the two capital cities of Lao .

Though the 9 days in Lao were so short and could give us only a superficial picture, I myself as a lay delegate, have sensed that there are some basic changes in Lao Buddhism and Sangha on both the structural and philosophical levels.

As everyone knows,before the time of liberation the hierarchy of the Laotian Sangha was just like that of Thailand. This kind of hierarchical organization has not been overthrown;in fact, it has only changed its coat from a feudal one to a socialistic one which is certainly different.

The supreme organization of the Lao Sangha is called the Lao Buddhist Fellowship Organiza-



Head of Thai mission with the Acting Head of State of Vientienne.



Thai and Lao monks collected alms together at Luang Phra bang.

tion (LBFO) where Ven. Thougkhun Anantasounthone is the present president which, to compare, is equal to the supreme patriarch of the Thai or the former Lao Sanghraja. LBFO is obviously the political organization under the Centre of National Unification Front of Lao (CNDFL) which is chaired by Mr. Phumee Wongvijit, the Fourth range in the Politburo of Lao. CNDFL is the powerful political organization only second to the Revolutionary Party of the Lao People. Its mission is to organize and solidify the people outside the Party.

According to the People's Institution of Lao, the people still have freedom to hold any belief that does not obstruct the socialist progress. So Lao people can be ordained monks and attain the religious ceremonies as before. But of course, the government does not support the religious affairs and leave them up to the individual concerns; in spite of that, in every temple I visited, I saw a number of young monks and novices or even young nuns in some places. Besides, quite a few Lao laymen came to join us in chanting and observing the Buddhist ceremonies; especially in Luang Prabang, where I was so glad to see a crowd of smiling children coming to greet us.

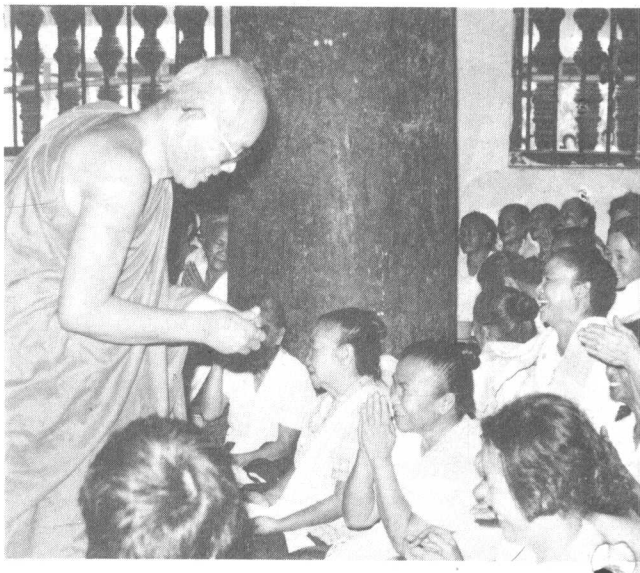
Nowadays there are about 3,000 monks and 1,000 novices left among the 3,700,000 citizens of Lao. This is not much less than the number of monks in Thailand when compared in relation to the total number of citizens. I felt a little bit disappointd when I came to know that the Pali study had been abandoned by the Lao Sangha; after all Pali is the language of Theravada Buddhism. The young monks and novices have to study the same curriculum that is provided for the secular sector. In this way the monks are secularized by the state education, since the Lao Sangha can not maintain an education of their own. All the Sangha's roles in Lao are under state control. The Sangha plays an important role in promoting the secular education and public health care, especially herbal medicines. Above all, the Lao Sangha is one of the most influential agents of propaganda for the new regime.

Here, the crucial issue to be noted in Lao Buddhism is that there are some theoretical attempts to combine Buddhism with Marxist ideology. The result is something that may be called Buddhist Theology of Liberation. Our delegation had a good chance to meet Mr. Phumee Wongvijit, the acting President of Lao, and do some talking with him. He said that, as long as he had this political role in Lao,he would apply Buddhadhamma to the rule of state because he certainly believed that basically Buddhadhamma and Marxism could go together.

Though I have not enough information to forecast the future of Buddhism in Lao, I feel if the situation of Lao Buddhism is going on like this, under the strong domination of Marxist ideology, without any real recreation of its own teach-



Lao Ladies in a temple.



Lao Ladies greeted a Thai monk.

ing and practice, then it might fade away some day, just like Thai Buddhism is in danger of being submerged in the high tide of capitalism and consumerism.

But I still hope that if the Laotian authority is true to Buddhism, it should allow Lao Sangha to have more autonomy and if it is possible, Lao Sangha should communicate with other Buddhists in Asia besides Asian Buddhist Conference For Peace, (ABCP - The Buddhist organization of socialist countries - Mongolia, Vietnam, Lao and Kumpuchea) in the deeper dimension, not only for the sake of political interests but for the sake of truly religious and cultural understanding among the Buddhist communities in the world.

by **Santisukh**

TICD

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Letter

c/o Postbox 2057 Varanasi 221002

29 MAY 1988

Dear Sulak,

Many thanks for sending me the copy of the latest **Seeds of Peace.** That was a nice obituary written by John Curnow—reading it I could see Vikas.

After reading *Religion & Development* my interest and curiosity to meet you is even more, especially to hear of the sort of discussions that you & Vikas must have had with your different ideologies. It was mentioned that you 'have only one message'. I have been trying (still am) to put across, and into practice, similar ideas with development workers I come into contact with, However, whereas you in your book could come directly from a 'religious perspective' I have to keep 'religion' out of it (loaded words & concepts) as I find that so many development workers, especially here in India, are so modern, scientific, western-educated that they have 'thrown out the baby with the bath water'as the saying goes—discarded that of value (like religous values) along with everything old as out-dated. Probably, as in the West, some of them in fact never had much of the old traditions/culture in their upbringing or home environment. I probably have a lot more familiarity with eastern philosophies & religions than many here do—and my background was Catholic.

So I call it inner, personal development to go with the outer, social development we are engaged in. Do you know of an English Vipassana meditation teacher called Christopher Titmuss? He was a monk in Thailand for 6 years, teaches throughout the world, and is also politically active in UK,where he lives. In fact it was from him that I first heard about you, back in the days of the lese majeste charge against you. Christopher has been my main teacher for 15 years, as well as being a big influence & a great support for my work here.

He is very skillful at teaching Dharma without using the traditional terminology — I once heard him record a talk for monks in Thailand then give the same talk without using any of the Sanskrit or Pali words, just using language that anybody could relate to.

