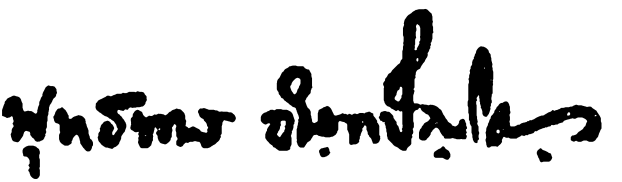
THE QUEST FOR A JUST SOCIETY

The Legacy and Challenge of Buddhadassa Bhikkhu

THE QUEST

FOR A JUST SOCIETY



First published 1994, 1,000 Copies
ISBN 974-206-094-5

Front cover by K. Khemananda
Back cover by Thepsiri Sukhsobha
Cover design by Tongtip Sudthakorn
Text design by Song Sayam Co., Ltd.

Baht 120.-
Distributed by Suksit Siam
113-115 Fuangnakorn Rd.,
Bangkok 10200
Fax: 662-222-5188

THE QUEST

FOR A JUST SOCIETY

The Legacy and Challenge of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu

edited by
Sulak Sivaraksa

Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development
Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute
Bangkok 2537 (1994)

The Siamese, Cambodian and Laotian Buddhist Era seems to be one year later than that of Burma, Sri Lanka and India. In fact this is not so. The difference is that while the latter regards the year of the Maha Parinibbana as B.E.1., the former takes it to be the first anniversary after the Master's Passing Away. For example this year is B.E. 2537 according to the Siamese, Cambodian and Laotian calendar, but it is B.E. 2538 according to the Burmese, Sri Lankan and Indian calendar.

BUDDHĀSSAHAṀ NIYYĀDEMI
SARĪRAÑJĪVITAÑCIDAṀ
BUDDHASĀHASMI DĀSOVA BUDDHO
ME SĀMIKISSARO - ITI

SABBE NĀḶAṀ ABHINIVESĀYA

PREFACE

Despite the fact that Bhikkhu Buddhadasa had passed away on 8th July 1993, TICD in collaboration with the Komol Keemthong Foundation held a birthday party for the late Venerable Achariya at Suan Mokh, the Garden of Liberation, Chaiya, on the 27th and 28th of May 1994. At this function, Dr. Prawase Wasi gave a keynote address on Dhammic Society. Many others also participated in Dhamma talks and discussion. A book in Thai will soon be published by the Komol Keemthong Foundation on these events. The gist of the Dr. Prawase's address in English is reprinted in the appendix of this volume.

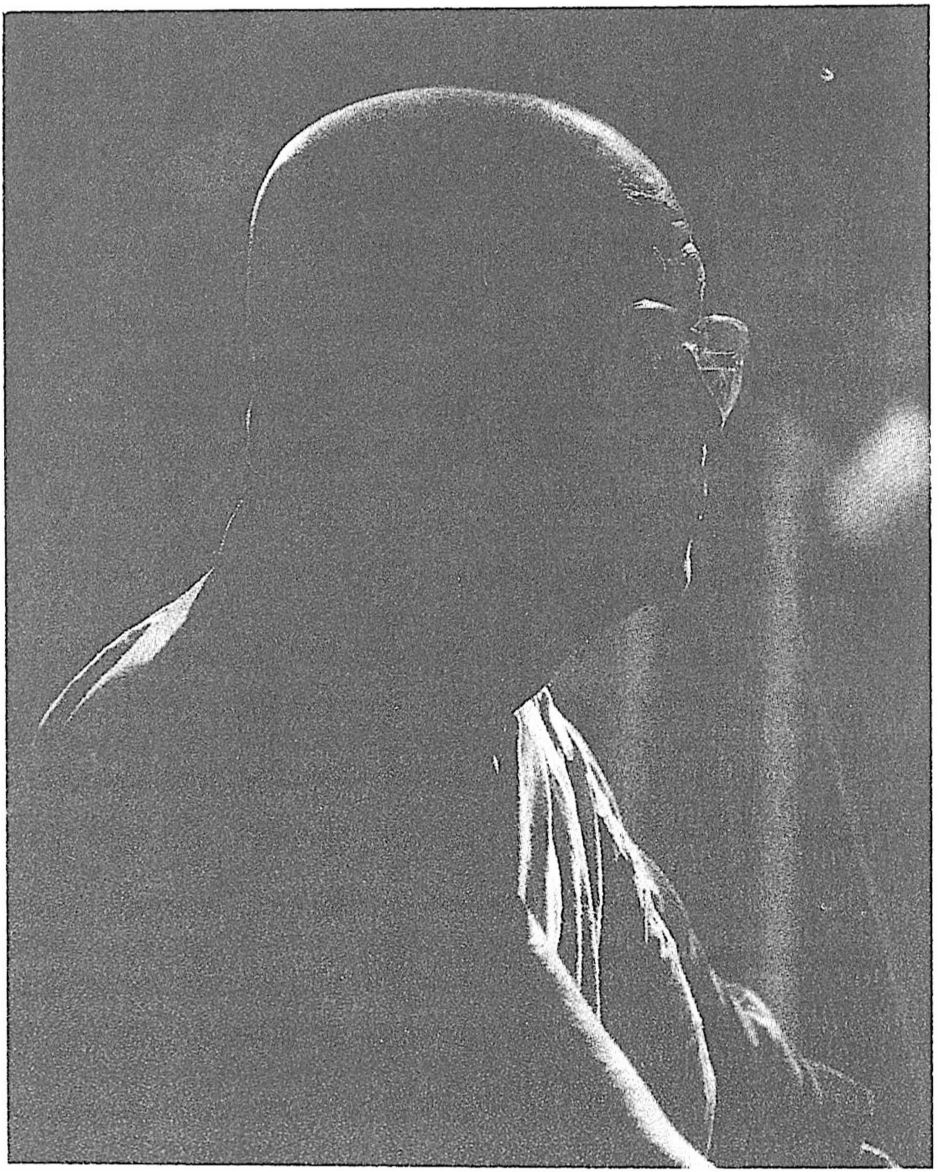
Around the date of the first anniversary of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa's death, TICD also collaborated with other organizations in arranging two symposia on his contribution to Siam and to contemporary Buddhism–one at Maha Chulalongkorn Buddhist University in Bangkok on the 6th of July and another at Wat Umong in Chiengmai on the 7th of July. On the 8th of July there was an event at Suan Mokkh itself.

Participants at the one in Bangkok were asked to prepare the lectures in English but the speeches were all made in Thai. Hence we were able to publish a book in each language to commemorate the first anniversary of the passing of the late Bhikkhu Buddhadasa.

I should like to thank all the four authors and all collaborators who helped organize the symposia as well as to see through this publication.

I trust the book is worthy of our great teacher, the Servant of the Buddha.

S. SIVARAKSA



Buddhadasa Bhikkhu

CONTENTS

The Quest for a Just Society

THREE LEGACIES
OF BHIKKHU BUDDHADASA

I first want to thank Āchān Sulak for inviting me to this occasion of the first death anniversary of Phra Dhammakosāchān, known to all of us as Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. It is a privilege to participate in this seminar at Mahāchulalongkorn Buddhist University honoring Buddhadāsa, one of the modern Thai Sangha's most provocative interpreters of Buddhadhamma and a noted exemplar of what has been termed, reform Buddhism.[1] Buddhadāsa was a provocateur in both his personal style and in his talks and writings. He was impatient with social pretense, critical of scholastic philosophizing, intolerant of mindless ritual, and committed to interpreting the most profound teachings of the Buddha in a compelling, rational idiom relevant to the challenges and dilemmas of the modern world.

This morning I propose to discuss Buddhadāsa's legacy to Thai Buddhists and to others familiar with his life and thought. First, however, I would like to begin with a brief personal reminiscence. My own relationship with Buddhadāsa began in 1960 when a special group of my Mahāchulalongkorn English language students presented me with several of Buddhadāsa's books before I

returned to the United States for graduate study. I am forever indebted to them for this *dhammadāna* gift. Although I am not a Thai nor do I call myself a Buddhist, I consider myself an heir of Buddhadāsa's spiritual wisdom. It is because of my sense of personal indebtedness to Buddhadāsa that I have chosen to speak of his legacy. I count myself an heir to that legacy.

I do not pretend to be an expert authority on the philosophy of Buddhadāsa. Many of you have read more widely in the *Buddhadāsa gambhīra* (i.e. authoritative texts) than I, or you were associated with him more continuously over the years. Still, it may be that few here today read Buddhadāsa's *Khon Thūng Tham. Tham Thūng Khon* [People Reaching the Dhamma: The Dhamma Reaching People] in 1960 (B.E. 2507), the year it was given to me, or looked at *Tua Kū, Khong Kū* [Me and Mine] before 1967 (B.E. 2514) when I received the book from Buddhadasa himself–perhaps one of the few benefits of growing old!

It was not until 1967 that I first met Buddhadāsa. It will not surprise you to learn that S. Sivarakasa was the person who first took me to Suan Mokkh. He had recently returned to Thailand from England. I was in Bangkok for a few months primarily to study Buddhadāsa's published work–a much less formidable task thirty years ago than it is today. Āchān Sulak graciously offered to accompany me to Suan Mokkh, a trip I was able to make again on two subsequent occasions each nearly a decade apart.[2]

Buddhadāsa's legacy is manifold. There is, of course, the legacy of his lectures and writings. One only needs to visit the Buddhadāsa collection at Suan Mokkh to realize its considerable extent. For those who have not had that opportunity, the book, *Dhammanidasāna: Nai Ngan Sapada Buddhadhamma-Buddhadāsa* [An Object Lesson in Dhamma: A Week Studying the Buddhadhamma of Buddhadāsa],[3] provides a schematic, topical

overview of the Buddhadāsa corpus. The Buddhadāsa legacy of written texts has a commercial side, however, that I believe *thān ājhān* (the venerable teacher) might find troublesome.[4] As a visit to any sizeable bookstore in Bangkok or Chiang Mai demonstrates, Buddhadāsa's books have become a commercial success. Today, the earlier plain, inexpensive editions of Buddhadāsa's teachings compete with beautifully produced, expensive volumes. Now that Buddhadāsa has become so popular–the *Buddhadāsa-niyom* era–one suspects that these lavishly illustrated books are purchased to display on coffee tables or to stand attractively on library shelves rather than to be studied at desks or to be read diligently on trains and buses.

Beyond the Buddhadāsa oral and written tradition, however, everyone who has been inspired by his writings and challenged by his example must be considered part of his legacy. They include well-known figures in the Thai *sangha*, in government service and among NGOs, as well as thousands of monks and lay persons whose lives have been changed by Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. Their stories form the real substance of his legacy. It is also possible, however, to discuss Buddhadāsa's legacy in broad, analytical terms. This morning I propose to examine three facets of Buddhadāsa's legacy under the following rubrics: individual, communal, and ecological.

Legacy I. Individual Liberation

In my understanding, Buddhadāsa was first and foremostly committed to the importance of the liberation of individuals from attachment to self.[5] In his talks and essays he never ceases to refer to the liberated mind and heart (*cit wāng*), overcoming selfishness (*mai hen kae tua*) and to other Thai and Pali terms related to liberation from attachment to self. Furthermore, I propose that he sought to embody this ideal of liberation in his personal lifestyle,

and that his continual advocacy of meditation, especially *ānāpāna-sati*, reflects this core value. Some critics, in fact, have argued that Buddhadāsa's focus on personal liberation makes his teachings either too otherworldly (*lokkuttara*) or too individualistic and, hence, inadequate to address the systemtic nature of today's problems.[6] I shall not discuss this criticism, although students of Buddhadāsa should consider this challenge carefully in evaluating the social, economic, and political relevance of Buddhadāsa's *dhamma*.

