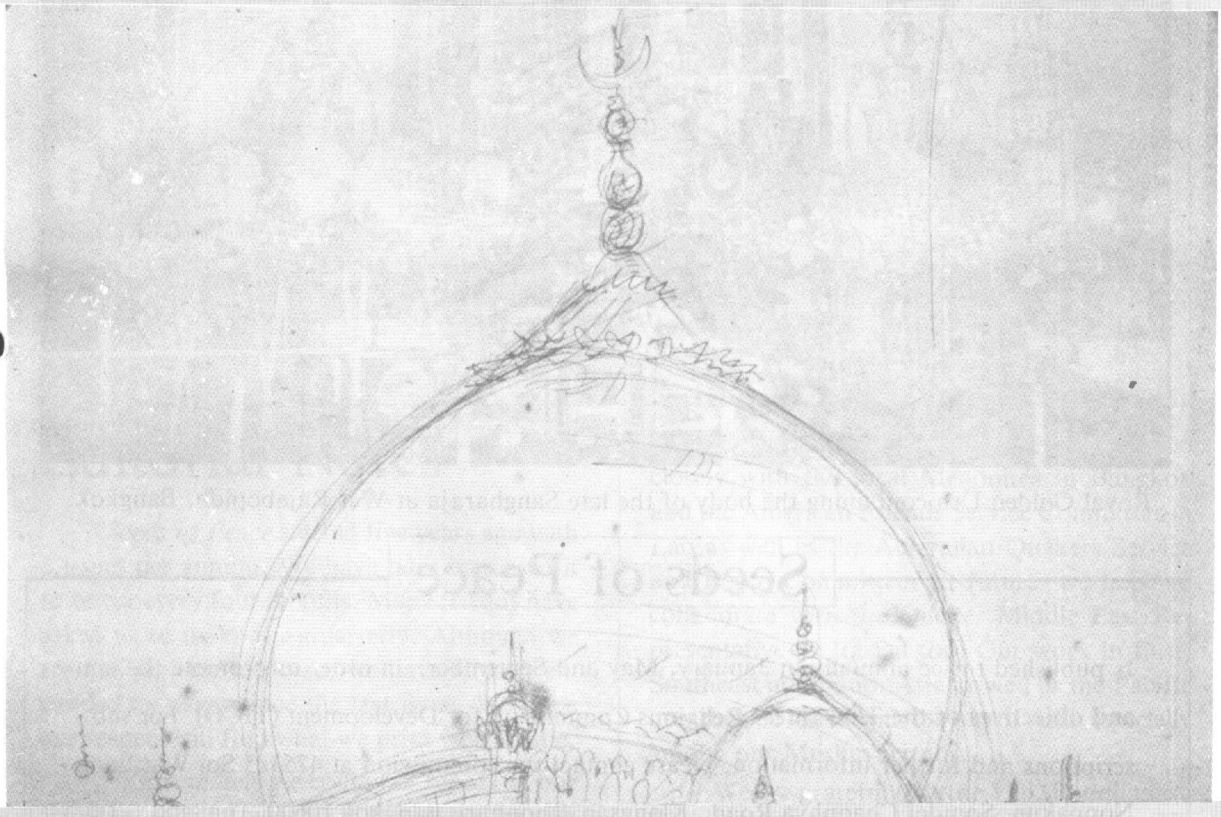
SEEDS OF PEACE

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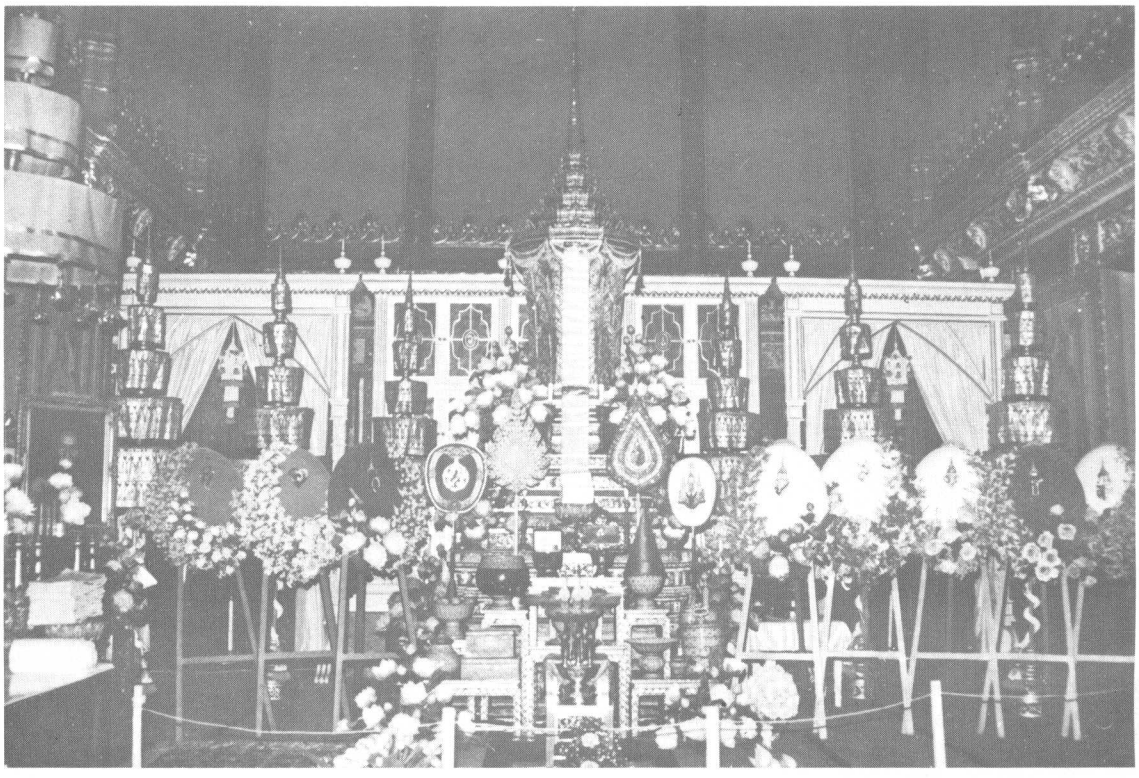


Man and Nature

Buddhism in the Creation of Peace

Islamic Banking

Quakers and Peace



Royal Golden Urn containing the body of the late Sangharaja at Wat Rajabopidh, Bangkok.

Seeds of Peace

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Objectives of TICD

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

Guest Editor Pracha Hutanuvatra **Cover** a drawing from an Indian mosque by Fua Haripitak

THAI INTER - RELIGIOUS COMMISSION FOR DEVELOPMENT
G.P.O.BOX 1960 BANGKOK 10501
THAILAND

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Editorial Notes

Seeds of Peace started five years ago with 2 issues per annum. We have later increased it to be for every four months. Many friends have asked us to make it a quarterly. Although we are not yet able to do so, we have already expanded its pages since the last issue. We hope our readers will find what we print worthwhile.

Unfortunately we could not report all our activities, some of which TICD collaborate with the Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute, under the same umbrella of the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation. We are glad, however, that the founder of the Foundation, the late Phya Anuman Rajadhon, has been and will be honoured by the Thai government as well as UNESCO members throughout the year.

In our next issue, we hope to be able to report on our Siamese Buddhist Muslim dialogue as well as our progressive Buddhist conference—each, we claim, would be the first of its kind.

Although we operate at the local and national levels, we are also happy to collaborate with regional and local networks like Asian Cultural Forum on Development, Peace Brigade International, World Council of Churches, World Conference on Religion and Peace as well as the World Academic Conference of the Seoul Olympiad'88. In the past we have worked closely with the local Menonites in Bangkok and the American Friends Service Committee in Lao as well as the Australian Quakers Service and Peace Committee. In future, we hope to collaborate with the Quaker Middle East Representative in Jordan too. Our work in East, Southeast and South Asia as well as the Pacific may then be linked with the rest of Asia, especially among our Muslim friends.

We are grateful that the Ven. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu has agreed to be TICD's patron. No one in this country has done more than him for better understanding between religions. Mrs. Somsri Sukumalananda,daughter of the late Phya Anuman Rajadhon and president of the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation, too, has kindly agreed to serve on our advisory board.

We respectfully beg to dedicate this issue to the Ven. Phra Debvedi on his 50th birthday anniversary in January. His teaching and life style have inspired many of us towards peace, happiness and social justice. His book on *Sammāsati-An Exposition of Right Mindfulness* has just appeared in English. May he have a long life on the path of enlightenment.

We trust that our endeavour in planting seeds of peace in various places will bear some fruit positively and non-violently towards social justice and human liberation.

Any comments and opinions from our readers will always be welcome.

Man and Nature



I often recall the words of a youngster from a few summers ago, who had come with his father from Seoul to visit the mountains in which I dwell.

"Papa, the breeze is sweet!"

Then, drinking gulps of water drawn up from the well in his hands, he exclaimed,

"Ah, it's delicious, truly delicious."

Recollections of this five-year-old's precious comments echo in my ears to this day.

Sweet breeze? How direct and poetic an expression, compared to the cliched descriptions of fresh and clear. Years of drinking tab water distilled by the fumes of chemicals, must have enhanced the flavor of the mineral water springing from the mountains. This is why children, pure, transparent and innocent, are "the father of man".

Who has stolen the "sweet breeze" from our youngsters? Who has adulterated our delicious water?

Nature only preserves itself, never destroying. Man, civilized humans have harmed and defiled nature. The processes of disorderly industrialization and urbanization that exclude man has polluted the fresh air and clean air. Seduced by excessive materialism, man has forgotten the natural privileges bestowed on him by nature and the environment, and are destroying his benefactor.

1

From age-old antiquity, nature has bestowed innumerbable benefits upon mankind without expectations of ever being repaid. Clear air and cool breeze, warm and bright sunshine and pure water from the mountains and rivers, serene silence and twilit night skys, rich soil from the fields, fragrant flowers, the lovely songs of birds, vital forests...

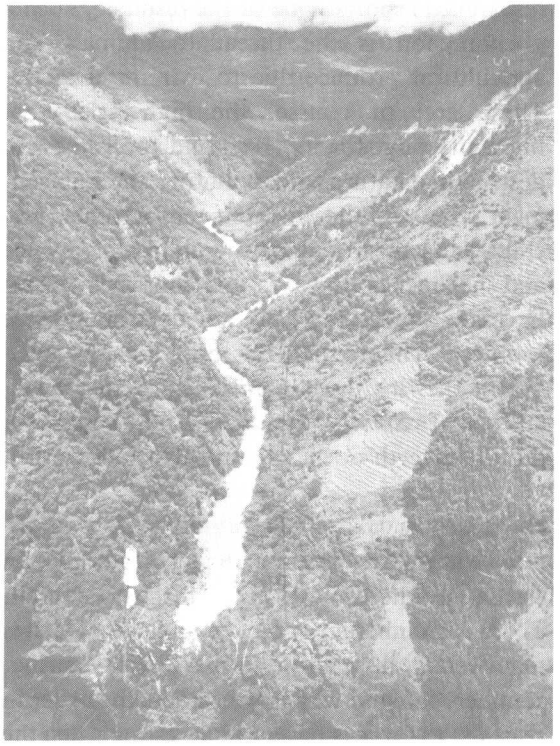
To these fruits of the earth given to mankind, most of us humans have responded

without gratitude and have accepted them as if obvious. Even though our predicament is such that without them survival would be impossible, modern man is insensitive to nature. In his foolishness and greed to merely possess, modern man is incapable of hearing the cries of nature that stem from having lost that which is hers. Man and nature should not result in a relationship of possessors and suppliants, of a master-slave bondship.

Nature, to man, is the source of life and environment. Civilization, on the other hand, is an instrument and means by which we live, but never an end-in-itself. The relationship between nature and man must return to that of a mother and child. Only within a nature that has not been polluted or destroyed can we humans return to a healthy state, less desolate and less polluted. Nature is the sole occasion in which man can nurse and rest his soul. We should also keep in mind that, after we have lived this life and become a cold corpse in the ground, a fistful of ashes, we will return to nature once again.

The latter half of the 20th century has confronted a reality in which the destruction of nature and the pollution of our environment is threatening our grounds of life. Many of those concerned with the future of mankind warn us that we are now facing an unprecedentedly serious problem. "The Roma Club Report" of 1971 which surprised us acutely pointed out some of the problems of modernity. The impending fear of nuclear warfare, along with the problems of population and produce, cleavage between those who have and have not due to industrialization, the depletion of natural resources, and the polluted environment are those dilemmas that foreshadow a dark and unsettled future.

These problems are indicative of the growing distances between man and his fellow man, and the destroyed relationship between man and nature. The fact that in the name of peace, atomic bombs more than sufficient to destroy all life forms on the surface of the earth have been stored, is an unhappy reality that implies the distance between man and others. The severe pollution of mountains and oceans, streams and fields also prove the wronged relationship between man and nature.



This academic conference, sponsored on the occasion of the Seoul Olympics and which object is to reaffirm unity and progress of mankind, is an attempt to overcome some of these problems that confront us.

2

Nature provides man with those elements essential to the physical and spiritual sustenance without any demand whatsoever in return. The relationship closely resembles a merciful mother who grants her child all that she can without a second thought.

Man's life would sparkle and be worthwhile if he accepted these gifts with grace and applied them usefully, but over-or mis-usage of such benefits result in ingratitude.

The atomic energy that exists on this earth are not for the purpose of eradicating the human race or destroying the planet. How do we accept the irony that man's fate—his survival —is threatened by his own invention of nuclear weapons?

Through our excessive usage of mineral energies such as coal and oil, life for mankind has become threatening instead of convenient. That over-consumption has resulted in the transformation of the planet earth into one large greenhouse is the conclusion of many

researched reports. One of the results of such a phenomenon is the threat to animals and agricultural produce due to extreme drought. These are, of course, the high price that humanity pays for its greed and foolishness in destructing nature and polluting the environment. To use the metaphor of mother and child, it is the result of the child's arrogance and negligence towards his mother's grace. Excess is worse than lack, nor does abundance top need. The needier, the more lovable.

As the British economist E.F. Schumacher, author of *Small is Beautiful*, has remarked, infinite growth does not suit this finite world.

3

Nature, to us humans, is not only an eternal mother but a great teacher as well. There is an inherent order within itself, which is manifested in many forms. With spring, summer, fall and winter we witness the order in seasons, as there is order in harvesting when the farmer reaps what he sows. Rain quenches the thirst of droughts, and even endless floods are put to an end. Winds set free restrained elements, and continuous flux prevents spoil. Darkness descends on the bright day to relieve the fatigue accumulated from industry.

Man must learn to obey the rules and order of nature. Simultaneously, we must learn from nature how to live a natural life. This is because that which is natural is concurrently healthy.

For those of us who rely on and live in the mountains, nature is not just a mere substance composed of trees, water, soil and rocks but a living organism that never withers.

Nature does more than control the blossoming and wilting of flowers. There is poetry and music, silence, thought and religion in the ways of nature. It should be noted that the most profound thoughts or religions germinated from the soils of great nature, not in classrooms made of bricks and cement. That the significant thoughts and religions of humanity were developed amidst forests of greenery, serene rivers or silent deserts say much to modern man.

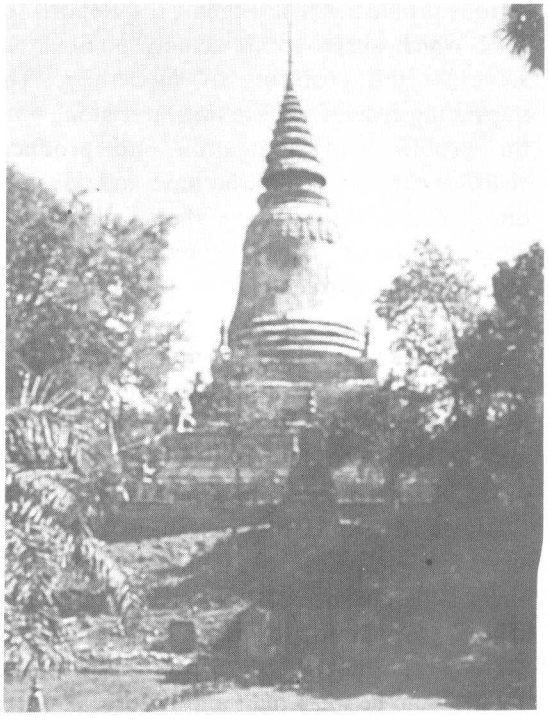
When the body is ill we seek hospitals for treatment, but this does not cure the ailments of the soul. Like a child seeking his mother's bossom, we can revive our souls in the arms of nature while listening to the sounds and living by her rules.

The most common disease of modern man, neurosis, is an epidemic of civilization incurable by medicine. Only by leading a natural life can the mind function naturally. Man's spirit becomes serene when he lives amidst fields and trees, plants and water. No need to rush through the day, he becomes enlightened to the ways of life that are truly human.

Nature offers us many lessons without words. Our shallow knowledge must acquiesce to nature's omniscience, and listen in silence to the inner voice with an inner ear.

Within this silence the secrets of creation and the mystery of love may be learned. For a tiny seed to germinate and spring forth with leaf, flower and fruit, much patience and silence is needed. Because nature itself is an enormous silence, serenity is an essential condition for the realization of nature's identity.

In the beginning before the Word was spoken one can imagine a weighty and heavy silence, for silence is the very language of the cosmos. We must realize that the exceptional thoughts and profound religions stemmed not from the branches of language, but from the great silence of nature. This is also conveyed to





modern man in the silence of Zen masters or the ascetic in the desert.

An anecdote relates how an ascetic visited the great priest Wonro before entering his life in the desert.

"Master, please tell me one thing—how I may be saved." To this, Wonro replied.

"If you wish to salvage your soul, do not open your mouth to anyone who seeks you before he asks you to."

They were undoubtedly aware of the relative importance of silence. One may keep silent but hold in contempt another. In this case he is constantly breaking the silence, whereas one may be preserving silence even through conversation if he speaks only when necessary.

Man must learn the art of silence from nature, and thus realize that he is part of the cosmic scheme.

4

In "Genesis", God says the following to his first-made man and woman.

"Be fruitful and multiply, and till the water in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth."

The "earth" He speaks of here may be substituted by nature. The fact that the history of Europe founded itself on endless conquest and exploitation, strength and pressure needs no proof. But nature is not an object to be conquered. How can it be conquered by man? Frequently we hear the "conquest of Mt. ____" on the Himalayas in the newspapers and TV, which to me seem utter words of nonsense. If the mount had truly been conquered, man ought to be able to live there—instead he crawls down in less than an hour's time. Those engaged in the media have been given an education that should enable them to know better than to write such thoughtless and arrogant words. The mountain has tolerated the courage of brave souls, and allowed their climbing, not the conquest. Accidents that occur in the mountains have been caused by the carelessness or greed caused by overestimation and arrogance. In his book *The Spirit of the Mountain*, the British mountain climber and writer F.S. Smythe wrote the following:

> "Nature is neither far away, nor is it an opponent to be conquered. It is an extension of ourselves, a continuation of beauty and grandeur. We are enlightened in the mountains, and learn the way of life."

He continues to view the act of mountain-climbing as an effort on man's part to familiarize himself with nature.

> "Climbing to the top is not all there is to mountain-climbing, which is but a mere thread of gold in the great plan. Climbing should not be like soldiers conquering a city previously conquered by others; gratitude and humility should fill our hearts when visiting the mountains."

Such an attitude should be applicable, not only to mountain-climbing, but to all of life's efforts, so that **how** we attain becomes more important. More significant is the process of climbing the peak, and not the conquest itself. In the words of Smyth, "not the crown but the kingdom"; the joy of mountain-climbing rests in every step of mountaining, as well as inhaling its scents and listening to its heartbeat. Those who mount for the pleasure of yelling echoes are but novices who have not realized the true meaning. Silence offers the greatest rest and holiness. Life's trials and tribulations? Gazing at the impending dusk, he can only look in silence...

5

What is nature to us? Not just mere land, but a foundation for all our lives in the past, present and future. It is the land of our grandfathers' grandfathers, grandmothers' grandmothers, the land of our relatives, friends, and loved ones, their flesh and blood and sweat, and the holy land of innumerable souls. Thus our land should never become a means or tool for money-making or object of expansion, but should be kept and preserved by those who love it.

In 1855, the President of the United States Franklin Pierce pressured the Indian chief of the Swami tribe, Seattle, to sell the land of what is now Washington State. To this the chief Seattle replied as follows (excerpt from his letter):

> "How can love buy or. sell the sky, the warmth of land? Such thoughts to us are inconceivable. We are not in possession of the freshness of the air, or the water-bubbles. Every corner of this land, to my people, is holy. They remain holy in the memory of may people—the sparkling pineleafs and the sandy beaches, the mist of dark brooding forests to the songs of insects.
>
> "We know that White Men do not understand our way of life. Our piece of land is exactly like another, because he comes at night to rob the land of what he needs. Land, to you, is not a brother but an enemy. After conquering a piece he proceeds to the next. After devouring the land with his voracious appetite, only deserts remain.
>
> "If I were to accept your proposition, you must do me one thing in return. What is man without other animals? If the beasts were to be ravished, man too, would suffer and die from loneliness. What happened to animals is also to occur to humans.
>
> "Our god is the same god that you worship. His compassion extends equally to White Men and Indians. This land is precious to him and harming it, therefore, is an insult to our creator. The White Man will be extinquished. If you continue to pollute your sleeping place, some day you will find yourself suffocating amidst your wastes. When the buffalos are killed and wild horses tamed, when the sanctified corners of the forest are damaged by the stench of humans, that will be the end of life and the commencement of death.
>
> "When the last Indians are extinct from this land and only the shadows of clouds traversing the plains remain, even then the spirit of my people will be preserved by the beaches and forests. This is because, like a new-born babe listening to the heartbeat in the bosom of his mother, my people love this land.
>
> "After we turn over our land to you, keep in mind that we will continue to love and cherish this land as we always have. After you have taken this land from us, love this land as you do your children, as our god does us, with all your might, and ability and heart. We know that your god and ours is the same. This land is precious to him, and White Men cannot be exempted from this common fate."

This letter could be a revelation not only to the President of 130 years ago, but to the modern man who destructs and pollutes Nature.

6

The human life cannot exist independent of the ecological cycle. The actions of mankind make a direct impact on the scheme of nature and as a result come back to us. Such is the principle of 'cause-and-effect, and the cosmic order.

Today our thoughts need to be changed. Only by thorough internal changes can catastrophes be overcome. A fundamental resolution can take place only through changes in man's reckless and habitual living pattern. More than anything the problem lies in our complacency—mistaking our lifestyle as normal. The phenomenol viewing consumption as a virtue is relatively recent one in history.

There is a need for a new relationship between man and nature to be established, not one of conquest and exploitation but of co-operation and companionship. There is an ancient saying, "Those who fall to the ground rise from the ground." In order for us all to lead a truly human life in a pleasant natural

environment, we need to rise to the challenge as presented to us today. The means of wounded nature also indicate the diseased state in which man is situated.

Finally, I wish to express the relationship between man and nature through a traditional Korean poetic verse. It is of the sixteenth-century poet Song Sung:

"After ten years of Management I build a thatch-roofed hut.
Install a room, a moon and light breeze ;
No room to bring in the mountains and rivers,
I shall regard them surrounding me."

by **Ven. Bup Jung**
Director
The Research Institute of Bojo's Thought, Korea.

The Role of Buddhism in the Creation of Peace



The basic contribution of Buddhism in the creation of peace has something obvious about it: the doctrine of *ahimsa*, of nonviolence. The five precepts are very clear in this regard:
I undertake to observe the rule
to abstain from taking life;
to abstain from taking what is not given;
to abstain from sensuous misconduct;
to abstain from false speech;
to abstain from toxicants as tending to cloud the mind.

Buddhagosa explains (from E. Conze, *Buddhist Scriptures,* London 1959, pp. 70-1) that "taking life is then the will to kill anything that one perceives as having life, to act so as to terminate the life-force in it, in so far as the will finds expression in bodily action or in speech. With regard to animals it is worth to kill large ones than small. Because a more extensive effort is involved. Even where the effort is the same the difference in substance must be considered. In the case of human beings the killing is the more blameworthy the more virtuous they are. Apart from that, the extent of the offence is proportionate to the intensity of the wish to kill".

Very clear. And he goes on to list the five factors that are involved in killing: not only life but also the perception of life; not only the thought of murder but also carrying it out; "and death as a result of it".

I know of no other religion with such an unambiguous norm against taking life. That there are gradations according to the intensity of the intention and the gravity of the consequence does not diminish the ethical force of this command. All killing is bad; some killing is even worse. Moreover, the norm is extended to all life. This is important, because it means that the buddhist has to live up to this norm every day, eg by being a practicing vegetarian. Other people, concerned only with not killing other human beings do not so often come across situations where the norm makes a difference. After all, most humans do not see killing as a possible action to be engaged in except under very special circumstances, such as a war.