Vikas was also a very big and wide ranging influence of my life, especially politically. He loved to tease me about my 'Buddhist' ideas, saying he preferred his spirituality in bottles. Sometime I hope to have the opportunity to reminisce about him with you.

sincerely,

Mary Lightfoot

30 JUNE 1988

Dear Sulak,

I've begun reading Phra Rajavaramuni's book on **Freedom : Individual & Social.** The Buddhist view on this seems so different from the American concept of liberty, which has no connotation of responsibility with it. How can one be "free" while causing others' suffering & destroying the environment? We need to learn new ways of living; of this, there is no doubt. All his goes by means of saying **thank you** for the book.

By the way, we had a good day with Kun Pibhap & Kun Toom at the Foundation For Children. We found their work very enheartening : I think they enjoyed meeting our baby Zoë, too.

Perhaps we'll meet again while you're in Chiangmai. If not, let me just express thanks for all your good work.

Goodbye for now!

sincerely,

Tom Ginsburg

Scenes of Tosachat and Local People in the Murals of Wat Buakkrok Luang



Thai Mural Painting is an art of great interest, which has its basic purpose to instruct and guide by illustrating scenes of religious history and moral value. We believe that it must have been originally derived from Buddhist Paintings of India and Sri Lanka. However, Thai painters have adopted to their local ways and techniques.

Mural painting in Thailand is classified into four schools: The Sukhothai School, The Ayuthya School, The School of Rattanakosin and The Lanna School. All of these have their own identities and also idiosyncracies with their own aesthetic expression.

The Lanna School of Painting developed strongly for many centuries, especially when Lanna was occupied by the Burmese for 200 years. In this period, Lanna style was influenced by Burmese style. After its liberation the Rattanakosin style spread to this region.

Chiang Mai, as the capital of Lanna, has Mural Painting in many Wats, such as; Wat Phra Singha, Wat Pa Daed, Wat Ta Kham and Wat Buakkrok Luang etc., All of these murals belong to the late Lanna School, probably painted in the reign of King Rama V, and the murals are contemporary with each other in their technique of dry fresco.

Wat Buakkrok Luang is situated near the eastern route to Sankumpang-Bosang (Route No. 1014). It is famous for School of Lanna Wisdom studies and its classically mural painting. The chapel interiors are beautifully decorated from dado to high ceiling.

The murals in Wat Buakkrok Luang, painted by Tai Yai artist in the early 25th century B.E., are one of the most important murals to be found in Chiang Mai. The murals were influenced by the Tai Yai, from the upper north. They had settled in this region by the order of Chao Kaveelawong. In addition. Tai Yai people share many fundamental cultural characteristics with the Lanna people.

The Tai Yai and other Tai in Burma, Lao , Vietnam and Thailand have long adopted the sect of Buddhism known as Theravada Buddhism, which is distinct from Mahayana Buddism found in Tibet and China. According to this, they are likely to have built and rebuilt the temple in which their young men are temporarily ordained as Buddist monks and which symbolizes village solidarity. Moreover, in some temples the murals were painted as a making merit and devotion to the Lord Buddha. The painter was an anonymous dedicated layman or monk, who had a great talent and faith.

The murals in Wat Buakkrok Luang are various scenes illustrating the Life of Lord Buddha. The murals depict Vessantara Jataka, Vidura-Pandita Jataka, and Naroga Phum (Buddhist Hell). The murals also depict the story of Phra Vessantara (Vessandon), the last of the 547 jatakas or previous births of Lord Buddha, which is also known as Maha Chat or Great Birth.

Because this Wat is situated in this region, local characteristics of the every day people are beautifully portrayed in many scenes. The Murals depict lovers embracing, Indian women at work, Chinese master carpenters and their workers, Thai soldiers, gossiping and flirting women. These minor characters are free to be themselves and they are shown realistically, often with broad humor.

Thus, the murals in the Viharn of Wat Buakkrok Luang not only show us the Tosachat, the last ten births of the Lord Buddha, but they also show us how the everyday people lived.

Photo and story by **Udorn Wongtubtim**

Poems

MIRAGE

by

Chamnongsri L. Rutnin



Man makes masks
for his own soul
He looks at the masks
and says 'I know myself'.

Man makes mirrors
for his own eyes
He gazes into the mirrors
and says 'I see myself'.



Man makes images
for his own mind
He points and says
'These I love,
those I hate.'

Man makes mirages
for his life
He loses himself in them
and says 'This is happiness,
this is sadness.'

All is not Lost



When man begins to ask himself questions like What am I?', it is, in point of fact, self-acknowledgement of the essential existence of something else other than the 'I', or more precisely something 'beyond-the-I'. This 'beyond-the-I' then, must logically be our true nature since the 'I' does not satisfy our curiosity as to what our true-nature is.

One could then ask what the 'I' is. Is it not a natural part of ourselves? Yes, it is, but in the Buddhist sense it is regarded as a natural consequence of the perpetuation of an idea or illusion of the self. It is not absolutely necessary to drive out this illusion but in order to 'get' to our true-nature we must negate it for practical purposes.

If the 'I' is merely an illusion, then what is the 'not-I'? For want of a name, it is termed **Anattā** as opposed to **Attā**. But **Anattā** does not mean nor imply that it is null and void. Let us just say for the sake of simplification, that it is null and void of the 'I'. Attā is a Pali term for 'I' and in **Anattā** the 'an' means nil or not-there. Thus **Anattā** literally means where-there-is-no-'I'. But what it actually is, is for each of us who are in earnest quest of truth to realise or find out for ourselves.

It is difficult to imagine a state of mind where the 'I' is not there. One may feel uneasy just thinking about it. What am I going to do if I don't have the 'I' anymore? How can life go on the same for me? Or will I be the same again? Some people may even think I don't have to get to the so called beyond-the-I. I am doing quite well as it is. But we all know that all our miseries and sufferings stem from more or less the reaction of the ego and we all wish to have it under control. Whether that is possible or not, of course, is another matter.

Then one could also ask that since we know that we are functioning with the 'I' and we are conscious of its goings on, what about the true self? What happens to it when the 'I' is in play? It **is** there i.e., we are **it** but the 'I' normally takes such a forefront in us, more so with all the conditioning and the striving for intellectual excellence and material ends that it has become very difficult for man to realise his own inner essence. Hence the loss of the capacity to love or to be loved and the spontaneity to experience the singular joy of existence.

But then one can also imagine what happens to great artitists and musicians in their moments of creation when they seem to be totally lost in themselves. Such are the moments when they are one with their self-nature. At these moments the 'I' becomes one with the 'not-I', and what results is a dynamic surge of creativity and beauty emerging full force from an inner source and strength that is normally dormant. Our self-nature or true-nature is not a vacuum nor a void. It is making us what we are be-ing. It is endowed with all the energy to love, to create, to generate joy and compassion and the wisdom that leads man to live harmoniously with himself and with others. It is there in each and everyone of us, but unfortunately, it is left very much neglected and untapped due to the way of life man is exposed to.