Buddhadāsa's commitment to the centrality of personal liberation reflects the most fundamental teachings of Theravāda Buddhism–craving (*taṇhā*) as the basic cause of suffering (*dukkha*), the five components of the individual (*khandha*) as the five bases of craving, and Nibbāna as the state of liberation beyond craving, attachment (*upādāna*), defilement (*kilesa*) and suffering. Buddhadāsa was fond of referring to the Pali phrase, *Nibbānam paramam vadānti Buddhā* [All Buddhas teach that Nibbāna is the highest truth.] He asserted that the Buddha's teaching was epitomized not by the oft-quoted phrase, "Refrain from doing evil, do only good, purify the mind" or even by the Four Noble Truths but by the Buddha's summary statement in the *Majjhima Nikāya, "Nothing whatsoever should be clung to" (sabbe dhammā nālam abhinivesāya).*[7] As he put it in Thai terms: "the liberated mind (*cit wāng*) is the pinnacle of Buddhist teachings."[8] In his major essay, *Tua Ku, Khong Ku (Me and Mine):*, he makes a similar point in an astonishingly provocative manner:

> We do not need to speak of the Buddha, the Dhamma, or the Sangha, or any points of doctrine, or of the history of Buddhism. We have to forget about all those things, and begin our studies by examining the words "me" and "mine," or rather the feeling in the heart which gives rise to these words. *To truly understand me- and-mine leads to the extinction*

of suffering.[9]

As *thān āchān* put it in another talk, "if there is no self there is no suffering" (*mai mîtua, mai mî thuk*).[10]

Where Buddhadāsa appears to depart from traditional Theravāda Buddhist teaching is not his persistent and consistent emphasis on liberation from craving (*tanhā*), in particular the attachment to self, but in his intention to *universalize* and *contemporize* liberation. In Buddhadāsa's view, (a) liberation is the business of all Buddhists, not just monks or the "noble ones" (*ariya*), and (b) liberation is not something that one achieves only after many lifetimes of moral and spiritual preparation but is attainable here and now. For this emphasis Buddhadāsa has been accused of being Mahāyanistic.[11] Buddhadāsa, furthermore, not only believes that anyone *can* achieve liberation in this life, but that all true Buddhists *should* strive for this realization. Buddhadāsa does not simply advocate the *possibility* of achieving Nibbāna in the present; it is the *duty* of every Buddhist to try to do so. All other forms of teaching and practice are secondary, at best. Indeed, they might even serve to obstruct this goal. For example, Buddhadāsa taught that the preoccupation of many Thai Buddhists with merit-making rituals (Thai: *pithi tham bun*) is in fact, detrimental to true Buddhist spiritual practice.

For Buddhadāsa liberation or freedom (*khwam wāng*) is the realization of our original condition unobscured by the taints of defilement (*kilesa*) resultant from our preoccupation with gain and loss, love and anger, hatred and fear.[12] Freedom, furthermore, is emptiness (*suññatā*). Because all *dhammas* are in their true nature empty, our own liberation is nothing more nor less than knowing the true nature of things: "Originally our mind is free from *kilesa*. Defilements seize us later. *Cit wāng* is our normal state, (*pakatī*) a condition freed from suffering, a state filled with mindful

aware-ness (*sati-paññā*). The original condition of the mind is one of non-attachment. When the mind attains to this condition it is in a state of Buddhahood; that is, it knows the true nature of things."[13]

Buddhadāsa's insistence on the priority of the mind[14] links naturally to his constant emphasis on meditation, the training of the mind, the development of full awareness (*sammā-sati*). Training the mind has two primary values for Buddhadāsa. First, it is important in and of itself because mindfulness (*sati*) is the means by which we are enabled to free the mind from attachment and defilment; second, having freed the mind from attachment to self and to the dualities of gain and loss, one is truly free to act selflessly: "To develop non-attachment is at the basis of being able to act without concern for oneself, to act unselfishly, to work for the sake of the work itself rather than for oneself."[15] In short, training the mind or developing mindful awareness enables individuals to be (a) truly other-regarding, to act on behalf of others' well-being untainted by self-interest, and (b) to act without concern for the personal consequences of the act. In the language of Buddhist ethics, to act wthout attachment means that one is liberated from the power of *kamma*. In the terms of Christian ethics, to act without attachment means that one acts out of love as an absolute principle. For Christians, Jesus embodies this principle.

For Buddhadāsa, meditation is not a theory but a praxis essential to the development of the mental state of full awareness required for true liberation. He had little patience with those who spend their time debating the differences between *samatha* (tranquillity) and *vipassanā* (insight) forms of meditation or with those who advocate complicated, rigidly prescribed systems.[16] His preferred system of meditation, mindfulness with breathing (*ānāpānasti*), is simple, straightforward and combines both tranquillity and insight. He called it the "heart of the foundation of mindfulness."[17] In its full delineation Buddhadāsa's teaching on

mindfulness of breathing followed the structure of the Foundation of Mindfulness Sutta (*Satipatthāna Sutta*). Buddhadāsa's program consists of sixteen steps divided into four foundational tetrads. The fourfold foundations are those in the Pali Sutta: recollection of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), recollection of the feelings (*vedanānupassanā*), recollection of the mind (*cittānupassanā*), and recollection of the Dhamma (*dhammānupassanā*). Buddhadāsa spells out these steps at some length in his long treatise on *Mindfulness With Breathing* but he also propounded a short version. Indeed, he has an even more condensed version for those who find a sixteen step program too complicated. In all of his teachings, including those about meditation, Buddhadāsa was direct, practical, and contextual. One can almost see the twinkle in his eye when he said,

> If some people feel that sixteen steps are too much, that is alright. It is possible to condense the sixteen down to two steps. One–train the *citta* (mind) to be adequately and properly concentrated. Two–with that *samādhi* skip over to contemplate *aniccaṁ, dukkhaṁ and anattā* right away. Just these two steps, if they are performed with every inhalation and exhalation, can be considered Anapanasati. If you do not like the complete 16 Step Practice or think that it is too theoretical or too much to study or too detailed, then take just these two steps.[18]

In Buddhadāsa's view, truly practicing mindfulness with breathing incorporates the entire Buddhist path. He put it this way: the determination to practice is *sīla* (virtue); the very intentionality involved in the practice of meditation is *samādhi* (concentration); and, the practice of the final tetrad, recollection of the Dhamma, is *paññā* (wisdom).[19] The end result of the attentive practice of mindfulness with breathing is the attainment of liberation. Liberation for Buddhadāsa is not some sort of mystical trance state; it is

Nibbāna here and now in this life. It is to have grasping, craving, and the defilements cooled (*nibbuto*).[20]

In concluding our consideration of Buddhadāsa's first legacy, I want to suggest that his own life exemplifies his abiding commitment to the centrality of individual liberation and the means or praxis to achieve it. I will not dwell on this point. I expect that all of you here today are as familiar with Buddhadāsa's life story as I am. Buddhadāsa was certainly not a typical Thai monk. Although he always remained a faithful member of the *sangha,* he was a critic of many facets of Thai Buddhist institutions. He charted a unique path, independent from mainstream Thai monastic life. Finding the formal structures of *sangha* hierarchy and education in Bangkok stifling to the spiritual life, Buddhadāsa returned to his rural hometown in southern Thailand to establish the Center of Empowering Liberation (Suan Mokkhabalārama) where he and others could devote themselves to study and practice.[21] As a sign of his intense dedication to his goal he took the name, "servant of the Buddha" (Buddhadāsa): "I give this life and body to the Lord Buddha. I am a servant of the Lord Buddha. The Lord Buddha is my Lord. Therefore, I take the name, Buddhadāsa." The names, Buddhadāsa and Mokkhabalārama signify the nature of the first legacy.

Legacy II. Communal Well-being

Buddhadāsa's committment to personal liberation focused on both individual and communal well-being. He believed in the priority of individual liberation, of the overcoming of attachment to self and the defilements of hatred, greed, and delusion. The realization of our full human potentiality, which for Buddhadāsa was a restoration of our original state of "purity, illumination, peace" (*saād, swāng, sangop)*[22] is inherently valuable but it is not self contained. That is, Nibbāna as a supreme value represents

both the highest self-realization and our ability to be and act in an appropriate manner in all facets of our lives. In particular, our own personal liberation allows us to act in a truly other regarding manner. Only when our own self interest is transcended (*mai mîtuaton*) can we realize the common humanity of all beings in the mutual process of birth, old age, suffering, and death, and perceive that everything in the world is conditioned by the same universal, natural dialectic (*idapaccayatā, paṭicca-samuppāda*). Hence, for Buddhadāsa, the individual nature of liberation is uniquely personal but at the same time it is communal and ultimately universal.

What is the nature of "communal" or the community in Buddhadāsa's schema? At one level it is truly universal because the laws that govern a community are universal. Thus, in Buddhadāsa's view such terms as a cooperative (*sahakorn*), a dhammically governed society, (*dhammika sankhom niyom*), and even *sangha* are imbedded in a normative condition (*pakatī*), namely, the universal laws of dependent co-arising which underlie all life forms. In the light of this understanding of the nature of things, true community as well as personal liberation is the recovery and embodiment of this very core or ground of reality. For this reason, in Buddhadāsa's talks in the 1970s dealing with political and social philosophy, a consistent theme is "getting back on track" (Thai: *thoy lang khaw khlong*). Buddhadāsa characterizes getting back on track in the public arena or the socio-political realm as *sīla-dhamma* (social ethics rooted in the Dhamma) and on the personal level as *paramathadhamma* (the supreme Dhamma).[23] Both, however, are equally rooted in the universal laws of nature. Section III of this talk explores the universal dimension of Buddhadāsa's understanding of community in terms of nature (*dhammajāti*). From an ecological perspective, the world community is all inclusive.

In addition to the notion of a universal or cosmic cooperative, however, Buddhadāsa often speaks of community in a specifi-

cally human, social sense. His best known and perhaps most controversial writings in this regard are those which develop the idea of "dhammic socialism" (Pali: *dhammika sangama niyama*). Elsewhere I have characterized this term as a fellowship or community grounded in the *dhamma* in which all members restrain their own acquisitive self-interest to act on behalf of the common good.[24] I would like to share with you some of my thoughts about Buddhadāsa's understanding of a dhammically grounded, cooperative community.[25]

Such a community operates according to three basic principles: the principle of the good of the whole, the principle of restraint and generosity, and the principle of respect and loving kindness. The principle of the good of the whole pervades all aspects of life from the health of the body to the cosmos. Communally, however, Buddhadāsa argues that the whole takes priority over the interests of any one individual:

> Whatever system is laid out for the functioning of a social group, the principles of such a system must be for the good of society as a whole and not just for individuals or for any one person. In a society that puts the interests of any one individual above those of the community, social problems cannot be effectively addressed because the context of the problems is the way society operates as a whole.[26]

To act in terms of all of the individuals who constitute our community–in the broadest sense all the world's inhabitants–necessarily means that we must restrain our egoistic impulses. We cannot do whatever we want to do. Chaos would be the result. We cannot act simply to satisfy our own needs and pleasures. The world today provides several dramatic examples of the consequences of untrammeled selfish behavior without regard to the well-being of others in our community, e.g. the destruction of local habitats and

natural environments by powerful, wealthy elites, the careless sexual transmission of the AIDS virus.

The principle of restraint should be seen as an optimal way of life rather than as a limit to human freedom. Buddhadāsa's understanding of the inherent interdependent nature of life means that the fulfillment of our true nature necessarily entails the realization of the potentials of others. In short, our own well- being cannot be separated from the well-being of others. Recognizing this fact should then affect the choices we make, everything from the way we spend leisure time to what we actively do about prostitution in Thailand or violence on the streets of Los Angeles.

The complimentary side of restraining egoism is generosity. Two of Buddhadāsa's examples of generosity seem rather conservative and naive but they are worth our attention, nevertheless. He contends that traditionally in Thailand wealth was not measured in terms of the number of houses or cars an enterpreneur owned but the amount he provided for the physical well-being of the needy. In his second example, he contends that rural Thai farmers, although relatively poor, still considered it their responsibility to provide food even for animals. They,

> ...taught that we should do what we can to promote the co-existence of all beings... All living beings are able to exist to the degree they form a society, a mutually beneficial cooperative... Those who know this principle hold fast to it. Even their paddies are planted for the benefit of wild animals who feed on it as well as for their own consumption. They grow as much as they can to share with all forms of living beings.[26]

In short, in Buddhadāsa's idealized view the behavior of both rich and poor was motivated by the principle of generosity and sharing.