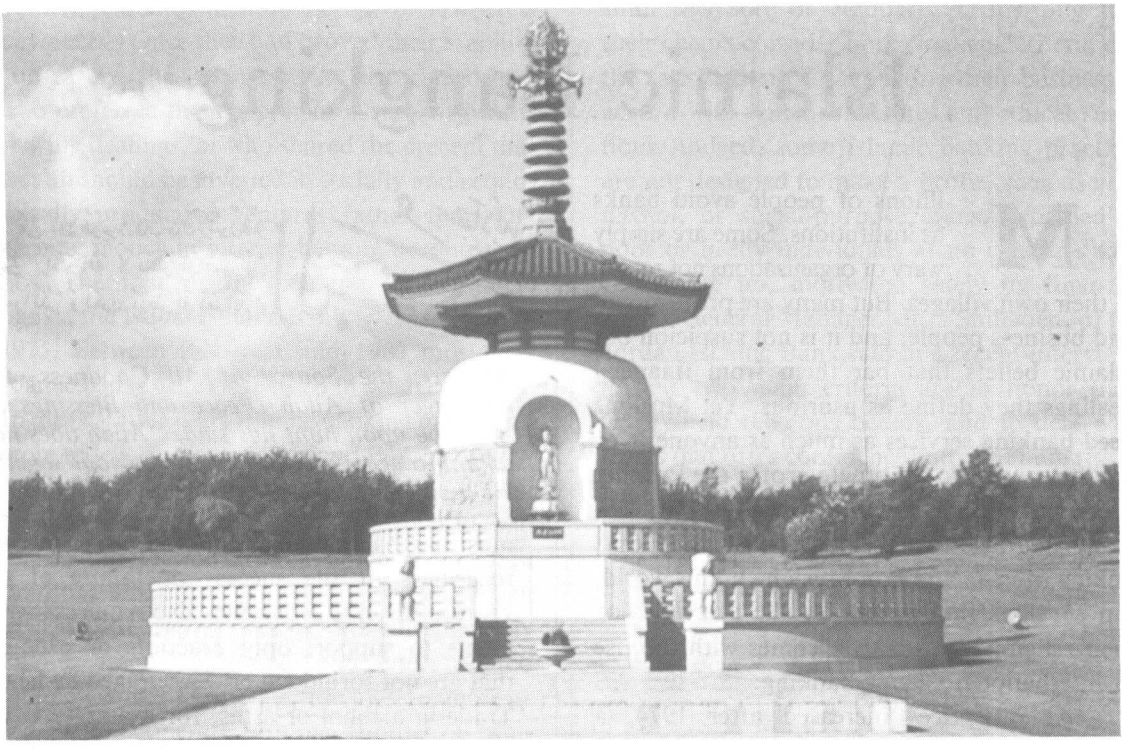
Now, with this very positive point of departure, let us look more closely at the *ahimsa* norm in the light of the requirements for peace. To create peace no doubt has to do with eliminating or at least reducing violence. The problem is that there are several kinds of violence. One is very clear: the direct violence described in the first precept, precisely with the five factors mentioned with the precision of a modern lawyer.

But then there is structural violence; the violence that kills slowly, built into a structure. Of the five factors only three apply: there is life and perception of life, but then there is no thought of murder and hence no "carrying it out". There is Death as a result of—of what? not of "it" in the sense of "carrying it out", but "it" in the sense of a desperately unjust social structure giving very much to the few and extremely little to the many. Is this form of violence covered by the five precepts?

Possibly by the second precept, "to abstain from taking what is not given". Buddhagosa explains again that five elements are involved: someone else's belongings, awareness that they are someone else's, the thought of theft and carrying it out, and theft as a result of it. But this is theft; not quite the same as structural violence. Something is taken. But there may be no awareness anywhere that this happens. A landowner has land; the landless has nothing but their ability to till the land. Their landowner says: You may till my land, but you have to give me 70% of the harvest", to give a figure fairy typical of Marcos', and Aquino's, Philippines. The landowner may feel he is generous, the alternative could have been to use a tractor. The peasant may feel grateful; the alternative could have been starvation. And yet we feel that something is wrong, morally. Scientifically this becomes an hypothesis. To maintain a structure of that kind something is needed, like keeping the peasants apart so that they cannot organize any revolt; or giving them an ideology or even a religion telling them that nothing is wrong with the structure.

Is buddhism a religion of that kind? I would say no, but in saying so I cannot quote buddhist scriptures as directly as I can for direct violence. I would have to refer to another buddhist rule, the principle of "neither too little, nor too much". If a social structure can be shown to produce both too much (the landowner) and too little (the peasants); in the great chain of being, would this not mean that the structure is wrong? Not necessarily. It could also be taken to imply the welfare state: tax the landowner and use the tax money to give free health and education to the peasants, plus subsidized meals at school. I do not think buddhism can be seen as implying radical structural transformation or what one might call structural justice, but certainly as implying, as a minimum, distributive justice.

Let us then look at the third type of violence, cultural violence. I define it as any element in the culture, meaning particularly in religion and/or ideology, that legitimizes direct and/or structural violence. Again a very strong point for buddhism. Of course there are buddhists in past and present, and there will also be in the future, committing direct violence and participating in structural violence. But they will not find any backing in buddhist scriptures telling them this is right, that this pleases the Lord Buddha. Whoever says so will break the fourth precept, "to abstain from false speech". That precept, however, is more about lying in the conventional sense than in legitimizing violence—but if buddhism is invoked in favor of violence I think it can be



argued that we have an act of lying.

Conclusion: buddhism is a very strong ethical system for peace. But there is a weakness: strength in personal commitment is combined with a certain weakness in understanding those silent mechanisms of evil, the wrong structures. The bigger they are, such as the nation state and the big corporations, or marriage for that matter, and the more we are used to them, the more violent can they become. Thus, can a buddhist do military service? The government tells him that time has come to "defend his country". The buddhist may be exemplary, treat his soldiers admirably if he is an officer, yet engage in the old game of "killing in order not to be killed". He, like many others, may not be able to see the structure at work here, not one country against another, but a tacit alliance of governments against the silent masses of citizens giving the government a right to order their citizens to kill for the national interest as defined by the government.

But is that not a political more than a moral issue? Both, of course. And the big question is exactly how the ethical inspiration from buddhism might enlighten politics by being bold enough to question structures, not only the single acts of individuals and countries. And corporations: why is it that they do so little for the basic needs of the common man and woman everywhere, that they are so good at producing "too much", and so bad at helping where there is "too little"? Answer: because there is not much money to make on basic needs, but much to make on basic greed. And as a consequence precious resources are wasted, not only on arms, but also on luxury goods for the few. A buddhist should be able to see through this and bend these big structures in other directions.

Conclusion: the world needs buddhist ethics in the struggle to create peace, and not only among human beings, but also with nature—a very strong point in buddhism. But buddhism has to confront the real world issues relevant for peace and enter the struggle—also when that struggle is political.

by **Johan Galtung**
Professor of Peace Studies
University of Hawaii,
Honolulu, Hawaii 96822

(with kind permission of the Institute of Oriental Philosophy, Tokyo.)

Islamic Bangking

Millions of people avoid banks as institutions. Some are simply wary of organizations not rooted in their own villages. But many are professional and business people, and it is not suspicion but Islamic beliefs that bar them from financial dealings they define as usurious. Yet Muslims need banking services as much as anyone. Nor are they averse to legitimate profit: the Prophet Muhammad himself was a successful businessman. But today's financial world is tightly knit, linking Muslim and non-Muslim. In this world, can Muslims find rooms for the principles of their religion? The answer comes with the rise of international Islamic banking.

As oil prices increased after 1974, a number of Arab and Muslim countries experienced a rise in income and became dissatisfied with the rigid requirements of commercial banks —mostly Western—and the banks' view of interest-earning activities as their central reason for being. The best response, for both individuals and communities, seemed to be reinvigoration of the principles of Islam.

Several Qur'anic passagess admonish the faithful to shun *riba*, or fixed interest payments: "Fear God and give up what remains of your demand of usury, if ye are indeed believers." *Riba* is prohibited on the tenet that money is only a medium of exchange, a way of defining value; it has no value in itself, and should not give rise to more money simply by being put in a bank or lent. The human effort, initiative and risk involved in a venture are more important than the money used to finance it.

According to the Shari'a, or Islamic law, the provider and the user of capital should equally share the risk of business ventures. Translated into banking terms, the depositor, the bank and the borrower should all share the risks and rewards of business ventures, unlike the interest-based commercial banking system where all the pressure is on the borrower, who must pay back the loan and the agreed interest regardless of the success or failure of the venture. Islamic economics also requires investments to support only practices or products that are not forbidden or discouraged by Islam. Trade in alcohol or arms, for example, would not be financed by an Islamic bank. Nor could money be lent to other banks at interest.



Al-Barr: the Source of All Goodness – the messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) has said, "Allah does not take into account your figures or your wealth. He looks and values your hearts and deeds."

Islamic banks have devised creative, flexible variations on the risk-sharing, profit-sharing principle. A group in Jordan, for example, had the land for a community college, but not the money to build it. An Islamic bank built the college and agreed to be repaid with 30 percent of tuition fees. But after the school opened, the government raised admission standards; the number of students—and the college's cash flow—fell to half of predicted levels. The bank responded by stretching out the repayment period. Another Islamic bank finances individuals' car or taxi purchases by *murabaha,* buying the vehicle and transferring ownership to the client, who repays the cost over 36 to 40 months. If the client cannot repay on the original, or a revised schedule, the bank agrees with the client to sell the car second-hand, whether or not the proceeds cover the outstanding balance of the original debt.

The public's acceptance of Islamic banking has been quicker and greater than its advocates had anticipated. The banks initially attracted depositors whose religious beliefs had caused them to shun commerical banks' interest-

bearing savings accounts. (Islamic banks also offer a full spectrum of the normal services of modern banking that do not involve interest payments.) Once they had proved their viability and safety, the Islamic banks attracted others who preferred the less pressured style of profit-sharing dealings, or who shared the precept that wealth should be invested in socially and economically productive ventures rather than idly earning money in interest-bearing accounts.

The first of the contemporary Islamic banks, the Dubai Islamic Bank, was founded in 1975. Between that year and 1983 most new Islamic banks were established in Arab countries. In the past four years Islamic banking has spread more widely, to Asia, Africa and Europe. Today there are more than 100 Islamic banks and financial institutions throughout the world, and several multinational banking companies. In countries other than Iran and Pakistan, which have required their banking systems to apply Islamic practices, Islamic and interest-based commercial banks operate side by side; increasingly, they cooperate with one another on principles acceptable to both.

In most cases, Islamic banks have paid dividends and profits that compare well with the rates of commercial banks. Islamic bankers shun this sort of comparison, insisting that their clients consider both financial criteria and the satisfaction of conducting their business in accord with religious dictates and ethical traditions. Indeed, some Islamic banking practices are not designed to make a profit, such as *gard hassan*, or social-purpose loans, extended to poor or needy individuals at no charge. "Our clients are not motivated solely by financial gain," General Manager Musa Shihadeh, of the Jordan Islamic Bank,said in a recent interview, "Their two main criteria are to honor their deeply-held religious beliefs, and to deal with banks that offer confidence and minimum risk."

by **Rami G. Khouri**
from *Buddhist Peace Fellowship Newsletter*
P.O. Box 368 Lismore NSW 2480 Australia.



QUAKERS and PEACE



The first Quaker Peace Testimony, issued to King Charles II in 1660 AD –

We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretence whatsoever. And this is our testimony to the whole world. The spirit of Christ, by which we are guided, is not changeable, so as to command us from a thing as evil and again to move unto it; and we do certainly know, and so testify to the world, that the Spirit of Christ, which leads us into all Truth, will never move us to fight and war against any (person) with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ nor for the kingdoms of this world.

Liberation Religion and Culture

ACFOD–Programme Team Meeting and Training Seminar for Activists



A. Background

ACFOD's 'Liberation, Religion and Culture' (LRC) Program was initiated in 1986 in order to strengthen the potential forces within the religions and cultures of the Asia-Pacific region for social justice and human development (see : *Seeds of Peace* 4 (1988) No.3, p.4-6).

Since then more than 1½ years have passed in which the programme has not yet proceeded as far and deep as has been hoped before. Thus a meeting was convened of outstanding and experienced people in this field from all over the region to discuss the present processes in the Asia Pacific region which are related to that field.

As the future success of the programme, however, depends on the impact it can make at the grass-root level, it was suggested to link the advisory meeting with a training seminar for second level organizers to make the best use of the advisors present to serve as resource persons, too.

After several months of preparation both events took place this September in Bang Pla Ma, Suphanburi Province. While nineteen people were present at the advisory meeting (including guests and secretarial staff) they were joined by 21 activists from eleven countries for the seminar.

The venue—a complex of wooden Thai-style houses beautifully situated at the river—contributed with its quiet atmosphere to the success of the meeting as also did the delicious food there!

B. Advisory Team Meeting, 19 - 20 September 1988

The aim of the meeting was to discuss the programme and explore the future directions, to advise the steering committee, and to suggest activities, to which the programme could or should relate to. Furthermore they could see how they could support the LRC-process in their particular countries (or sub-regions), too.

19 September

Morning:



— opening of the meeting and welcoming of advisors on behalf of the steering committee (John Curnow)
— mutual introduction of advisors and their personal involvement in LRC—work in their respective countries and in the region.

Afternoon:

— presentation on the 'History and vision of the LRC programme' (Siddharta).

Siddharta situated the LRC programme in the present context of Asia. After enumerating the previous activities of the programme he outlined the possible objectives for the future as follows:

(1) to strengthen and extend the liberative potential within all religious and cultural traditions in the Asia-Pacific region to help those concerned groups within these religions and cultures to renew them, making them more relevant to the modern world and its problems, under which especially the poor have to suffer, so that more and more people recognize their suffering and help in eliminating it; to promote exchange and learning between adherents of different religious traditions and cultures in order that they can cooperate meaningfully in a common struggle against the oppressive social forces that cause suffering.

(2) to enable peasants, fishermen, industrial workers and women and all oppressed sections in the societies of the region to discover their faith and the roots of their culture and draw inspiration and sustenance from it;

(3) to enable activists to be open to the liberative dimensions of Asia-Pacific religions and cultures;

(4) to enable activists who have difficulties with specific religions, to discover, develop and strengthen a secular spirituality of struggle that does not make overt reference to one specific tradition, but nourishes him/her for greater authenticity.

— Presentations on 'Trends in the major religious traditions in the Asia-Pacific region today'.

The contributors were asked to make short presentations, referring particularly to each religions' attitude towards social issues as background and framework for the LRC programme planning.

The leading questions were what the main liberative potentialities in each religion are, and where one sees the main obstacles towards liberation. The contributors were also asked to identify one or two concrete manifestations in their countries where both liberative and regressive potentialities can be exemplified. And if possible they should also hint at the consequences for the LRC programme that result from their analysis.

The contributors were:

— *Islam:* Asghar Ali Engineer (India), Chandra Muzaffar (Malaysia)
— *Buddhism:* Sulak Sivaraksa (Thailand), Pracha Hutanuvat (Thailand), Maruyama (Japan)
— *Hinduism:* Swami Agnivesh (India)
— *Maori spirituality:* Miriama Kahu (New Zealand/Aotearoa)
— *Christianity:* Ruben Habito (Philippines/Japan)

Evening:

After dinner discussions were soon interrupted by the tremendous thunderstorm which successfully diverted the topics of the group discussions from the power of spiritual values to the power of nature!

20 September

Morning:

— Plenary discussion to reflect on the major issues raised the previous day;
— group discussions, approaching specific issues from a religio-cultural perspective:
  (1) women and ecology,
  (2) ethnicity, labour issues,
  (3) meditation for social activists.
— plenary: sharing of group discussion results.

Afternoon:

Plenary on the aims and particular activities for the future LRC programme (a proposal drafted by the steering committee and circulated before was taken as a basis for discussion). A list of proposals was drawn up and all were invited to state their particular areas of interest to which one is willing to contribute. The list (with some additional comments) comprised of



— Religio-cultural consultations on A. land; B. health; C. women; D. nuclear energy
— spiritual world-views of indigenous cultures and religions
— Buddhist-Muslim dialogue in Southeast-Asia
— spiritual dimensions of/in social movements (peasants, women, ecological groups,...)
— providing with *Asian Action* a forum for exchange of news, views and experiences on progressive perspectives in the religions and cultures of the region
— exchange study trips on ethnic and communal conflicts in South/Southeast-Asian regions
— North-South progressive Buddhist ongoing dialogue
— workshop on meditation for social activists
— issue-related manual for social activists dealing with questions of social spirituality
— workshop for National Sectoral Programme Facilitators (peasants, women, fishworkers, industrial workers)
— migration of labour.

At the end of this session it was obvious that not all proposals can be put into practice in the next two or three years. It is now up to the steering committee to decide on priorities and to distribute leading responsibilities. But as the will of all advisors to cooperate and contribute was strongly expressed, the meeting was closed in an optimistic mood.

C. Training Seminar and Exposure Programme, 20 -29 September 1988

1. Aims, Method and Selection Process

The aims of the training seminar were

(1) to explore an orientation and a vision about a liberative religio-cultural perspective in community development work;

(2) to give motivation and a fresh push to start or strengthen work on the local and national level related to the LRC programme and/or its broad activities.

To achieve these broad aims the seminar should consist of the following three interrelated elements:

(1) reflection and exchange of own experiences in this field;

(2) discussions of the contributions from selected resource persons about the liberative and oppressive potentials in the major religious

traditions of the Asia-Pacific region;

(3) collection of ideas and experiences how to start, develop and contribute to LRC-work on different levels.

A broad variety of persons and organizations more or less closely related to ACFOD and its LRC programme were provided with a background paper on the LRC programme (cf. *Seeds of Peace* 4(1988) No.3, p.4-6) and were invited to nominate participants for the training seminar. More than 30 bio-data sheets were received from 10 countries other than Thailand that made the selection process not easy as a somehow equal distribution country- and religion - wise had to be secured.

2. Proceedings of the Training Seminar

Every morning was begun by a meditation session lasting about three quarters of an hour. Phra Paisan Visalo and Fr.Habito took terms in conducting the sessions. Besides providing us with a brief introduction in both Vipassana and Zen meditation traditions, the meditation was helpful to create an appropriate atmosphere for the interaction during the whole seminar.

20 September

Evening:

—Welcoming of participants (Sulak Sivaraksa);

—Video show about the anti-sati (widow-burning) march to Deorala, presented by Swami Agnivesh

21 September

Morning:

— introduction into the programme (Siddharta)
— Presentation: 'Religion and Culture and their Implications in Social Action for Liberation' (John Curnow/New Zealand-Aotearoa)

Fr.John's talk served as an introduction to the overall topic of the seminar and the LRC programme in general. He began by notifying the shift of attention in social action work from oppressive structures to religions and cultures. While this trend can be utilized by fundamentalist groups it is necessary to regain the original vision of a religion as has been exemplified by religiously inspired popular movements like the Basic Christian Communities in Latin America. When spiritual and structural change go together religio-cultural renewal is not in danger of being adopted by the dominant system.

— mixed group discussions about Fr.John's talk; plenary
— Presentation: 'Hinduism and Social Movements' (Swami Agnivesh).

Swami Agnivesh stressed at the beginning of his talk that all religions have been revolutionary movements in their early days aiming at liberation. But they have become institutionalized and withered down for which he cited many cases from history. Recalling two examples of struggles to liberate religion from distortions in which he himself is involved in, he showed how a new tradition in the spirit of the initial revolutionary thrust can be created. In this struggle communication with the ultimate through meditation is indispensible.

— plenary: questions and clarifications by Swami Agnivesh.

Afternoon:

— general introduction about ACFOD and its programmes (M.A.Sabur)
— plenary: brief round of introducing each other
— groups (both country-and religion-wise mixed) to get to know each other more in depth and reflect about one's involvement in LRC and the expectations from the seminar
— group reports.

Evening:

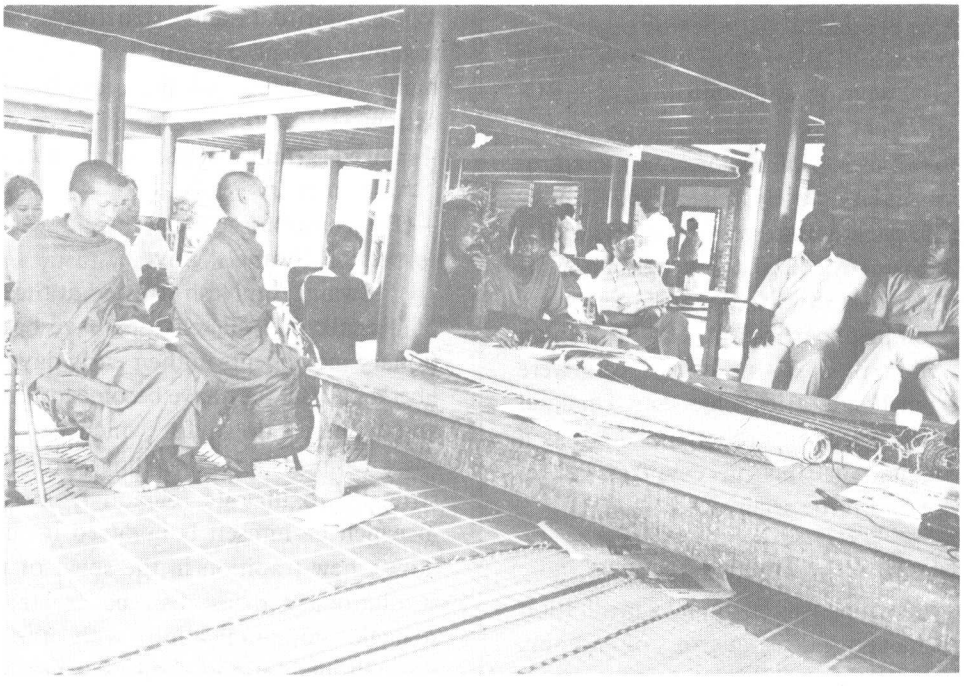
—video 'Coming of Age in the Pacific' on the anti-nuclear movement in Palau and a slide presentation on hill-tribes in Thailand.

22 September

Morning:

— presentation: 'Social Activism and Spiritual Alternatives' (Chandra Muzaffar).

Chandra's main concern was to apply elements from spiritual traditions to issues social activists are involved in. He identified a number of issues to examplify this, such as imperialism, the power of the state, basic rights, natural resources, exploitation, women and environment. In order to respond to all these issues one has to come to a renewed understanding of these spiritual traditions. This must, however, be done honestly. New religious



ideas have to come from the religions's own womb and not from any other kind of framework.
— group discussions (religion wise); group reports.

Afternoon:
— Chandra answered some of the questions raised in the morning
— presentation about women in Hindu scriptures (G.Shanta), which was supplemented by 4 other women participants belonging to different religions
— plenary discussion.

Evening:
—video -presentation about the distortion of Christmas ('The First and the Last') produced by the Christian Workers' Fellowship (Sri Lanka), and a video about a popular theater production of Adnan Quadir's theater group from Pakistan.

23 September

Morning:
— presentation on Buddhism and social values (Sulak Sivaraksa).

Sulak gave a short introduction into the basic teachings of Buddhism such as the Four Noble Truths and the three root causes of suffering to stress that knowledge of oneself is necessary to overcome suffering. The true individual strive for liberation will extend to the community. The small communities of Buddhist monks and ultimately the idea of the Sangha is a symbol of that.

In Siam (Thailand) there are a few new movements that link individual with social liberation and thus try to counter the intellectual colonisation that is taking place in the country.
— group discussions
— plenary: group reports; questions and Sulak's responses.

Afternoon:
— Presentation: 'Maori Spirituality' (Miriama Kahu).

Maori culture is based on an integral relationship between human beings and nature. Maori spirituality is thus creation-centered, regarding the earth as the mother and the sky as the father. This spirituality has many facets which express this intimate relationship, especially with the earth. The Maoris' loss of land thus undermined their spirituality considerably.

Miriama then outlined a number of its specific elements to exemplify their spiritual depth and social significance.
— group discussions
— plenary: group reports; questions and Miriama's responses.

Evening:

free.

24 September

Morning:

Evaluation

— individual reflection (what did I gain? what was missing? what am I going to do at home?)
— reflection in groups (region - wise)
— group reports, clarifications, personal statements.

Afternoon:

Discussion on the LRC programme

— national group discussions about the LRC activities in their resp. countries
— plenary: group reports, introduction of the 'South-North Network on Cultures and Development' (Edith de Boer-Sizoo)
— presentation of the plans for the future LRC-programme (see 20.9.)
— group discussions region- wise
— plenary: collection of the participants' suggestions.

Evening:

Social evening, at which all enjoyed the little play initiated by Adnan on abuse and exploitation of religion and culture, the songs, dances...

25 September

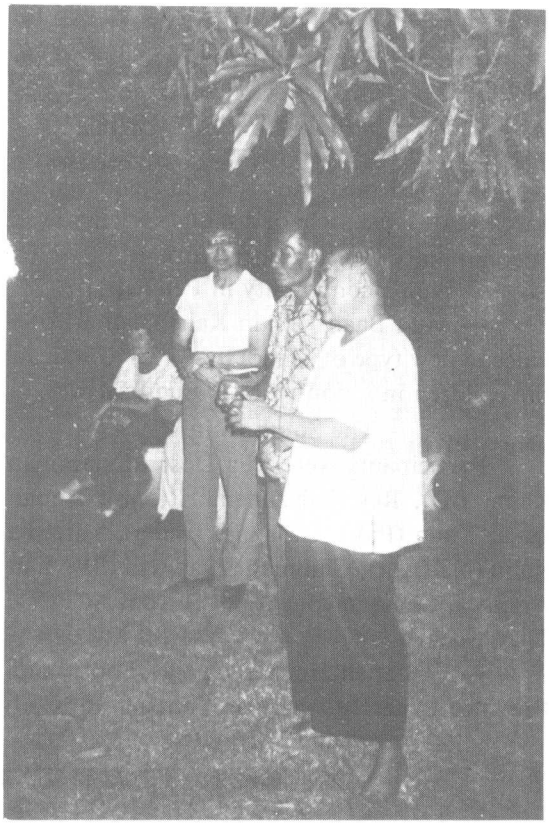
In the early morning we went to Wat Mai Suwannaphum in Suphanburi town where we attended the Buddhist ceremony and had breakfast at the temple. Afterwards we went to the Wat Pra Norn where the main attraction was the wealth of fish in the river that were fed by the community and pilgrims and not being caught there. Finally we split up for the exposure.

3. Exposure Programme

The purpose of the exposure programme (organized in cooperation with TICD) was to provide the participants with some insights about the role of religion (and religious renewal movements) in the life of the Thai masses. The discussion process within the three exposure groups should sharpen the perception of the issues discussed in the seminar before.