Let us say that normally we function only on the fringe of our consciousness which is very easily vulnerable to conditioning by habits, values, attitudes and the external environment. This puts us in a position where it is very easy to fall into the confinements imposed by the doldrum of daily living from which one finds little escape. This results in the search for distractions in entertainments, physical pleasure, gearing onto cults or some form of bizarre way of life.

On the other hand, mamy a time in human history, there have been instances of great men who have risen above the ordinary run of men to show us that it is possible to break out of

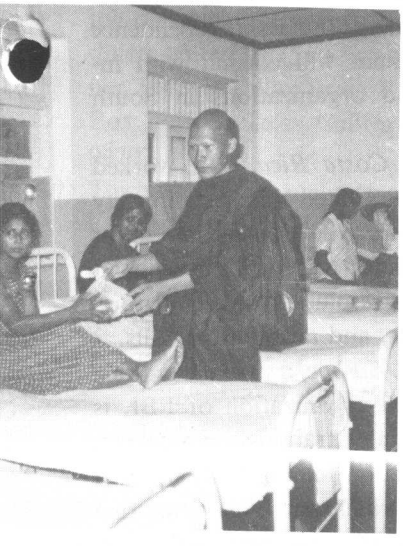


the psychological imprisonment we have imposed upon ourselves. Buddha was one such great man, and also in recent times, one good example is Gandhi. Seeing the movie, one cannot help think about a man who had been able to reach into his own depths of consciousness, which gave him his great love for humanity, incredible tolerance and benevolence. Here is a man who had transcended his ego and was still able to live, function and lead a nation out of drudgery into independence and self respect. His is a unique example of a man who has successfully coupled his religious wisdom and political convictions into a national movement for peaceful and harmonious existence. Maybe, to my mind, the coming of the film is precisely what is needed for the present times. This world is wrought with hate, fear, greed and destruction of human lives. It is opportunate that someone has remembered to bring out the story of such a man to remind us that inspite of everything love is still possible, that all is not lost. But, man must be aware of his own ignorance of himself, of what is happening to himself and why he has become so destructive.

If men who hold so many millions of lives in their hands would start to ask themselves questions like 'what am I' and perhaps be able to find some answer to it, we could be hopeful that mankind still has a chance to create a peaceful and harmonious world, instead of one that is frought with tension, mistrust, pain and war.

by **Dr. Thynn Thynn**

PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL: PRACTICAL EXPERIMENTS IN PEACEMAKING



A Thai monk in a Sri Lanka hospital.

Peace Brigades Concept and Background

PBI seeks to establish international and nonpartisan approaches to peacemaking and to the support of basic human rights. We challenge the belief that violent institutions and warfare inevitably must dominate human affairs. We seek to demonstrate that as international volunteers, citizens can act boldly as peacemakers when their governments cannot.

Peace Brigades sends unarmed peace teams invited into areas of violent repression or conflict. These teams can flexibly pursue avenues not open to governments or political groups. Their work is to reduce the violence and support local social justice initiatives through a) protective accompaniment of those whose lives are threatened; b) fostering reconciliation and peace dialogue among conflicting parties; and c) educating and training in nonviolence and human rights.

Peace Brigades International builds on the rich heritage of nonviolent social change movements throughout the world. Mohandas Gandhi's Shanti Sena ("nonviolent army") in India has often intervened and reconciled in



Hindu/Moslem conflicts since 1922.

The World Peace Brigade aided in the Zambian independence movement in Africa and interceded during the Chinese-Indian border conflict. This predecessor to PBI was formed in 1962. In 1972-74, World Peace Brigade volunteers were instrumental in the Cyprus Resettlement Project which carried out reconstruction and reconciliation work among Greek and Turkish refugees.

Peace Brigades International was founded at Grindstone Island, Canada in 1981 by veterans of these and other nonviolent social movements from three continents. PBI was conceived as an international network to support both local and international initiatives in nonviolent action and reconciliation.

An early PBI effort was a short-term nonpartisan border team of ten volunteers from three countries, which went in 1983 to the border of Honduras and Nicaragua to deter military attacks.

PBI Program and Activities

In Central America:

★ PBI established international Peace Teams in *Guatemala* (1983) and *El Salvador* (1987), countries that have suffered thousands of kidnappings and murders. PBI volunteers provide protective accompaniment for threatened leaders of unions, human rights and peasant organizations, and a watchful presence at demonstrations and in workplaces. This nonpartisan presence provides "breathing space" for these groups to exercise their legal rights to organize and to be heard.

This accompaniment is supported by the PBI Emergency Reponse Network of concerned organizations and individuals who send telegrams when a kidnapping or other crisis occurs.

"Your presence really gave us more confidence and strength to continue our work; a great help."

-Leader, Guatemalan electrical workers' union.

★ *Peace and human rights education* is another facet of the Peace Teams' work. The El Salvador team is developing curriculum materials and conducting teacher training in conflict resolution and cooperative skills for use in Salvadoran schools. In Guatemala, the PBI team provides workshops and resource material on human rights upon request.

Over 200 PBI volunteers from four continents have undergone training in nonviolence and participated in the Peace Teams' work. They have returned home to share their first-hand experiences with nonviolent struggle and Central America. In this way, PBI contributes both to the theory and practice of nonviolence, and to the growing awareness of the Central American reality.

Elsewhere in the world:

★ In *Sri Lanka,* PBI representative Sulak Sivaraksa, a Thai Buddhist intellectual and educator, has quietly fostered reconciliation through retreats and dialogue. Community development work by Thai Buddhists among both the Buddhist Sinhalese and among Tamil refugees is also intended to help heal the intense conflict between these two ethnic groups.

★ An exploratory mission to *South Africa* is taking shape. Resource persons with training experience in nonviolent struggles such as the US civil rights movement and India's independence movement will consult with interested organizations in South Africa.

★ In *Costa Rica,* PBI worked with the United Nations University for Peace to develop and implement models for training in nonviolent conflict resolution, effective group process, and negotiation skills.

★ *PBI/Europe,* a vital and growing regional organization of PBI, is providing training, volunteers and support for PBI Central Ameri ca programs, and is also exploring new initiatives in the Middle East, the Basque region of Spain and elsewhere.