A dhammically grounded, mutually cooperative community also dictates a life-style of simplicity and moderation. While such a community recognizes that what counts as moderation, on the one hand, and excess on the other, may vary among individuals, groups, and cultures, the principle of non-excess or moderation pertains to all ages. Buddhadāsa contends that the Buddhist philosophy of the Middle Way (*majjhimā patipadā*) supports this principle. This principle, furthermore, is exemplified by the Buddha and embodied in the Sangha:

> The Buddha prescribed the system of monastic discipline (*vinaya*) which, as we can see, binds all things together into an indissolvable group or aggregation. We know this from the word, *sangha*, itself which literally means such a community... [T]he *vinaya* demands contentment and moderation in style of life. In particular, monks are under a special rule not to take more than they need... The ideal which teaches monks not to take in excess is the real foundation of a mutually cooperative community (*sangama niyama*).[28]

The third principle of a dhammically grounded mutually cooperative community is respect for life or non-violence (*ahimsā*) and loving-kindness (*mettā-karunā*). Buddhadāsa roundly condemns violence. In doing so he appeals to the Buddhist principle of not overcoming evil with evil but overcoming evil with good. "Killing others will only lead to being killed. The only way to live harmoniously together is to act out of loving-kindness (*mettā-karunā*)." [29]

Buddhadāsa's vision of a dhammic socialism is all inclusive. It ranges from the mutual interdependence of the bodily and mental parts of the individual to the nature of the structure of the cosmos. In particular, it is a philosophy which he applied to the modern nation state. In some of his writings, for instance, he sets

dhammic socialism over against liberal capitalism on the one hand, and Marxist based socialism on the other.

In my view the utopian character of Buddhadāsa's dhammic socialism problematizes its applicability to a political system. Consequently, I suggest that: (a) the principles of Buddhadāsa's dhammic socialism should be translated by his proponents into more realistic, political programs and goals, and (b) Buddhadāsa's vision of a dhammically grounded cooperative society is more appropriate to communities like Suan Mokkh and the Ashram Wongsanit than to political systems. In this regard, informative analogues to Buddhadāsa's communal vision might be found in utopian communities in 19th century America such the Shakers, the New Harmony community in Indiana, the Amana community in Iowa, or the Amish communities of Pennsylvania. Even better analogues are the Liberation Theology inspired Base Communities of Latin America.

Like Suan Mokkh, Base Communities are groups of people exploring ways to embody the *dhamma* (in this case, Christian) in both personal and socially transformative ways. Dhammically based cooperative societies such as Buddhadāsa envisons can provide three crucial roles in Thai society: (a) offer meaningful communal environments for people seeking to develop in their own lives Buddhadāsa's principles of a dhammically based cooperative society, (b) serve as an inspiration to other communal groups and to the larger society, and (c) be centers of critical advocacy for a more humane, just, and righteous social, political, and economic order.

One of Buddhadāsa's most enduring legacies might well be the creation of Buddhadāsa type dhammically grounded, broadly ecumenical Base Communities throughout Thailand of which his own Suan Mokkh can be seen as a particular instance. Indeed, this

development is already occuring and would, in my own view, include a wide range of centers including *wats*, e.g. development Wats like Pa Daraphirom outside of Chiang Mai, various community based lay NGOs especially in the northeast, and institutions such as Santi Asok which have tried to construct totalistic communal centers. Sulak Sivaraksa, in particular, has devoted a considerable amount of his time and effort to create communities of people broadly based on Buddhist principles dedicated to working for a more just and human social, political, and economic order.[30]

Legacy III. Caring for the Environment

Although Buddhadāsa refers to all that surrounds us by the term, "environment", he was particularly concerned about the health of the natural environment or ecology (*nivesavidayā).* It is in this more particular sense that I am using the word, environment.[31] Let us begin first with a consideration of two important concepts, "caring" (Thai: *anurak.* Pali: *anu-rakkhā)* and nature (Thai: *thamachāt.* Pali: *dhamma-jāti*).

Within the context of the worldwide concern for environmental destruction, the Thai term, *anurak*, is often translated into English as "conservation." In fact, the dozens of Thai monks involved in efforts to stop the exploitation of forests in their districts and provinces have been labeled, *phra anurak pā*, translated as "forest conservation monks."[32] *Anurak*, as embodied in the life and work of Buddhadāsa and several conservation monks, however, conveys a richer, more nuanced meaning closer to its Pali roots; namely, to be embued with the quality of protecting, sheltering, or caring for. By the term, *anurak*, Buddhadāsa intends this deeper, dhammic sense of *anu-rakkhā*, an active "caring for" that issues forth from the very nature of our being. In this sense, *anu-rakkhā* is linked with a pervasive feeling of human empathy (Pali: *anu-kampā*) for all of our surroundngs. If you will, caring is the

active expression of empathy.

One cares for the forest because one empathizes with the forest just as one cares for people because one has become empathetic. But how does one become empathetic? *Anurak*, in this sense, is fundamentally linked with non-attachment or liberation from preoccupation with self which is so central to Buddhadāsa's thought. We truly care for our total environment and for our fellow human beings only when we have overcome selfishness and those qualities which empower it, e.g. desire, greed, hatred. There is a persistent linkage in Buddhadāsa's writings among non-attachment, selflessness, and the capacity to be truly other-regarding. Caring *(anurak)* in Buddhadāsa's dhammic sense, therefore, is the active expression of our empathetic identification with all life forms--sentient and non-sentient, humane beings and nature.

Caring in this deeper sense of the meaning of *anurak* goes beyond the well publicized strategies of the conservation monks to protect and conserve the forest, as important as these strategies are in Thailand today. This is where the term, nature (*dhammjāti*), comes into the picture. The Thai term, *thamachāt*, is usually translated as "nature" in the sense of the observable natural world. In its more nuanced Pali sense, however, *dhammajāti* denotes everything that is linked to *dhamma* or that is *dhamma* originated (*jāti).* That is to say, *thamchāt* includes all things in their true, natural state. To conserve (*anurak*) nature (*thamchāt*), therefore, translates as having at the very core of one's being the quality of caring for all things in the world in their natural conditions; that is to say, to care for them as they are in themselves rather than as I might benefit from them or as I might like them to be.

From an ethical perspectve this means that our care for nature derives from an ingrained, selfless, empathetic response. It is not motivated by our need to satisfy our own pleasures as, say, in

the maintenance of a beautiful garden, or even the laudable goal of conserving nature for future generations. To care for nature in these pragmatic, functional terms has immense value, to be sure. I think that Buddhadāsa would not dispute this fact. A carefully tended garden is both meaningful to the gardener and inspirational to the viewer; furthermore, human survival may depend on whether or not we are able to conserve our dwindling natural resources and solve the problems of our increasingly polluted natural environment. Laudable as these two senses of conserving nature are, however, they lack the profound transformational or spiritual sense of what Buddhadāsa means by *anurak thamchāt*.

The concept of active caring for others needs little explication.[33] The word itself evokes numerous examples from our own experience, e.g. the parent who cares for a child, the mutual caring among friends, the responsible caring of citizens for the well-being of the state. But what does Buddhadāsa mean by caring for nature, *thamachāt*? By *thamachāt* Buddhadāsa certainly does not mean to impose on nature some sort of abstract, metaphysical construction; quite the contrary. For Buddhadāsa, things in their natural, true state are characterized by their dynamic, interdependent nature (*idapaccayatā, paṭicca-samuppāda*). Everything is linked in the process of dependent co-arising, a mutual friendship which binds everything together in the process of birth, aging, suffering, and death.[34]

While some linkages are obvious to us, e.g. our relationships with family and friends, others are more hidden. For example, only in recent years has it been commonly recognized that the destruction of the Brazilian rain forest or the ocean dumping of toxic waste affects the entire world's ecosystem; or, in more immediate and personal terms, that whether I personally conserve water, electricity, gasoline and so on affects not only my utility bills but the health of the entire cosmos. To care for (*anurak*) nature (*tham-*

chāt), therefore, stems from a realization that I do not and cannot exist independent of my total environment. I am not an "island unto myself"; or in Buddhadāsa's terminology, I do not and cannot exist unto myself (*tua kū, khong kū)*. To do so contravenes the laws of nature.

Buddhadāsa extends the sense of a cooperative society to the cosmos:

> The entire cosmos is a cooperative. The sun, the moon, and the stars live together as a cooperative. The same is true for humans and animals, trees and the soil. Our bodily parts function as a cooperative. When we realize that the world is a mutual, interdependent, cooperative enterprise, that human beings are all mutual friends in the process of birth, old age, suffering, and death, then we can build a noble, even a heavenly environment. If our lives are not based on this truth then we shall all perish.[35]

My own personal well-being is inextricably dependent on the well-being of everything and everyone else, and vice versa. In Buddhadāsa's view this is an incontrovertable, absolute truth (*sacca-dhamma*). To go against this truth is to suffer the consequences, as we are today. Buddhadāsa expressed these consequences in terms approaching an apocalyptic vision:

> The greedy and selfish are destroying nature... Our entire environment has been poisoned–prisons everywhere, hospitals filled with the physically ill, and we can't build enough facilities to care for the mentally ill. This is a consequence of utter selfishness (*khwām hen kae tua*)...And in the face of all of this our greed and selfishness continues to increase. Is there no end to this madness.?"[36] Fortunately, in the legacy of Buddhadāsa, groups of monks and laity like the Sekhiya

dhamma (Disciples of the Dhamma) which are connected to the work of the Santi (Peace) Pracha (Democratic Participation) Dhamma (Justice) Institute are trying to do something about ending this madness.[37]

Concluding Observations

In conclusion I want to make three brief remarks.

1. Few Theravāda monks in the modern period have left as large and diverse a legacy of *Buddhadhamma* as Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. To digest and evaluate this legacy of doctrinal exposition and creative interpretation demands intensive and extensive study by many Thai and international scholars and students of Buddhism. I am encouraged by the work currently underway at Suan Mokkh by the Dhamma Study and Practice Group and by workshops such as the one sponsored by the Alliance for the Propagation of Buddhism at Chulālongkorn University in 1992 (B.E. 2532). Buddhadāsa's great contribution to the creation of a distinctive, modern interpretation of Buddhist thought should be critically analyzed, and its strengths and weaknesses evaluated. Criticisms of the corpus of Buddhadāsa's thought should take into acccount its breadth and depth as well as the contexts to which he was responding. It is unfair to dismiss certain aspects of Buddhadāsa's philosophy because they are judged to be Mahāyanistic or Western, or to reject his political philosophy as a naive and conservative response to the political trends of the 1970s. Interpretations of Buddhadāsa should take account of the influences on his thought and the audiences to which he addressed his teachings, but Buddhadāsa's unique voice should not be reduced simply to his background, environment, and context.

2. A criticism leveled against Buddhadāsa has been that his *dhamma* is too theoretical. I wonder if these critics have really read much of the Buddhdāsa corpus? It is so vast and diverse that

a singular evaluation or criticism inevitably seems to be inadequate. Many of Buddhadāsa's essays are quite doctrinal, to be sure, but these doctrinal essays are no more theoretical than the Pali Suttas themselves. Furthermore, the great majority of his talks at Suan Mokkh and elsewhere tend to be very straightforward and are filled with illustrations, examples, and metaphors.

I suggest that the criticism of Buddhadāsa as overly theoretical is misplaced. To be sure, Buddhadāsa is an intellectual. He did not spend his time either in isolation meditating in a cave or chanting at meritmaking ceremonies. From the very beginning Suan Mokkh was dedicated to the study and propagation of Buddhist teachings.

Buddhadāsa is, however, very idealistic. His vision on individual, communal, and ecological levels is utopian rather than theoretical. I believe, however, that the power of his vision lies in its very idealistic and utopian character. Buddhadāsa challenges us to be more than we are. His vision cannot be completely institutionalized in Thai society or in any other society for that matter. To try to transform Buddhadāsa's dhammic socialism into a workable political system, for example, is not only unrealistic; it robs this vision of its power to challenge and transform all of our systems and institutions to be better than they are.