The Northeast route

Participants were Consolacion Alaras (Ph), Siddharta, Alida da Rosa (India), Edith de Boer-Sizoo (NL), Phra Paisan Visalo (Th), Pataraporn



Sirikanchana (Th) and Rungrudee Rawdmek (Th) from ACFOD. They visited

— Wat Sukato, a forest monastery in Chaiyaphum province, where Phra Paisan lives. Discussion with Luang Poh Kamkhian Suvanno about Buddhism;

— Wat Tha Mafaihwan, where the monks encourage a number of community development activities;

— village Nong Ya Plong, a mixed Christian-Buddhist rice farmer village, where both religious communities work closely together;

— Nong Mueng village in Surin Province, where the abbot Phra Shalerm Titisrilo is involved in several activities to strengthen the self-reliance of the village and is concerned about the education of the Buddhist monks.

The West route

Participants were Gedong Bagoes Oka (Indon.), Kuliyapitiya Prananda (SL), Lakshman Gajasinghe (SL), Aroha Poharama (NZ/Aot.), Sanjeeb Chowdhuri (Bd) and Nibhond Chaemduang from TICD, Thailand. They saw

— Pathom Asoke in Nakorn Pathom, the life community of the Buddhist Santi Asoke sect;

— Plak Mailai monastery, a center for herbal medicine and meditation in Nakorn Pathom;

— Wat Ketummawadi in Samutsakorn province, an impressive temple;

— Yok Krabat monastery in Samutsakorn, a well known example of a monastery involved in community development work.

— Nun's community in Petchaburi;

— Muu Baan Dek in Kanchanaburi province, a new type of school that tries to educate the children in a non-violent, Buddhist way.

The South route

Participants were Mir Dost Mohammad Khan (BD), Rev.Keii Amemori (Jpn), Adnan Qadir Khan (Pak), G.Shanta (India), Miriama Kahu (NZ/Aot), Chinniah Sivanesan (SL), and Ampiwal Chuayunyongkul (Th) from ACFOD. They went to

— Wat Suan Mokh in Chaiya, Surratthani Province, where its eminent founder Bhikkhu Buddhadasa was trying to integrate individual liberation with social liberation. We were shown the "Theatre of Spirituality" where the teaching and stories from Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism and other world religions, and simple moral teachings including Aesop's Fables, were depicted in drawings, paintings and replicas of sculptures from Buddhist India. An interesting place and holy atmosphere to gain insight into the follies and wisdom of humans and to contemplate the total nature of life

— three places in Nakorn Si Thammarat province, where Islam is the main religion: Kiriwong village, Saeng Wiman village and Pratheepsat school, where they try to foster interreligious harmony in the area.

It was felt that without this exposure the training seminar would not have been complete. It was most worthwhile to experience in reality what Buddhist life in the rural areas means.

Morning Meditation*

We always say "Good Morning" to each other since morning is the good time for doing good things i.e., reading, bathing, and eating, It's also a good time for meditation.

Meditation is a way to relax our body, calm our mind, refresh our intellect, and awaken our spirit. Body, mind, intellect and spirit are integral parts of our life. Being a whole person is to have these elements integrated and interrelated in harmony.

In Buddhism, the breath is always used as an object for meditation. It is our best companion that sustains our life, physical and spiritual. Through breathing, the air which is the gift of nature permeates our body; the nature thus becomes a part of our life. When we breathe



mindfully, our body and our mind unite. The mind which becomes clear through proper breathing refreshes our brain and inspires our spirit.

To begin with, we should sit properly, since our posture determines to a certain extent

* Adapted from a talk delivered by Phra Phaisan Visalo during a morning meditation session of an Asian and ecumenical seminar on "Liberation Religion and Culture", organized by ACFOD and Inodep-Asia during September 20 - 25 in Supanburi, Thailand.

the state of our mind. Sitting in a stable posture and breathing in a peaceful manner enables our mind stable and peaceful. Sit upright with one leg on top of the other, or cross two legs, if you can. The body relaxed, the neck is not stressed, the eyes are not strained. No tension on our face, our hands and our legs. A half smile helps relax the muscles on our face. Gaze at the ground one meter from you, or gaze at the tip of the nose, if you prefer.

Meditation through the breathing is to be aware of our in-breath and out-breath. Let the breathing go comfortably and naturally. For beginners, counting the breath from one to ten, and start one again, is recommended.

Try to be at the present moment, here and now. The only real moment of our life is the present one. The past has all gone and the future has not come yet. All we have to do at the present moment is to breathe mindfully. No planning, no speculation, no analysis. Merely observe each of our in-breath and out-breath.

When the sound is heard, just aware of it and let it go. When thought comes to our mind, just aware of it and let it go peacefully. Do not force it away. Constant awareness gradually leads our mind become peaceful and tranquil.

Stick to mere observation in any situation, even when the mind unrests or disperses. All we have to do is to be aware of it, observe it with no anger or frustration.

Every in-breath we feel the freshness of the air from natural environment. When we breathe out, let our strain and tension released from our body and mind. At times, observe our body. Body stress usually occurs when our mind become tense.

Before we leave from meditation in sitting posture, we should be thankful to body and mind that enable us to do good job this morning. Give blessing to ourselves to overcome hardship and suffering facing us. Extend our best wishes to our parents, teachers, friends and foes. May they live happy lives and free from all sufferings.

Extend our loving kindness to all living beings in the world. May they live in harmony and peace.

Back to ourselves. Now we are ready to start the new day with awareness and loving kindness. Open our eyes and see our friends sitting around us. Appreciate their presence since they are among the most important persons we are going to relate with for the rest of the day, and the rest of our life.

The meditation has just begun. It should be continued till the end of the day, through our daily activities i.e., walking, washing, typing, discussion, etc. Let all be done mindfully and wholeheartedly. Through such constant meditation in the world of action, our activities will undoubtedly bring peace to both ourselves and the world.

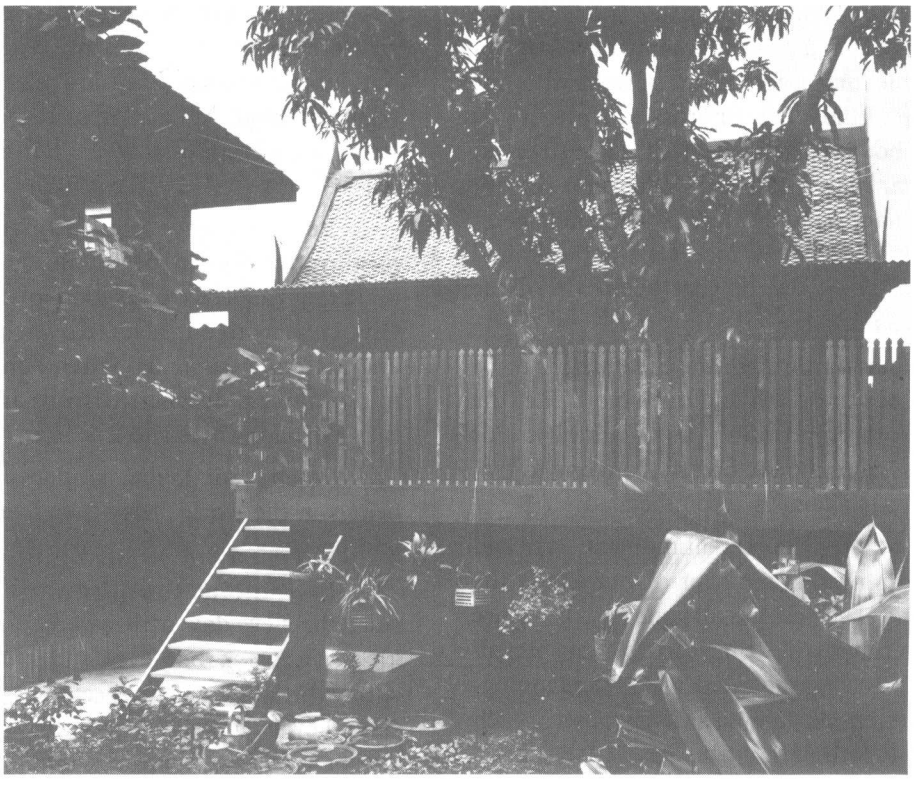
URGENT !

On September 29, two prominent Buddhist monks in Vietnam, Thich Tue Sy and Thich Tri Sieu, were brought to trial *and sentenced to death*. They were falsely accused of associating with an anti-government group.

Until now, no Buddhist monk has ever been executed in the history of Vietnam. Thich Tue Sy and Thich Tri Sieu, both in their mid-40s, are highly respected Buddhist scholars and former professors at Van Hanh Buddhist University. Both have been imprisoned since 1984. The Buddhist Peace Fellowship has circulated appeals calling for their release, as have other human rights organizations, including Amnesty International and the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development has already sent a cable to Mr. Nguyen Van Linh, Secretary General of the Communist Party, Hanoi, as follows

"As a Thai Buddhist friend of Vietnam, I urge your excellency to please consider and intervene on behalf of Thich Tue Sy and Thich Tri Sieu for their release."



The Role of Siamese Culture in Rural Subsistance

According to anthropological assumption; Siam is similar to many other Asian countries, that she possesses the heterogeneous culture. But the remarkable distinction between Siamese culture and the others is that her cultural diversity is likely to contribute to the integrity and the enrichment of hotistic wisdom that characterizes the distinguished identity of Siamese people as they were in the past and are still today; while in some other countries, this very might cause the everlasting enthnical and cultural diverity conflicts.

It is said that if one would like to gain any true insight into the culture and character of the people of any countrys , it is necessary for him to learn something of their religions ; for the religion, especially the popular one, is the mainspring of behaviour as manifested by the people.

In this case, it is doubtless that the popular religion, which has been professed by Siam since the time when the Thai of Sukhothai liberated themselves from the Khmer ruler more than seven centuries ago; is Buddhism of Southern School or Theravada, which was transmitted indirectly from India, by the great king Ashoka's missionaries, through Sri Lanka.

Notwithstanding, the local animistic beliefs, that mingled with the Brahministic Khmer Culture, were previously prevalent in this region, the coming Theravadin Buddhism has taken the prominent role in forming social and ethical values which has underpinned all aspects of Siamese community life ever since.

However it should be noted here that Theravadin Buddhism has never declared itself to be the solely absolute truth; instead, it believes in pluralism—that means to trust that people of different races, religions and political beliefs can live together peacefully and happily under the same society. This is why the Siamese Buddhists tend to respect the different ways of

thinking and practising and treat the others as their equals. Moreover, Theravadin Buddhism —or also said in proper word, Siamese Buddhism —has intended to strenghten the local sub-cultures or even the traditional animistic values which encourage people and community to be autonomous, self-reliant and in peace.

In Siam then, within each village the Buddhist temple used to be not only the center of spirituality as well as community life in various aspect, such as education, vocational training, art, culture, social welfare, health care or even entertainment and ecology; but also the place where the most crucial values of Theravadin Buddhism were propagated.

Buddhism is; by nature, anarchism. According to its philosophy, people should have as little to do with the state rulers as possible. This means that people should have a hand in their own destinies. Besides, it advocates non-violence, simplicity and co-operation rather than violence, complexity and competition.

Being influenced by Buddhist culture, village communities in Siam lived in simple life with self-subsistance and self-government. They cultivated their own land and wove their own cloth. They used to get shelters, herbal medicines and other necessities for daily lives— water, fuel, light and agricultural tools etc — from abundantly natural resources nearby.

Above all, they ruled themselves by their own local laws and traditional institutions which acted vigorously against the centralized and colonial power from outside.

Described above are the general impressions of the rural community life in Siam before the decade of modernization began at the end of the second world war.

Unfortunately, Buddhism traditionally works well within the context of an agrarian society. As Siamese society becomes more urban, more materialistic; the Buddhist culture is strongly challenged to prove whether or not its essential teaching can be relevant to the rapidly changing society.

Phenomenally, as the Buddhist culture was weaken, the self-sufficiency of communities and traditional institutions gradually deteriorated also. The westernized consumerism basically changes the people's mode of consumption. People both in urban and rural sectors, are craving for modern conveniences to facililate their lives, while religion becomes monotonous and ritualistic for them with little practical impact on their daily lives. In the national wide scale, Thai Government has tried to copy the development policies of western neo-colonism which accelerates the penetration of market forces and capitalist systems of production and consumption throughout the rural areas, moreover it promotes investment in agricultural-related industries. This results in the decline of traditional village handicrafts, and a change from agricultural production for self-consumption to agricultural production for national and world markets and in the same time the villagers have to depend on the market for material necessities. The rural development policies of Thai Government do not stop at this point. It looks forwards to following the "Look East Policy" or the mordernization of Japan and would like to be the second round NICs (Newly Industrialized Countries) which is just the same as the western development policy, it's only the other side of the same coin.

After being well aware that the mordern time that comes is not the millennium and actually the plight of the village life has become worse in many respects, the Thai peasants have begun to search for their own alternatives, otherwise they can not survive any longer. With population growth and depletion of natural resources and their increasing dependence on market forces, they are finding it more difficult than before to obtain enough food and other necessities for their own subsistence.

Since almost newly westernized institutions whether social, economic, political or even legal ones, are designed for the advantages of the wealthy few—not for the numerous underprivilleged peasants who have no bargaining power concerning economic and political issues, so the only alternative left for them is to return to their village traditional values and institutes which once helped to protect and survive their community life. The Thai villagers are not romanticized when they return to their cultural root of the good-old-days; it does not mean that the traditional or Buddhist intelligence can cope with all problems in the changing society, but it is the only appropriate approach possessed

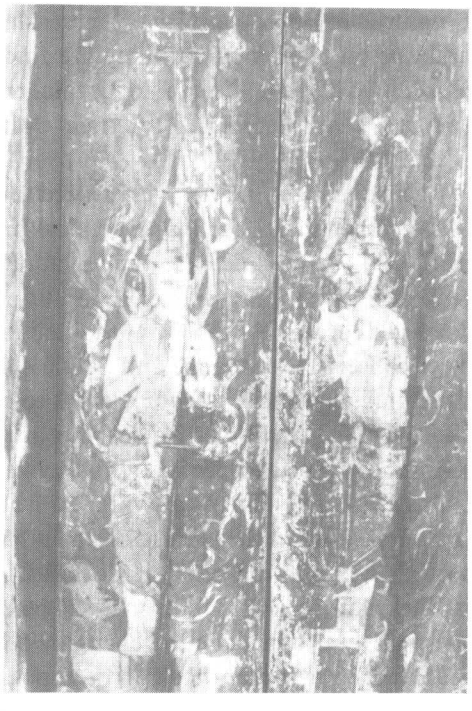
by the helpless villagers while they can not find any better alternative. During the last two decades, there are some small groups of local people here and there in rural region of Siam, both monks and laity, try to revive and renew the traditional and Buddhist values and then create the self-sufficient way of life again, not in day dream, but within the limit of the present day social context and reality, which has been irriversibly changed.

In case of "Energy and Rural Subsistance Sector" in Siam, it should not be considered separately from the structural issue which underpins all aspects of problem. Nowadays, there are many Government Organizations and NGOs try to promote the renewable energy projects and appropriate technology in village communities. However good projects they are, many of them fail mainly because they are inserted from outside and less concerned with local ecological, socio-cultural and economic contexts. The thing that should be done is to leave these projects to the endogenous intellectual creativity of the local people.

Accordance with my experience, I feel that the fashionable technologies of renewable energy; eg. solar technologies, biogas, economic stoves, small scale hydro electricities, windmill etc, have not been generally relevant to Thai community life yet. But, of course, they may suit the Thai village needs in the near future. Until now the most important energy resource for community life in Siam is forest which used to supply excess fuel wood to the whole village. Therefore, the first thing, that the Thai villegers should do in the renewable energy issue is to reserve the remained community forest. This is why the Thai villagers are sensitive to deforestation, because forest means everything for them.

There are many case studies on traditional forestry and agro-forestry practices in Siam, expecially in the North and Northeast . Moreover, there are some case studies on local people struggling against the deforestation, the large dam construction projects, for example the recently famous Nam Chone dam case and eucalyptus plantation for commercial benefit of the few in bussiness sectors backed up by government policy. It should be noted here that the leading ideology in these ecolgical and forestry movements essentially comes from Buddhism mingled with local animism. In many cases the Buddhist monks themselve take the positions of leadership.

by **Suntisukh Sobhonsiri**
Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute, Bangkok.



Rare Photos of the Murals Wat Buddhaisawan, Ayudhaya

King to Benares and Queen Chandadevi at the palace.



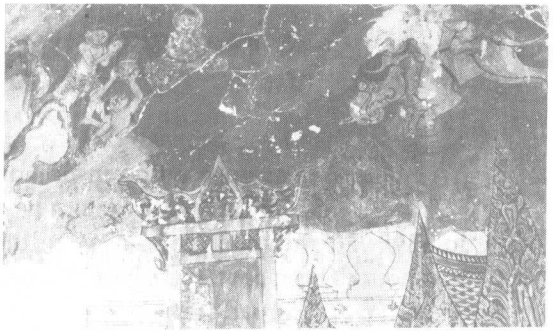
Foreign guardian figures on the window leaves.

Ayudhaya, the former Thai capital, founded by King U-Thong (Ramathibodi I) in 1350, situated on an island at the confluence of the Chao Phrya, Lopburi and Pasak rivers, was very important as a high standard civilization and center of commercial in 17th century.

South of the prosperous city, on the right bank of the Chao Phrya is located Wat Buddhaisawan, which is one of the camp site for building the city of Ayudhya.

At the moment of its greatest prosperity, Ayudhaya was the most beautiful city in the East. Foreign tradding ships sailed from France, Spain, Portugal, Holland, Japan, China, Persia and India to this heavenly city. They settled their own villages outside the city and changed Ayudhaya to an international community. Moreover, the interchange of art and culture especially in the style of Western architecture, is easily founded in many Wats.

It can be also founded at the residential building of the partriarch Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacariya, in Wat Buddhaisawan, which was built during the reign of King Phet Racha (1688 - 1704 A.D.). This building has two stories and its first floor windows feature the Gothic style.



Prince Temiya who pretends to be a mute is being tried into speaking with a terrifying elephant and serpents.

The inside walls of the second floor are decorated by the mural paintings of the Ten Lives of Buddha or Tosachat, The Thai version of the Ramayana, Triphum, scence of Venerafle Buddhaghosa on the way to Lanka, women singers and musicians in style of gold leaf painting, foreign warriors etc.

The story of Ten Lives of Buddha is traditionally painted on the murals of this residential building during the period and Triphum scence with seven high mountain rings probably first appeared on the mural here.

On the otherhand, the battle scene in the Mahosodh Jataka shows us many foreign warriors, such as French, Portuguese, Japanese and Indian, all of them had served the Thai King as guards or soldier of fortune in the 16th century.

Moreover, gold leaf painting founded particulary in the set of sacred painting, especially in the scene of women singers and musicians.

It is also founded that the mural painting inside this building use thinned brown colors in bright and vivid style, and the color pigments are not at all diluted by the deep layers' absorption. Therefore, it can easily be destroyed by rain and humidity.

This set of sacred scenes are an invaluable document of the life of the Ayudhaya Kingdom. It is deeply regretted that the mural paintings in this building, showing our great cultural heritage, has been badly neglected for a very long time and all of them have decayed. Although the Fine Arts Department has jumped to the rescue, it is too late to survive the past.

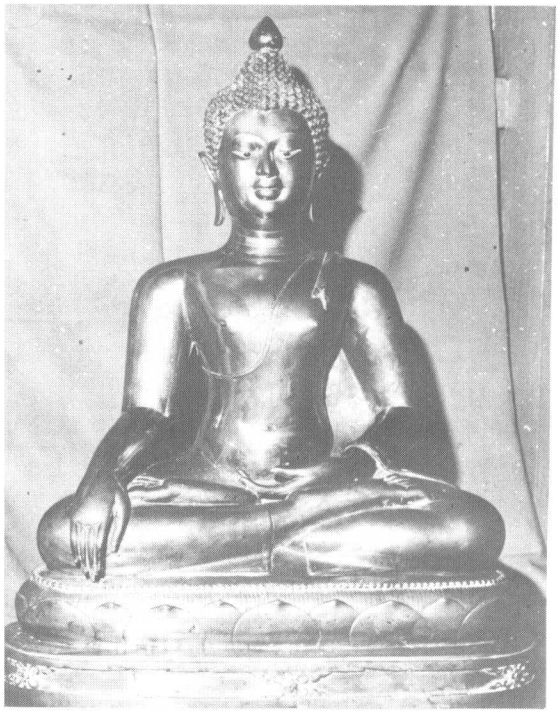
Article and Photos by **Udorn Wongtubtim**

The Amazing Buddha Images

When I was Minister of Interior, I went on my first inspection tour of the Northwestern province in 1898. At the time the railway to the north had not yet been constructed and we had to travel by boat from Bangkok up to Utaradit and then on land to Muang Prae, Muang Nan, Muang Nakorn Lampang and Muang Lampoon. It took nearly a month to reach Chiang Mai. On the way back we came by boat down the Mae Ping river from Chiang Mai to Muang Tak, Muang Kampaengpet to pick up the route we came by a Pak Nam Po in Muang Nakorn Sawan and from there back along the original route until we reached Bangkok.

I had heard that in the north, both in the province of Pisanuloke which used to be the country of King Pra Ruang, and the Northwest province, the territory of the Chiengsaen craftsmen, there were more beautiful Buddha images to be found than in any other area. Collectors of Buddha images usually went hunting in that area. Buddha images in the lotus position were considered best and the most sought after were images in the lotus position of medium size with lap length of between six to ten inches. But when I went up that time my aim was to find images which were beautiful and it did not matter to me whether they were seated in the lotus position or whether they were in the simple cross-legged position. I was also more interested in acquiring a large image with lap length of about one foot, for I think that the artists produced their best work in that larger size than in the small size that were so popular.

When we got as far as Utaradit I went one day to visit a town called Thung Yang and stopped to take a look at Wat Maha That, which dates from the Sukhothai period and which King Baromakos of Ayudhaya had restored. The stupa containing a Buddha relic and the main vihara were the two significant buildings of this wat. The original relic stupa had fallen in ruins and had already been rebuilt in a different style, but the main vihara still stood as King Baromakos had restored. Inside, the main vihara has as its principal image a large molded image with lap length of about eight feet. When I went in to postrate, I noticed that another Buddha image was lying in the palm of this principal image. Curious, I asked the officials why the Buddha image had been placed in the hand of the principal image. They told me that the smaller image was originally in another wat, I think they said Wat Wang Moo, but I can't remember for sure, and that it had very strange powers. It was as though the evil spirit of Mara were lying in wait for a fight. If offerings were made to the image, a quarrel would soon break out in the village. It got so that people were afraid to make any offerings. However, the youngsters living at the wat thought it was a great joke. Whenever they heard that there was to be a gathering at the wat, such as for an ordination, for example, they would make the



This Buddha image was brought down from Chiang Mai the same time as Phra Buddha Narasiha. HSH Princess Chongchit Diskul, the royal author's eldest daughter inherited it and she presented it to H.M. the King on her 80th birthday.

usual offerings of beetle nut and so on to that image. And sure enough, some quarrel would occur.

One night this Buddha image disappeared. Later it was found lying in the hand of the principal image of this main vihara of Wat Thung Yang. No one knew who brought it and no villager had volunteered to take it back to the original wat. So there it stayed.

When I heard this, I thought it was funny and could not help laughing. I told them to bring the Buddha image down on to the platform in front of the principal image so I could take a good look. I liked it immediately, for it was made in the subduing of Mara stance and was of the Sukhothai period, quite exquistely made and about the size I was looking for, too.

I told the officials from Thung Yang that since no one else had volunteered to take that Buddha image, I would like to take it down to Bangkok. They gladly consented but appeared surprised that I did not believe what they had told me. I lighted candle and incense to pay respect to the image and then gave order for the Buddha image to be brought down to the boat landing that same day.

That evening the officials who had come along had dinner together as usual. But on that day I noticed that they were laughing and joking more than usual, so I asked them what was so funny. They told me that when I was visiting Wat Phra Maha That, a fight had broken out between two oarsmen. I knew of course that they all concluded that it was because I had made offerings to the image in question and that I did not believe what the officials had said. But still I thought it was an amusing coincidence rather than anything super natural. So I gave orders for the image to be taken on board and shipped back down to Bangkok.

After I arrived in Chiang Mai I went one day to Wat Phra Singh. There I saw that a large number of old molded Buddha images, some in good condition and some damaged, had been gathered together on the platform in front of the main vihara. I climbed up and inspected them and found one image in the lotus position in the style of Chiengsaen. It was very beautiful and just the size I wanted. I had the image brought down so I could take a look at it by itself and saw that it was indeed exquisite. I asked the Prince of Chiang Mai's permission to invite the image down to Bangkok. Later I asked the Venerable Phra Budhacariya (Ma) from Wat Chakravatti Rajavas — at that time he was still Phra Mangaladipyamuni — to help repair and polish the images, since he had craftsmen who made and repaired images at that wat, and we were old friends. In their original state, the Buddha image from Thung Yang was lacquered and guilded, whereas the one from Chiang Mai was only polished and not covered with gold. The craftsmen went to work polishishing the image from Chiang Mai first and as soon as the shawl had been removed gold could be seen shining through. This image was more lovely than any other they had ever seen, and Phra Budhacariya gave orders for them to restore this image first. Even while it was still at Wat Chakravatti Rajavas, people began to comment on the image's remarkable beauty. After it had been restored I brought it and had it placed for worship in the throne hall of the old palace near Damrong Sathit Bridge where I was living at the time. Everyone who saw this image remarked on its incredible beauty.

It was at about this time that His Majesty King Chulalongkorn was having Wat Benjamabopitr built. His Majesty said he wished to have antique molded Buddha images from various historical periods placed in this new wat— something like what His Majesty King Buddha Yodfa Chulaloke had done when he had had Wat Phra Chetupon built. His Majesty entrusted me with the task of hunting for these images for him. One day His Majesty mentioned to me that he desired to have a principal image in the library of the wat and that it should be slightly smaller than the ones in the gallery surrounding the consecrated assembly hall. It would, however, have to be a really beautiful and worthy of being the principal image. His Majesty asked me whether I could find it for him. I informed him that when I went up to Chiang Mai I had acquired one about that size, that it was now at my house and if it were to his liking I would present it to him; (meaning, if he did not like it, I would not). His Majesty said nothing at the time.