Books

Recommended Reading

1) *Mindfulness with Breathing: Unveiling the Secrets of Life* (a manual for serious beginners) by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu ($5.-)

2) *Selflessness in Sartre's Existentialism and Early Buddhism* by Phramaha Prayoon Mererk (Baht 150.-)

3) *Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies Newsletter* No. 1 Spring 1988 $20 - annually, Graduate Theological Union, 2400 Ridge Road, Berkley, Cal. 94709

4) *Buddhist Perspectives on the Ecocrisis* edited by Klass Sandell, with a Declaration on Environmental Ethics by H.H. the Dalai Lama, Buddhist Publications Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka

5) *Trance and Healing in Southeast Asia Today* by Ruth-Inge Heinze (White Lotus) Bangkok. $35.-

6) *The Path of Compassion :* writing on Socially Engaged Buddhism edited by Fred Eppsteiner $14.- Parallax Press P.O. Box 7355 Berkeley California 94707

7) Thich Nhat Hanh's new books:
   - *7.1 The Heart of Understanding* : Commentaries on the Prajñāparamitā Heart Sutra $6.-
   - *7.2 The Sutra of the Full Awareness of Breathing* $6.-
   - *7.3 The Sun My Heart* : From Mindfulness to Insight Contemplation $9.50

   All three titles can be ordered from Parallax Press.

8) Occasional Papers from ticd and The Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute by S. Sivaraksa
   - *8.1 The Value of Human Life in Buddhist Thought* (20 Baht)
   - *8.2 Development for Peace* (30 Baht)
   - *8.3 Buddhism and the Sociopolitical Setting for the Future Benefit of Mankind* (30 Baht)
   - *8.4 Science, Technology and Spiritual Values : a South-East Asian Approach to Modernization* (20 Baht)
   - *8.5 Thai Thoughts on the One Hundredth Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations Between Japan and Siam* (30 Baht)
   - *8.6 Siamese Literature and Social Liberation* (40 Baht)
   - *8.7 The Religion of Consumerism* (30 Baht)
   - *8.8 Buddhism in a World of Change* (30 Baht)

   All these can be ordered through TICD. GPO Box 1960 Bangkok 10501. No postage charge.

9) Seri Phongphit:
   Religion in a Changing Society: Buddhism, Reform and the Role of Monks in Community Development in Thailand.
   Hong Kong: Arena Press 1988 (available at Suksit Siam and THIRD)

The book has three important features. First is the emerging thinking on Buddhism and society. This emerging, alive and dynamic thinking in Buddhism is presented with an in-depth understanding of Buddhism and knowledge of a rapidly changing society. This new emerging thinking is historically very important, not only for Thailand but for the whole world. The second important feature of the book is the case studies of the social involvement of eight Buddhist monks. The third feature is the attempt to arrive at a synthesis of the emerging thinking and the actual practice of a monk...The small scale successes of the Buddhist development described in this book are real. The new trend is small but is extremely relevant for world development. "We shall require a substanially new manner of thinking if mankind is to survive" said Albert Einstein. Buddhist Development is a new thinking for survival of humanity.

Dr. Prawase Wasi

10. *A Socially Engaged Buddhism* by S.Sivaraksa. Distributed by Kled Thai Co.,Ltd. Suksit Siam, Bangkok. (208 pp)

We want to mention the new publication by ACFOD chairman Acharn Sulak Sivaraksa and commend it to those who would like to see the aspects of social engagement of Buddhism.

It is a collection of articles based on lectures and papers presented at different conferences or written for some periodicals and journals.

The different chapters deal with Siamese Buddhist visions and values; The search for alternative development models; Siamese relations with Japan; Dialogue with

Christians and some Siamese profiles.

The publication can be ordered from Suksit Siam, 1715 Rama IV Road, Bangkok for Baht 200 a copy (paper back); Baht 300 (hard cover).

from Asian Action No.68

11.) Seeds of Peace

Last month the May edition of *Seeds of Peace* appeared. This journal, published thrice yearly by the Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Developement (GPO Box 1960, Bangkok 10501) is a thoughtful and thought-provoking witness to the liveliness of Siamese intellectual activity.

Articles include "Violence, Peace and Religion" by M. Sastrapratedja, S.J., and "Death and Dying, a Christian Perspective in the Context of Buddhist-Christian Dialogue" by John B. Cobb. But perhaps the most important contribution is "Three Weeks of Thai Buddhists in Sri Lanka" by an unnamed author.

In February 1988 a delegation of five Siamese monks and three laymen visited Sri Lanka "to study the situation and give assistance to reconciliation and peace in Sri Lanka; secondly to study development work and give support to monks involved in community development."

Seminars held included "Role of Buddhist Monks in Developing Countries" and "Elements of a Buddhist Response to Violence". These were attended not only by Buddhists but also by Catholic priests and Protestant ministers.

It is noted that whereas the now militarized situation is very grim, and the activities of chauvanistic monks have enjoyed wide report in the press, still there exists a core of "bridge builders" :

"Two of whom we met were Ven. Padumasiri Thera and Ven. Vimalasara Thera. The former was highly respected by Tamils in Jafna where he stayed almost 15 years; the latter is now working in Vavuniya, a district in Northern Province, part of Tamil-claimed Elam, and has won the trust of all Tamil militant organizations, as well as the government's security forces."

The existence of such brave and even-minded monks suggests that there may be a solution to that beautiful island's problems, despite the horrors being perpetrated by extremists on both sides.

The saddest finding of the Siamese delegation was that the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) was not keeping much peace. One can sympathize in that the Force is operating under the most complex and poisonous circumstances, but one might have hoped that they would have established an adequate intelligence base to identify professional terrorists and separate them from the innocent population. But that is no easy task.

The delegation also learnt much about the practice and administration of indigenous medicine, which is very advanced in Sri Lanka, and hopes to promote the Ayuraveda here, after many years of indifference.

from Art & Culture Monthly Bangkok June 1988

12.) Three books by Theravada Buddhists from Wisdom Publications 23 Dering St., London W1

12.1) Buddhist Ethics: The Path to Nirvana by Ven. H. Saddhattissa, Sinhalese monk and scholar (£ 6.95)

12.2) Being Nobody, Going Nowhere: Meditation on the Buddhist Path by Ayya Khema, western nun residing in Sri Lanka (£ 6.95)

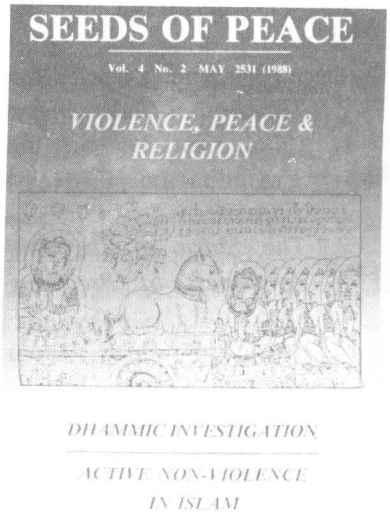
12.3) Thus Have I Heard: The Long Discourses of the Buddha. A new Translation of the Dhiga Nikāya by Maurice Walshe of U.K., with a Foreword by Ven. Sumedho (£ 17.95)