3. Finally, I hope all of the justified praise and adulation of Buddhadāsa does not undermine him as a provocateur and trickster. Buddhadāsa's style was essential to his vision. When Buddhadāsa ceases to challenge, reprimand, confound, and offend us, his vision also loses its idealism. The two go together. If Buddhadāsa becomes too popular; if his books become mere coffee table decorations rather than objects of serious study and discussion; if pilgrimage to Suan Mokkh becomes the fashion rather than a risk of being outside the mainstream and then

Buddhadāsa and his *dhamma* will lose their power to transform our personal lives, the societies in which we live, and the worlds we inhabit.

Donald K. Swearer.
Department of Religion, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, USA.
Guggenheim and Fulbright Fellow, Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University, Thailand.

Postscript

Last week the *Bangkok Post* business section carried an announcement of a forthcoming meeting of the Cafe Society to discuss modern strategies of blending Buddhist teachings and business dealings. For your edification (and possible discussion) I append a xerox of the article below. I wonder how Buddhadāsa would have reacted to reading this announcement?

The Bangkok Post 30th June 1994

Buddhism and business panel

In the fast-paced, high-tech business world of the 1990's, is there still room for the basic principles of Buddhism?

Cafe Society's July programme takes an in-depth look at the issue to show that getting ahead doesn't necessarily mean taking advantage of others. At the July 20 programme, a panel of distinguished speakers will discuss modern strategies in blending Buddhist teachings and business dealings.

Featured panelists will include:

- Khunying Chamnongsri Rutnin, poet, writer and president of Rutnin Eye Hospital.
- Khun Anurat Vongvanij, president of Asia/Supreme Marketing Co., Ltd.
- Khun Sirinart Phanhemanont,managing director of Srinart Co., Ltd.

Moderator for the eventing will be newspaper editor Khun Nitinand Yorsaengrat.

The discussion, in Thai, begins at 7 pm at Siam City Hotel's Club Erte and admission is free.

END NOTES

[1] Peter Jackson sees Buddhadāsa's reformist, demythologized interpretation of Buddhism as one of several contemporary voices appealing to an audience of urban, educated Thai elites. Peter A. Jackson, *Buddhism, Legitimation and Conflict: The Political Functions of Urban Thai Buddhism* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1989).

[2] At that time S. Sivaraksa was also the editor of *Visākha Pūja*. He published my first essay on Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, "Buddhism, Christianity, and Bhikkhu Buddhadāsa," *Visākha Pūja 2511* (1968), pp. 77-90.

[3] The book was published by the Alliance for the Propagation of Buddhism in conjunction with a conference at Chulālongkorn University in May 2531 (1991).

[4] It is exceedingly difficult for the Thai *sangha* to resist the pressures of commercialization. The cult of the amulets of charismatic monks, e.g. Luang Pu Waen, is as much a product of the marketplace as it is the veneration of Buddhist saints or even the appropriation of magical power. From a commercial perspective, I suggest that in the case of Buddhadāsa, expensive, lavishly illustrated books can be interpreted as the functional equivalent of the sale of amulets of deceased, holy monks. The prominent place of Buddhadāsa's pictures in these books is an especially important feature of this interpretation.

[5] This section reflects the following essays: *Khū MŪManut* (Handbook for Humankind) and *Tua Kū Khong Kū* (Me and Mine) as translated by Phra Tanissaro (Geoff Degraff) in *Me and Mine: Selected Essays of Bhikkhu Buddhadāsa*, ed. Donald K. Swearer (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989); *Kān Tham Ngān Duæ Cit Wāng*

[Working with a Liberated Heart and Mind](1975); three essays reprinted in the Dhammasaphā series: *Kan Tham Lāi Khwām Hen Kae Tua* [Destroying Selfishness], *Tham Yāng Rai Chœng Wāng lae Yū Nūa Lok* [How to Realize Liberation and World Transcendence], *Withi Fūk Ānāpānasati Būang Ton* [Introduction to Mindfulness of Breathing]; *Heartwood from the Bo Tree*, 1985. Several of Buddhadāsa's talks on meditation have been translated into English. They include: *Ānāpanasti: Mindfulness with Breathing*, 2nd ed., trans. Santikaro Bhikkhu, 1989; "The Dham ma-Truth of Samatha - Vipassanā for the Nuclear Age," trans. Santikaro Bhikkhu, in *Key to Natural Truth, 1988; A Shortcut Through Vipassanā Meditation*, trans. Kingkeo Atthagara, 1985; "The Meditative Development of Mindfulness of Breathing," trans. Stephen R. Schmidt, in *The ABC of Buddhism*, 1982.

[6] Tavivat Puntarigvivat of Mahidol University argues this point in his recent PhD dissertation at Temple University, U.S.A. Tavivat Puntarigvivat, *Bhikkhu Buddhadāsa's Dhammic Socialism in Dialogue with Liberation Theology* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1994).

[7] Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, *Heartwood from the Bo Tree* (Bangkok: Suan Usom Fundation, 1985), p. 12.

[8] Buddhadāsa, *Kān Tham Ngān Duœ Cit Wāng* [Working With a Liberated Heart and Mind] (Bangkok: Society for the Propagation of Buddhism, B.E. 2518/1975), p. 8.

[9] "Me and Mine," trans. Phra Tanissaro (Geoff DeGraff), in *Me and Mine: Selected Essays of Bhikkhu Buddhadāsa*, p. 88, italics mine. It should be noted that in 1939 Buddhadāsa wrote a major essay on the Buddhist doctrine of not-self (*anattā*) [See *The Buddha's Doctrine of Anattā* (Bangkok: Dhamma Study and Practice Group, 1990], and that *Tua Kū Khong Kū (Me and Mine)*

was published in 1961 over twenty years later.

[10] Buddhadāsa, *Kān Tham Lāi Khwam Hen Kae Tua* [Destroying Selfishness], p. 8.

[11] For an analysis of the relationship between the philosophy of Buddhadāsa and Mahāyāna thought see, Suwanna Satha-Anand, *Pratyāphutathāt Kap Mahāyāntham* [Mahāyāna Philosphy in Buddhadāsa's Thought]. Research Report Series No. 31. (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 1992.) She contends that Buddhadāsa's "universalism" in his interpretation of the concept of Dhamma, religious language, soteriology, and social equality are congruent with the philosophy of Nāgārjuna and Asanga.

[12] Buddhadāsa, *Kān Tham Ngān Duœ Cit Wāng* [Working With Liberated Heart and Mind], p. 8.

[13] Ibid., pp. 12-13.

[14] Louis Gabaude delineates the psychological orientation of Buddhadāsa's teachings. See Louis Gabaude, *Une Hermeneutique Bouddhique Contemporaine de Thailand: Buddhadasa Bhikkhu* (Paris: Ecole Française d'extreme-orient, 1988). Gabaude provides a detailed analysis of Buddhadāsa's background and various influences on his thought.

[15] Buddhadāsa, *Kān Tham Ngān Duœ Cit Wāng,*

[16] Buddhadāsa takes two positions regarding the standard Theravāda distinction between *samatha* and *vipassanā*. In some contexts tranquillity meditation is preliminary to insight; in other contexts he unites them. For example, see "The Dhamma-Truth of Samatha-Vipassnā for the Nuclear Age," trans. Santikaro Bhikkhu, in *Key to Natural Truth,* p. 118.

[17] Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, *Ānāpānasti : Mindfulness With Breathing,* 2nd ed., trans. Santikaro Bhikkhu (Bangkok: The Dhamma Study and Practice Group, 1989, p. 115. Buddhadāsa describes the style of practice at Suan Mokkh in a 1958 talk translated and published in *Evolution/Liberation* No. 4 (1990/ 2530), pp. 23-42.

[18] Ibid., p. 116.

[19] Ibid., p. 100.

[20] Ibid., pp. 101-102. Buddhadāsa's emphasis on the existential, rational, psychological, and ethical aspects of Buddhism, especially Nibbāna, is consistent with other modern Theravāda interpreters in Sri Lanka, Burma (Myanmar), and the West.

[21] Several autobiographical and biographical essays on Buddha dāsa are available in Thai. English language readers will enjoy reading, Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, *The First Ten Years of Suan Mokkh,* trans. Mongkol Dejnakarintra (Bangkok: The Dhamma Practice and Study Group, 1990).

[22] See Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, *Withī Fū'k Anāpānasti Bū'ang Ton* [The Practice of Mindfulness with Breathing] (Bangkok: Dhamma-saphā, n.d.).

[23] For example, see Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, *PhrachāThipatai Baep Sangkhom Niyom* [Democratic Socialism] (Bangkok: Sublime Life Mission, 1977/2517), pp. 2-3. This distinction made in Buddhadāsa's social ethics writings needs to be studied at greater depth but is beyond the scope of this essay. The distinction seems to offer the possibility of adapting Buddhadāsa's uncompromising idealism to the realities of the socio-political realm.

[24] Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, *Dhammic Socialism*, ed. Donald K. Swearer, 2nd ed., (Bangkok: Thai Interreligious Commission for Development, 1993), Introduction. My remarks in this section are based primarly on Buddhadāsa's essays in this book. They include, *Sangama Niyama Chanit Thi Chuai Lok Dai [A Socialism Capable of Benefitting the World]* (Bangkok: Sublime Life Mission, 1976/B.E. 2519), *Prachāthipatai Baep Sangama Niyama* [Democratic Socialism] (Bangkok: Sublime Life Mission, 1974/ B.E. 2517. *Sangama Niyama Baep Padechakan* [A Dictatorial Dhammic Socialism] (Bangkok: Sublime Life Mission, 1975/B.E. 2518.)

Because "socialism," a standard English translation for the Thai term, *sankhom niyom* (Pali: *sangama niyama*) is out of favor these days, it may be a more problematic translation today than ten years ago. In my usage, when preceeded by *dhammika*, the term connotes the meaning above which differs considerably from the usual political definition of the term.

[25] See Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, *Dhammic Socialism*, pp. 33-39.

[26] Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, *Prachāthipatai Baep Sangama Niyama* [Democratic Socialism] , p. 23.

[27] Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, *Sangama Niyama Chanit Thi Chuai Lok Dai* [A Socialism Capable of Benefitting the World] , p. 10.

[28] Ibid., pp. 12-13.

[29] Ibid., p. 19.

[30] See Donald K. Swearer, "Sulak Sivaraksa's Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society", Afterword in Sulak Sivaraksa, *Seeds of Peace* (Bangkok: International Network of Engaged Buddhists, 1992), pp. 133-190.

[31] My remarks in this section are based primarily on Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, *Buddhasāsanik Kap Kān Anurak Thamachāt* [Buddhists and the Conservation of Nature] Bangkok: Komol Keemthong Foundation, 1990/B.E. 2533). This discussion is adapted from my article, "Buddhadāsa on Caring for Nature (Dhammajāti) in the Sept-Dec 1994 issue of *Seeds of Peace.*

[32] Many conservation and development monks meet monthly in an association known as Sekhiyadhamma. The organization publishes a journal six times a year by the same title. The organization has as its chief purpose to make Thai Buddhism relevant to individual lives and to Thai society. The conservation efforts of Thai monks have even made the international news media. See, "The Seeds of Controversy: Battling the Intrusive Eucalyptus," in *Newsweek*, July 4, 1994, p. 46.

[33] For example, see Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley: Unversity of California Press, 1984).

[34] Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, *Buddhasāsanik Kap Kān Anurak Thamachāt* [Buddhists and the Conservation of Nature], p. 34.

[35] Ibid., p. 35.

[36] Ibid., pp. 15-16. I have given a free rendering of the Thai in order to convey my understanding of Buddhadāsa's meaning.

[37] See Swearer, "Sulak Sivaraksa's Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society", p. 150.