Two or three days later His Majesty had to go down to Samut Prakarn to receive a

bone relic (of the Buddha) which the Indian Government presented to him. His Majesty had entrusted Chao Phya Yamaraj (Pan Sukhum) when he still held the title of Phya Sukhum Naivinij, to travel to India and accompany this relic to Samut Prakarn. His Majesty called in at my house when he left the train at Hua Lampong Station, to take a look at the Buddha image in the throne hall. His Majesty took immediate liking to the image. "This image is amazingly beautiful," he commented and gave orders for the palace officials to arrange for the royal palanguin and a procession with high regalia and victory drums to transfer the Buddha image to the Royal Palace. His Majesty also presented the image with name "Phra Buddha Norasiha" and from that time on the image has been counted among the important images (of the realm).

When the previsional consecrated assembly hall at Wat Benjamabopitr was completed, His Majesty ordered Phra Buddha Narasiha transferred there, again with a large processin, to be the principal image until the large consecrated assembly hall was completed. As for the principal image of the large consecrated assembly hall, an inspection was made of all the ancient images in the provincial towns, up as far as Chiengsaen, but none was found that was beautiful enough to be brought down for the purpose. Finally, His Majesty had a replica made of the Phra Buddha Chinaraj in Pisanuloke to be used as the principal image. His Majesty also had a copy made of the Phra Buddha Narashiha which was then placed as principal image at the Royal Vihara in Wat Benjamabopit. As for the original Phra Buddha Narasiha, His Majesty had it transferred to Amporn Palace where it still remains in the royal household apartments.

People like to say that this Buddha image possesses super natural powers and brings good luck. They cite the fact that I myself who was responsible for bringing it down soon got promoted from Kromamuan (a royal duke) to Kromaluang (a senior royal duke); that Phra Budhacariya (Ma) who was then Phra Mangaladipyamuni and who took charge of the restoration work and was then an ordinary rajagana order got promoted to a senior rajagana rank of deva order — even Bhikkhu Piam, the craftsman who actually did the restoration work on the image Buddha Norasiha, received the title Phra Khru Mangalavichitra. That is what they said.

As for the Buddha image acquired from Muang Thung Yang, one could also say that it, too, possessed supernatural power, but quite of a different nature. After I had presented His Majesty with Phra Buddha Norasiha, Phra Budhacariya finished the restoration work on the Thung Yang image and sent it down to me. I had it placed in the throne hall where Phra Buddha Norasiha had been. A couple of months went by, when one day, as I was visiting my mother, as I usually do every day, she said to me: "Is it true what I hear? That you got an image down from the north and that it makes people quarrel?" Now, since I had never told anyone the story of this image, I gathered that one of the people who had accompanied me on the trip up north must have told my mother about it. Since she knew about it, I told her what I had been told in Utaradit. My mother commented that, the people in this house used to live peacefully with one another, but since I had brought that image into the house, people were always quarrelling. She then handed me a piece of paper on which she had noted down the names of the people who had had a falling out. The list contained names of people from both high and low birth. There were as many as six pairs of adversaries.

My mother admonished me to think carefully about the matter. I did think about it and felt that if I left that image in the house I would only be upsetting my mother. So I told the Ven. Phra Budhacariya about the matter and presented the image to him to keep at Wat Chakravatti.

I heard no more about the image from Muang Thung Yang for many months. Then, an official from Utaradit who had gone to Thung Yang with me came down to Bangkok and visited me at my house. I told him about the image and it occurred to me that it would be better to ask him to take the image back to Thung Yang than to keep it at Wat Chakravatti. I sent someone to ask for the image back.

The Ven. Phra Budhacariya, somewhat put-out, rushed over to see me immediately. He said he thought I had no more interest in that

image and that it had become his property. Since that image came to the wat, he noticed that there were an unsually large number of quarrels in the wat. Even one of the young disciples who was normally well-behaved went and hit a Chinese noodle man on the head. He had had no more peace and did not know what to do. As luck would have it, an up-country merchant whom he knew from the past came to Bangkok on business by boat and called in to see him. When the merchant saw that Buddha image he immediately took such a liking to it that he actually asked for it. So, unfortunately he had given that image away to the merchant and had no idea where he had taken it to.

Thus ends the tale of the Buddha image which I brought down from Thung Yang. I can only hope that, since the merchant who acquired the image was ignorant of its background, perhaps that is enough to prevent quarrels from occuring as they did in the past.

from *Nithan Borankadi*
by **HRH Prince Damrong Rajanubhab.**
Translated by Ms. Sumalee Viravaidaya



A Look at the Kalama Sutta

In this issue of the newsletter we have combined the feature essay with the "Sutta Study" column as we take a fresh look at an often quoted discourse of the Buddha, the Kalama Sutta. The discourse—found in translation in Wheel No.8—has been described as "the Buddha's Charter of Free Inquiry," and though the discourse certainly does counter the decrees of dogmatism and blind faith with a vigouous call for free investigation, it is problematic whether the sutta can support all the positions that have been ascribed to it. On the basis of a single passage, quoted out of context, the Buddha has been made out to be a pragmatic empiricist who dismisses all doctrine and faith, and whose Dhamma is simply a freethinker's kit to truth which invites each one to accept and reject whatever he likes.

But does the Kalama Sutta really justify such views? Or do we meet in these claims just another set of variations on that egregious old tendency to interpret the Dhamma according to whatever notions are congenial to oneself—or to those to whom one is preaching? Let us take as careful a look at the Kalama Sutta as the limited space alloted to this essay will allow, remembering that in order to understand the Buddha's utterances correctly it is essential to take account of his own intentions in making them.

The passage that has been cited so often runs as follows: "Come, Kalamas. Do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing, nor upon tradition, nor upon rumour, nor upon scripture, nor upon surmise, nor upon axiom, nor upon specious reasoning, nor upon bias towards a notion pondered over, nor upon another's seeming ability, nor upon the consideration 'The monk is our teacher.' When you yourselves know: 'These things are bad, blamable, censured by the wise; undertaken and observed, these things lead to harm and ill,' abandon them... When you yourselves know: 'These things are good, blameless, praised by the wise; undertaken and observed, these things lead to benefit and happiness,' enter on and abide in them."

Now this passage, like everything else spoken by the Buddha, has been stated in a specific context—with a particular audience and situation in view—and thus must be understood in relation to that context. The Kalamas, citizens of the town of Kesaputta, had been visited by religious teachers of divergent views,

each of whom would propound his own doctrines and tear down the doctrines of his predecessors. This left the Kalamas perplexed, and thus when "the recluse Gotama," reputed to be an Awakened One, arrived in their township, they approached him in the hope that he might be able to dispel their confusion. From the subsequent development of the sutta, it is clear that the issues that perplexed them were the reality of rebirth and kammic retribution for good and evil deeds.

The Buddha begins by assuring the Kalamas that under such circumstances it is proper for them to doubt, an assurance with encourages free inquiry. He next speaks the passage quoted above, advising the Kalamas to abandon those things they know for themselves to be bad and to undertake those things they know for themselves to be good. This advice can be dangerous if given to those whose ethical sense is undeveloped, and we can thus assume that the Buddha regarded the Kalamas as people of refined moral sensitivity. In any case he did not leave them wholly to their own resources, but by questioning them led them to see that greed, hate and delusion, being conducive to harm and suffering for oneself and others, are to be abandoned, and their opposites, being beneficial to all, are to be developed.

The Buddha next explains that a "noble disciple, devoid of covetousness and ill will, undeluded" dwells pervading the world with boundless loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity. Thus purified of hate and malice, he enjoys here and now four "solaces": If there is an afterlife and kammic result, then he will undergo a pleasant rebirth, while if there is none he still lives happily here and now; if evil results befall an evil-doer, then no evil will befall him, and if evil results do not befall an evil-doer, then he is purified anyway. With this the Kalamas express their appreciation of the Buddha's discourse and go for refuge to the Triple Gem.

Now does the Kalama Sutta suggest, as is often held, that a follower of the Buddhist path can dispense with all faith and doctrine, that he should make his own personal experience the criterion for judging the Buddha's utterances and for rejecting what cannot be squared with it? It is true the Buddha does not ask the Kalamas to accept anything he says out of confidence in himself, but let us note one important point: the Kalamas, at the start of the discourse, were not the Buddha's disciples. They approached him merely as a counselor who might help dispel their doubts, but they did not come to him as the Tathagata, the Truth-finder, who might show them the way to spiritual progress and to final liberation.

Thus, because the Kalamas had not yet come to accept the Buddha in terms of his unique mission, as the discloser of the liberating truth, it would not have been in place for him to expound to them the Dhamma unique to his own Dispensation: such teachings as the Four Noble Truths, the three characteristics, and the methods of contemplation based upon them. These teachings are specifically intended for those who have accepted the Buddha as their guide to deliverance, and in the suttas he expounds them only to those who "have gained faith in the Tathagata" and who possess the perspective necessary to grasp them and apply them. The Kalamas, however, at the start of the discourse are not yet fertile soil for him to sow the seeds of his liberating message. Still confused by the conflicting claims to which they have been exposed, they are not yet clear even about the groundwork of morality.

Nevertheless, after advising the Kalamas not to rely upon established tradition, abstract reasoning, and charismatic gurus, the Buddha proposes to them a teaching that is immediately verifiable and capable of laying a firm foundation for a life of moral discipline and mental purification. He shows that whether or not there be another life after death, a life of moral restraint and of love and compassion for all beings brings its own intrinsic rewards here and now, a happiness and sense of inward security far superior to the fragile pleasures that can be won by violating moral principles and indulging the mind's desires. For those who are not concerned to look further, who are not prepared to adopt any convictions about a future life and worlds beyond the present one, such a teaching will ensure their present welfare and their safe passage to a pleasant rebirth—provided they do not fall into the wrong view of denying an afterlife and kammic causation.

However, for those whose vision is capable of widening to encompass the broader horizons of our existence, this teaching given to the Kalamas points beyond its immediate implications to the very core of the Dhamma. For the three states brought forth for examination by the Buddha—greed, hate and delusion—are not merely grounds of wrong conduct or moral stains upon the mind. Within his teaching's own framework they are the root defilements—the primary causes of all bondage and suffering—and the entire practice of the Dhamma can be viewed as the task of eradicating these evil roots by developing to perfection their antidotes—dispassion, kindness and wisdom.

Thus the discourse to the Kalamas offers an acid test for gaining confidence in the Dhamma as a viable doctrine of deliverance. We begin with an immediately verifiable teaching whose validity can be attested by anyone with the moral integrity to follow it through to its conclusions, namely, that the defilements cause harm and suffering both personal and social, that their removal brings peace and happiness, and that the practices taught by the Buddha are effective means for achieving their removal. By putting this teaching to a personal test, with only a provisional trust in the Buddha as one's collateral, one eventually arrives at a firmer, experientially grounded confidence in the liberating and purifying power of the Dhamma. This increased confidence in the teaching brings along a deepened faith in the Buddha as teacher, and thus disposes one to accept on trust those principles he enunciates that are relevant to the quest for awakening, even when they lie beyond one's own capacity for verification. This, in fact, marks the acquisition of right view, in its preliminary role as the forerunner of the entire Noble Eightfold Path.

Partly in reaction to dogmatic religion, partly in sub-servience to the reigning paradigm of objective scientific knowledge, it has become fashionable to hold, by appeal to the Kalama Sutta, that the Buddha's teaching dispenses with faith and formulated doctrine and asks us to accept only what we can personally verify. This interpretation of the sutta, however, forgets that the advice the Buddha gave the Kalamas was contingent upon the understanding that they were not yet prepared to place faith in him and his doctrine; it also forgets that the sutta omits, for that very reason, all mention of right view and of the entire perspective that opens up when right view is acquired. It offers instead the most reasonable counsel on wholesome living possible when the issue of ultimate beliefs has been put into brackets.

What can be justly maintained is that those aspects of the Buddha's teaching that come within the purview of our ordinary experience can be personally confirmed within experience, and that this confirmation provides a sound basis for placing faith in those aspects of the teaching that necessarily transcend ordinary experience. Faith in the Buddha's teaching is never regarded as an end in itself nor as a sufficient guarantee of liberation, but only as the starting point for an evolving process of inner transformation that comes to fulfillment in personal insight. But in order for this insight to exercise a truly liberative function, it must unfold in the context of an accurate grasp of the essential truths concerning our situation in the world and the domain where deliverance is to be sought. These truths have been imparted to us by the Buddha out of his own profound comprehension of the human condition. To accept them in trust after careful consideration is to set foot on a journey which transforms faith into wisdom, confidence into certainty, and culminates in liberation from suffering.

by **Bhikkhu Bodhi**
from *Buddhist Publication Society Newsletter*
Kandy. No.9, Spring 1988



A Buddhist in Bangkok



Sulak Sivalaksa is some kind of "Black Sheep" among the Bangkok cultural elite. He could be called a dandy, being dressed in old Siamese style, and always carrying a silver-knobbed walking stick. He is both an occasional lecturer at Thammassat University, and a specialist in History, Buddhism, and Philosophy, having translated Plato and Aristotle into Thai. He is also a publisher and owns a bookstore. His life is restless as we will see.

In 1976, after the fierce suppression of the "Democratric Experience" the police stormed his bookstore on Rama IV Road and confiscated and burnt 45000 books on the charge of subversion. Most of them though concerned subjects such as Philosophy, Economics, History, Thai literature and Buddhism. Khun Sulak sent a complaint to UNESCO but was never given back his publishing house stock.

In 1984 the situation worsened. Following an order apparently backed by the army, Khun Sulak was arrested under a lèse-majesté charge and tasken into jail. He was accused of saying in an interview that the King of Siam was not aware of the real situation of the country, as he lived in his palace, surrounded by courtiers.

This "crime" is juged in Thailand by military court and is punishable by up to 15 years in jail. He was freed, this thanks partly to foreign protestations, and maybe also royal leniency.

Q. Your last book has been titled "Siamese Resurgence". What do you understand by this term?

The values tend to disappear from Thai society. There is a need for a revival of traditional Thai values.

Q. What are they?

As far as I am concerned, and for most people in Thailand it means Buddhist values. This is the core. But it does not mean "one has to be a Buddhist". It means one has to understand the society in which one lives, understand

that the survival of society depends on a natural framework, understand that one should, at the same time, have a broad understanding, be open minded, have respect for the others, even those who are different from us, and also be oneself, avoiding following foreign customs blindly (although we are precisely doing this when we adopt western values without proper understanding of them).

Q. You mentioned harmony with nature. Bangkok seems to be the very opposite case?

Yes precisely. It shows that something went wrong. We have ceased to be ourselves and we imitate what is done abroad. Bangkok is a second rate western city. "Progress" means adding ugliness to concrete, money and power, and unfortunately many people have to suffer from this.

Q. Is this concentation of power in the hands of a group not a product of Thai history?

I know it is the way History is taught in this country. But actually it is the viewpoint of the social elite. The reality is that in the Sukhothai era (the first capital of Siam) King Rama Kamhaeng's position was just slightly above his subjects. When the king was not seated on the throne, a monk would sit there and preach while the king himself would be seated among the audience. There was much more equality. The Sangha was then a model of an ideal society.

Q. Are we not very far from this ideal egalitarian society here in Bangkok today?

We are very far indeed. At that time the centre for traditional society was the Wat. The Wat was the centre for spiritual and intellectual life, as well as teching, medicine, arts.... Of course, this is no longer the case. We have "commercial centres" and "financial centres" instead (linked to international capitalism) and military men who are linked to big powers and the arms industry; all this goes well along with opium and heroin trafficking! Money, power and ignorance are the roots of evil in Buddhist society.

Q. Instead of a revival you speak rather of the spoiling of Siamese society!

My book suggests indeed the need for such a revival, but the path leading to this is very narrow. What we see is actually a wreck, a decadence.

Q. How did this happen?

First of all because we do not know who are we. Secondly because we tend to accept the idea of the affluent society and "technological progress" blindly.

Q. Thai people seem to be very pround of their culture. How come they are so easily tempted by the western way of life?

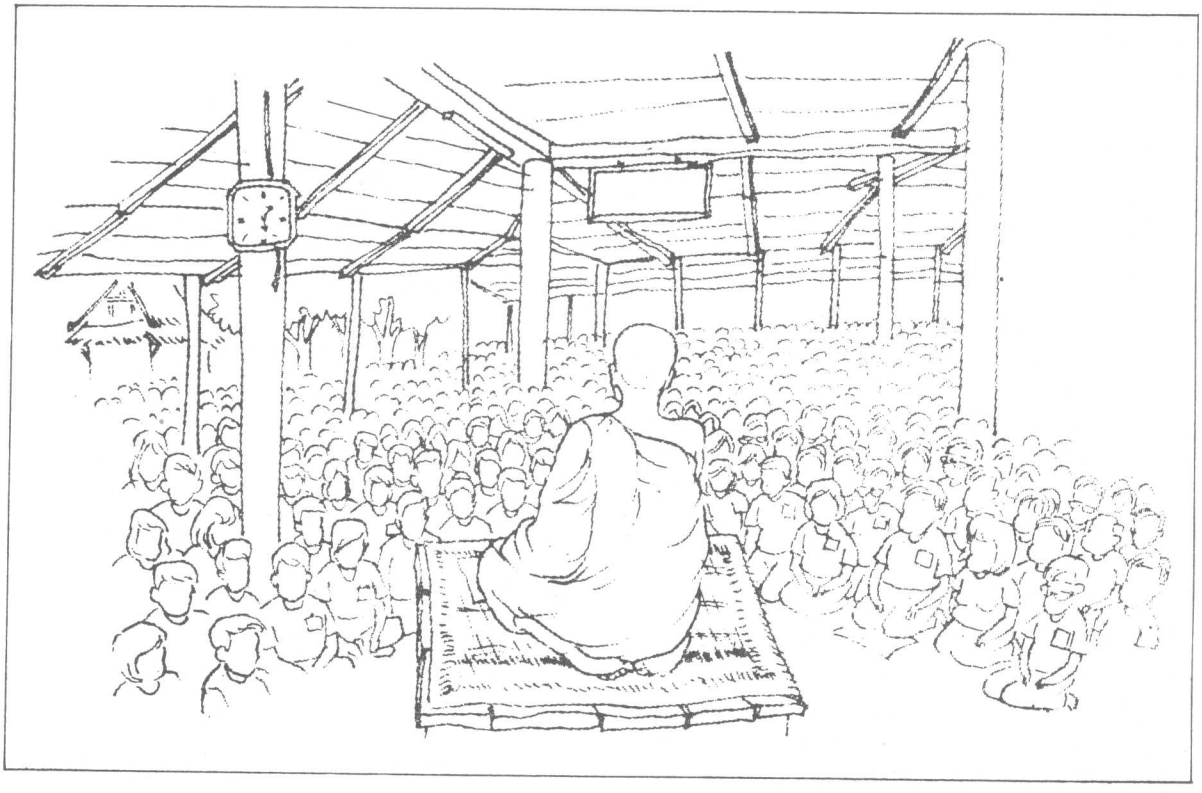
My opinion is that it comes from the fact that we have never experienced a colonial situation. In Burma they rejected British rule, at the same time they rejected western influence. They burnt their European clothes, and wore their *longji* again. With Gandhi it was similar case. He threw away his western clothes, then declared independence. But we, in Siam, have never suffered from a colonial situation. A fact we are very proud of — and this was our first mistake — to be proud instead of being humble. And we also tend to despise our neighbours.

We were the only country in the region able to negotiate on an equal standing with the government in London or Paris. Then our ministers learnt English. They admired western culture, without understanding them. This is the core of the problem; we have copied western materialism, but we have not understood western values and spirit: human rights, liberty, equality ... Something went wrong... We copied a false model! When one does not know where one stands, and one copies someone else's values and attitudes one is bound to make mistakes.

Q. Then what is left of Buddhism in contemporary Thai society?

We are Buddhists, but only for ceremonies, festive days. This was not the case before. We did not have, as you have, the duty to go to Church on Sunday. There was no duty because monks did not have any special power. People would naturally go to the **wat**, as it was their monastery, the place where they had been ordained themselves, or where their son would stay, and monks depended on the people too. But, please, do not think I dream of a past golden era, which has never existed. It is not a Buddhist attitude to try to set the clock back in the past. One of the first Buddhist teachings is about change, impermanence.

A free translation from French
by **Diana-Lee & J. Chirstophe Simon**



Santi Asoke: Symptom, not sickness

Could the non-conformist views of Buddhist leader Phra Bhodhirak lead him to be seen as a Thai version of the Ayatollah Khomeini?

Is he really an illegal monk?

Has he really violated the rules of the Sangha?

Is this regimented religious group really a rotten apple that will soon damage Buddhism in Thailand as a whole?

For those who are afraid of the monk's political outspokenness, the answers to all of these questions will be yes.

But according to social critic Sulak Sivaraksa and thinker Prof Prawase Wasi, the fear inspired by Phra Bhodhirak has a real basis.

Even if the cult leader violates secular and religious laws, which Sulak asserts that he has in fact done, it does not mean that Phra Bhodhirak can by simply written off.

It only means that the script will have to be changed, says Sulak.

According to Sulak, Santi Asoke is only a symptom of an illness. And that illness is the weakness of the clergy's failure to communicate with people of the younger generation.

He also suggested that the present Sangha laws and structures must be changed because "they are out of touch with reality."

In the meantime, Sulak alleges there is no question but that Phra Bhodhirak has violated both secular and religious laws.

In the case of the Dharma Vinaya, Sulak says it has been clearly stated since ancient times where the ordination should be performed, how and by whom. And ordination at a Buddhist centre such as Santi Asoke is simply not valid, he asserts.

An expert on Thai culture and religion, Sulak also says that the Lord Buddha told the

Sangha to accept secular laws and to live peacefully according to them, as long as they did not violate morality or the precepts of religious law.

According to secular law, Buddhist monks must be ordained by a senior monk of at least 10 years' standing. They must have certificates recording their ordination, and they must belong to one of the two sects, Mahanikaya or Dhammayuti.

The law also says that legal approval is needed to ordain monks. Phra Bhodhirak has no such approval.

But Sulak points out that breaking the law is not the reason why Phra Bhodhirak is under attack at the moment from the Parian Dharma Association, a conservative Buddhist movement.

"It is because Phra Bhodhirak is constantly attacking the clergy. He rocks the boat. And that is what gets him into trouble."

The emergence of Santi Asoke fundamentalist movement, he says reflects the inefficacy of the clergy in dealing with the pains of alienation among the younger generation, instead confining itself to performing rites and rituals, and concerning itself too greatly with materialism and capitalism.

The Ecclesiastical Council was set up during the reign of King Chulalongkorn as part of his centralisation of the religious hierarchy, following the secular administrative structure.

At present, there are about 300,000 monks in 30,000 temples across the country. And the proliferating "monks' business" of selling amulets or demonstrating "magical" powers are all contrary to religious law.

"But they have not been dealt with because they know better than to challenge the authorities," said Sulak.

The Ecclesiastical Council is comprised mostly of elderly monks whose main functions now are to give titles and promotions to monks throughout the country.

The time is ripe to find ways to revitalise the clergy and the Sangha, so that they can give spiritual answers to modern social problems, and help steer society away from greed and violence, Sulak says. In other words, cure the ailment afflicting the whole body, rather than simply disposing of the symptom: in this case, Santi Asoke.

According to Prof Prawase Wasi, the antagonism against Phra Bhodhirak stems mainly from his "thundering" against the clergy and other elements of the Buddhist establishment.

But he stresses that we should look below the surface in order to reach the essence of Buddhist teaching: that is, a return to sharing and an equitable society.

While Sulak agrees that Santi Asoke does more good than harm in bringing about a revival of religious interest in the country, he remains critical of Phra Bhodhirak.

"What he has done is to give society a much-needed moral jolt. Society is too much concerned with greed, competition and materialism. What he preaches needs to be heard."

But Sulak cautions against arrogance.

"The central teaching of Buddha is the eradication of self and of egotism. Phra Bhodirak's arrogance comes from a bloated ego. And that, I think, is dangerous."

Buddhism, he says, also stresses tolerance and peaceful co-existence. And Phra Bhodhirak's antagonism does not accord with a tolerance nature.

Certain of Phra Bhodhirak's practices are also at odds with those of Thailand's strict Theravada Buddhism.

Ancient religious law also prohibits monks from revealing or boasting of any supernatural qualities they may feel they possess. This rule is dismissed by Phra Bhodhirak as conflicting with common sense.

His vegetarianism and the concept of the Lord Buddha's reincarnation as a Bhodhisattara —which he claims himself to be—are also more part of the Mahayana tradition than of the Theravada.

"It is possible to accept Santi Asoke as another sect in Thailand. But certainly not in the Theravada tradition," says Sulak.

The "holier than thou" attitude also does not have any place in Buddhist teachings, he pointed out.

"The Lord Buddha never said that his way was the best. For example, he did not condemn animism, realising that not everyone could follow his path.

"What he did was only to recommend to people that there was a better way if one wanted to be rid of suffering.

"Yet Bhodhirak claims that his teachings

alone are correct. Everyone else is wrong. That is just against our Buddhist tradition of modesty and compassion''

The recent effort by the Parian Dharma Association to bring Santi Asoke to account is by no means the first.

According to Sulak, the Ecclesiastical Order had set up an investigative committee led by legal and religious authorities to consider the status of Santi Asoke in 1984.

After four years of investigation, the committee agreed that Santi Asoke had indeed violated both religious and secular laws concerning the Sangha.