13.) Recent Research on Max Weber's Studies of Hinduism edited by Detlef Kanstowsky (Weltforum Verlag) München-Koln

14.) Learning How to Live in Peace A documentation compiled by Detlef Kanstowsky on .Sarvodaya of Sri Lanka. Universitaet Konstang, Posttade 5560, D7750 Konstang, W. Germany

15.) Buddhist Studies Review Vol.4 No.2 1987 c/o R.Webb 31 Rusell Chambers, Bury Place, London WCIA 23x

16.) On the White Empty Page (a selection poems and tales) by Chamnongsri L.Rutnin with an introduction by Chetana Nagavajara



Peace and Happiness

The Undeveloped Condition of Man

How can we stop wars and conflicts? How can we be sure that peace will prevail and become long-lasting? Some might say that love and cooperation must be established in place of competition and conflict. This seems to be too easy an answer. It looks impractical. We have to further ask: How can we turn hostility and conflict into love and cooperation? So long as man is overcome by any of the three self-centred tendencies, true love and cooperation are impossible. If he acts out of any of them, he cannot be on good terms with others. He will only hurt them and cause in them hatred and anger. With his own desire countered, challenged or defied, he himself develops anger and hatred. From anger and hatred, ensue only hostility and conflict, not love, cooperation or peace. For people who are in conflict, one or the other must first act in the way of peace. But for them, such action would mean a loss. They would say they are forced to struggle to win. There is no other choice. The real solution must be made before the conflict starts. To put it more correctly, there must be a fundamental change in the behaviour of man in such a way that he will never start a conflict. To get the real practical solution, we must turn the answer to a more fundamental question.

Enabled by science and technology to increase both the capability to solve most problems and the capacity to destroy everything, why does man tend to choose the latter? Why has the abundance of human talent and material resources been devoted to negative and destructive purposes of arms buildups and militarization instead of being positively utilized in developing the means fo securing a stable and lasting peace? As given earlier, the answer is simple: Because man has been so engrossed in the development of all things outside that he has neglected the task of developing his own self, leaving himself almost an unchanged man who follows the driving force of instincts rather than the guidance of wisdom. Professor Albert Einstein accepted this when he said to the effect that the atomic bomb has changed everything except the mind and the thinking of people. Science and technology serve to advance the frontiers of human knowledge and potential either for better or for worse. They provide man with free and full scope to exercise his free will on the material world. If he acts in the direction of peace and happiness, everything on earth is on his side to achieve it. If his action turns towards war and misery, he can exterminate the whole race of mankind in a matter of seconds. That which direction he will take is the question of human development. If man has been well-developed, he will be able to steer technology and all other vehicles of civilization for the goal of peace and mutual well-being. Unfortunately, the development of the inner core of man, the mind, the formation of character and spiritual values has not kept pace with the rapid progress of technology. Though he has developed to the highest degree of possibility the technical capabilities, man still has not developed in himself the qualities needed to live and to deal with his own self, with others and with his natural and technological environment.

The undeveloped or underdeveloped condition of man, of his mind and character, and of his liberating wisdom is discernible in many ways.

First, man behaves wrongly and unwisely in relation to happiness. Man looks at happiness as something he is in search of, that is, something unattained, not already in hand. In other words, man himself is here and now not happy and he is looking for something to make himself happy. With this attitude, he mistreats happiness both in time and in space. In time, happiness is for him a state he hopes to realize some time in the future, something in prospect, not yet realized. In space, happiness is for him a state to be attained to by satisfying himself with something found or obtained from outside, an external satisfying object. In either way, he cannot find true happiness. The unhappy man has to run forever after happiness and also has to depend for happiness on things outside of his control. Many people would ever sacrifice his already existing happiness, essentially the inner peace and happiness of the mind, to chase the hoped-for happiness, like the dog that drops the piece of meat in its mouth in a hope

to catch the other piece seen reflected in the pond. If he succeeds, he gets a superficial happiness to the loss of the profound one. If he does not, his loss is twofold and anguish is his lot.

In the contest of running to grab the pleasure-giving material, the unhappy people unavoidably come into conflict. Moreover, their restless search for happiness goes on at the expense of the inner happiness and peace of mind. Thus, in this process of ever running after pleasure, peace and happiness are not found either within or without. This also shows how people are unscientific. Modern men may have scientific attitudes towards the whole universe, but cover only the material world of phenomena. Regarding their own selves, their life and mind, their approaches are not scientific at all. The way they treat their lives and deal with peace and happiness is scientifically irrational.

In the right and proper way, the man must be made happy here and now, not relying on the hoped-for pleasures from outside. For the happy man, pleasures that are upcoming only enhance his happiness. But, for the unhappy or the happy-to-be man, these coming pleasures can only give extraneous and ephemeral satisfaction, bringing anxiety and tension on the coming and leaving regret and sorrow on the going. Just as the beauty wrought by cosmetics and decoration is not the real beauty, even so the happiness of external pleasure is not the real happiness. And just as cosmetics and decoration can be an increase to the real beauty, even so extraneous pleasures can enhance the real happiness. Emphatically, it is not merely the matter of real or unreal happiness of the man but that of the lack of real happiness which leads to trouble and conflict in society. Therefore, first and before all else, the making of a happy man is the prerequisite for peace and the development of man is the central question of development.

Secondly, the unhappy man, in his effort to find something to make himself happy, causes even more trouble by resorting to a wrong means of obtaining it. He seeks enjoyment at the expense of others. As a man who seeks pleasure by going fishing with rod and line enjoys himself by causing suffering to the fish, people tend to seek happiness by, directly or indirectly, hurting others. At least, they do not care what will happen to other lives and the world of nature as a result of their selfish acts. From this spring conflicts and many other problems such as the violation of human rights, injustice, poverty and environmental pollution. In such unfriendly and depressed atmosphere, they themselves cannot enjoy real peace and happiness. As the Buddha says: Whoever seeks happiness by inflicting suffering on others, is enmeshed in hostile relations and will not be free from enmity. In fact, it is the hurter himself that will first be hurt rather than the others whom he wants to cause loss and trouble to. In the word of the Buddha: The man spoils himself first before he hurts others. Some people even seek to enjoy themselves at the expense of their own lives. Drug addicts and alcoholics are among this kind of people. All the pleasure-seeking activities of these unhappy people are inhibitions to peaceful living. They form the behavioural pattern of an undeveloped or underdeveloped man.