BUDDHADASA'S CONTRIBUTIONS AS A HUMAN BEING, AS A THAI, AS A BUDDHIST

I want to thank Sulak Sivaraksa for inviting me to join this honorable gathering on the first anniversary of the death of Budhadasa Bhikkhu. As everybody knows, Sulak is a taker of risks and he has taken one, albeit a small one, in this invitation. Even though I may present in this paper some of Buddhadasa's contributions to the world, it should be obvious to all that it would be too presumptuous of me to make a suggestion for or give an advice on the ways to carry on Buddhadasa's work.

In the first place, I came to study Buddhadasa not as a devotee but as an historian of contemporary Thai religious thought and, notwithstanding my appreciation of his creative mind, I made no secret of some of the problems I had with his teachings.[1] Apparently, this did not alarm Sulak. In the second place, being neither a Thai nor a Buddhist, I could be seen as just another blind Westerner trying to discover the nature of an elephant by touching

[1] See. a) Louis GABAUDE. *Une herméneutique bouddhique contemporaine de Thailande: Buddhadasa Bhikkhu*. Paris, Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1988, 690 p. b) "Thai Society and Buddhadasa : Structural Difficulties". In : *Radical Conservatism : Buddhism in the Contemporary World: Articles in Honour of Bhikkhu Budddhadasa's 84th Birthday Anniversary. Bangkok*, International Network of Engaged Buddhists, 1990, pp. 211-229.

here and there on Thai life or on the still more elusive Buddhist life. So, not only will I not blame you if you think I should keep quiet today, but I beg your pardon in advance for my unworthy thoughts which are either simple or self-evident.

Moreover, to suggest ways of carrying on the work of Buddhadasa implies that his work is worth continuing, yet how can a "non-Buddhist" like myself judge what is worthy or unworthy in the writings of a Buddhist monk? I cannot legitimately make such a claim. However, I have accepted Sulak's invitation because I felt that, at least, I could focus on the basic elements in Buddhadasa's life and teachings which deserve appreciation even from an ordinary man like me, especially in the context of the present situation of the world of which I am a part, of Thailand as my host country, and of Buddhism as my field of research and sympathy.

So, what can I say about Buddhadasa's contributions to the world? Usually, a "contribution", is thought of as something given to someone, thus it belongs in the domain of "having", on the grounds that one cannot give what one does not possess or "have". In the case of Buddhadasa's contributions, that leads naturally to focus on the "works", or the "books", or the "sayings". It is my contention that whatever Buddhadasa "had" or "gave" or "contributed" came mainly from what he actually "was", which is for me a contribution not only not to be overlooked, but a primary and seminal contribution of which we must be conscious in the first place.

This explains why I would like to draw your attention to the roots of Buddhadasa's contributions as the human being he was, as the Thai he was and, finally, as the Buddhist he was. I acknowledge that this is more the subject of a book than of a short talk, so please consider this as a limited suggestion of what should be expanded and developed further on.

1. BUDDHADASA AS A HUMAN BEING

Even if, as a non-Buddhist and a non-Thai, I am unqualified to speak of Buddhadasa, I hope you will agree that I might at least render some kind of a judgment on Buddhadasa as a human being, because I happen to be a human being, too, albeit from a different continent, culture and spiritual level. Of course, you may say that just being a human being should not be taken into account in the case of Buddhadasa because, even if you are not among those who place him among the "gods" or the "angels" ("theps" or deva), you could argue that what shines most in him is "higher" than the merely common, mortal and finally contemptible character of ordinary humanity. I presume that his "Thai" and most of all his "Buddhist" virtues appeal to you much more than his "human" qualities. But to a non-Buddhist foreigner, these very human qualities were probably the first common platform on which many of us could relate to and eventually come to appreciate Buddhadasa. Moreover, I am reasonably sure that, to him too, this human platform was a preeminent one. We have several clues, from the way he produced his biographies to his concern for the world at large, through his repeated teachings about the way to achieve one's humanity.

HUMAN BIOGRAPHY versus SUPERHUMAN HAGIOGRAPHY

Every human being has a problem with "image" or "face" because, accurately or not, the face is supposed to express something from the heart. In other words, the appearance reveals something of the hidden within. Someone has said that up to 45 years of age, we are responsible for the face we show, but after that we are also held responsible for the face we have because our way of looking at life is revealed in the set of our face. So, the face may be revealing in one way or another; lovers know this. We may be afraid

of what our face might disclose about our true feelings. That makes it a very sensitive area and even an "erroneous zone" on which we may consciously construct a deceptive world for ourselves and others, a world of appearances and illusions we wish others to take as our deepest feelings. To accomplish this task, our "face" extends out to all our "havings" or belongings which are supposed to reveal our innermost "being": jewels or gold, preferably in large amounts; cars, preferably an expensive highly regarded one; houses, preferably an exclusive neighborhood; diplomas, preferably from an excellent university; a wife or a husband, preferably from a good or rich family. Even monks may have an extended face as well: honorific titles, preferably at the provincial or national level; temples, preferably wealthy or famous ones; bronze images, preferably of large size; flattering publicity stories, preferably in a well-known magazine, etc.

People keen on generalizing may even go so far as to assert the commonplace that, for Thais, their "image" is more important than the truth of their actual life, or that their "face" is more important than their heart. For many, face-gaining and face-saving could well serve as categories to analyze Thai behaviour, specially among the elite in the so-called "high" society. I will give two examples.

Until recently, prostitution was never considered a "problem" in elite circles except when some malicious foreign newspaper or TV network began to spread the word about it and the "image" was broadcast around the world that "tourists" were spoiling Thai "innocence" by preying on Thai poverty. Even if one sympathizes with that nationalist frustration because there was and is more to Thailand than prostitution, still one was surprised by the fuss about the revelation of a visible yet tiny minority while the hidden, silent yet large majority of prostitutes never raised an eyebrow here. Not a thought or consideration was expressed for

the tens (or hundreds?) of thousands of prostitutes working diligently for the "native" market all over the country, while those working for foreigners in three or four areas in Bangkok were exposed as unbearable.

Turning to another very sensitive spot for Thailand's erroneous zones, Buddhism, we cannot help but notice that its "face" is sometimes more concerned for appearance than for deep commitment. Actually, the monks's rules or Vinaya and Thai customs lend support to this tendency by attaching a great importance to the robes and to the status of the monk and, more generally, to the external and formal marks of appreciation and respect. Such respect should uphold the virtues and well-being of the monks and the "good" order of society in general. However, this attention to "forms" often produces an adverse effect when relatively young monks create their own image through sentimental or outspoken teachings, books and magazines, through extreme aceticism, through amulets or bronze images before they have actually emulated the purity their image proports to show. Only one newspaper headline is often enough to send this false and artificial image to the dustbin.

The young Buddhadasa was also concerned with his image. He wrote a booklet on the first ten years of Suan Mokkh and contributed to his first published biography.[2] When you compare these image-building materials with those dealing wih other contemporary famous monks, you cannot but be struck by the difference. Normally, monks achieved and still achieve promotion and fame through two channels. The first is the ascension to higher and higher responsibilities through the religious administrative network set up to control and preserve the purity (as well as the political

[2] See : a) พุทธทาสภิกขุ. *10 ปีในสวนโมกข์ เล่าเรื่องชีวิตในวัยหนุ่ม* กรุงเทพฯ, กองทุนวุฒิธรรม, ม.ป.ป. 63 หน้า
b) ชิต กิบาลแทน ชีวิตและงานของพุทธทาสภิกขุ, กรุงเทพฯ ศิลปาบรรณาคาร, 2520, 329 หน้า

innocuousness) of the sangha. The second is the ascension towards sainthood through genuine asceticism often spiced with stories of struggle with ferocious spirits or with miracles produced by amulets during other types of wars, be they military, or business or sexual ones. This has created two religious hierarchies in Thailand: one is the official, state-sanctioned, Bangkok centered one, and the other is the popular, lay-sponsored, multi-centered one. Most of the time, the two co-exist in peace but along parallel lines. Sometimes they meet when a fairly popular monk is given administrative responsibilities; sometimes they clash, as in the case of Phra Srivijay in Chiang Mai or Phra Phimolatham in Bangkok.

From the very beginning, Buddhadasa was atypical because he did not fit into either of the two hierarchies. First, he criticized the granting of honorific titles by the State to the monks because it not only induced a desire for honors, but also it revealed the desire of the State to exercise control over the sangha. Moreover, he was convinced that there were already enough temples in this country. So, there was more than enough evidence for the official hierarchy to be cautious about this "leftist" character. Buddhadasa did not fit into the second popular scale for achievement either. He acknowledged that in Suan Mokkh he was not favored with encounters of the third type. No malevolent spirits, no boon granting deity ever appeared to prove that he was some kind of a special being, he was just an ordinary human being, just an ordinary monk, just an ordinary man. There was no miracle to look for, save the "miracle of being awake".

His tendency towards focusing upon the importance of the merely human as the basis for religious life was further underlined in his oral autobiography which was skillfully extracted from interviews with the Master by Pracha Hutanuwatra, then a monk

in Suan Mokkh.[3] Through these oral memoirs, we see a living man emerge in his search, his commitment, his courage, his creativity, his openness as well as his errors and limits.

A LESSON ON AUTHENTICITY

In these times of national recognition and legitimation of Buddhadasa and after all those Honoris Causa Doctorates granted by most Thai universities, one should be reminded that the late "doctor" often acknowledged that he had been in error or that he had failed. He had been wrong as a young monk to preach "like a parrot" "democratic" sermons after the 1932 "revolution" while ignoring everything about democracy, society and politics. He had been wrong to attack "God" from a traditional Theravada point of view. Later on, he admitted failure to explain some of his main teachings so that all would understand. Buddhadasa's confession of errors and failures (from one many consider a genius) should give ordinary followers pause vis-à-vis their own opinions and theories.

It is often difficult for a committed preacher to distinguish the moment when he serves the "truth" or the "Dhamma" from the moment when he uses this "truth" or this "Dhamma" to serve his own image, his own ego, not to speak of serving his passions. This is difficult because, if he does not want to simply repeat the religious textbooks or read over and over the Anisong sermons, on the "advertages" of meritorious acts, he must internalize the Dhamma in order to be able to present it to others; he has to personalize it without "ego-izing" it; he has to serve it while remaining free. When this is achieved, and that should take years, when the time comes for a creative preacher to expound his views, when

[3] See: พุทธทาสภิกขุ. *เล่าไว้เมื่อวัยสนธยา : อัตชีวประวัติของท่านพุทธทาส :* (พระประชา ปสนฺนธมฺโม สัมภาษณ์). กรุงเทพฯ มูลนิธิโกมลคีมทอง 2535. (26). 707 หน้า.

he is alone in his "kuthi" pondering the Kalama Sutta principles,[4] he should think it over carefully for a while before assuming that he has attained the "truth" or before believing that people might consider him to be almost a Buddha.

I have indeed met such monks who were so overly confident of their spiritual attainment or took pride in their followers' praises that it escapes their lips. They are very interesting for a researcher such as myself, but at the same time less convincing to the person within myself. These proud monks seem to believe that their achievements would be incomplete without proclaiming it themselves. Apparently, they do not trust the people to recognize their "remarkable" achievement. Because of their urgent need for public recognition of their "special qualities" one is moved to investigate exactly what it is they pretend to know. In the end, one is led to doubt that they are what they appear to be. Was I deceived or not? I never had this feeling with Buddhadasa. He was just what I thought we should expect from anyone; he was not playing easy ego games; he was just being himself; he said nothing beyond his own actual experience. Apparently, he was just what he said he was. He admitted errors; he admitted failures. When he taught, he did not pretend to put himself above others. And even when his approach toward this Dhamma was so "personal" as to border upon heresy in the eyes of many, you did not feel it to be an ego enhancing exercise for him. He talked and acted as if it concerned only the Dhamma which through time and authenticity had become wholly natural and universally human.