The committee then submitted its findings to the security council for action. Much to the Sangha's disappointment, the answer, according from Sulak, was that the controversy was a highly sensitive matter politically. Therefore, the council agreed to put the matter into abeyance, and in the meantime to recommend that efforts should be made to strengthen the Sangha.

In other words, there was nothing to be done. Full stop.

Sulak says it is understandable that the conservative Sangha should be afraid of Santi Asoke's political power because, he says, the cult has been antagonistic all along. But it is another matter to exaggerate this power by describing him as a Thai version of the Ayatollah Khomeini.

The strict demands made by Santi Asoke upon its followers will tend to limit its appeal, in any case, he says.

Also, he stresses that it is necessary to separate Bangkok Governor Chamlong Srimuang from Phra Bhodhirak and to take account of the fact that Thailand's political and social structures have no room for extremism.

''As I see it, the Governor has more chance than Phra Bhodhirak of being politically powerful. But he has done little to apply his strict Buddhist beliefs to the practices of the wider society, for example, the sale of alcohol. Change doesn't come easy.''

Khomeini or not, what Santi Asoke has done is to show how much society wants monks who can communicate with the younger generation.

''It will be a pity if the clergy let this pass without considering it themselves.

''After all, Santi Asoke is but a symptom. We need to cure the illness itself.''

by **Sanitsuda Ekachai**
from *Bangkok Post*
July 23, 1988

THAILAND-Asian Active Non-Violence Seminar

The small non-violent movements which have developed in Asia in recent years are striving for regional coordination to facilitate deeper mutual understanding and work in areas of common concern. These groups are developing in the struggle to procure basic human and political rights for the poor and minorities and in the struggle against the oppression of technological capitalistic economic structures. These ruthlessly destroy not only traditional ethical values but also the ecological balance. Countries with Buddhist or Hindu cultures can refer back to old non-violent traditions. These can also be found in the Islam of Bangladesh and Pakistan. With this background the non-violent movement in Asia accepts the challenge of a *new ecumenism* (We would like to call to mind that the Fellowship of Reconciliation in Europe had been a pioneer of Christian ecumenism already at the time of the first world war.)

The AANV Seminar was the 3rd conference of non-violent groups from the Philippines (AKKAPKA), Thailand (Coalition for Peace

and Development), Bangladesh (Satyra Shanti) and Sri Lanka. Aims were a clearer and deeper understanding of non-violence in the light of the religions of the delegates an exchange of practical experiences and the setting up of a modest coordinating office. This is at present in Bangkok.

This new ecumenical dimension tries to meet the demand of our time for cooperation among all religiously motivated non-violent movements of the world. Its core is the *rediscovery* (and practice) of the *absolute respect for the human being* and creation, which constitutes an essential perception and the depth of the spirit. At its root we find our common base in the responsibility before God to respect each human being.

At this meeting *Islam* (= Peace) was the focus of our considerations.

The Moslem delegates and a Christian expert on Islam from Bangladesh helped us to get a clearer idea of the Islamic conception of peace and of the world-wide brotherhood of man. We discussed the (mis) interpretation of Djihad (justified, holy war) which was (originally) conceived as the struggle against evil within man himself. We also talked about the possibility of giving a wider interpretation to outmoded laws, about punishment, about human rights etc. A Moslem woman from Thailand, a university lecturer, reported on her efforts on behalf of women's rights in the impoverished Islamic south of Thailand. Together we began the first very exacting days of *Ramadan* the month of fasting, whose goals are purification, prayer, obligation in the four world religions (Hinduism Buddhism, Christianity, Islam). The human being is conceived as an inviolable creation in whom the Spirit of God dwells. However, in the practice of these religions absolute respect for the human being has been largely abandoned. It was the conviction of all participants, that this principle can only be renewed by a return to the deepest, most radical core of our respective religions. Therefore this is not syncretism but rather a lived and purified faith arising from forgiveness and reconciliation.

Buddhist monks (young monks who through meditation, have rediscovered non-violence and who are active in support of basic social rights for the people in accordance with traditional Siamese values) helped us to approach their conception of man's inner peace and his relation to nature.

The well-known Thai philosopher and social reformer, *Sulak Sivaraksa,* had visited *Sri Lanka* to help discover possible non-violent solutions from the Buddhist side in the dramatic armed conflict between Singhalese and Tamils. As a result of his trip two Buddhist monks and two Tamils, accompanied by an English Quaker (who worked for "Quaker Peace and Service") in Sri Lanka took part in the AANV meeting. One of the monks, Ven. Wimalasara Thero of the Vanni Peace Foundation, has taken 1500 refugees of both groups into his temple on the border between Tamil and Singhalese Zones. Threatened with assassination by armed militia, he answered, "If this procures you happiness, kill me!" The terrorists, impressed, did not kill him. The experience of this meeting led to the delegations's decision to try to unite the scattered peace workers in Sri Lanka in a non-violent movement. AKKAPKA and we ourselves promissed them our support.

Non-violence is on the rise in Asia. Individual contacts exist with India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Korea and Hong Kong. A branch of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation has long existed in Japan.

At the end of our stay in Thailand we worked with the country's own peace and human rights groups on fundamentals and practice of active non-violence. Participants comprised union members, leaders of popular protests against eviction from slum areas in Bangkok, village elders fighting for land rights, groups protesting against water power stations which threaten the last forest areas, groups supporting women's and children's rights (child labor) and those protesting against growing militarization of the country. Within the outwardly peaceful Thai society violence, encouraged by the break-through of western technological civilization, lies hidden in many forms. This situation can only be countered by peace work in the comprehensive sense of inner and outward transformation.

Hildegard and Jean Goss,
Vice Presidents, International Fellowship of Reconciliation
Nachreihengasse 21
A 1170 Vienna, Austria

Poems

A POET'S PLEDGE



1 Who would dare trade skies and ocean?
Wondrous creation is this world of ours.
These corporeal parts shall be laid
Betwixt earth and sky in the final hours.

2 We are not owners of clouds or air,
Or the heavens or any elements of earth.
Man has made neither moon nor sun
Nor a single atom in a grain of sand.

3 Man cheats and kills to grab empires;
Galvanized by greed, the breathing corpse
Spurns goodness and forgets its grave
Abdicating dignity of the human soul.

4 Components and elements of this earth
Are worth all celestial treasures
Cherish forever soil, sky and water
Make the world brighter than the heavens.

5 Fields, forests and impenetrable wilds
High mountains that challenge the clouds
Gibbons, buffalos, tigers, elephants
Ants and all species in this universe

6 Are like man's intimate beloved friends
Companions in circling current of rebirths
Priceless existences in Time's ageless span
Radiant treasures of immeasurable worth.

7 Let others soar beyond the infinite skies
Or tread cosmic paths of moons and stars;
But to this living world my heart is pledged
To Earth bonded in all my lives and deaths.

8 I shall even refuse Nirvana
And suffer the circling wheel of rebirths
To translate the multitudes of wonders
Into poems dedicated to this Universe.

9 To cleanse the human world of sorrows
Until peace glows into a golden age.
Then, my ashes with earth will integrate —
A calcified fossil keeping watch.

10 If men grew deaf to poetry's charm
What treasures could replace the loss?
Ashes and dust would abhor
The dryness of the wretched human soul.

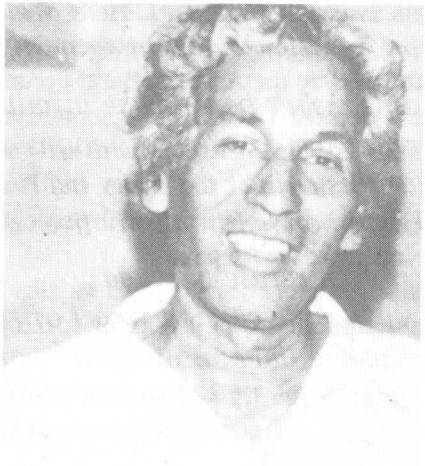
11 If this world were barren of poetry
Then farewell dear human race.
I would go and build a realm of the soul
With jewels of rainbow verses.

12 I shall enchant the celestial worlds
With priceless wealth of poetry.
My spiritual merits in the arts
Shall outlast Time's infinity.

Poet: **Ankarn Kalayanapongse**
Translator: **Chamnongsri L. Rutnin**

IN MEMORIAM

Mr. Surendra Chakrapani



Mr. Surendra Chakrapani

I had an Indian Brahmin friend whose name was Surendra Chakrapani. The first time we met was at a meeting held in Penang in 1979. The meeting was organized by the Asian Cultural Forum On Development (ACFOD). He came to greet me and told me that he had heard my name before. Then we talked and made friends with each other very quickly.

He said after the meeting he would go to Bangkok. I asked him where he wished to stay. "I would like to stay with you because I like you," he replied without hesitation and so he did. After that he was elected to be an Executive member of ACFOD. So he had to come at least once or twice a year to Bangkok as where is the head of that organization, he always stayed with me. Even though the meeting was over, and other members had left for their respective countries, he often extended his stay and went up country to explore and learn about Thai people's life. This made him aware of Thai culture in various aspects, unlike other foreigners who visit Siam. Consequently my family and most of my colleagues are familiar with him—my wife, children as well as my secretary and even my servant with whom he also made friends, including the younger people around me.

When I went to India, I could not stay there long as he did in Siam, and I did not stay at his home. However, I sent some of my Thai and British friends to lodge at his house. If I went to New Delhi, he would bring me to have meals cooked by his wife. Likewise he took care of me very well. Or when I went to other cities far away from New Delhi, if possible he would try to meet me. Moreover he always organized a conference inviting his friends and members of ACFOD who are development workers to discuss about ACFOD work while I was Coordinator of that organization. When I resigned from Coordinatorship, it was only him who really understood me and tried to protect my reputation espeacially when false rumours were spread against me by some ACFOD members.

I have many Indian friends but Surendra Chakrapani was the one who was most concerned about me.

What I was able to learn about Bhrahmin culture and civilization—besides from what I gained through reading and my direct experiences with it—came from him. He used to tell me "Do you know that our God always reincarnate in the Kshatriya caste, for example, Rama, Krishna and Lord Buddha. This is because we Brahmins want to please them, but, in fact, the power behind the throne is always in our hands."

Chakrapani added that sending Thai people to study in western countries is very expensive and makes people admire only westerners besides of being very extravagant which will make those people look down upon their own culture. Some people even don't want to go back to their own country. But by sending Thai people to study in India, they can learn either western or ancient Indian civilization. Furthermore they will learn to economize as well as to be honest and certainly they will return to their country.

His idea is quite good, although in general the qualifications of those who graduated from India are unfortunately insufficient. In addition he told me "Don't follow the western culture in connection with the permission to your children to select their own partners; it should be parents who select suitable persons for them". He raised himself as an example that his parents selected a wife for him. This was good that since then his wife and himself lived happily.

For this suggestion, I could only tell him that our Thai culture is now so far beyond his that we cannot follow that tradition. Even my father selected his wife by himself and so did I. If we were to select partners for our children, surely the would not agree with us, although there are many good things in old tradition itself.

When I was in gaol, he came to see me and wept! On his return to India, he campaigned with his compatriots to set me free.

When my mother died, Chakrapani held a Brahmin ceremony in New Delhi for her. He took her ashes to scatter under the Sri Maha Bodhi Tree at Buddha Gaya, of which I was very grateful.

Although he was a Brahmin he also respects our Lord Buddha,especially his teachings in relation with self reliance, using wisdom to solve any problem.He prefered respecting the teaching of the Buddha rather than sticking to the myth that he was an incernation of Lord Vishnu as mentioned in the Brahmin scripture.

The last piece of the work he volunteered to help me was to hold an exhibition on the Life and Work of Phya Anuman Rajadhon which would be presented at the Gandhi Peace Foundation and the Jawaharal Nehru University. Phra Maha Viro from All Radio India would also help in this venture. But on an unfortunate day there was an overseas call from New Delhi informing us that Chakrapani had suddenly passed away.

The death was perhaps the real happiness for him to leave peacefully from the present world. However, as his friends,we feel difficult to accept that he died so soon and suddenly.He dedicated himself to work with grassroots people especially in Himachandrapradesh—such kind of work has still to be carried on under the guidance of a person like him. Now his wife and children have lost the head of the family which left them in disarray.

In the circle of ACFOD, there maybe only a few people who understand him. On the international level, maybe not many realise this loss. But the Indian friends who worked with him during these 3 decades will understand his valuable dedication and feel the loss of such a man like Surendra Chakrapani.

For me, it means that I have lost an important good friend for whom I will not find anybody else to replace him.When I look back to our friendship over the past decade,we have had love,respect and understanding for each other. Such things are quite difficult to establish even with the people in the same nation as well as with those who speak the same language.

Sulak Sivaraksa
edited from *Asian Action*
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Fr. Michael Rodrigo

The Significance of Fr.Michael Rodrigo (1927-1987)

One year is now over after Fr.Michael Rodrigo O.M.I. was murdered on November 10 , 1987. While he was celebrating mass with his little community in Southeast Sri Lanka, an anonymous assasin killed him with a shot in his head.

Since then he has been nearly forgotten outside Sri Lanka. He thus shares the fate of the many thousand other victims of the cult of violence that reigns in Sri Lanka today. Within his own Roman Catholic Church he is in danger of becoming a victim of another mechanism that causes memories to fade: one praises prophets and martyrs and erects monuments for them in order not to have to consider their message any more.

Mike Rodrigo **was** a prophet and a martyr whose message, however, deserves to be heard not only in Sri Lanka but also elsewhere in the world. He himself was very keen to know what was happening in other countries, particularly the Buddhist countries of Asia. Thus he visited Thailand in 1986, together with three Buddhist monks and another Catholic priest from Sri Lanka to get to know similar attempts of living dialogue in village communities here in Thailand, a journey, that inspired him very much.

Who was he and what did he stand for?—Born 1927 to a Catholic mother and a father of Buddhist background,he was from his childhood aware to grow up in a non-Christian environment that made him sometimes admit that he felt to be a Buddhist by culture and a Christian by religion.

While these inter-religious aspect remained constant throughout his life the ways and levels on which he performed it changed considerably. Educated at Colombo's prestigious St.Peter's College he joined the religious order of the Oblates at the age of twenty. He absolved his studies of philosophy and theology at the no less prestigious Gregorian University in Rome from where he received in 1959 his first doctoral degree in Philosophy of Buddhism. From 1955 to 1971 he taught generations of priests at the National Seminary at Ampitiya, his main subject being liturgy.

During those years the Church in Sri Lanka and in the world at large experienced the beginning of a period of cirsis and reflection. Educated in pre-Vatican times and teaching in a traditional, Tridentine type of seminary, he more and more felt the insufficiency of the prevailing form of Christianity unresponsive to the context of Sri Lanka where the call for nationalism and greater social and economic justice was increasing tremendously in those days.

Before he went to study in Paris for his second doctoral degree in theology the 1971 Youth Insurrection brought the plight of the neglected rural masses and especially the youth to the fore. The impact of this event can be felt in his doctoral dissertation where he recognized the selflessness of the youthful insurgents as comprising elements of the passover from selfishness to selflessness which he identified in his thesis as being the common denominator of Christianity and all three other major religions in Sri Lanka. But the impact of 1971 went much further than to remain merely on the level of academic reflection. Fr.Mike did not return to the National Seminary but joined the 'Centre for Society and Religion' (CSR) headed by Fr.Tissa Balasuriya after his return in 1973. He thus opted for supporting a new form of Christian witness in post-Vatican Sri Lanka. Since 1971 a number of action and human rights groups, little life communities, action-related study centres as well as new approaches of non-parish centered pastoral work have developed at the fringe of the Church which tried to respond creatively to the needs of the poor majority of the country and become a true part of its culture. Besides the CSR there were Satyodaya in Kandy and Tulana in Kelaniya, to mention only two. In previously existing groups of Anglican background like the Christian Workers Fellowship (CWF) and Devasarana a radicalization process took place. While the mainstream Church was long (and somehow still is) preoccupied with coming to terms with the loss of its previous identity closely related to the private schools which they ran and which were nationalized in 1960, the concern of this increasing group of reformers was not to make the Church visible again but to make visible God's kingdom and its values of justice, peace, love and sharing.

Already at the CSR Fr.Mike was involved in training the seminarians of the newly erected Uva diocese whose bishop, Leo Nanayakkara, was the only bishop who wholeheartedly supported and inspired this whole new trend. In 1975 Fr.Mike moved with a handful of seminarians to Bandarawela in the hills of Uva, the most neglected of Sri Lanka's nine provinces, to serve these people which he regarded as his new vocation. With 'Sevaka Sevana' he began a new contextual type of priest formation which started from the real life experiences of the plantation workers of Upper Uva and particularly the peasants of lower Uva.

Through these encounters with the peasants he got to know their unwritten history: that lower Uva had been a relatively prosperous land with a well functioning irrigation system which enabled them to grow plenty of rice; that this system had been destroyed by the British who thus crushed the backbone of the notorious local resistance to British imperialist penetration in Sri Lanka at the first half of the last century. Always at the margin of the subsistance level the peasants of Lower Uva however managed to survive mainly as slash and burn (chena) cultivators in the dry and arid jungles that had developed in lower Uva.

Fr.Mike left 'Sevaka Sevana' in 1980 to share his life with the people of the village community of Alukalavita near Buttala, together with two religious sisters and one Buddhist layman. When in 1982 I went there for the first time, what I first saw at this place (and gratefully used after half an hour walk through the hot sun from Buttala!) was a jug with fresh water for all by – passers, often pilgrims to the

sacred shrine of Kataragama. My first impression was no exception: 'Suba Seth Gedara', as the place was called, does not only translate 'friendly wishes house' but it really was one.They lived in simple clay houses in the service to the village community, at first mainly through health services of one of the sisters. Through this work contacts to the neighboring population developed which began visiting the centre and shared their concern about lack of water and land,employment facilities and so on. Small seminars were organized and street theatres performed.

One of the most startling features of 'Suba Seth Gedara', however, was the village level inter-religious dialogue that grew out of this involvement. Initially a large skepticism prevailed among almost exclusively Buddhist population there who were afraid that the Christians would soon unpack the holy water and start to baptize. But after two long years of monthly discussions with the villagers and visits to the local Bhikkhus, pilgrimages to Buddhist shrines and a song session of justice—oriented Buddhist songs in the village, the local Bhikkhu said: "Henceforth we must continue collaboration for the rights of man. For whom did the Buddha work? What did your founder, Christ, do? He lived and died for man."

In recent years the impact of the liberal economic policies of the United National Party (UNP) which is ruling since 1977 became to be felt more and more by Uva's villagers.With its emphasis on capital intensive yield increase, the financially weak smallholders of Uva were dogged by this policy with disadvantages. The most far-reaching consequence for the social and political atmosphere in the area had the government's decision to provide tens of thousands of hectares of crown land to multinational sugar companies for their plantations, parts of which were previously been earmarked to benefit from Mahaweli water. Not only that the hopes of the people of Uva for water were crushed, but more severely thousands of families were driven out of their land which they had cultivated and cared for over generations as they were suddenly regarded as 'encroachers'. Giant sugar mills were erected to process the sugar cane from the plantations and thousands of households—often being evicted from their previous land—were offered to set up small sugar cane farms under the companies supervision.

Fr.Mike and his community became more and more involved in the conflict as it severely affected the people in Buttala. Especially the youth was angry about the lack of land or proper other employment opportunities and became a major force of fervent resistance struggle in Vellassa, the land of the hundred thousand rice fields, as this part of Uva is traditionally known. Some of these youths sympathized with the militant 'Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna' (JVP) (People's Liberation Front) which became the only political group in the South to pose a serious threat to the government. Most of these sympathizers were however unaware of the anti-Tamil racist Sinhala ideology or of its implications,to which the JVP has moved since 1983. As Fr.Mike worked among the unsatisfied youth it was easy to link him to the JVP. Security forces often raided Suba Seth Gedara without, however, finding any evidence of a JVP hide-out there. What—in fact—was behind this unbacked suspicion was the aim of local businessmen, administrators and politicians in favour of the multinational capital to make the community move away from the area. Through Fr.Mike, information about the practices of the companies and the local strong men were channelled to Colombo and elsewhere. He even wrote to President Jayewardene giving details about abuse of power and money in order to strangle the Vellassa peasants resistance.

As threats became more and more substantial the group seriously considered moving temporarily away from Buttala. Finally they gathered for mass on the evening of November 10 to consider all the pros and cons in prayer and meditation. The common decision was to stay. After communion and before the final blessing, Fr.Mike was shot from the window behind him. Also Sr.Milburga was injured.

Who the murderer was is still not known.Several times concerns have been raised to the president that a proper investigation into the murder of Fr.Mike has not yet been launched. That might, however, be related to the open secret that the UNP-sponsored paramilitary 'Green Tigers' were behind the killing. This group was established to protect UNP politicians from the attacks of the JVP but are known to have more than once extended their 'mandate' to serve UNP-politicians and their friends other interests as well.

It might be that Fr.Mike was politically a bit too naive to assess the real danger that arose through the way he made his informations known to the president (and somehow even hoped that he would resolve the problem!). Maybe, that it was in a way his lone-fighter attitude and "the absence of a movement to effectively back him in his witness both at the local and national level" that made him and his community unnecessarily vulnerable, as some of his Christian friends thought. But whether or not this is *true, Fr. Mike* had difficulties with this kind of political reasoning. When it comes to truth and justice one has to tell where one stands and stand up for it, that was his opinion. Usually a gentle, calm and humble person, he could become unexpectedly angry when his sense of justice and truthfulness was hurt.

In the first obituaries and articles after his death the main emphasis was on the political background of his murder and the prophetic character of his witness, while the relationship to his religious convictions and theological thinking was widely neglected. They are, however, a key to understand him and the kind of significance his witness carries.

His basic convictions can be found already in his doctoral dissertation of 1973. As its title'The moral passover from selfishness to selflessness in Christianity and the other religions in Sri Lanka' already implies Fr.Mike identified in it a basic pattern for all the four religions represented in Sri Lanka. This pattern consists of a transition from a situation of 'less' to one of 'more' in qualitative terms. Moreover this transition is to be fulfilled not in a vacuous space but in real society and thus contains a socio-political dimension.

Fr.Mike proceeded in three steps. In the first one he identified this basic pattern in Christianity, in the second he unveils it in the other three religions and finally he associates it in the third part with the social situation in Sri Lanka at that time and the resulting necessities.

The first part contains the theological foundation of his whole work: the Easter incident, in which Jesus transcends from death to life, has become the cause and source of energy for the individual and collective 'transition' from sin to sainthood, from Death to Life. It is not important whether the source of this transition is known or not. Being conscious of it is not as important as the transition itself.

This theological basis does not portray anything completely new. However, how he points to the political dimensions of this 'transition' is remarkable. He not only refers to the teachings and philosophical concepts of those religions but also to their connections with actual religious practices. In turn he understands these as practices which prove to be liberative in the political context also in Sri Lanka. In the political context it stands in contrast to capitalism which is exactly the opposite and therefore the enemy of any liberative transition, since it is based on the self, egoism, and does not aim at that transition but tries to prevent it again and again.

Thus he elaborated in his closing chapter the significance of the Youth Revolt of 1971 as a paradigm of a search for such a transition in the most recent history in Sri Lanka. "The search for true freedom is in the soul of our people" just as it was a fact for him that the compulsion for transition is rooted in each human being. "This law of self-liberation (is) incised into man... this urge is ontologically written into the very heart of man."

At this point a further pattern of Fr.Mike's argument becomes evident. The destination of every human being exists in the transition, and so he has the duty to correspond to this destination.Thus Fr. Mike used the final chapter to show that the moral 'indicative' of the liberative transition must be carried over to the 'imperative' in the people's struggle for liberation. Thus Christians can act with trust in the one who has shown "that it is basically and truly human, and now a divine work too, to give one's life to others. There is no room now for mere guesswork, suspicion or supposition, for Christ himself lose His life to prove the truth of this tendency in man; in what is called the Passover mystery, the passing over from evil to good being a secret shared by all men."

That Fr.Mike has stressed the liberative potential of all Asian religions has many consequences; for example those regarding cooperation and genuine dialogue between the members of all religions as well as for the Church pastoral. Thus he considers the forming of basic **Christian** communities problematic since for him what should be formed are **people's** communities. This is because people live together and

their religions do not mutually exclude themselves; the Christians could really contribute in such communities to a liberative transition in which Jesus Christ would ultimately prove himself.

In the context of such a community amidst the people, as 'Suba Seth Gedara' is, Fr.Mike's considerations on this subject have deepened even further. Thus he came to ask the question how Christ (and 'to live in him') can be experienced in this way. He expressed the opinion that it is ultimately a mystical experience, for it is the experience of the Spirit of Christ which he made. 'Life in Christ' signified for him therefore a life in the Spirit, for "the Christian mystic must accept that Christ's permanent presence is assured by his absence... The real present, the now, is the presence of the Holy Spirit." The absence of Christ thus becomes the christological reason and source of a Christian spirituality in living dialogue.

It was often uttered that Fr.Mike had a predicament of an early death.But sentences like'We must be ready to die for our people if and when the time comes' are spiritually deeply rooted in his belief in the value of the passover that can take many forms. The significance of his witness for the Church in Sri Lanka and other countries in Asia is that he showed by his witness that the Church need not be afraid of a passover, as—after all—Jesus Christ after his passover promised "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matth 28,30). The passover for the Church would be a passover from an old identity to a new one, living and working with the poor in peoples communities, thinking primarily in terms of the kingdom and its growth and not of the institution and its preservation, supporting small peoples communities and having the patience and giving them time to grow stronger. While the mainstream Church is often afraid to lose its identity Fr.Mike was living out his conviction that to retain a Christian identity one must be willing to die and to be born again. "For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it." (Mark 8,35).