A developed man is, on the contrary, happy of his own nature, as a result of the development of his own self, and seeks to enjoy himself by means of what brings happiness both to himself and to others. In other words, a developed man is characterized by his inherent happiness and the way of enjoying himself in which he diffuses happiness among people throughout society.

In another way of speaking, a man in his relationship with other people, both consciously and unconsciously, shares with the latter what he has. If he has happiness, he gives out happiness. If he has unhappiness, he gives out unhappiness. Especially, for the unhappy man, he is weighted down with his unhappiness and, in an effort to get rid of it, he desperately throws off his unhappiness onto people all around. Thus, the undeveloped unhappy man will render a peaceful society an impossibility. Then, it is imperative that people be developed to be happy if any hope for peace is to be realized.

Again, so many people in this technological age who succeed in obtaining material gains and sensual pleasures to gratify their desire, in no long time find that they become bored and discontented and feel that these gains and pleasures do not give them real happiness. Tired of the ceaseless unsuccessful quest for happiness, surrounded by the ever-increasing unsolved problems rampant in society and all over the world, and finding no better means of realizing happiness, these people develop boredom, frustration, anxiety and confusion. They live unhappily without peace of

mind. This condition is growing to be the characteristic of the present-day society.

In sum, the failure of man to secure peace and happiness lies in that, being unhappy and not developing himself to be happy, man struggles in vain to realize peace and happiness by setting out in the two wrong ways. He seeks to make himself happy with pleasures from outside and in this way covers up or plasters over his unhappiness with extraneous pleasures. As the man himself has not been changed, the process of covering or plastering has to run on endlessly. And as it is there deep inside, the unhappiness will never vanish despite any amount of plaster or cover up. Simultaneously, as this process of unrestrained pursuit of ever-increasing pleasures has to go on at the expense of, or in competition with, other people, it results in hate, anger, trouble, conflict and the loss of peace and happiness both in the mind of the man and in society. Otherwise, the man, with his inherent unhappiness, seeks to make himself happy by giving out or throwing off his unhappiness onto others. Other people will then react and retaliate in kind and possibly in a higher degree of severity. In this way also, instead of finding the real happiness, he only increases, intensifies and diffuses unhappiness far and wide. Thus, the process of human search for happiness becomes the process of driving peace away. In other words, desiring one thing, man does the cause for the aristing of another. Desiring happiness, he does the cause of suffering. Desiring peace, he does the cause of hatred and conflict.

Freedom As the Guaranty of Peace and Happiness

In Buddhism, peace *(Santi)* and happiness *(Sukha)* are synonymous. An unhappy man cannot find peace and there can be no peace without happiness. In absence of peace, no people can be happy and those who are unhappy cannot live in peace. A Buddha's saying is: there is no happiness beyond peace. However, it is of much significance to note that Buddhism prescribes freedom as another synonym for peace and happiness. Only the free man can be possesed of peace and happiness. Endowed with freedom, people can live happy and peaceful lives. There are roughly *four levels of freedom* the achievement of which is indispensable for the realization of peace and happiness, viz.,

1. Physical freedom or freedom in relation to the material world or physical environment, natural or technological. This covers freedom from the shortage of the basic needs of life, the requisites of food, clothing, shelter and health-care; freedom consisting in safety from life-threatening calamities and unfavourable natural conditions, i.e. to have, among other things, beneficial natural environment; the wise use of natural resources, requisites of life and technology in such a way that they serve man to enhance his life-qualities and the man does not become a slave subjected to them for his good or evil, happiness or sorrow.

2. Social freedom or freedom in relation to other people, community, society or social environment. This is represented by freedom from oppression, persecution, exploitation, injustice, crimes, violation of human rights, discrimination, violence, terrorism, conflict, fighting and war, the non-violation of the Five Precepts, or, in positive terms, good and friendly relationship with neighbours, social welfare and such values as equality, liberty, fraternity, discipline, respect for law, tolerance and cooperation.

3. Emotional freedom or freedom of the heart. At the ideal level, this refers to the state of freedom from all traces of mental defilements and suffering, the state of mind that is unshaken by worldly vicissitudes, purified, sorrow-free, secure, and profoundly happy and peaceful, i.e. *Nibbāna*. It includes freedom from all kinds of mental illness, stress and strain, anxiety, worry, boredom, frustration, fear, depression, avariciousness, greed, jealousy, hatred, ill will, sloth, torpor, restlessness, remorse and uncertainty, or, in positive terms, the state of being endowed with beneficial mental qualities such as love, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity, confidence, mindfulness, conscience, forbearance, generosity, tranquillity, concentration, mental strength and firmness and perfect mental health consisting of mental clarity and purity, peacefulness and happiness.

4. Intellectual freedom or freedom of and through knowledge and wisdom. Belonging to this class of freedom are: the process of perceiving and learning that is clear of and free from distortion by any bias or ulterior motives; freedom of thinking and judgement and the free exercise of knowledge and wisdom that are just, honest,

sincere and accurate, not influenced by prejudices, self-interest, greed, hatred or any selffish motives; and the knowledge of all things as they really are or the insight into the true nature of all things, together with the emotional freedom as its corollary and the life-view and world-view that are based on that knowledge.

These four levels of freedom can be reclassified as three by putting the third and the fourth levels together as one and the same level of spiritual or individual freedom.

The four (or three) levels of freedom are interrelated and interdependent. Without a minimum of physical freedom, the road to the other three levels of freedom is blocked. Without intellectual and emotional freedom, the wise use of resources as physical freedom is rendered impossible. Lacking the freedom of knowledge and wisdom, the mind cannot be set free. In the absence of the freedom of the heart, social freedom is only a dream. Except for social freedom, physical freedom cannot come true.

With this fourfold freedom, peace and happiness are surely secured and they are real peace and happiness found both within and without, that is, peace and happiness that are deep-rooted in the mind of man and prevalent outside in society.

Under physical freedom, man is relatively free from the oppression of nature and he also does not exploit or spoil nature, but makes wise and unselfish use of natural resources to achieve mutual well-being both of man and of nature. He thus lives in peace with nature. Equipped with all kinds of facilities provided by science and technology as his servant, not himself turning into their slave, man can be said to have fulfilled the physical aspect of the good or ideal life. With this physical freedom as the firm foundation, man is in a good position to realize the three other aspects of freedom.

from *Freedom Individual and Social*

by **Ven. Phra Rajavaramuni**

whose present tittle is **Phra Devavedi**

A Report from Wangsanit

Introduction to Wangsanit:

The Wongsanit Ashram is a small community that has the appearance of a traditional Thai farm. It produces the basics in household needs, such as beans, cotton, a variety of mellons and poultry; but after visiting the Ashram, it is obvious that it has the potential of being much more than just a farm.