Anyone who tries to emulate Buddhadasa, whichever life one has decided to lead, should first remember the authenticity in

[4] The "Kalama principles" are the following : 1. Be not led by report; 2. Be not led by tradition; 3. Be not led by hearsay; 4. Be not led by the authority of texts; 5. Be not led by mere logic; 6. Be not led by interference; 7. Be not led by considering appearances; 8. Be not led by the agreement with a considered and approved theory; 9. Be not led by seeming possibilities; 10. Be not led by the idea 'This is our teacher'.

his life. Authenticity engenders humility because aspiring to any ideal can never be perfectly achieved. In the long run, authenticity is probably the best way to achieve public recognition although it should not aim for public recognition in the first place. It took several scores of years to produce the Budhadasa we now know. As a young monk, he was neither an abuser nor the victim of the media which now prey upon the young and not so young monks. These are monk "stars" featured in the newspapers, religious magazines, television, and shown in shops or riding in fancy cars. Why would they not believe they are famous since they appear in the press or the TV, or because they are ubiquitous and can travel around the world to show off the Dhamma – or themselves. If an authentic nature does not act as a guide to spiritual progress, then there is a risk that an inflated public image will grow to the bursting point.

So we are back to square one, the question of image. I hope I have suggested that Buddhadasa's image building has been based on that ordinary human quality of authenticity which guarantees a proportionate growth for both the real authentic personality and the artificially forged image or, better yet, that which guarantees there is no artificially forged image other than the real authentic personality. That authenticity is one of the many features I read in Buddhadasa's life and should be the foundation for anyone who carries on his work.

FOR A HUMANISTIC BUDDHISM

In addition to looking at his life, there is another way to stress the human side of Buddhadasa, and that is his teachings.

In nineteenth century Europe, Buddhism created a shock among the first intellectuals to discover and study it because, for them, it had no God, no concept of the immortal soul and no humanism. A "religion" without an eternal God and without a

transcendental soul was, of course, beyond the understanding of western minds, be they theists or atheists. But a religion without any concern for history, a religion so "monkish" as to be removed from ordinary life was, nonetheless, intriguing. Since then, Buddhists have attempted to show that their religion is indeed "humanistic" too. Here, in Thailand, Buddhadasa and the groups founded by Sulak Sivaraksa have striven to prove just that.

The many titles of talks and books by Buddhadasa bear witness to his concern for the basic needs of mankind and the answers Buddhism could give such as "Manual for Mankind", "Why were you born". With these titles, Buddhadasa did not want to address only the Thai "Buddhists", whom he thought were just Buddhists in name only; he aimed to address the most common denominator in every Thai, to be sure, but within every person everywhere in the world as well.

In Thailand which is facing the deculturization and debuddhization of the urban and educated elite, Buddhadasa's approach aims to plant the questions Buddhism pretends to answer into a deeper soil than the quickly disappearing "traditional" one. Rural and magical Buddhism may mean very little to the "modern" and "scientific" person. That did not really matter for Buddhadasa because his "true" Buddhism is not supposed to speak to only rural and magic-oriented populations. "True" Buddhism has an answer for everyone and, indeed, for all modern students, for all modern persons. Based on wisdom or paññā, Buddhism should appeal to all concerned persons who reflect deeply upon the human condition. As a moral force both for the individual as well as society, Buddhism offers guidelines not only to monks but also to the laity who are concerned with political and social justice. These discourses answered questions from students and intellectuals. But, if one considers the practical results in Thai life, one is unsure, to say the least, if Buddhadasa's teaching about "Dhammic socialism", for

example, had anything to do with the end of the communist guerilla movement or had any impact on the MP's personal behavior or public law-making.

Up to the very end of his life, Buddhadasa continued to lash out at the westernized and ego-centered system of education; he continually made an appeal for a public morality; and he called for the creation of a comprehensive Buddhist humanism that could not be achieved quickly or by one monk only. He was conscious of the cultural "globalization" before the word was created and become fashionable.

Beyond Thailand, Buddhadasa felt that the "materialism" of western civilization and the crisis facing all established religions were actually responsible for creating a spiritual void in the religious life, just like in Thailand. And just like here, the question "Why were we born" could be applied to people from all over the world in order to question their way of life. The similarity of the crisis facing all religions called for a parallel re-planting of questions they had failed to answer properly. By understanding the heart or essence of every religion, which was the first of Buddhadasa's "resolutions", everyone would be able to dialogue among themselves and that was the second resolution. Paradoxically, for the whole of humankind, the "materialistic" and spiritually bankrupt culture created a common battleground for reflection and reaction and this struggle against materialism was his third "resolution".

Buddhadasa's analysis expresses a deep concern for the fate of human individuals and societies all over the world, first in the context of the cold war, then of the communist guerilla movement and, lately, of a stammering Thai democracy. In his attempt to find a deeper and a common ground for individual and social morality, Buddhadasa exploited the richness of the concept of

Dhamma from which the "nature of things" (or "thammachat") emerges. His analyses of this "nature of things" indicates that he drew upon a general concept of what this "nature of things" was for all human beings all over the world: politics, sexuality, education, female behavior, work, etc., everything could be articulated to the "nature of things". This amounts to an innocence or even a naiveté in the eyes of a Westerner who has been raised to believe that, actually, there is no perception of any "nature of things" outside the framework or the conditioning of a specific "culture". One often has the impression that Buddhadasa was not always conscious that his so-called "universal" view of the "nature of things" was actually a modernist "Thai" view of this nature. If this is true, we have some homework to do to analyze the relationship between nature, culture and the religion(s) of a specific culture, namely the Thai culture.

Now that the western and communist "humanisms" have shown their limitations, people of goodwill are challenged to show that they can articulate an authentic and practical humanism with their spiritual convictions. If you do not want to allow Buddhism to continue to live on with its nineteenth century understanding which made it a narrow humanism just for small communities of monks striving for extinction, and if you feel that Buddhadasa's work should be incarnated into new forms, then this is perhaps one of the fields you should consider worthwhile of study.

Due to the time limits of this gathering, I must omit many aspects of Buddhadasa's contribution as a human being. I have pointed first to one personal aspect of Buddhadasa that I think is the fundamental condition for anyone who would follow not only Buddhadasa but any exemplary person. By this I mean the primacy of the authentic life and of the equation of the real ego with the apparent image. Then, I touched on one doctrinal foundation of humanism which could be explored more fully: the notion of the

nature of things which might not be as simple as Buddhadasa has suggested.

I will now concentrate my focus on the contributions of Buddhadasa as a Thai.

2. BUDDHADASA AS A THAI

To begin one could ask a controversial question: is there really such a person as a "Thai"? If one takes "Thai" to refer to some pure ethnic group, then I am afraid it would be difficult to find a scholar to certify that such and such villages are pure "Thai". You would find people telling you that this is or that was a "Lao" village, that a "Mon" one, or a "Lawa", a "Thai Lü", a "Phu Tai", and so on. There is a great chance that the "Thais" left would be those who have simply forgotten their particular ethnic identity. This is a very narrow base indeed, if "Thai-ness" is to rest on Thai ethnicity.

If one takes "Thai" not as referring to one particular ethnic group, but to a social image sketched from the middle of the last century onward, roughed out by Rama VI, sculpted by Luang Vijit Watthakarn and adorned by subsequent governments, then there are indeed nearly sixty million Thais in this country with the last ones appearing on the scene being the "Chao thai phu khao", or in other words, the hill tribes.

For better or worse, all countries in the world not only need this kind of social image of themselves, they consciously create it. In France, for example, we have assembled an arsenal of imaged or conceptualized tools which, since the last century, have contributed to a finished product – modern French identity. More than one hundred years ago, the Republicans needed to blend together the different provincial or "native" peoples into one, national and republican mold so that, in particular, nostalgia for the former

Kingdom of France or for the former Napoleonic Empire would be entirely forgotten. The national anthem, republican symbols, architectural styles, history textbooks, national festivals, all was refurbished, recreated or just created from nothing into a new, one Nation from as many descendants of mixed natives and immigrants as Thailand may have. These tools were used in the national education system and the schools to put an end to "native" cultures and thus achieve national cultural unification.

What was accomplished in France in the last century is realized in Thailand in this century. At school, the future Buddhadasa learned from the same textbooks as all children throughout the country, at least as far as the education system reached. He was ordained and studied the religious textbooks printed in Bangkok for the whole country. Here again, he imbibed a standardized Buddhism which had been brought into the Buddhist community or sangha by the Thammayut Prince Vajirañanavarorasa. As he was a curious young monk, Buddhadasa absorbed not only the official ideology, he read secular books, reviews and newspapers, enough to be aware of dissenting spirits such as Thienwan, for example. He was impressed by the interest Westerners showed in Japanese Buddhism and was thus motivated to search for something in Theravada Buddhism that would appeal to Europeans. At that time, Western culture was more an ideal to imitate than a stain to wash out. Eagerness to learn and know, criticism of traditional beliefs, scientific discoveries, electric appliances, whatever came from the West was stimulating. Intellectually, Buddhadasa used Western critical tools to question Thai cultural beliefs as "superstitions" before he applied a critical methodology to the Buddhist scriptures themselves. In brief, Western values were used to criticize Thai values and even Thai Buddhist practice.

In the sixties, Buddhadasa began to talk of a new era wherein Western culture was seen to be more of a trend to contain or even

to repudiate than a trend to emulate as before. By then, Western clothing had been forced upon the Thai, Western educational subject matter had been expanded both in content as well as geographically, Western anti-communist stand inspired the political apparatus and games, Western economic values shaped the first Thai development plans, American military bases in the Northeast were freely used to bomb Indochina, and Japanese logos and trademarks began to appear on the streets of even remote districts, etc. No longer did the West shine with the charms of innovation and subversion that had seduced Buddhadasa in the thirties. Now, for Buddhadasa, the West meant rampant "materialism", an estrangement from one's own roots and culture, an alienation from one's own political and academic judgement and a rejection of one's own traditional values.

This coincided with a time of religious maturity whereby Buddhadasa had defined his own unique way of interpretating the Scriptures using the distinction, "Human language and Dhammic language". He re-interpreted a series of Buddhist "capsule phrases" such as "free mind" (jit wang) and Conditioned Origination. After Donald Swearer suggested to him that he be more systematic in his teachings, he began to give seasonal and thematic cycles of talks in Suan Mokkh, many of which have been printed in the "Thaammakhos" series. We were now in the seventies in Bangkok where Sulak Sivaraksa had for several years stirred the students' spirits through his "Sewana groups" and the *Sangkhomsat Parithat Review.* This flourished until 1973 when the students called for an end to the military government, and three "democratic" years followed. In the jungles, the Communist Party of Thailand guerillas, already struggling for years, were spurred on by the rise of new communist regimes in Saigon, Phom Penh and Vientiane in 1975. The political and social pressure mounted and in 1976 a coup threw many "concerned" and "radical" students and intellectuals into the arms of the communist guerilla movement

where most of them lost their political innocence within three years, unable to cope with the special type of "centralized democracy" that ruled the Communist Party of Thailand or with the "brotherhood at war" in nearby Cambodia and Vietnam.

For the Thai students and intellectuals, the years 1960-1980 were an era of questions. What was in doubt was not only the economic rules or which political system to choose but also the cultural identity of the students, many of whom were destined to become the future leaders of the middle-class. Many, from pure or mixed Chinese families, just happened to be born in Thailand. Others, from so-called "Thai" stems, had been uprooted from their rural soil. Through education all were opened to Western free, albeit limited, thinking and exposed to a communist utopia. With westernized heads atop an often crossbred body walking on Thai soil, they needed some channel to express their alienation and, hopefully, some system to articulate their confused egos. The channel through which to express themselves was Sulak Sivaraksa's *Sangkhomsat Parithat Review* and, sometimes the streets, to oppose the "dictators" or Japanese products. As for a system which would heal their broken egos into a new harmonious being, marxism was very seductive for many of them until the love affair turned sour. Other searching souls found themselves better off in the modernist Buddhist identity that Buddhadasa was blending together out of three culturally mixed sets of traditions, a Thai-Chinese one, a Thai-Western one and a Thevarada-Zen one.