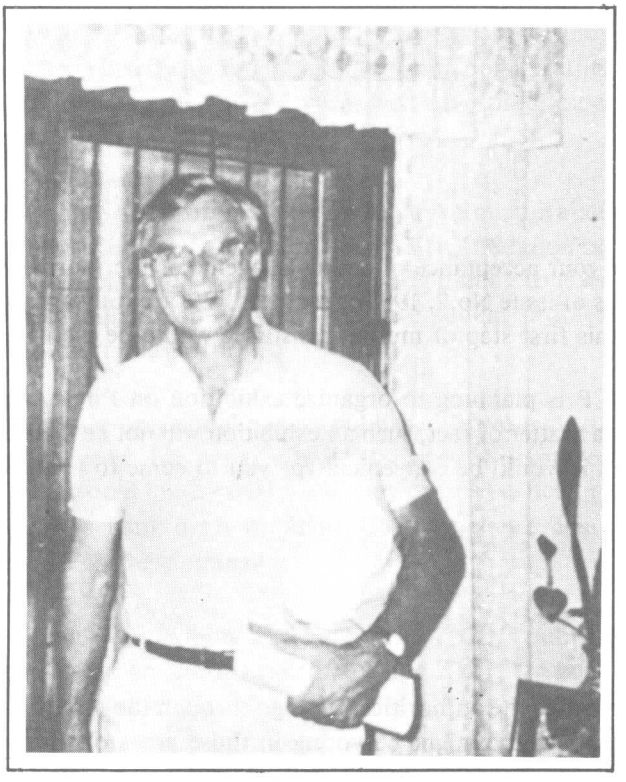
It has been an age old belief in the Church that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. Let us remember for which kind of Church he has shed his blood so that his seeds will grow and bring fruit: a Church in which Christ's spirits lives in living communities and active inter-religious groups.

Ulrich Dornberg

Theo Janssen : the Man of Partnership

The first time I met with Theo Janssen was during a meeting in Bangkok in 1982. All of us, staff members of one non-governmental organization for development, gathered to meet with the new representative of Cebemo, a Dutch "funding agency". The event was new for us. Usually only the executives would meet with such a person. Moreover, his attitude surprised us all. He told us his personal story, his seven years experience working in Indonesia and many years in Africa before joining Cebemo. Even how he met his wife, with whom he had two children, a happy family. One of his statements struck us. "It's you who should decide what to do and how to do, and not we who should dictate. But we have to challenge you, and you should challenge us. This is a real and equal partnership."

Theo Janssen died on the 10th of October 1988, after having struggled against tumor for almost a year. He has witnessed "partnership", not by words, but by his attitude, his commitment, and his engagement in development activities in Asia, particulary in Thailand. He insisted and convinced the doubtful board of Cebemo to continue the relationship with one NGO in Thailand trying to assist it not only when it has no problem, and runs smoothly, but especially when it faces problems. For him "a friend in need is a friend indeed"



Mr. Theo Janssen

When in October 1985 I quitted one NGO in a rather dramatic way, Theo called me from Holland several times, and wrote personal letters to express his solidarity and understanding of what had happened, and committed himself to support my new initiatives.

Theo became director of Asia desk some years ago, but he continued keeping Thailand under his responsibility. Despite all these burdens, he still found time to visit some villages in the North and the Northeast. He said he wanted to meet with the villagers and to learn from them. One wish he could not fullfill was to spend some time in a Buddhist temple in the rural areas, to meditate and learn about the Buddhist way of life.

Theo's dream was to develop the equal partnership between Cebemo and the NGOs in Thailand, a relationship that goes beyond the donor-recipient model, that consists of mutual support and mutual learning, a sharing of experiences. Theo sincerely recognized the cultural richness of Thailand, and wished that we shared with him and the Dutch people this richness. He was the great supporter of the socio-cultural approach, or the holistic approach, vastly practised by many Thai NGOs. He tried his best to intermediate these experiences to Cebemo staff and the Dutch people, encouraging them to come to Thailand to learn about this experience. In July 1987 his wife and his two children joined him in Thailand for a few weeks of vacation. He wanted to introduce them to a country he loved. Theo did not feel being disturbed when people kept on going to see him and discuss about development issues and projects even while he was on vacation.

A broad-minded man who sincerely respected the others, recognized the differences and the limitations, kept on making, dialogue and learning till the end of his life. In his dying bed, he read about the experiences of Buddhist monks in community development in Thailand.

Theo passed away with only 53 years of age. But his spirit is still alive. The spirit of partnership.

Seri Phongphit

Letters

17 August 1988

Dear Mr. Sulak,

Thank you very much for your acceptance of acting as agent for the journal *Buddhists for Peace.* We have just sent you 20 copies of issue No.2, 1988 as required. We are fully agreed with the proposed price for each copy. We hope this first step of mutual assistance would be increased further.

The Headquarters of ABCP is planning to organize exhibition on Phya Anuman Rajadhon in Ulan Bator next year (1989). As a matter of fact, such an exhibition will not be realistic unless the contribution is yours. We wonder when it would be convenient for you to come to Ulan Bator for this project.

Cao Xuan Pho

Jaffna is tense at the moment as the authorities try to go through the motions of an election against the wishes of the LTTE. Though there might be voting in those areas of the East which are Muslim or Sinhalese and in those places where the other Tamil militant groups are strong, I doubt if even 1% would vote in areas under influence of the LTTE, particularly Jaffna. Voting is due only in November, but even the nomination of candidates is proving impossible with kachcheries remaining closed and the TULF languishing in India.

The South, as you will have heard, has problems too. The government has decided upon a date for presidential elections and both its candidate (Premadasa the current PM) and Mrs. Bandaranayake have promised, on coming to power, to dissolve parliament and hold a general election. If fair and just, elections under the new system of proportional representation would result in a much more representative parliament and this would be a very good thing. However elections, particularly general elections, set in motion gargantuan forces and everyone exerts a fair ammount of violence.

The JVP supposedly has some deal with the SLFP by which the smaller party gets a voice—and may be ministerial portfolios—if the SLFP wins. However, I would not have thought that the purists of the JVP would feel that working under the wing of that party fulfilled their aspirations in any way. The economic changes they seek are too radical to be accomodated by the SLFP which, after all, is not too dissimilar from the UNP in its economic policies and its systems of patronage. To implement anything like their intended programme the JVP needs power in its own hands. The time of greatest instability likely to be immediately after the general election results are declared when either there will be a fledgling government without established control of the state machinery in office or, if the UNP is reelected, there will be wide spread anger and accusations of a rigged ballot. If I was a JVP man I would try to seize power then.

The Militant groups are under considerable pressure and rehabilitation organisations are more affected now then ever. Last week two workers from Redd Barna, a Norwegian organisation (the Norwegian version of Save the Children Fund actually), were kidnapped and the fate of one still keeps in the balance.

from **Sri Lanka**

Dear Achaan Sulak,

We have met each other very briefly during the simposium on literature in Thailand held at this university on 1 October. Your visit to the university was well advertised, especially by Prof. Muhammad Haji Salleh, a good friend of mine.

I have learned a great deal from your profound talk on Phya Anuman Rajadhon. I must also thank you for giving me a copy of the Institute's occasional paper no.VII, "Religion of Consumerism". I read the content of the interview with great interest and it is most frightening to learn of what consumerism has actually done spiritually to Thailand. In Malaysia we have similar problems too, perhaps in a much larger magnitude and more disguised in form.

I have managed to acquire other occasional papers published by your institute when they were put on sale during the simposium, except for paper no.VI, "Siamese Literature and Social Liberation". I would be very grateful if you would kindly send me a copy of this particular paper. I believe the paper is US$2.00, but I am enclosing a bank draft for Baht 450,the balance being my donation to the Thai Inter-Religious Commission For Development.

I would be very grateful if you would kindly arrange for the TICD's publication, *Seeds of Peace* sent to me regularly. Please also put me on the Institute's and the TICD's regular mailing list. Would it be possible for me to get hold of back copies of *Seeds of Peace?*

During the brief meeting with you, I promised to send you copy of papers that I have written on the Siamese of Kelantan. Enclosed are two articles which were published in *Sojourn* and *Mankind* which could be of some interest to you.

I am teaching anthropology in this department and my academic interest is basically on Buddhism. My PhD thesis submitted to the Australian National University was on the social organisation of Buddhism in Kelantan, a state in the northeastern part of the Malay Peninsula. But I must admit that my fieldwork experience is limited only to the Siamese Buddhists of Kelantan plus some brief stay with those of Kedah.

I would like very much to expand my comparative study and understanding of Buddhism beyond Malaysia. If there are seminars related to Buddhist studies held in Thailand and in which anthropogists could participate, please let me know. Perhaps I should be able to deliver a paper reporting on the situation of Buddhism in northern parts of Peninsular Malaysia. What seems to be quite unique about this area is that the practice of Buddhism takes place within an environment which is predominantly Malay and Muslim.

So much for now and thank you for your attention. Hoping to hear from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Mohamed Yusoff Ismail

Books

A Socially Engaged Buddhism

"Sulak Sivaraksa is barrister-at-law, publisher, critic, lecturer, traditionalist—and thoroughly unpopular. Rightists call him an out-and-out communist, while he disappoints Leftists (and his Rightist detractors) by rejecting communism and most aspects of doctrinaire socialism...His very unpopularity is a recommendation that he be listened to. He presents no ideal solutions, but his thought is wide enough to contain the best in tradition with the best in progressive thinking." Thus writes Michael Wright in his interview of Sulak Sivaraksa sometime ago.

Michael Wright's article which demonstrates the thinking of Sulak well enough is to be found in Sulak's recent publication in English, *A Socially Engaged Buddhism*. This book is the author's fourth major work relating to the Thai Buddhism after *A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society, Siamese Resurgence* and *Religion and Development* respectively.

Attempting to illustrate how Buddhism must nowadays be linked adhesively with society as a "Buddhist's alternative", Sulak first explains the "vision" aspect of a "Siamese" Buddhist, followed by the "values" point of view, the principles of both being incisively expounded. The third section deals with the "search for alternative development models". It touches on rural poverty specifically and deduces that the "widening gap between the rich and the poor" is the "result of the rural development policies as carried out by the governments of South-east Asia which are supported by Japan and the West as well as international financial institutions..."

In the end, it seems the alternative would be progress with less need of technology in the modern sense using instead the "applied science", a combination of natural and social science which is free from western domination. "This will not really be a new lifestyle but a return to the sacred, with social justice and freedom of choice as to religion and culture as the core of personal spiritual development", writes Sulak at one point. Hear what this 55-year-old social critic has to say about Japan regarding its 100 years of diplomatic relations with Thailand in his "monologues with Japan". A very interesting perspective.

On the other hand, his "dialogues with Christians" is equally mind-probing and his chosen alternative for people's co-existence:

"In this day and age, we do not need converts in Christianity or Buddhism. We need to be converted to our original teaching, with spiritual depth, to be fully human, rather than to be an economic animal, a political entity or a chauvinistic nationalist", writes Sulak adding that the "common enemies" to both Buddhists and Christians today are "materialism, militarism and consumerism".

There's perhaps nothing entirely new about the above thinking, as Sulak might argue. He says that himself in the book's Foreword that "new thinking is never new", because Lord Buddha had done it 2,500 years ago. "A new manner of thinking", rationalises the author, "is possible only after the brain's old program is replaced by a new one. Usually people are programmed by selfishness through *avijja* (ignorance) which leads to conflicts and violence..."

Sulak sometimes seems like a lonely voice. But assuredly his message is meaningful and gathering listeners. A race against time perhaps, but a race the Thai people can hardly afford to lose.

by **Gap**
from *Bangkok Post*
September 25, 1988

Buddhism for the urban elite

Peter Jackson, *Buddhadasa: A Buddhist Thinker for the Modern World* (Bangkok, The Siam Society, 1988) pp.354

For the past fifty years, Buddhadasa, Thailand's controversial philosopher monk, has been consumed with the task of elucidating the relevance of Buddhism in modern-day society to the educated, but often sceptical, urban elite.

During this same period, Christian, Jewish and Islamic, religious leaders have similarly sought to tackle the confrontation between religious tradition

and socio-economic change. They have struggled to assure that the conflict and tensions evolve into creative rather than destructive forms.

While several of Buddhadasa's works have been translated into English, there has been, to date, no comprehensive analysis of his intellectual thought, its antecedents, its implications for roles of both laymen and monks, its contradictions, and its repercussion on cultural, social and political life in Thailand.

Dr Peter Jackson has admirably filled this academic vacuum. He is clear, concise and balanced in his presentation. The reader can appreciate the complexities and intricacies of Buddhadasa's intellectual adventurism and its occasional logical inconsistencies.

Jackson provides the reader with a valuable description of the socio-political context within which Buddhadasa's thought has developed.

In Thailand, the state and the Sangha have needed each other's support. The government and clerical establishments have been extremely sensitive to anything that threatens the relationship.

Buddhadasa's careful adherence to approved clerical practice and his acceptance of the official ecclesiastical hierarchical authority may be seen as a practical compromise to assure that the sanctity of his radical, if not subversive, interpretation of Buddhist doctrine is preserved without interference from the ecclesiastical authorities.

The author, *en passant,* provides his readers with insight as to why the far more doctrinally conservative Phra Bhotilak of Santi Asoke is under such ecclesiastical pressure as he challenges hierarchical authority and introduces his own variations of traditional clerical practice.

But Buddhadasa is convinced that it is necessary to dismantle the traditionally accepted barriers between the world-affirming sphere of the layman and the spiritual realm of the world-renouncing monk.

Jackson describes with great clarity how crucial it is to Buddhadasa's thesis that this forced separation be breached so that lay men and women can have access to the same spiritual attainment as monks, and that salvation for all is possible in this world of here and now.

Buddhadasa sees karma, merit, rebirth, nirvana as things of the present. Past and future lives are thus no longer so relevant. Traditional Buddhist thought conceives the world as inseparable from suffering. For Buddhadasa and his followers, suffering is the product of external conditions and the world becomes an arena where suffering can be eliminated.

The means to do so revolves around the core concept of Buddhadasa's philosophy, *jit waang* or freed mind—a mind freed of the self-centredness that leads to attachment, craving, and aggrandizement.

As we achieve this insight into the state of *jit waang* we are reborn. As this state of mental calm and equilibrium imbues our every action, significant progress towards nirvana in our present existence is achieved.

Jackson illuminates for us the selective intellectual paths Buddhadasa traverses to reach his innovative interpretation of traditional Buddhist doctrine, including reliance on Mahayana and Zen. He bases his idiosyncratic interpretations of Buddhist doctrine on selective choice of scriptures, often at the expense of consistency.

Buddhadasa has carefully designed a linguistic sleight of hand as mundane language *phaasaa khon* is transformed into spiritual language *phaasaa tham*. Jackson indicates that this transformation of meaning facilitates and justifies Buddhadasa's reinterpretation of traditionally understood Buddhist doctrine so as to fit into his unique philosophical model.

Jackson, fortunately, has also given the reader a *tour d'horizon* of Buddhadasa's social and political thought.

The author has deftly pointed up the linkages, continuities and inconsistencies involved. For Buddhadasa, one must not retreat from the world and its suffering and chaos.

One must rather, through morally guided social activity inspired by a lack of self-centredness, seek to alleviate and overcome poverty and social injustice. Economic activity can lead to spiritual attainment if it is undertaken with the awareness of *jit waang* and if it leads to removal of povery, sickness, injustice.

It follows that moral, spiritually-attuned people should be involved in politics and, through the application of the dharma, transform politics to be directed towards achievement of both material and spiritual well-being.

Buddhadasa's political

thought is conservative, and it is here that many of his most fervent supporters part company. These followers, representing the liberal intellectual elite, are quite comfortable with Buddhadasa's "plague on both your houses" chastisement of exploitive capitalism and the class hatreds of materialistic communism.

However, they object to Buddhadasa's predilection for benevolent authoritarianism as the political model through which his utopian dharmic socialism will be realized.

For Buddhadasa, moral responsibility must take precedence over freedom. Individual political rights should be forsaken to guarantee social order and stability. Dictatorial means, albeit inspired by moral rectitude and spiritual values, become a tool to promote the dharma and assure peace and social order.

But Buddhadasa has, himself, become somewhat uncomfortable with the inconsistency between his authoritarian-biased political thought and his more democratic-oriented religious thought where salvation through one's own efforts is championed. He has, therefore, modified slightly his authoritarian political biases.

Elsewhere, Buddhadasa has yet to come to terms with one of the basic inconsistencies in his philosophical model. Buddhadasa argues for spiritually-based activism and the removal of the barriers separating laymen from the realm of spiritual attainment. But he opposes the secular involvement of the Sangha in activities of either a political or social nature.

Buddhadasa would appear to be penalizing a socially conscious and committed Sangha from seeking their salvation through spiritually imbued community development work undertaken with minds freed from the burden self-centredness.

And yet, a significant proportion of the rural Thai Sangha is doing just that. Both Jackson and Buddhadasa almost completely ignore the productive dynamism of a Sangha-initiated movement comprised of rural "development monks" which is increasingly taking hold in the North and Northeast of Thailand.

These monks have been instrumental in merging spiritual and material development, both in theory and in practice, and the focus is placed on self-sufficiency, moderation, frugality, appropriate technology and mutual help and cooperative patterns of behaviour.

Despite the objections of more conservative Buddhist commentators, community service of this kind, within the acceptable limits imposed by Buddhist rules of discipline, is now generally sanctioned and approved of by the ecclesiastical authorities.

And, most importantly, this is not new. Sangha involvement in the secular concerns of their impoverished rural communities has been prevalent in one form or another for hundreds of years and is both desired and approved of by the villagers. From a purely rural perspective, much of Buddhadasa's thinking, as in the above instance of monk role-play, would be met with dismay, if not outright disapproval.

Merit, rebirth and karma have more traditional meanings for villagers, are central to rural existence and permeate everyday village behaviour. Buddhadasa's pleas to divest Buddhism of what he perceives of as the barnales of Brahmanic and animist thought and ritual would not find a receptive rural audience.

While popular Buddhism in rural Thailand often takes on form and substance at some variance with philosophical teachings of the Buddhist texts, the villagers view Brahmanic ritual and animistic beliefs as largely separate but complementary to Buddhism. Each in its way fulfills a need and each functions to establish psychological balance, maintain social order and stability and assure the ultimate survival of the individuals and the community.

As one reflects on Buddhadasa's religious, social and political thought so ably explained and dissected by Jackson, it becomes increasingly obvious that Buddhadasa's constituencies are the educated urban middle-class and intellectual elite as well as disaffected urban youth.

Buddhadasa's rational analysis of Buddhist doctrine; his acceptance of science and technology coupled with education as necessary elements in the struggle to eliminate poverty and social injustice; his contempt for moral laxity and self-centredness, whether of monk or parishioner; his acceptance of economic acitivity, albeit spiritually imbued; his assurance of the possibility of salvation in this life through the medium

of awareness—*jit waang*—all have meaning for an educated urban class.

It is this constituency that has questioned the relevance of Buddhism to their lives and has been disillusioned by the craving and attachments of members of the clergy.

Buddhadasa's teaching has certainly helped to bring some of these disaffected educated urbanites back into the religious fold. His importance lies in showing the "benefit" of religion to a wary urban public immersed in a world of technology, science, commercial activity and modernization.

Jackson is to be commended for his reasoned analysis of Buddhadasa's thinking. There is an immense amount of intellectual food for thought and contemplation in this book which, coupled with virtue, will hopefully lead the reader to wisdom.

The Siam Society, through this publication,is contributing to a dialogue on the relevance of Buddhism in modern-day Thai society. To further that dialogue and perhaps redress the balance, the Siam Society might consider publishing the works of Phra Rajavaramuni, the most articulate exponent of a Sangha committed to active community service.

by **William J. Klausner**
from *The Nation*
October 16, 1988

Remembering a great scholar

"It's time for the nation to celebrate another commoner", said the man who's always clad in his typical Thai-style trousers and shirt , Sulak Sivaraksa, that "lamp of Thai intellectuals". It was a casual remark at the opening of Preecha Arjunka's exhibition of paintings at The British Council the other night, but the "commoner" referred to by this renowned social critic and noted historian was none other than Phya Anuman Rajadhon, the great scholar whose birthday centenary is upcoming on December 14 this year.

Those who know Archarn Sulak will understand that everything he says is far from being ordinary. The celebration plans have apparently been in the pipeline for quite some time, starting with the earlier publication of the prodigious volume of writings of Phya Anuman, also known by his common name of Yong Sthirakoses, through UNESCO's endorsement of the Thai Government's request to "enlist the name of Phya Anuman Rajadhon as an internationally celebrated personality".

In 1987 a similar request by the Royal Thai Government was granted at the time when the nation celebrated the Bicentennary of poet Sunthorn Phu. UNESCO then participated in several commemorative activities. In its Draft Resolution UNESCO recognises that "Phya Anuman Rajadhon was a great scholar whose contributions to the literary world will always be remembered and appreciated, and who was the light that guided his contemporaries and the succeeding generation towards truth, goodness and beauty."

It is an honour to be cherished. The light both through his writings and translations that Phya Anuman shed across almost 200 hundred subjects certainly inspired several of the country's leading scholars later on. Sulak Sivaraksa naturally is one contemporary who's still alive; and the late distinguished historian Prof Kachorn Sukpanich was another.

As this point I'm not sure what specific activities will take place to commemmorate the occasion, but obviously the Sathirakoses-Nakapradipa Foundation for which Sulak is chairman of the organising committee, will most likely come up with very interesting programmes.

Meanwhile, this is a wonderful opportunity to browse through Phya Anuman Rajadhon's works. Bookmarker has in the past reviewed some of the volumes such as *Essays on Thai Folklore* (in English) and more recently a unique book on tradition and lifestyle entitled *Kwam Tai* (The Death) written under the name of Sthirakoses. Considering the unlimited choice which is now available my selection represents just the tip of the iceberg.

One publication which was launched just a week or so ago that must be read as an initial familiarisation with Sathirakoses as a personality is *Poh: Phya Anuman Rajadhon* (Father: Phya Anuman Rajadhon). This high-profile biographical work is written by daughter Somsri Sukumonlanand, the third of the nine children. Archarn Somsri's book marks the second publication of its kind. The first was released last year—*Phya Anuman Rajadhon 'Poh Khong Luke* (Phya Anuman Rajadhon, Our Father) was compiled by three of his children, Archarn

Somsri included.

The only book by Phya Anuman Rajadhon himself that tells anything about the author at all is *Fuen Kwaam Lang* (Remembering the Past). But even so, daughter Somsri writes that half of it doesn't say much about her father because "father could have forgotten that he was actually writing an autobiography as he felt that there were other people and events that were more important."

Poh is a warm and candid remembrance by a daughter of her father. With due respect the author recounts the life of the man who "all his life paid his gratitude to his country with his enduring labour and perseverence to make the Thai language, history and culture known to the world". From childhood which was Chinese in origin, to his early formal education and working experiences as an official at the Department of Customs, as key man on culture during field Marshal P. Pibulsongkram's era and as director-general of Fine Arts Department and a professor at Chulalongkorn University, the daughter recounts the details.

The picture is of a man who's honest, modest and absolutely dedicated not only to his work but to the guiding principles in his life. Sathirakoses was said to have once thrown a bribe brought over to his house by a Chinese merchant out of his window of his living room. As the head of a large family which comprised three generations and with his writing to do he had his hands full. But the author gives much credit also to her mother, who's a model housewife and mother of her time.

The two points that her father stressed specifically—perseverence and independence—are what all his children seem to have inherited. One of the kids remembers these aspects better than most, probably as he had to learn to swim the hard way when as a little boy he fell in the *klong*. His father was just sitting there watching him disappearing into the water and coming up again only to have to struggle to learn to dog-paddle his way to the ladder himself. Sathirakoses told the alarmed wife that he could see that the boy didn't really need help, but that he could help himself. "When a dog falls into the water it knows how to paddle", he assured her. "Human beings ought to be able to do that too".

The Sathirakoses lived in a large wooden house in the Surawongse area on the *soi* now named Soi Anuman Rajadhon. Their lifestyle strictly adhered to tradition and customs and is told not necessarily only with pretended pleasure. Her mother's status, that of a daughter-in-law who had to come live under the same roof as the in-laws was not altogether an exciting experience to write home about. But her mother, Khunying Lamai later on, took it in good spirits. The author's point on the status of Thai women in general is very refreshingly assessed here.

So is the entire biography, which is also very fair and unbiased in its presentation. Most importantly a picture of Phya Anuman Rajadhon emerges as someone who never stopped learning and searching for something of a higher value. "Father liked to memorise poems or proverbs which he held up as his mottos", his daughter recounts at one point, "And one of them is a poem by Rudyard Kipling..."

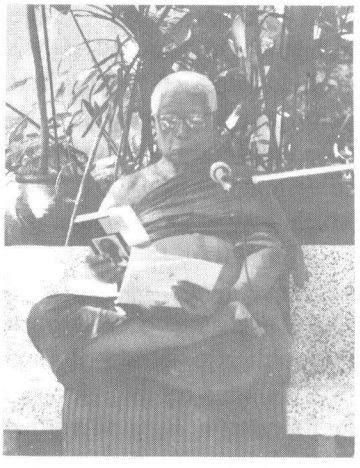
I have six honest serving men,

Who teach me all I know.

Their names are What, and Where and When,

And Why and How and Who.

by **Gap**
from *Bangkok Post*
October 23, 1988



Une Herméneutique Bouddhique Contemporaine de Thaïlande: Buddhadasa Bhikkhu **Louis Gabaude** Paris: École Française d' Extrême-Orient, 1988. 690 pages.

Une Herméneutique Bouddhique Contemporaine de Thaîlande: Buddhadasa Bhikkhu is quite a marvelous book on Buddhadasa in French. Louis Gabaude, an energetic and efficient French scholar, carefully wrote it for the sake of contemporary Buddhist studies and practices. He states that most Thai Buddhists generally understand life and the world

according to the *Trai Phum Phra Ruang*. For example, the concepts of kamma and rebirth are taken literally in connection with three realms of existence: the past, the present, and the future. In the Nineteenth Century, however, European and Thai scholars began to discuss seriously such popular understanding.