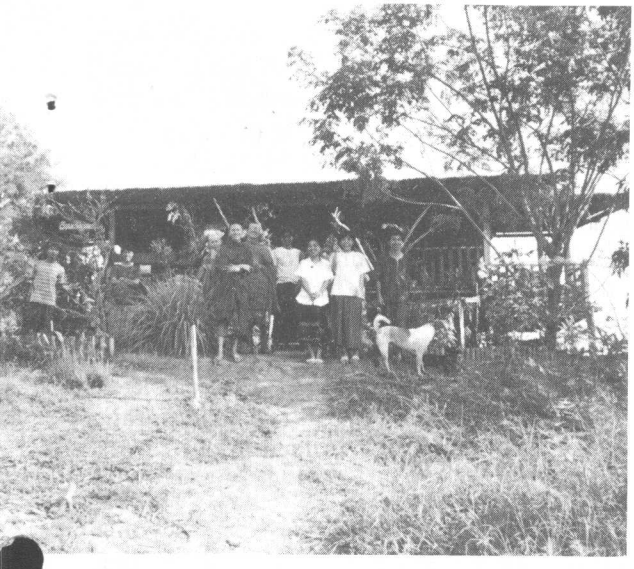
The purpose of the Ashram is to create a place which "aims at the search for peace and wisdom for both the individual and the society." The main ways in which this goal will be achieved is by creating a self-sufficient farm that is also concerned with the preservation of nature, support and encouragement education in religion, agriculture and art, creating a peaceful atmosphere where artists can come to live and work in an alternative lifestyle, and providing a place for seminars, lectures and workshops for those people who are interested in regaining personal contact with lost Thai cultures.

The essence of the ashram is its commitment to environmentally sound farming and cooperative community life. These then give rise to greater understanding about human cooperation and peace and the importance of culture in builing a strong society.

Farming :

For almost a half century Thai agriculture has been influenced more and more by industrialized countries. Ways to increase food production have been introduced to the Thai farmers so that Thailand can expand trade and commerce worldwide. These new methods can prove to be economical for the farmers if they are successful. More money can be made in large commercial farms with extensive use of modern technology. With more money, the farmers can then buy better equipment or more land so that they can produce more products to make more money, etc.

But what many of the farmers do not realize is that large commercial farming is very competetive, and just a bit of bad luck or lack



of knowledge makes it possible for the farmers to lose all their money and land. For a farmer to start such commercial farming, if he does not have capital to invest, he must take loans from banks. If the farmer is not successful and cannot repay his loan, the bank has the right to take his collateral, which usually means his land. He then must change his life and become an employee or start some new business in which he does not have experience.

Other problems that large commercial farmers encounter is that this new type of farming, unlike traditional farming, can be extremely harmful to the soil and wildlife. New technology calls for other use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides which, in the short run are beneficial and in the short run yield a larger, stonger crop. But many of these chemicals are harmful to wildlife and surrounding ecosystems in the long run. Crop rotation, a very important technique used by all farmers is sometimes neglected in big commercial farming when chemical fertilizers are used to replenish the soil. But even with chemicals, the soil still needs to be rested or used for a different crop which uses different nutrients than other crops.

Even Thai culture is being lost by the new high technology farming. In the past, a farmer would make a little more than what he needed. The surplus would then be traded or sold for the ramainder of food or clothes he needed. Communities were set up on this method, and usually everybody had enough to eat. Life was not easy, much work was involved and only a small amount of profit was made. But everyone was content with their unmaterialistic lifestyle. Now, high technology creates a stiuation where the farmer specializes in one crop and is not self-sufficient at all. This creates a demand for other food products. Middlemen are needed to buy the food from the farmers. The small self-sufficient communities are becoming obsolete, and the traditional life of rural Thailand is dying.

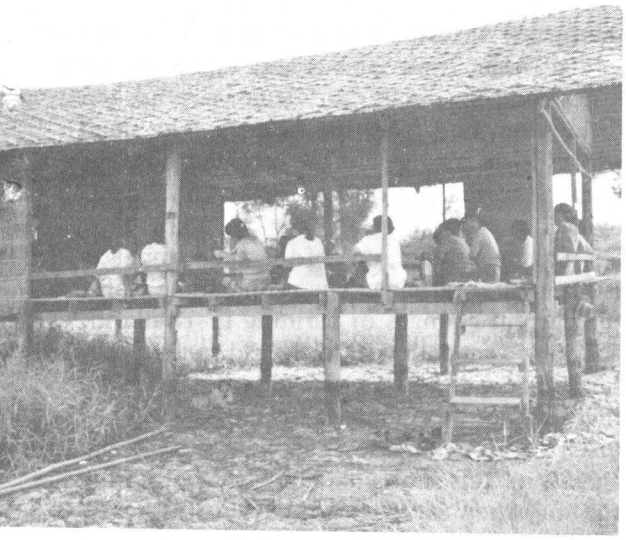
At the ashram, one of the main emphases is on natural farming. The people there realize the current changes of farming in Thailand, and they want to return to the old style of self-sufficiency with a little profit for other necessities that can not be produced on the farm. They insist on working with nature, not fighting against it. This shows on a day to day basis by the way they farm without tractors or any machinary except for an irrigation pump. All the fertilizers are natural (they come from poultry dung) and the pesticides they will use come from special plants.

Unfortunately, for the first four years, the ashram was rather unsuccessful. But that was largely due to lack of staff agricultural knowledge. Also the soil on the ashram is acrid and not very fertile. But when I was there a new staff had just taken over and appeared to be having more success.

I was fortunate enough to be able to live at the Wongsanit Ashram for about six weeks in February and March. While I was there, I spent my time working in the fields or doing other various projects that were going on at the same time.

The ashram is a small farm with only 13 acres of fields for upland crops along with several rice paddies which are not in use yet. There are six people who live and work there (although countless visitors and friends came to visit or relax for a while.) For a farm, 13 acres is not very big. When I first arrived I wondered why it was so small and why they did not use the rice fields. I soon realized that 13 acres is hard to farm with only six people without the help of mechanical equipment. But even so, every space is used. Once, when I was cutting the grass with a machete, I cut a plant that looked to me just a useless weed. I was very quickly told that the plant I had just cut was to be used as a natural pesticide. (Luckily, the staff were forgiving and also had a lot of patience with me.)

When I first arrived, the planting of mellons, beans and cotton was just starting. I was eager to help at first but after half an hour my hands were so blistered and my



shoulders so tired I had to rest. It wasn't until then that I realized that what natural farming was all about. Everything is done totally by hand and tools. There are no machines to make work easier. There is not even any running water to water the plants. There is an irrigation pump, but that is really a necessity for the first several years. (Maybe after some time they will be able to use wind or solar energy.)