Actually, Buddhadasa was well suited to create a new paradigm for those confused personalities. He himself issued from a typical mixed Chinese-Thai family. He could feel as a Thai from within through his mother, while looking at Thai culture from the outside through his father. From the day of his birth to the day of his ordination, he lived in a bifurcated world, one encouraging achievement in business, the other encouraging achievement in

the field of merit. He was to put his spiritual concerns into the shop and the concern for immediate benefit into the temple. In other words, he used his own blood and cultural mix as the basis for a deeper transformation, that of the psychological and spiritual levels. You may say that in Thai society, this situation is so pervasive that it does not even bear mentioning. Yes, mixed race families are common in Thailand. But what is also pervasive is the way in which Chinese-generated money is used to gratify the Thai urge for saving face, even in temples. What is original with Buddhadasa is the Chinese talent for efficiency mixed with the Thai-Buddhist quest for inner peace.

There is a second synthesis Buddhadasa realized of which the Thai public may be unaware even now, namely the Thai-Western synthesis. Buddhadasa never studied in any Western country nor even visited one. Yet, explaining the genesis of his theory of interpretation or his distancing from the Abhidhamma-pitaka would prove very difficult without recognizing in his thought a rather hidden blending with Western cultural ideas. The present generation could be misled by his warnings and condemnations of Western materialistic values infused into a victimized Thai society by a Westernized Thai educational system. His stand arose clearly as a result of excessive Americanization dating back mainly to the early sixties to which I briefly alluded earlier. However, the condemnation of the so-called "Western materialism" does not imply necessarily the condemnation of all Western ways.

The truth is that the young Buddhadasa felt at home with the intellectual curiosity for which the West is known. He therefore accepted a part, if in a very limited way, of Western critical literary and historical theories which had begun to be applied to the Buddhist Canon by the end of the nineteenth century. In brief, these theories, which had been previously used to study the Christian Bible, did not assume that the Theravada Buddhist Canon

was ever recited, checked, and codified unquestionably by scores of arahants soon after the Buddha's Parinirvana. That was just a pious story for devotees, not a "scientific" fact. Since Buddhadasa was afraid to pose a threat to the Thai Sangha and Thai Buddhists, he did not speak out very often with bold declarations, yet still he incurred their wrath when he implied that the Abhidhamma Pitaka had not been spoken literally by the Buddha himself, or later when he added that this part of the Canon could as well be thrown into the sea with little loss to Buddhists. When he suggested that "actually, the Buddha may not have said a word of what has been recorded in the Tripitaka", he repeated exactly what Western academics and Christian exegetes had previously applied to the sayings of Jesus found in the Gospels, much as the Rhys-Davids had applied to the Buddhist Canon. Most of the time Buddhadasa took a Western de-mythologizing approach to religious texts so as to present the Buddha's life and teachings in a more natural, straightforward and selective way of which the series of books "... from the Buddha's words" bear witness.

This talk would be incomplete if I did not mention his attention to what he termed "essential" or "genuine" core of religion. This understanding compelled Buddhadasa to remain in the forest, refuse to build an uposatha hall, or accept, only reluctantly, Buddha images, replicating the exact stand Protestants took toward Roman Catholic Christianity. Just as they considered the Roman Catholic "religion" to be layered with recent, false, useless and ultimately harmful additions to an earlier and more authentic Christian message, so too Buddhadasa, emulating the founders of the Mahabodhi Society in Sri Lanka, came to consider that most of the "religious" practices held in great respect by the Thai Buddhists were just as recent, just as fake, useless and harmful for the true comprehension and practice of the Buddha's original teaching. Whether expressed in a mild or a strong form, the adoption of this stance was a case of intellectual blending between East and West,

and even between Buddhism and Christianity. The West was used to "read" or interpret the East. While the latter was kept alive, it was actually viewed differently from the local tradition.

The third synthesis, between Theravada and Zen, is more well-known by the contemporary Thai public, and since Dr. Suwanna Satha-anand will probably touch on this, I will only retain what is most relevant to my problematic of the construction of a new Thai Buddhist identity. Buddhadasa knew Zen through Western books – the West again – and found first in Zen a confirmation of what a Chinese son could appreciate: a quick, practical and simple way to achieve something. This "something" being here both the understanding of the Tripitaka and its practice. This Zen discovery was all the more well received as it confirmed in Buddhadasa what the Western blending had already set off, namely an emphasis upon the essential core and a rejection of later accretions to "religion".

Now I return to what happened from the sixties onward and that which I consider to be Buddhadasa's primary contribution as a Thai. Buddhadasa lived in a society where the younger generation no longer felt its real Thai roots and was therefore tempted by foreign fruits, such as a Western consumerist society as well as marxist utopian dreams. Utilizing local proverbs, lullabies, folk-stories and old paintings, Buddhadasa presented his conception of Buddhism as if it came from an apparently typical Thai traditional background. This was an illusion as far as Buddhadasa's teaching was concerned because it actually implied a falling away from many facets of Thai "religion" and an inspiration that was more "foreign" than Thai. However, this was an effective tool in so far as it created an identity model for the urbanized, half Chinese and educated elites who knew very little about rural folk traditions but who also did not want to be alienated neither from Thai society nor from Western values.

If you are tempted to quickly and strongly react negatively to my suggestion of these "blendings" in Buddhadasa's inspiration or to the limited natural "Thai-ness" in his teachings, please remember that there is no such thing in this human world as pure "purity". You may find purity in diamonds, and it is said that women love diamonds, but how many would really like to be a diamond? You may think that arahants are pure, but, according to general beliefs, how many thousands of lives have they experienced before reaching the extinction of their desires? As for the rest of us, who knows where we come from. In our blood, runs saints, killers, heroes, prostitutes, soldiers, poor, rich, even kings perhaps, but since we do not know, we do not think we are monstrous mongrels and believe in our purity. Similarly, Thai-ness is very much a modern and composite feature put forward from above in times of nation-building or from below in times of root-searching. Thai-ness just appears to be pure because we are ignorant or fail to pay attention to its multi-layered origin and formation. From convenience and ignorance, we freeze it into a certain period of history, forgetting that it was continually evolving because it was and is a living process. I might risk saying that the contemporary discourse on a fixed-in-time Thai-ness signals its demise because a goose in a freezer cannot be a live goose! The presence of Thai-ness in the contemporary discourse is like the presence of an artifact in a museum. I mean that it is no more a part of daily life, if indeed it ever was in the way we fancy it. So, showing that Buddhadasa's Thai-ness is composite, multi-layered and even in part foreign-inspired should be considered as a commonplace observation and not as a cause for scandal. What is remarkable, and this is not a pronouncement on the orthodoxy of Buddhadasa, is that he has managed to create a harmonized approach to Buddhism for many who feel themselves not only to be Buddhists but also modern and "truly" Thai. But since his "Thai-ness" or his conception of "Thai Buddhism" frowns upon what many consider to be a living part of their "Thai-ness" or "Thai Buddhism" (I mean

the "religious" or "folk" aspects of "traditional" Buddhism), it remains to be seen how the two conceptions of "Thai-ness" will evolve, which one will dominate and eventually win, if there is to be a winner. I will return to this subject later after discussing Buddhadasa's contribution as a Buddhist.

3. BUDDHADASA AS A BUDDHIST

Without actually saying so, I have, in fact, spoken all along about "Buddhadasa as a Buddhist": first from a "human" side, and then from a "Thai" side. Now I will consider more explicitly the role of Buddhadasa as a Buddhist who felt he had his part to play for the future of Buddhism in Thailand and perhaps in the world. His Buddhist attitude may be analyzed in two ways: first as a destroyer, second as a builder. Then I will draw some conditions for how these roles may be implemented.

BUDDHADASA AS A DESTROYER

Everyone recalls one of the pictures which made Suan Mokkh famous and appeared on covers of some of Buddhadasa's books, that of the rapidly turning wheel of the Dhamma destroying all incorrect "views", not only the belief in an eternal self, but also religious rites, religious intoxication, astrology, social classes, oppression, magic and drugs. As if the picture was not clear enough, a caption declared: *"Buddhism is in this world to kill and get rid for good of these things"*. Generally, the turning of the wheel evokes the romantic deer park at Isipatana where the Buddha gave his first sermon to the first five disciples. With deer in the background, it seemed an unlikely place for such inquisitorial violence. The Suan Mokkh killing wheel differed from other wheels of the Dhamma we see elsewhere, with smiling monks, lay people and

children walking slowly - "à la Thai" - and gently pushing the wheel - "à la Thai" again – as if they were in a fairy tale or in a recreation park. The young and middle-aged Buddhadasa felt it was his mission to denounce the beliefs people wrongly took for Buddhism. Remember, for example, the scandal when he first said in Bangkok[5] that
the Three Gems, the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, were actually preventing people from being true Buddhists. Why? Because the Buddha images were concealing the real Buddha, because the manuscripts were concealing the true Dhamma, because the monks were concealing the authentic monkhood. In other words, as vital as Thai Buddhism might appear, it was only a mask, a mask which prevented the real Buddhism from entering the heart. That is why this mask had to be removed and put aside.

One can very well read all of Buddhadasa's works as destroying "traditional" beliefs he held to be as wrong views, the main one being the belief in an unchanging self which in turn induces, and comes from, the popular belief in rebirth. At one point, that attack made many people believe he was a subversive communist mole disguised as a monk to destroy Buddhism and Thai society from within.

Although he used to refer to a section in the Scriptures where many monks vomited to death after the Buddha had denounced their bad behavior, Buddhadasa characterized himself as a destroyer not of people but of their wrongly held views or passions. This was reinforced when a foreign country sent envoys to ask him to help in the struggle against the communists, and for his assistance, he would receive money for further development of his work. He refused the request, saying that he had been fighting communism all along by fighting human passions.

[5] In 1948 (B.E. 2491)

In addition to his role as "explicit" destroyer, Buddhadasa was also an "implicit" destroyer not only by his words, but also by his behavior. Due to lack of time again, I cannot mention all the silent messages he gave through his life. One example is that he stubbornly refused to leave Suan Mokkh when he could have been an Abbot in Chiang Mai, in Ayutthaya, in Nonthaburi or perhaps in Bangkok. Even as abbot of the Wat Phra Boromathat in Chaya, he never took residence there. That tells something about his commitment to nature and research but, most of all, about his desire to distance himself from the powers that be, both religious and political.

As he grew older, he acknowledged that being so outspoken had never really paid off except in a negative way. And he advised disciples against being too outspoken because of the backlash it usually produced. Was that a conclusion he applied exclusively to Thai society where traditional education does not encourage or reward direct speech or was it a result of a growing compassion for humans who need time to change? Probably both, but I am not yet in a position to give a definite answer.

BUDDHADASA AS A BUILDER

As a destroyer of passions, Buddhadasa did not want to be remembered only as a builder of buildings but as a builder of a Buddhism for the future. Only time will prove him right or wrong.

The first thing he saw instrumental to that effect was his preaching which, in recorded or printed form, would remain after him "so that he would not die". His conferences and sermons were given in many different public forums ranging from boy-scouts to monks, from students to judges, from Buddhists to Christians. A tremendous amount was produced but what can be said of its

quality? Sometimes, one imagines a Buddhadasa who might have spoken less repetitively and written more systematically. He could have composed manuals of Buddhology for the kind of curriculum he dreamt of, a cycle without or completing the "Parien" (or the Pali studies) system. To him, this present system produced mainly only good Pali speaking parrots or those interested only in honorific positions. It failed to generate real experts in the Tripitaka because the aim was simply to prepare them for reading the Tripitaka. To achieve this aim, the Pali studies cycle uses the Commentaries of the Tripitaka to foster the study of a sophisticated Pali language. The problem is that Buddhadasa considered these Commentaries to be late accretions, useless and even harmful for Buddhism. "Back to the Tripitaka" could have been his motto. If he did not write systematic treatises, then he produced the Dhammakhos Collection which could be used as a sort of unsystematic Buddhology in progress. Apart from many duplicate teachings, these talks are indeed well-structured. One may add that this is probably the first time in the history of Buddhism when one has recorded and published so many sermons and conferences by the same monk. In that sense, through his numerous talks, Buddhadasa has effectively created a corpus of material which has yet to be thoroughly or systematically studied and published.