In the beginning of the Twentieth Century, classical Buddhism was under an attempt of a new analysis. The Buddhist teachings in the Tipitaka were exposed in either anthropomorphic or doctrinal sense.

In the middle of this century, Buddhadasa, an eminent monk in Southern Thailand, thought that such interpretations of the Buddhist doctrine neither rendered any justice to the Buddha's teachings nor solved human problems nowadays. He, therefore, invented a new theory of Buddhist interpretation which became a technique of searching for the original meaning of the Tipitaka, i.e., the Buddhist hermeneutics.

Buddhadasa's hermeneutics is concerned with the theory of Human (Everyday) Language and Dhamma Language. It is used for criticizing incorrect expressions of Buddhist and other religious doctrines. Moreover, it indicates that all philosophical and religious teachings share certain common features (p. 124).

In order to illustrate Buddhadasa's hermeneutics, Gabaude has differentiated the Buddhist teachings into languages of Classical Buddhism, of Scholastic Buddhism, of Magical Buddhism, and of Animistic Buddhism.

The Language of Classical Buddhism is the original meanings of the Buddha's teachings which are revealed in the doctrine of the Dependent Origination. The Language of Scholastic Buddhism is the Buddhist teachings elaborated in the Abhidhamma. According to Gabaude, Buddhadasa denies the authenticity of the Abhidhamma, i.e., the Abhidhamma is not the Buddha's words. The Magical Language of Buddhism is a popular interpretation of Buddhism which reflects popular beliefs and practices and supernaturalism of Thai Buddhists, e.g., the prolongation of life which contradicts the Buddhist doctrine of the Law of Kamma. The Language of Animistic Buddhism is the popular understanding of Buddhism which allows the cults of spirit worship.

Gabaude explains that, for Buddhadasa, all of these languages should be used in Dhamma Language and not in Human Language. For example, "Asura-Yakkha" is anyone who is fearful and/or fears others; he is not "une sorte de génie (phi) invisible qui fait peur et n'ose pas se montrer prace qu'il a peur (p. 295).." Buddhadasa's hermeneutics thus provides all Buddhists with a good sense of the Buddha's teachings and the way of practice accordingly.

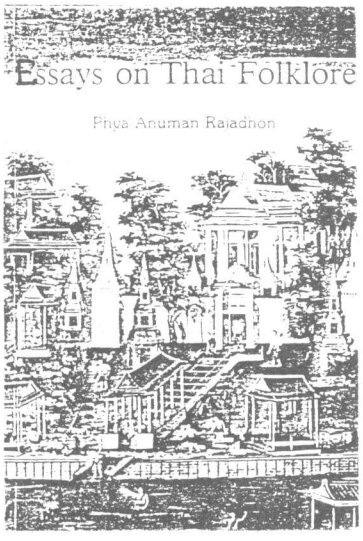
Comparing with Jackson's *Buddhadasa: A Buddhist Thinker for the Modern World,* Gabaude's book demonstrates a more persistent and exhaustive work. Nearly half of the book contains an abundant Appendix in which one can find illustrations and expositions in Dhamma Language, the Glossary in Human Language and Dhamma Language, the Bibliography of Buddhadasa's work and other scholarly work on Buddhadasa in Thai and in foreign languages, and the Index in Thai and in English. The two books are arranged in the same structure. They begin with Buddhadasa's life history and end each chapter with a conclusion. Nevertheless, the contents of the books indicate their authors' different purposes: Jackson's book is concentrated on Buddhadasa's teachings in the Thai socio-political context while Gabaude's aims at an analysis of Buddhadasa's language.

Generally, this book is a valuable source for an advanced research on Buddhadasa. Though Gabaude's explanation of Buddhadasa's hermeneutics is not quite a unique work, his plentiful Appendix is incomparably distinguished and extremely necessary for contemporary Buddhist studies.

Pataraporn Sirikanchana
Thammasat University

Essays on Thai Folklore
by **Phya Anuman Rajadhon. Sathirakoses—Nagapradipa Foundation.** Third Edition 1988

This new edition of the learned writings published in honour of the centennial birthday anniversary of the Thai great scholar Phya Anuman Rajadhon is very timely and meets the need not only for the Thais but also for the English reading public the world over



who are interested to know more deeply about the Thai ways and life in Thailand.

Phya Anuman was a unique Thai who without the benefit of formal education beyond grade four became a self-taught man. His inte ıal ability and scholarship as sought by well-known universities within and without his own national community. His writings provide a mine of information and interpretation on the culture, literature and concept of the Siamese people. The beliefs handed down from times long past and surviving the social changes that had come about in the country can be appreciated by those outsiders who might wonder why Thai people think and behave in certain ways. Even for the Thai people themselves, these collected essays will be helpful to appreciate how their own traditions and folklore had developed.

Divided into five chapters dealing respectively with Culture; Language and Literature; Folk-tale; Buddhism; and Rites and Rituals, these writings of Phya Anuman will enable readers to perceive the meaning of customs and practices in Thailand and understand the Thai thought and beliefs.

Because of the common cultural background of South-east Asian nations, information contained in this publication has also implications for understanding of values in neighbouring lands with references to *Ramakian* (based on the famous Indian epic *Ramayana*) and Buddhist birth-stories.

It is also interesting to note that while the publication is a reproduction of the writings of the author in English, an appendix provides an English translation of the author's work about the life of the Thai farmer, who, of course, forms a typical character in the agrarian Thai society.

Besides the value of the publication itself, we must not overlook the valuable parts of the publication such as the preface, foreword and the appendices. The preface was written by the famous and respected H.R.H. Prince Wan Waithayakon, a leading scholar with international reputation. The foreword and the obituary on the author were written by Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa who had been personally close to Phya Anuman himself during the author's life-time.

The interested readers around the world will welcome this publication which will have lasting value for scholars dealing with Thai people and their nation.

Tint Tint Than
Slum Childcare Foundation
Bangkok

Buddhism in society

A Socially Engaged Buddhism

Author: Sulak Sivaraksa

Publisher: Bangkok Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development

Distributor: Suksit Siam, 1715 Rama IV Road, Bangkok

Sulak Sivaraksa, the perennial gadfly on the Thai body politics, lives up to his reputation in his latest English publication, *A Socially Engaged Buddhism*.

Achaan Sulak, with his usual verve and flair, plays the role of the agent provocateur on the battlefields of social reform and spiritual development as he goads and incites his readers to "awaken" and become mindful and aware in their everyday lives.

The author, without fear or favour, pursues the task of the ture intellectual as he questions the accepted values of a society that he sees as materialistic and deluded by greed and power. Throughout this book, he rails against the forces of consumerism, materialism and militarism. The capitalists and communists, the merchants of death who deal in military escalation and armament sales, the exploitive multi-nationals and international banking community, the complacent power establishments, whether secular or clerical, all are subject to the critical thrusts of his acerbic pen.

It is not surprising that officialdom, over the past decades, has viewed Achaan Sulak sometimes as a serious threat, sometimes more derisi-

vely, as having, in Cotton Mother's words, "windmills in his brains."

However, Achaan Sulak has not been cowed, and he continues to depict present conditions of life and accepted values as intolerable and to agitate for change. Unlike some other academics and *soi disant* intellectuals, he has avoided being co-opted into the bureaucracy and has shut his earn to the siren songs chanted in the corridors of power.

Yet, as other intellectuals throughout history, he has had to face the personal crises of either becoming an endangered species or being viewed as irrelevant. Achaan Sulak has sought to remain a "scholar of action," in Ralph Waldo Emerson's phraseology, to "make history" by his *engage* involvement in a wide variety of development oriented non-governmental organizations (DNGO).

In the book under review, his activities with the Coordinating Group for Religion and Society, the Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development, and Asian Cultural Forum on Development (ACFOD) are touched upon.

As *A Socially Engaged Buddhism* is a collection of lectures, articles and interviews, it is instructive to note the audiences and readership to whom Achaan Sulak was speaking. More often than not these audiences represented groups and organizations with their own special concerns, commitments and agendas.

In the sections of the book on Siamese Buddhist values and the search for alternative development models, the author offers his readers a vision of a society based on Buddhist morality and imbued with spiritual values of calmness, compassion and impartiality.

Self-centredness is removed and mutual help and interdependence become the norm. The author extols models of development that offer an alternative to the emphasis on economic growth, as the values of self-reliance, self-sufficiency and frugality are given priority. Consumerism is curbed; appropriate technology becomes highly valued as does rational management and conservation of natural resources.

As in other books written by Achaan Sulak, *A Socially Engaged Buddhism* has short profiles of role models revered by the author. These respected elders, whether they be of royal blood or commoners, all exhibit the same virtues of simplicity and humility as well as a sense of excellence in whatever their profession, task, or activity. As one reads of the life and work of Prince Dhani Nivat; the Princesses Chongchit, Pilai, and Poon, daughters of Prince Damrong Rajanubhab; Phya Anuman Rajadhon; Buddhadasa; and Phra Debvedi (Phra Rajavaramuni), one comes to better understand Achaan Sulak himself, what he values and what motivates him.

Each of his role models, in different ways, are supremely conscious of their cultural roots, have benefited from Western education but have not been enslaved by it, and have been deeply committed to moral and spiritual development.

Those familiar with the author's writings will find in this present volume a reaffirmation of the values that so imbue this intellectual maverick's persona. For those who have not yet been challenged and energized by Achaan Sulak's critiques of Thai society, *A Socially Engaged Buddhism* will open up new horizons and provide much food for thought and reflection.

Reviewed by **William Klausner**

from *The Nation*
November 13, 1988

Father : Phya Anuman Rajadhon
by Somsri Sukumanlananda
Bt. 55

Phya Anuman Rajadhon or Sathirakoses was a scholar who has written a lot of books. But his own biography is rarely seen even in the library.

Because of his fondness of leading an ordinary life, he never thought himself important although, in fact, he was. Thais who are interested in literature must recognize the name Sathirakoses and Nagapradipa

The famous *Kamanita* was translated from English into Thai by these two Thai scholars. Other important works of theirs are *Hitopates, Bengkli fable, Tosamontri* and *Katha Saritsakorn.*

He was not only an expert in literature, but had a good knowledge of Thai customs. He also wrote several books about these customs such as *Custom of Death.*

Nobody knows exactly how many books he has written. But they can be roughly divided into several fields. They are literature,

culture, language, religion, custom and tradition, art and entertainment, biology, history, archaeology, biographies, novels, fables and translated works. Each field includes many books.

To commemorate his one humdredth anniversary on December 14, Somsri Sukumalananda, his third daughter, was asked by S.Sivaraksa , president of the Sathirakoses and Nagapradipa Foundation, to recount her father's life.

Somsri is now a well-known columnist of Satresan magazine. Her column offers readers tips on how to make oneself useful to society.

Somsri narrates her father's life including her recollections of him when she was a child, in direct and clear language. Readers may get the immpression that the writer is sitting in front of them, telling the story.

The book is divided into eight chapters. They are *His Life as a Youth, His Life as a Civil Servant, His Family, His Home, His Children, His Friends, His Works* and *His Last Day*.

Phya Anuman Rajadhon was born to Thai-Chinese parents on December 14, 1888. He was named Lee Kuang Yong at birth. He began his first lessons at home, tutored by his father.

He got his primary education at the Assumption College where the medium of instruction for most of the lessons were in English. This made him fluent in the language, even though he did not know at the time that it would be useful to him in his work later.

He was as fluent in Thai as in English, though he was not allowed to speak Thai at school. Thus, his favourite subject was translation, both from English into Thai and from Thai into English.

Besides the famous *Kamanita,* he also translated such works as *Arabian Nights, Folcon, Poland Raj* and *Face to Face with the Great Napoleon*.

He married Khunying Lamai Anumanrajadhon, and has five daughters and four sons.

He bagan his civil service career at the age of 19, working at the Customs Department. He worked there until he retired at the age of 45, after he had reached the post of deputy director general.

One year later, he was persuaded to work at the Fine Arts Department as the head of the art section. His salary at that time was only Bt400 per month.

He worked for eight years until he was appointed director general of the department.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Phya Anuman Rajadhon remained a faithful husband and a good father.

I have six honest serving men,

Who teach me all I know,

Their names are What, and Where, and When,

And Why, and How and Who.

Phya Anuman Rajadhon died of leukaemia on July 1, 1969. His body was cremated like all Buddhists.

by **Nantiya Tangwisuttijit**
from *The Nation*
October 9, 1988

Recommerded Reading

1) *Evolution & Liberation* No.3 with articles by Ven Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (free distribution) Suan Mokh, Chaiya, Surat Dhani 84110 Siam .
2) *Social Alternatives* $20 (Aust) per annum (4 issues) Dept. of Government, University of Queensland, St Lucia, Qld 4067 Australia .
3) *Nonviolence Today* $2.50 per copy. Movement for a New Society, Transnational Collective 4722 Baltimore Ave, Philadelphia, PA 19143 USA.
4) *Seductive Mirage: The Search for the Village Community in Southeast Asia* by Jeremy Kemp (Foris Publications for Center for Asian Studies Amsterdam)
5) *Journal of the Siam* Society Vol.76 1988 dedicated to Phya Anuman Rajadhon.
6) *Culture and Environment in Thailand : Dynamics of a Complex Relationship*. The Siam Society 1989.
7) *Culture, Philosophy and the Future*. Essays in Honour of Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana on his 80th Birthday (P.T. Dian Raykat) Jakatar.
8) *Revolution from Below : Buddhist and Christian Movements in Asia :* Four case studies from Thailand and Sri Lanka by Robert Bobilin, University Press of America U.S.A.
9) *A Guide to Awareness :* Dhamma Talks on the Foundations of Mindfulness by Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara (Ven. Suvaddhano Bhikkhu) Wat Bovornives Vihara, Bangkok.
10) *The Vajaradhatu Sun* a monthly Buddhist newspaper 1345 Spruce St., Boulder, Co. 80302 USA $2.50
11) *Crazy Wisdom News* a true information service to all the Disciples of the Clear Evolved Nre, 8 Lorong 22/49 A 46300 P.J. Selangor, Malaysia.

Phya Anuman Rajadhon

The Commission recommended that the General Conference should adopt draft resolution 24 C/DR. 215, the text of which is reproduced below:

The General Conference,

Considering the Royal Thai Government's intention to celebrate the Birthday Centenary of Phya Anuman Rajadhon on 14 December 1988 and the Royal Thai Government's request to enlist the name of Phya Anuman Rajadhon as an internationally celebrated personality,

Recalling the success of the Bicentenial Celebration of Sunthon Phu in 1987 and the participation of Unesco in the commemorating activities,

Recognizing that Phya Anuman Rajadhon was a great scholar whose contributions to the literary world will always be remembered and appreciated, and was the light that guided his contemporaries and the succeeding generation towards truth, goodness and beauty,

Considering that the international commemoration of the anniversaries of great intellectual and cultural personalities contributes to the realization of Unesco's objectives and to the promotion of the mutual appreciation of national indentities and cultural values,

Recalling that in resolution 4.351, adopted at its eighteenth session, it promoted the comemoration of the anniversaries of great personalities and events,

Invites the Director-General, within the budgetary resources provided in the programme and budget (24 C/5), to involve the Organization with the activities organized on the occasion of that anniversary in Member States.

Exhibition on Life and work of Phya Anuman Rajadhon

A Photographic exhibition on life and work of the late Phya Anuman Rajadhon and aspects of Thai culture is currently being shown in Australia in conjunction with his centenary in December.

Also present at the exhibition is social critic Sulak Sivaraksa who is visiting six states in Australia from August 6 to 31 at the invitation of Australia Quaker Service and Peace Committee.

Sulak's programmes include giving speeches to Buddhist and Christian communities, peace activists, non-governmental agencies, schools and universities.

To mark this important event, Thai Government and UNESCO will hold similar exhibitions and seminars on Thai studies in several Asian countries where Phya Anuman's work has been translated into their languages. The exhibitions are also to be held in Europe and North America.

from *Bangkok Post*
August 26, 1988

Phya Anuman

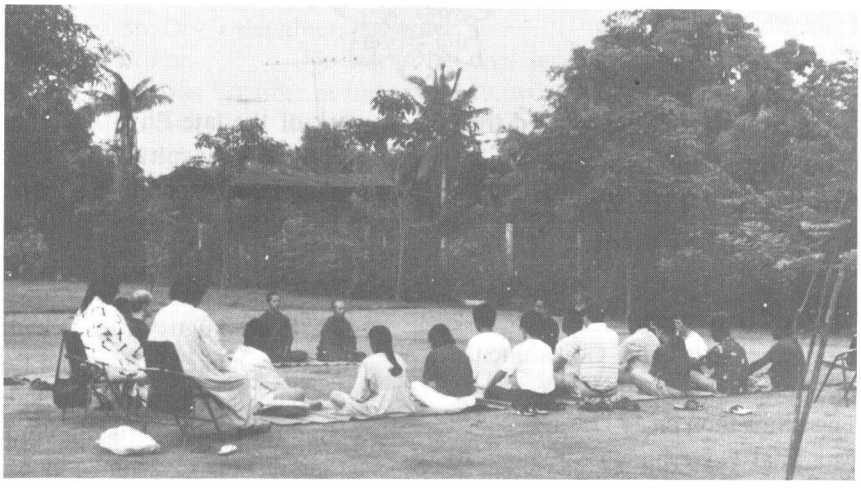
The National University of Malaysia is holding a photographic exhibition on Phya Anuman Rajadhon's life and works as well as aspects of Siamese culture at the Department of Malay Culture in Kuala Lumpur.

Prior to this event in Malaysia, the Thai Students Association in the Federal Republic of Germany under Royal patronage, also organized an exhibition on "The Life and Work of Phya Anuman Rajadhon and Aspects of Siamese Culture" in Berlin on August 27.

In November, similar exhibitions will take place in Kathmandhu (Nepal), Seoul (South Korea), and in New Delhi and Dharamsala (India), prior to the actual centennial birthday of the late Chao Khun, which will be a national celebration in Bangkok and in the provinces on December 14.

from *The Nation*
October 4, 1988

Buddhistic economy: Happiness for everyone



So far, Buddhism is largely confined to the inner self, the purification of the mind, and despite its simplicity and clarity, little effort has been made to incorporate Buddhistic concepts into an economic system that would produce equilibrium in society.

Gradually, however, people are beginning to put general concepts into words. The teachings of one monk, Phra Debvedi (formerly Phra Rajavaramuni), the foremost advocate of a 'Buddhistic economy' (if there is such a thing), as opposed to the Western economy, were echoed last week by M.R. Pridiyathorn Devakula, senior executive vice president of the Thai Farmers Bank.

In his speech, "The philosophy of the business sector", the highlight of a business seminar organized by the Siam Cement Group, Pridiyathorn explained step by step the underlying thoughts of a Buddhistic economy.

The Buddhistic concept starts with the perception that any production process occurs simultaneously with a destruction process: nothing gained without something lost.

From that, from this concept comes *all good production should yield output with a value greater than what has been destroyed.* Taking this premise one step further, Pridiyathorn then asserts that *all production should bring about the greatest quality of life for the people.*

Sharply contrasting a Buddhistic economy with a capitalistic economy Pridiyathorn stressed that while Buddhism emphasizes the quality of life, the bottom line of capitalism (alghough he did not use this term directly) is pricing or investment return.

He cautioned that as long as the pricing yardstick is used, problems in the gap between the rich and the poor and the overexploitation of the environment will continue to exist.

Thus, desire, fuelled by incentive, can never be satisfied. According to capitalism, the only virtue seems to lie under the cloak of growth.

Such respected business magazines as *Fortune* indicate that credit goes to companies that post the highest profits and employ the most efficient means of production, with little, if any, recognition of the totality of the production process by which man interacts with his fellow human beings and with the environment.

Pridiyathorn did not hesitate to assert that as a Buddhist, one should be conscious that pricing should be held secondary to the quality of life and the quality of environment.

Within the Buddhistic framework, the common people can achieve an acceptable

quality of life if they are paid at a minimum wage level that can support them. That question, Pridiyathorn stressed, must be borne in mind even ahead of supply and demand. It is loose thinking to set the minimum wage at a level that attracts foreign investment.

"I don't want to see our country become like the Philippines, which records high economic growth but has a wide gap in the distribution of income," Pridiyathorn said.

Buddhism also holds that the real value of natural resources must be weighed before they are destroyed in the process of production. The ecological consequences of destroying a forest should be taken into account before trees are cut down to serve a handful of people. Operators of industrial plants should be aware of the environmental problems that might follow from the discharge of industrial wastewater into rivers.

IMPLEMENTATION

Throughout his entire talk, Pridiyathorn stressed again and again the strong relationship between maintaining the people's quality of life and a sound environment. "At least, deeper in our mind, that kind of idea should exist," he said.

Although, such ideas may sound too idealistic to be practical, Buddhism does provide the steps to be taken to achieve the objective.

To be sure, new entrepreneurs may accept only reluctantly the vision of the quality of life being so closely linked with the quality of environment. They are likely to be so concerned with the survival of their business that they would overlook the living conditions of their workers, continue overexploiting raw materials and assume little or no responsibility for environmental consequences.

In this case, Pridiyathorn suggested resorting to legal measures to make sure that these new entrepreneurs march on the right course.

Regulations should be introduced and enforced to control the exploitation of raw materials. Natural gas should not be overly used to fuel power generation plants. The pace of lignite consumption should not be accelerated. The list goes on.

Pridiyathorn also voiced concern that Thailand does not have any law regulating construction along the beaches. If left uncontrolled, unbridled construction can turn most of the country's beautiful beaches into ugly entertainment places.

"Look at what Switzerland has achieved," he said. "Through preserving its environment, Switzerland has become an immortal tourist destination all the year round."

Pridiyathorn warned that if we allow the Thai tourist industry to develop uncurbed, some day it will reach a state of decadence. "Phuket is still there, but if no one is overseeing it, with new hotels being built up, we will eventually destroy the place," he said.

On another level, Pridiyathorn suggested that moral teaching seems appropriate in dealing with entrepreneurs who have just made a success of their business and are in search of other abstract values. For these people, money is not a problem. What they want appears to be power and honour.

Pridiyathorn, who loosely defined honour as anything that society holds to be good at a particular point in time, said that now it is an honour to become a member of the Board of Trade or the Federation of Thai Industries, among others, which is more or less an illusion.

Instead, Pridiyathorn said, these newly successful entrepreneurs should be instilled with a value of the quality of life, instead of power and honour gained mainly through money. The government and the media have the responsibility to ascertain and create that value.

Recognition should be given to a good entrepreneur who takes good care of his workers or maintains sound environments instead of promoting business that records the highest growth. And these successful entrepreneurs will become a pattern for others to follow.

It is the role of the government to promote the goal of the quality of life. The consumers will benefit from relatively good products; workers will receive good payment for a decent life; natural resources will not be wasted; peace will come to pass in the society in which we live.

If that can be achieved, then happiness for everyone can be achieved.

by **Thanong Khanthong**
from *The Nation*
September 5, 1988

Irradiation Plant draws protests



Environmentalist groups yesterday submitted a letter to Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan demanding that the Government scrap a 120 million-baht food irradiation centre now under construction in Pathum Thani for safety reasons.

Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute director Sulak Sivaraksa said in the letter that he and other environmentalists wanted the project put on hold until the public had a chance to debate the issue.

Also supporting the move were the Volunteers' Group for Consumers, the Drug Study Group, the Herbal Medicine for Self-Dependence Project, the Project for Ecological Recovery, the Komol Keemthong Foundation, conservation groups of 16 universities and the Student Federation of Thailand.

Mr Sulak said the project, which has been under way for one year at Klong 5 in Klong Luang district had been approved without the public being fully informed.

He said the plant, capable of irradiating 41,000 tons of food annually, would be the first industrial plant using a radioactive energy source set up in Thailand for other than research or medical purposes.

"The Government, in so deciding, is taking the country toward a greater use of nuclear technology, which has been widely known to be a great potential health hazard to human beings," he said.

Mr Sulak said the Government had made a mistake in approving the project, which he said had not been done "in conformity with democratic principles because the people had no part in the decision-making process".

In a letter to Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and the Canadian House of Commons, the Bangkok-based Project for Ecological Recovery asked the Canada reconsider its assistance to the Thai project.

"We strongly feel that the Canadian government, which is understandably eager to help establish export markets for its atomic industry's products, has taken advantage of the uninformed state of the Thai public and the lack of proper review and oversight procedures common to many underdeveloped countries to push a questionable technology on a nation which is not yet prepared to accept it," the group wrote.

from **Bangkok Post**
September 16, 1988



Phra Khru Khantiyapiwat

The toddlers at Wat Sra Kaew in Ang Thong Province chat gaily and play around in the usual manner. But for those old enough to understand what death is, an air of sadness prevails.

Each day is punctuated with the fact that their beloved abbot, Phra Khru Khantiyapiwat, is no longer with them.

Phra Khru started looking after abandoned children at his wat some 40 years ago. In time, the number of children at his wat grew to more than 2,000.

Word of his magnanimous gesture spread far and wide—even stretching across international waters. Last year, Phra Khru was recognized for his efforts and was awarded the Norwegian Peace Prize. Two of the wat children went in his place to receive the prize in Oslo.

For these children, Wat Sra Kaew is home and *luang phor,* as they call Phra Khru, has always been both mother and father to them.

That's why his death last weekend brought an air of sadness that lingers and they are adjusting to life without him.

"I miss *luang phor* a lot. It is really a great loss for us. There is no one who can replace him," says 17-year-old Rienchai Peng-un.

Rienchai came to the home from Uthaithani nine years ago because his family was too poor to look after him. "It was *luang phor* who brought me up. If there had been no *luang phor,* I could not have grown up and had the kind of education I have now," he continues.

2,271 children are now living at Wat Sra Kaew. Not everyone is an abandoned child or an orphan. There are those who still have parents but who come from very poor families.

Wat Sra Kaew is a sanctuary form the poor. Its fame has reached the hills where Thailand's hilltribes dwell. The temple now has 120 tribal children from three tribes—Lisu, Meo and Yao.