The next project was to collect straw to put on the soil. This is helpful for two reasons. One, to keep the soil moist during the day, Two, when the straw decomposes, it will produce a rich, fertile topsoil. But even a job like this that sounds easy, is not. The straw is kept on the other side of the klong for the villages to use. In order to get it to the soil it is necessary to row the boat across the klong, put the straw into large burlap sacks, then bring it back across the klong and deposit it on the planted areas. Unfortunately, only enough straw for about seven per cent of the area can be taken in one boat so it is necessary to make about 15 trips to finish the job. Each trip takes about one hour to complete.

For the first week, work was the same. Planting, watering and collecting straw. A usual day started at 6:00 with meditation or yoga. Water was then taken from the klong for toilets, bath and diswashing. (Drinking water was collected from rain and stored in large pots.) Wood was cut for the stove and all the other daily chores were done at this time. Breakfast was at 7:00. Usually cooked by Mrs. Naongnuch Smoonprai, (known as Eat). The main chef. But everyone else helped cook and clean. After breakfast the serious work started. Whatever was planned for the day, whether it be straw, planting or anything else that needed to be done. Lunch was at 12:00. After lunch was a "siesta" for three hours because of the heat. That time was used for reading, relaxing or doing small projects that could be done in the shade. At 3:00 work began again and usually lasted until 6:00 or 6:30 when everyone would swim and bathe in the klong. Dinner followed and then after dinner was a time used for socializing, making plans or relaxing by the fire. (There is no electricity at the ashram, either.) It may sound like not much work ever gets completed, but in the words of Mr. Burati Smoolprai : "quality not quantity." In fact, a lot of work is done.

I was also at the ashram when they dug a well -- without any mechanical drills. We dug it by hand. The first two attemps were fruitless and frustrating because no water was found. The method for these first two was putting a small pipe 25 meters into the ground with hopes of finding an underground pool. The third attempt was to dig a hole about 1.5 meters in diameter until we found water. It took from four to five meters until water was found. The whole episode took about five or six days of having "quality" work.

Other projects that I worked on while I was there was cleaning out the irrigation ditches of all old grass and weeds, tearing apart the bamboo floor of one of the huts and putting in wood planks from an old house not in use. (That was very rewarding for me because a bamboo floor is very uncomfortable to sleep on for a foreigner who is used to a soft bed.) We also built a large poultry coop.

Unfortunately, it will be several years until the farm is self-sufficient because it will take time to learn how to produce the maximum amount without depeleting the soil. The methods used are all relatively new to the staff, most of whom were not farmers before they came to the ashram. The way they work is to "live and learn" and it can be expected that there will be bad crops and failures. One time I bought 20 young chickens, ducks and geese. But unfortunately 17 died from cold, drowning or disease. That was a very important but unfortunate and sad lesson for the farm. Now we know not to buy poultry from the open air market in Bangkok because it is very often weak, unlike the indigenous poultry that can be bought in the countryside. We also know how to take better care of young poultry.

When I left the ashram, Mr. Burati Smoolprai (known as Too), the Co-ordinator, was beginning to build a small shed where two weaving looms would be put. The ashram will use these weaving looms to make their clothes, make cloths to sell for a small profit, and also to teach the villagers who live near the ashram the lost art of handweaving. Since the introduction of the weaving machine, the old hand weaving looms are not used much anymore. The goal for the hand weaving project is to arouse interest from the villagers. Hopefully they will want to learn how to use the looms therefore cutting expenses on their own clothes and maybe even make a small profit. Also, the weaving looms will arouse interest in the lost culture of hand weaving.

Culture, Dialogue, and Personal Growth:

There were two seminars at the ashram during my stay. Unfortunately, the first was spoken in Thai so I could not understand what it was about. The second was the *Asian Activist Non-violence Committee* that discussed many topics dealing with non-violent solutions to conflict. I am not sure if any essential decisions were reached, but the seminar was a success because the Committee left with a strong sense of fellowship and a deeper commitment to the use of non-violence. This is essential if the organization wants to succeed. Without friendship and understanding, it is very hard to reach common causes. The ashram itself deserves much credit for this success, simply because of the setting and atmosphere. The representatives were in a situation where they lived together for two days. It was not just a meeting. The people spent much time getting to know and understand each other. Also, when they were discussing serious topics, they were much more clear-headed because the surroundings. Their minds were not led astray by the commotion found in a city. The people were very relaxed and they were able to put aside other personal stresses and concentrate on the discussions for two days.

Another goal of the ashram is to provide a place for education on Thai tradition and religion. The ashram is a place that holds much tradition; not only in agriculture, but religion also. While there is no manditory commitment to Buddhism, there is strong influence. Unlike most of Bangkok, which has conformed to the western style of work from Monday through Friday, the ashram still has its holidays on monks' day -- every new quarter of the moon. The workers there also practice meditation daily, and are also beginning to gain interest in yoga.

The library is full of writing on the Bhuddist way of life and literature on Buddhist ways of living in peace and harmony with nature. Educational programs are effective because the students are submerged in an environment they are studying. The students not only learn by studying, they learn by living and acting the particular role they are studying.

The ashram is also planning to create a place where artists can come to enjoy and utilize the suroundings. This will not only be beneficial to the artists, the whole ashram community will gain because of the artists presence. The ashram is a good place for artists to work for the same reasons as it is a good place for seminars. The surroundings are peaceful and relaxed; and concentration is easy because of the tranquility and lack of noise, air and earth polution. All worries seem to be as far away as Bangkok. Also, the artists would be more than welcome to lend a hand farming, cooking or any of the other daily activities of the ashram. So, if the person wanted to rest from his or her work for an afternoon or so, he could get some exercise doing constructive activities. In turn, his or her presence on the farm would benefit the farm because an extra hand is always useful. Also, the artist could teach the staff about art or just give them personal experiences that are interesting and/or useful.

Conclusions:

After my stay at the ashram, I realzed how successful it actually is. Although it still has much to do and learn, it is a very relaxed place. Never in my life have I felt such peacefulness, tranquility and respect for human life and nature. It was very seldom that I ever feel the everyday pressure of life that I feel at home. If I ever did start to worry or get tense for some reason, it was easy for me to think constructively and find acceptable solutions to my problems because I was always relaxed. The simplicity of life there is a unique situation which is hard to find in America. But it is very important to everyone. I just hope that in this everchanging world we now live in, people will have the courage to experiment with this "alternative lifestyle."

By **Eric Grace**

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