"I separated from my husband and now I have to support the family by myself. So I have no time to look after my children. Besides, the school is very far from my house," Alame, a Lisu from Tak, reveals.

Alame was first informed by her friends about Wat Sra Kaew. So she brought her children there. Alame's neighbours also took their children to stay at Wat Sra Kaew.

Near the temple, there are three schools for the children. They are Thairath Wittaya and

Bangsadet Wittaya, built with funds raised by *luang phor,* and Bangsadet Wittayakom.

The children of different ages share dormitories in the wat. Each room can accommodate 30 of them.

"We have no brothers, so the temple does not divide us by age," says Narong Matiem, 24, who looks after the children. He himself came to Wat Sra Kaew as an orphan at the age of 11 and found shelter there.

Children at Wat Sra Kaew learn how to be self-reliant from a young age. A three-year-old child at the wat can already bathe himself.

The daily routine for the children at the wat begins with a bath. Rows of naked boys queue up to wash themselves under water taps. Then they step aside and soap themselves. Once they have rinsed themselves again, they queue up for a sprinkling of talcum powder. The final process would be to dress themselves—all in two seconds.

In the morning, after waking up at 5 am, all the children go to the temple to receive food and eat at the canteen. Then, they wash their dishes and visit *luang phor* to pay respects to him.

After that, they go to school. After classes, at 3.30 pm. they return to their dormitories, relax and do their chores. Some clean the rooms, some cut grass and some wash dishes.

Then, the children visit *luang phor* and listen to his teachings. Although this will no longer be part of their daily routine, many children like Rienchai still remember the lessons.

"*Luang phor* always taught us to behave and to concentrate on our studies," Rienchai recalls. "That makes us feel real respect for him."

It is now vacation time for the children. Normally, children will return to their homes for 15 to 20 days. Some may find a vacation job to earn money. But most of the children have decided to stay this time and help as much as possible with Phra Khru's rites. They know it will be the last time they can pay their respects to his face.

"I did not think of returning home for this vacation because I want to help with *luang phor*'s ceremony," says Panida Krueawanwong, 11. "The reason is that I feel really grateful to *luang phor.*"

Without *luang phor,* some of the children are thinking of leaving and returning to their hometowns. Some parents have arrived to fetch their children.

"I have heard some of my friends talking about leaving here. They say they feel uncertain about how life here will be from now on." Rienchai reveals. "But I think they will later realize that, apart from their parents' house, there is no other place that can be as warm as here."

Alame had come to Wat Sra Kaew after *luang phor's* death to take her children back to Tak. But she later changed her mind.

"I heard that *luang phor* died. So I was not sure whether my children could stay at the temple after *luang phor's* death. But now, I understand that the temple will continue to meet *luang phor's* objective," says Alame.

Phra Khru had built a main chapel which is nearly finished and he had started to restore the old chapel. The restoration will be continued.

At present, the body of Phra Khru Khantiyapiwat rests at Wat Sra Kaew. Prayers will continue until everybody has paid their respects to him.

"We realize that there are many people who respect *luang phor.* If they come here and cannot see *luang phor,* they will be sorry," says Phra Niponhiriko, secretary of the temple. "We will discuss what we will do next later."

Donations are now needed to feed the children. Meals cost about Bt9,000 a day, Phra Niponhiriko reveals.

Eventually, what Phra Khru wanted to do was to educate all the poor children. This goal will be striven for by his colleagues as well as the temple's children.

Both emotional and financial support is being received in ample amounts at Wat Sra Kaew.

One individual who made a donation is Charles Brent, an American living in Chiang Mai. He developed a kinship with the abbot during his first visit some two years ago at Wat Sra Kaew.

"I made a promise to Phra Khru when he was in the hospital to look after his children and as long as I am alive, they will eat," he fervently vowed.

Brent has made generous donations to the

wat and has adopted three boys and one girl. He plans to adopt two more.

A surprise was in store when he found out a few months back that he had been mentioned in Phra Khru's will. As a result, Brent proudly has laminated a certificate that states that he is an honorary member of the committee for the Wat Sra Kaew Foundation.

Therefore he has set out on a mission to restore the wat and to look after the welfare of the children. "I plan to create some small businesses, with the profits going directly to Wat Sra Kaew. I have arranged two scholarships for two technical schools, one in memory of Phra Khru, the other for my wife, Somjit, who recently passed away."

He finds it a monumental task to have been made an honorary member of this foundation. "My master plan for these kids is education, education, education."

He plans to seek out psychologists to help with the children and work out their interests. In the process, he wants to make them self-sufficient as well.

Brent hopes that he can appeal to influential persons and associates abroad for their assistance for the wat. "I will ask for help, not money necessarily. I'm more interested to get doctors, teachers and skilled labourers to join. I will create a fund to pay living expenses. It's a minimal amount, but it's for the children of Wat Sra Kaew."

So he is in the process of opening a restaurant in Chiang Mai and he also wants to start a business to make silk shoes—all for Wat Sra Kaew.

With so many generous hearts around wanting to help Wat Sra Kaew, the children should be able to have some peace of mind that all will be well for them.

Phra Khru may be gone, but his legacy, Wat Sra Kaew will go on.

by **Nawarat Acosta**
and **Malee Traisawasdichai**
from *Bangkok Post*
October 16, 1988

Phya Anuman exhibit tours Asia

An exhibition on "Life and Works of Phya Anuman Rajadhon and Aspects of Siamese Culture in Connection with His Centenary" is going on tour in Vietnam, Laos, Burma, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan.

Sponsored by Toyota, this mobile exhibition is organized by the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation. Thai lecturers will travel with the exhibition.

There will also be seminars and symposium on Siamese culture at those cities where exhibitions take place.

The exhibition has already taken place in six Australian cities and in West Berlin.

Meanwhile, the Korean Buddhist Chogye has invited the exhibition to be shown at its headquarter temple in downtown Seoul next week, from November 19-26.

In March next year, a similar exhibition will be taken place in Paris, London, big cities in the USA, Osaka, Beijing and Ulan Bator (Mongolia).

The Phya Anuman Rajadhon centenary will be celebrated in Thailand on December 14. HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn will preside over the opening of the celebration. Highlight of the opening will be a speech given by Phra Debvedi (Prayudh).

To commemorate the centenary of Thailand's late scholar, a memorial building complex will be built at Wongsanit Ashram in Nakhon Nayok province.

Those who wish to contribute money to the good cause may do so by contacting the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation, 303/7 Soi Santipap, Nares Road, Bangkok 10500, (tel 233-2382).

from *The Nation*
November 16, 1988

A Call for the end of Violence in Burma

The wind of violence is blowing harshly over the gentle Burmese land. News of blood soaking the Irawadi basin has become a cause of concern for people around the world. On September 18, a Burmese general led 18 officers in a coup e'etat which seemed to eclipse the hope of democracy. Almost a month after the coup, the world again hears that hundreds of Burmese civil servants have been arrested or sacked in Rangoon while more than 450 people were killed in the capital city. These victims were accused of supporting pro-democracy demonstrations and strikes and therefore cruelly punished.

For the past 26 years, under the banner "Burmese Way to Socialism", the Burmese ruling party reigned powerfully. Except for its role in the non-aligned country, Burma has indeed been the "hermit of Southeast Asia" seemingly untouched by the current of modernism and other outside influences.

But true to Buddha's teaching, change is the nature of things. Hundreds of thousands of Burmese took to the streets demanding the end of the one-party rule and the flowering of democracy. A slumbering nation has awaken to the desire to seek control of their destinies and to chart the course for the future of Burma.

Violence erupted because this basic human rights of self-government has been denied by the dictatorial ruling party, among other things. People were brutally suppressed. They fought back nonviolently. Armed only with organization skill, the Burmese staged strikes and noncooperation against the increasingly barbaric dictatorial regime. Then, protesters threatened to adopt the means of violence in the manner of self defense. The military responded with the methods they knew best and the cycle of violence is now completed.

As concerned individuals in her neighboring country, Thailand, we the undersigned would like to express our condolences to fallen heroes and heroines who sacrificed their lives to defend the rights of the common people. We would also urge the Burmese government to stop using violence on the people. The sacred task of a good government is to care for the happiness and well-being of the citizens not to cause their death and suffering. We would also call upon the oppositions not to fall into the trap of violence and hold fast to the power of nonviolent struggle.

As a country with a strong Buddhist tradition, Burma should respond positively to the just desire for peace and basic human rights by the populace. To succumb to the temptation of violence will only yield hatred and destruction while there is no guarantee for victory. It is about time Burma shows the world that a proper way to peace, justice and human rights is through the use of nonviolent alternatives.

Thai Concern for Burma

Last Saturday two Thai religious organizations performed a ceremony at a Buddhist temple in Bangkok to make merit for victims of the uprising in Burma and to pray for peace and democracy in that country.

About 40 Thai and Burmese attended the three-hour religious rites at Dhamma-Vicai Hall, Mahathat Yuwaratrangsarit Temple in Tha Phrachan, organized by the Coordinating Group for Religion in Society and Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development.

Representatives from Christian, Buddhist, and Muslim communities in Thailand, as

well as a Thai scholar and a Thai politician, were invited to give condolence speeches. Kothom Ariya said on behalf of Thai academics that he supports non-violence which he believes is a more effective way to achieving a political goal.

Kothom appealed to the Thai government not to expel the Burmese who are now taking temporary refuge on Thai soil. He asked the Thai administration to state clearly its position on the situation in Burma, and to provide medical supplies as well as other humanitarian aid to the Burmese people.

The humanitarian action would not be considered as Thai interference in Burma's internal political affairs, he said.

from **The Nation**
October 10, 1988

Statement on behalf of the Anti-Slavery Society

For about a decade and a half the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh have been administered under either *de jure* or *de facto* martial law. In the tracts at the moment there are just under 10,000 armed troops and police as well as the ordinary police force, members of which are to be found, particularly, in every area of Bengali settlement.

The tribal population of 600,000 has been augmented by 300,000 Bengali plains-dwellers 'encouraged' to settle by Dhaka. This influx has been accompanied by landgrabbing, torture, rape, desecration of holy places, and the displacement of tribal peoples currently living in unofficial refugee camps in the Indian state of Tripura and who now number over 40,000. The Bangladeshi army has even attacked an orphanage in Dighinala run by Buddhist monks.

The Anti-Slavery Society has in its posession over 100 cases of violent human rights abuses perpetuated in the six month period up to April this year. It now takes the opportunity in this forum to invite the Bangladeshi authorities to investigate just one of these cases, that of the headmaster of Babu Chara High School. On or about 6 April this year 40-year-old Mr Ranjan Kumar Chakma was reportedly subjected to severe physical beatings and torture by a Major Mahfuz of the 20 East Bangal Regiment. As far as is known, the headmaster is still being held in custody in the army camp at Babu Chara. It is hoped, Mr Chairman, that the investigation will begin as soon as possible and that the outcome will be forwarded to the Centre for Human Rights as well as to the Anti-Slavery Society.

The recent decision to declare Islam the state religion of Bangladesh has caused consternation among the non-Muslim population and particularly among the hill tracts people, most of whom are Buddhist. Their fear that the move will be followed by a policy of Islamicisation has already led, according to the political party the Jana Samati Samiti, (JSS) to increased oppression in the tracts.

Meetings, the first since December 1985, between representatives of the government and the JSS broke off in February this year without any agreement being reached.

In order for a start to be made to ending the unrest and bloodshed in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and bearing in mind the ethnic and religious differences between the hill people and the majority Bengali population, and noting the widespread fear that their existence as 13 separate hill tribes is put at risk by the policies of Dhaka, the Anti-Slavery Society recommends:

1. The end of Bengali settlement in the Chittagong Hill Tracts;
2. The removal of the Bangali settlers except those comparatively few families who predate the Bangladeshi state;
3. The withdrawal of all Bangladeshi armed forces including non-tribal policemen;
4. Financial and other help for the rehabilitation of tribal refugees.

UNITED NATIONS
Economic and Social Council
Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities Working Group on Indigenous Populations Geneva
Seventh session August 1988

Behind the scented mask



'We drag at the oars with aching arms, and suddenly a puff of wind, a puff faint and tepid and laden with strange odours of blossoms of aromatic wood, comes out of the still night — the first sigh of the East on my face ...impalpable and enslaving, like a charm, like a whispered promise of mysterious delight.'' (From Youth, by Joseph Conrad.)

And where should the Conradian dream of the East end, if not in Bangkok? It had to end somewhere. Only with the greatest difficulty could young men go on rowing into scented harbours once these had become part of people's republics or of container ports.

Bangkok alone maintains its romantic profile, at great cost to the Thai tourism budget and thanks to a careful use of photographic close-ups. Royal palaces, sloping temple roofs, kneeling silk-clad girls offering garlands of jasmine blossoms: all of these can be found. And a short flight away, happy hill tribes till their poppies in traditional gear. Through careful use of closed eyes and air-conditioned cars, this Disneyland vision can be maintained. But if eyes and windows are opened, the smells are quite different and the dominant image is of traffic jams and stained concrete buildings.

Yet neither view is true to the place. What counts in Bangkok is the sudden throwing together of millions of people on this mud flat, only a short distance from where the Chao Phraya runs into the Gulf of Siam. The site made perfect sense for a few thousand people in wood houses seeking natural protection from the Burmese army. But centuries later, 10m or so individuals are on the same spot, sinking rapidly into the mud. There are, of course, the royal family; the aristocracy, still in the 18th century; the Chinese business class, richer than imagination permits with their marble bank towers and their space-age equipment; and the peasantry converted into urban poor, who live almost next door to the towers — in Klong Toey, for example, where they have built a shanty town raised on stakes over a swamp.

Mixed into all of this are the generals and the foreigners. The generals may make their money out of rake-offs from the drug or arms trades, but they may also be perfect social democrats, running state corporations in the best interests of the people. They may threaten, attempt and even carry out coups, or, alternately, withdraw into monasteries to rediscover a certain purity. As to the foreigners, they have gradually fallen back upon Bangkok from China, Vietnam,

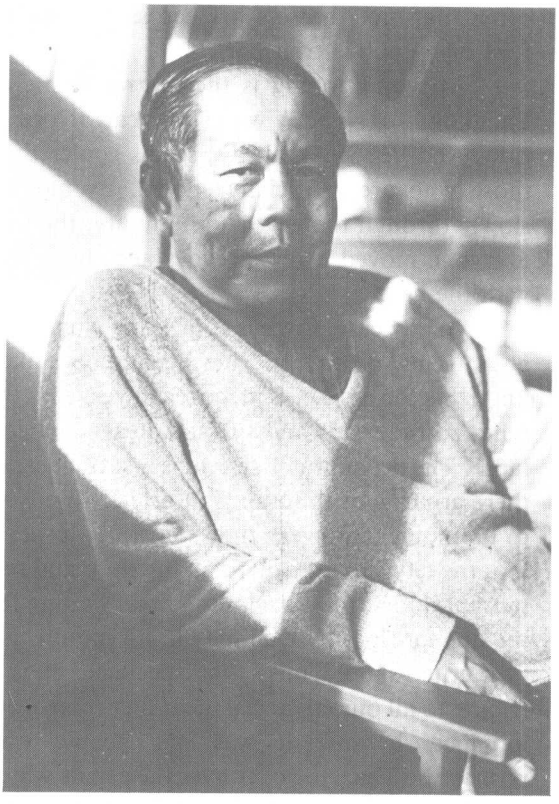
Kampuchea and Laos. Some have been there for almost 50 years. Many are the escapees of the Sixties.

The last Conradian dream was provided by the Vietnam war. Hundreds of young men used it as an excuse to flee the West disguised as soldiers, journalists, businessmen, doctors and aid workers. Some were killed. Some found the dream too rich and went home. But the rest are holed up in Bangkok, in their forties now, married or not to Thais and still sitting on the edge of the cataclysm. Because, pretend as one will, Bangkok is 24 hours' distance from the Vietnamese tanks in Kampuchea. The confusion of hundreds of thousands of refugees still sitting on that border, where they are pawns in the continuing Kampuchean civil war, means that the Vietnamese tanks are a constant, unstated sub-theme in Bangkok life. They are at least one of the sources of the city's frenetic energy. People living on the edge always live at a faster pace.

Bangkok is one of the last remaining unpasteurised great cities. Un-middle-classed. Nothing on the surface appears to work. And yet underneath, behind, everything works in its own way. It is not merely a good place to set a modern black comedy: Bangkok is, in itself, a black comedy about the world.

Thirty-five miles west of Bangkok, at about 4am, the city's governor, Major General Chamlong Srimuang, can be found waking up in his little hut by a stream. He sleeps on the floor beside the wife with whom he does not have sex. Chamlong is a devout Buddhist and this is a Buddhist retreat. He has given up far more than sex. He doesn't even use his salary. "Mr Clean" is attempting to reform Bangkok. One of the basic rules for his new political party is that his candidates must not buy votes. Chamlong dresses more often than not in a simple, peasant-like shirt and talks to the people about how he once made money from black-market goods. Now he exhorts the people to "eat less, spend less and work harder".

Chamlong is not alone in this mould. He is modelled in part on the saint-like king who spends much of his time in the hills helping the poorest of his citizens. There is also the prime minister, General Prem, who can be glimpsed quite easily, dressed in his Prem shirt. This style—



a rounded high collar — while not peasant-like, is not Western either. It eliminates the dreaded tie which was once the symbol of modernism. Before Prem, everyone could be seen trailing about in suit trousers, short-sleeved white shirt and dark tie. Now the entire Thai ruling elite imitates Prem by wearing his clothes. The general's taste was and is a subtle hint at the need for a "Thai way" versus a military or a Western way.

In a small road not far from Chulalongkorn University, Sulak Sivaraksa, radical royalist, can be found delivering the same message. Often I find him in mid-massage, being contorted by a powerful-looking man. Sulak comes from a good family, but wanders about the streets in rural peasant clothes and a simple straw hat. He has already been in exile and in jail, thanks to some nervous generals. Sulak points out that all the American virtues of individualism, competition and consumption are serious Buddhist sins. Why should Thais embrace that sort of modernity if the implication is rebirth as an insect? He writes, speaks and publishes about the third way — the Thai way or the Buddhist way. Sulak's house is screened on all sides and the air is moved by simple electric fans. More

often than not, he sets off across the city on foot or by public transport.

Air conditioning is the central theme of Bangkok life. Nobody walks who can afford to ride. And yet Sulak always seems cooler than those who are artificially cooled. By moving slowly through the heat and humidity, the way everyone moved a few decades ago, he is one with the heat.

In any case, there is something wonderful about Bangkok streets. They need to be walked upon. As the city sinks inches each year into the mud, so the roads and surfaces heave and collapse. The urban water system is insufficient, so there are tens of thousands of artesian wells — to the point that every time someone flushes a loo, the city sinks. Around all the shop and restaurant doors, there are mini-dams, waiting for the annual flood, which may last a month. No Westerner should miss that spectacle. It is a tribute to all our advanced ideas on urban development, because it was our people who pushed the Thais to cover over the canals which once laced the city and washed out the filth and rainwater along with the high tides. Now the roads hide the putrid water in these blocked canals and it all comes swilling out in high season. Only the bank towers and new hotels stay above this because their deep pylons prevent them from sinking. The sidewalks sooner or later hang around them like skirts.

Not only the Thais understand the Thai way. Many of the Westerners — the farangs — have gradually become one with the city. Father Joe Maier, for example, can be found down at the slaughterhouse. He began in the East during the Vietnam war, when he served with the Laotian hill tribes. Now his parish is made up of the thousand or so Vietnamese Catholic refugees who live in the pork slaughterhouse. It is an open-sided shed the size of a football field. The Vietnamese families live in wood-huts strapped up under the rafters, just a few feet above the slaughter pens. The job is done by Christians because Buddhists don't like to kill. And, given that there isn't much difference between killing pigs and killing men — their screams are identical — the city's best assassins work there. Quite apart from the atmosphere of pure violence that inhabits the place, the one sight even the novelist's mind, at least mine, finds incomprehensible, is that of sweet little girls, perfectly dressed in uniforms, coming out of the suspended huts in the morning and parading off to school.

But then Bangkok is not limited to the dark or the heroic side of man. Quite the contrary. Beyond the congested streets lined by shops and offices, there are more congested streets lined by walls. And behind these are gardens and wonderful houses. The gardens are often filled with orchids strapped onto trees by determined gardeners, and beneath these trees there is a sense of peace which is almost strengthened by the background noise of traffic and city that blends into the insect sounds at nightfall. In these houses, the resident farangs and the Thais dine together, a reminder that this is not the capital of some excolony. Thailand, perhaps alone among the non-European nations, was never colonised. They were too smart. They asked the various ambitious Western powers to give them advice in different areas, then played us off, one against the other.

The only downside to this social mingling is that a farang guest usually means that the cook will feel obliged to produce Western food — inevitably English; often roast pork with roast potatoes. I have memories of attempting to down cream-of-mushroom soup, shrimps in mayonnaise, grey Brussel sprouts and strawberries under whipped crem, while outside you could fry anything you liked on the pavement. And while I chewed, I thought of the perfect Thai food I could have been eathing.

This is not the only influence the British Empire had on the Thais. The other was to provide a fertility goddes. As an imperial gesture, Queen Victoria — her statue, that is — was once placed outside the old British legation down by the river. Word got about that she produced children at the rate of a rabbit, and soon sterile women were bringing her garlands and presents. When the embassy moved to a great compound some time before the last war, the Queen was placed well inside the walled grounds. This was theoretically a gesture of political discretion. I have always believed it had more to do with foreign embarrassment; not so much because Victoria was a local sex symbol or a goddess, but because she was an earth religion deity. In any case, their worries were irrelevant.

Victoria's pact with childless women is still beyond bureaucratic control. Even imprisoned within the embassy's grounds, she remains garlanded.

Sex, of course, is a Bangkok theme for foreigners. Perhaps that is part of the Conradian dream. And so there are half a million or so professional girls neatly organized into categories specialising in serving various races. The most interesting figure in that world actually lives outside Bangkok, the same distance to the east as Bangkok's governor lives to the west. Ladda is the owner and hostess of an extremely respectable country club which welcomes diplomats, officers and businessmen. She built an 18-hole golf course in the middle of the rice paddies; that is to say, below sea level. It is dyked and equipped with pumping systems to keep it dry. This island is Ladda's return to her country roots: she originally came from a village in the north to begin life as a "hostess" at the old Cafe de Paris. She was 20 at the time and had left behind a husband she had married some seven years before.

By age 40, she was one of the richest women in Thailand, controlling a string of bars and massage parlours. Her sister used to collect the weekly earnings from the various establishments on Tuesdays, then drove out to the country club for the day to deliver the funds and to chat. I should add that Ladda had also given the Buddhists a big tract of land beside the golf course and built them a religious study centre. Her father is one of the monks. The sister liked to take me along, for company and vaguely for protection. From my point of view, an afternoon chatting with Ladda about the meaning of life was worth any trip. She is, after all, the world's greatest expert on men, having made about US$20m out of understanding their psychic needs. She makes Freud look like a Sunday painter. And all of this without any cyncism. Certainly, she is tough and smart, but above all, she is professional.

The secret to her success lies, she says, in the training of her girls. "I run the greatest acting school in the world." The English will be pleased to hear that she also takes in a lot of stray dogs. In Buddhist terms, this can but help to earn her merit.

Earning merit in a city which is sinking into the mud may seem a bit too parabolesque, but then, Bangkok is not a measured place.

by **John Ralston Saul**
from *The Sunday Times*
August 7, 1988

TICD

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Protest letter to PM over nuclear technology

Your Excellency,

The (food irradiation) deal was signed one year ago without the public's knowledge, even though this will be Thailand's first nuclear-fuelled industry. This decision implies government acceptance of nuclear (technology) in the country, though the dangers of this technology are widely-known.

This decision contradicts democratic principles, as the government has gone ahead with the project without public knowledge or participation in the decision-making process.

The prime minister should suspend the project and allow for a public debate on its pros and cons before a final decision is made.

We would like to express our concern and ask the prime minister to answer following questions:

1. Please outline the steps in the decision-making process. Who was the highest official involved? Why was the National Environmental Board not consulted as required by the National Environmental Protection Act of 1975?

2. Why is this project necessary? Is it economically feasible in comparison with other alternatives – especially considering the opposition from consumers in trading partner countries?

3. What are the safety guarantees for workers and the public concerning radioactive (substances)? ... What measures are there for disposing of the nuclear waste if Canadian people refuse for it to be returned (to Canada)?

4. How honest and fair are the conditions of the aid deal between Canada and Thailand? Have Thailand's interests been sufficiently taken into consideration? ... What are the connections between this project and Canada's nuclear industry? According to the contract, will Canada provide Cobalt-60 fuel indefinitely, and if not how much will it cost in the long run?

5. How safe is irradiated food, what research has been done on this topic in Thailand, and what is the opinion of the Public Health Ministry?

We, the undersigned, hope that the newly-elected government will see the importance of public participation in this issue. We are ready and willing to help to the best of our ability in accordance with the rights and duties of citizens.

Yours respectfully,

Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute
Student Federation of Thailand
Volunteer Group for Consumers
Project for Ecological Recovery
Komol Keemthong Foundation
Drug and Health Information Centre of the Drug Study Group
Pacharayasara Magazine
Traditional Medicine and Self-healing Project
Sixteen-institute Conservation Club

from *The Nation* September 16, 1988

Thailand's 50th Anniversary!

This kingdom was known as Siam until 1939, when its name was changed to Thailand. Then it reverted to the original name again in 1946. Two years after the copu d'état of 1947 it was decreed that the country would be called Thailand, and it remains so officially.

SOCIALISM You have two cows; and give one to your neighbour.

COMMUNISM You have two cows; the government takes both and gives you the milk.

FASCISM You have two cows; the government takes both and sells you the milk.

NAZISM You have two cows; the government takes both and shoots you.

BUREAUCRATISM You have two cows; the government takes both. Shoots one milks the other and throws the milk away.

CAPITALISM You have two cows; you sell one and buy a bull.