Through his teachings, Buddhadasa has tried to "build" a Buddhism for the "atomic era" as he liked to say, and a Buddhism which would permeate modern society in order to transform it. This has been a case for much debate in Thailand especially when another famous monk, Bodhirak, spoke and wrote a book about the complete failure of Buddhadasa's proposal to change society. Put simply, the argument was as follows: 1) Buddhadasa pretends to purify Buddhist practices and society; 2) He has many followers among the upper classes and high profile personalities; 3) The society is still evolving from bad to worse; 4) That shows that the disciples of Buddhadasa are ineffectual; 5) So therefore

Buddhadasa's teaching is both empty, useless and dangerous. This is clearly a debate for you here because it calls into questio the usefulness of Buddhadasa's teachings. If we go to the roots of these accusations, we have, in fact, a question about what should come first : Wisdom (paññā) or Morals (sila). For Bodhirak, Buddhadasa has failed because he has placed too much emphasis on "paññā", that is, on theory, on interpretation, on such vague and potentially dangerous ideas as "free mind" (jit wang), without explaining exactly to his disciples how to put these principles into practice in one's life, second after second, which is the role of moral precepts. He has not actually turned the Wheel to really "kill" the wrong views in Thai Society and in Thai Buddhism. He said that but did not do so because these wrong views and practices are more prevalent than ever. The middle class who proport to be his followers only read his books and then talk about them, but, just like the Master, in fact, they are uncommitted to any specific action in society, to any actual "engagement", that is. They should not be considered as responsible except for choosing to follow a non-committed, non-serious, non-truthful teacher.

WHAT TO DO?

Although it is not my role to tell you what should actually be done so that you could be real and committed "engaged" Buddhists, maybe you may allow me to add some reflections on this debate on "destroying" false views and on "building" a new society according to Buddhadasa's thought.

DESTROY?

As I have already mentioned, the view that religion has become like a cluttered attic, full of old and worthless things, or like

a dense forest where thorny plants prevent us from recognizing the beautiful park it once was and from moving forward, is an idea the Protestants have used against the Catholic Church since the sixteenth century. Later on, in the nineteenth century, historians of religion exploited this same criticism and, with new academic tools, studied how successsive layers came to be added to the original ideal or message. Previously, Protestant reformers scored a point against the Catholic clerical and intellectual hierarchy which came to realize or believe that, as the Protestants said, their religion, and especially in its popular form, was really full of unworthy beliefs and practices which had little to do with the pristine message of Christ. So the Catholics implemented reforms, too, to get rid of the most visible and "harmful" popular beliefs and practices. To that end, the Catholic bishops set rather strict rules for the calling of, the education of and the examination of the clergy who should be taught to think the right thing, that is, what Rome wanted them to think.

Almost twenty years ago, that sixteenth century Roman Catholic response to the Protestant Reform was the subject of a debate among French historians.[6] Some asserted that this Catholic decision caused what has been called the "de-christianization" of some large parts of France, on the grounds that by cutting the link between popular practices and official religion, the latter had actually lost more power, prestige and followers, than the former. In other words, the clerical, urban, intellectual religion lost followers permanently while what was called "popular superstitions" went blythly on its course untouched. If we compare traditional Buddhism with Christianity, we see that, generally speaking, Buddhist reformers did not pretend to put an end to popular beliefs we now label as "superstitions". Buddhist reformers most of the time were concerned with genuine reforms within the Sangha.

[6] See : Jean DELUMEAU. *Le Christianisme va-t-il mourir?* Paris, Hachette, 1977.

And who signed the Acts of reform of the Sangha? The Head of the Sangha or the Sangharaja? Rarely or formally. The real implementors were the kings or the Emperors, Asoka being the most famous. And what were the reforms about? About beliefs? About doctrinal questions? Rarely or formally. Primarily the reforms concerned the monks' discipline or the Vinaya. This tells us what was considered to be important by the Buddhist hierarchy and the Buddhist kings until this century. Buddhadasa has probably begun a new kind of Buddhist reform which does not aim at reforming disciplinary or formal practices of the sangha but mainly its education, its beliefs and its practices. Moreover, it intends to reform all areas of Buddhist life and society.

What has allowed the Buddhist authorities to accept these possible unorthodox beliefs and practices was the plentiful evidence in the Buddhist canon and commentaries of what we call now "popular beliefs", that is deities, yakkhas, spirits, mysterious beings, mysterious powers, etc. The intellectual way of integrating these beliefs into a Buddhist world-view has been the Three-World cosmology where there is a place for every being and, on a deeper level of interpretation, the distinction between the "personified" *(pugaglathitthan)* and the "doctrinal" *(dhammathitthan)* discourses. This allowed learned monks to read an acceptable doctrinal meaning in otherwise biased assertions. Prince Vajirañanavarorasa took care to include these categories into the religious textbooks because it proved that Buddhists were not "superstitious" as some foreigners claimed. There was something "spiritual" behind the curtain of apparent "superstitions."

Buddhadasa felt that he should further extend the modernization of Buddhism begun with King Mongkut and his sons. For him, that grew out of a theory of interpretation which would allow for the setting of everything, beliefs and practices, in the right place. Although he used the *puggalathitthan-dhammathitthan* catego-

ries as a model and as a basis for his two leveled language, the latter was more radical and broader than the former. It would remove all popular concepts and beliefs from the least suggestion of an eternal self up to the point of refusing to discuss anything about "physical rebirth", not because there could not be such a rebirth but because that missed the only real Buddhist point – how to be free from rebirth here and now?

When Buddhadasa began to make his mature ideas known at the end of the Second World War, he explicitly said that these views were just for a tiny minority of Thai society. A few disciples would follow him without necessarily trying to persuade the entire country. A problem arises now that his teaching has been printed and disseminated all over the country because some people think they have the mission of implementing it. The "minority" aimed at in the forties may have not become a majority yet, but it is quite natural that his followers believe that it should. If it should, we are back to the problem of the destruction of popular beliefs with the dilemma of eventually losing the Buddhists masses for good, just like the Roman Catholic Church in France lost entire parts of the country. Similarly and explicitly, Buddhadasa has been accused not only of destroying popular beliefs but also of destroying Buddhism itself. By removing the motivation of merit from further good rebirths, he in fact eradicated the motivation of keeping established Buddhism alive, because novices, monks, buildings, foundations, cannot survive with simply emptying one's mind and one's stomach.

Notwithstanding these opponents' arguments, the problem is still more acute because "Thai" culture is changing at a tremendous rate. No one knows what will remain of the "Thai" traditional world view in thirty years. Will the westernized educational system have eradicated deities and spirits from this land, accomplishing what Max Weber called the "disenchantment of the world"?

Or, on the contrary, will the current desire for wealth cause an even greater creation of the cults of deities, spirits and will Buddhist ascetical monks be able to provide lottery winnings, love victories and political premierships such as we now witness? And will not Buddhadasa's teaching be found barren because now his intellectuality has recently been criticized? Or will his work be really useful only for a small minority as he predicted in the forties? No one yet has the answer. But whatever you do, you should not forget the socio-historical context of the "destroying" aspect of Buddhadasa's teaching.

BUILD?

Speaking of "building", and here I mean "building a future Buddhism", we turn to a more positive aspect of cultural reform, that of setting rules and deciding upon actions to implement an ideal.

From what I know of Buddhadasa, I am unprepared to tell you exactly what you should do to actually "build" upon his teaching, or how you should act. But there is one thing I may develop from his way of doing, and that is what you should **not** do.

You should **not** make him into an amulet. I know that most of you do not have the intention of moulding small images of your Master. But there are many ways of making an amulet of someone. An amulet embodies some magical power which can cause certain effects on certain occasions. An amulet does not think, an amulet acts, and acts automatically, without feelings. But the most interesting feature is that, once you possess it, the amulet is at your service, providing that you observe some taboos. Whenever you put Buddhadasa's teaching at your service, for whatever reason, you make an amulet of him, and that will be very, very interesting to me

as a researcher. And I would appreciate very, very much your sending data on this use of Buddhadasa's memory for your own sake!

Whenever you are going to think and tell people: "I think this and this", "I do that and that", "You should think this and this", "You should do that and that" just because you are one of Buddhadasa's disciples or because you know that Buddhadasa would have said or done this and that, on such an occasion, you should think for a second: "Well, am I making an amulet of him or not? Am I using him or not?"

It will be difficult to pretend that you know for sure what Buddhadasa would have done unless you have lived with him or read his books thoroughly. And then, you will know that, "once upon a time", Buddhadasa was alive, which means that he hesitated, he changed, he was mistaken.

When he was right, he never gave fast-food recipes to be used anywhere at any time, except when he recalled the Vinaya rules. For the rest, he was an inspirer more than a director. The inspirer points to an ideal but does not trace a line or make a map to reach this ideal exactly. In other words, an inspirer has neither predetermined nor detailed solutions to any problem, no plane to fly to the ideal. That makes him difficult to emulate because one cannot never be sure that the best way to the ideal was chosen.

I will give some examples to illustrate my point.

On December 8, 1968, Buddhadasa said: "Yesterday evening, I was listening to the radio. They talked about the Vice President of the United States who had said: *"The destruction of North-Vietnam such as it is done, it's moral. Should the United States stop bombing North Vietnam, they would fail to mora-*

lity." And Buddhadasa added: *"They create wrong and right according to what they get or lose. What they want is right, good, meritorious."*

At first sight, one could conclude from this declaration that Buddhadasa was against the bombing of North Vietnam or perhaps against the Vietnam war, or against any war. That would amount to considering Buddhadasa as a fast-food chef. In fact, Buddhadasa spoke here against the link established by the Vice President of the United States between morality on one side and the bombings on the other. There can be no deal with morality. That was the locus of Buddhadasa reaction and not the bombings or the Vietnam war per se.

Another example is his stand concerning vegetarianism. He asserted that the problem was not "eating or not eating" meat. The real problem was "not eating for nourishing the self". In other words, the rule of morality (sila) was not a justification by itself but by an objective which could only be defined by Wisdom (paññā).

The fact that Buddhadasa liked to inspire more than dictate rules has been considered as a flaw. And actually it is a flaw, in so far as many people need crutches to stand up and walk. It is probable that Buddhadasa's freedom towards tradition, toward institutions, toward the Tripitaka is not for everybody. It will be tempting perhaps to set up such rules to implement his uncompleted teaching, or to add your own contribution to future Buddhism.

When you propose to argue from Buddhadasa's words to justify your own stand on a precise rule or action for the sake of Buddhism, please do so as carefully as if you were touching fire, otherwise it could quite well blow you up or, on the contrary, you could just blow it out. Buddhadasa was probably a man of great

spiritual principles, very "Indian" at that, but, at the same time, he was very pragmatic, very "Chinese", I would say. That is why I see the difficulty in fixing any precise rules of interpretation for his teachings besides the broad guidelines which are rather clear.

There is no reason why you would avoid what all disciples of great men have done, that is, first freeze the living message into a dead body and then break it into separate pieces. But, at least, if you are as cautious with it as you would be with fire, perhaps there is a chance that you will respect it enough so as not to fossilize him too prematurely into an amulet which will serve only your immediate concerns and perhaps passions.

CONCLUSION:

I would like to conclude my participation in this meeting by stressing the diversity of Buddhadasa's contributions to the world as a human being, as a Thai and as a Buddhist. None of you intends to replay his entire role, and you have already divided responsibilities and duties among yourselves.

Some are playing his young role as destroyer of false views. They are the "biters", eager to scorn the "bad" wherever they are in this country or the world. Perhaps they should remember that Buddhadasa took this role during his youth. Later on, he used it more and more cautiously and never against specific individuals.

Others of you will play his role as keeper of the Dhamma when you edit, print, or publish his works. May I insist in passing that the editions be as accurate, complete and precise as possible, and that the dates of Buddhadasa's talks and conferences always be mentioned so that the reader may situate a text within the history

of Buddhadasa's thought?

Still others may play his role of "forest monk", even though they live in towns. They are laborers. They do not talk on national networks but work deep in villages or suburbs to show how Buddhadasa's teaching may successfully inspire village life, and support forest conservation and social action. Once the work of keeping Buddhadasa's teaching is complete, these "laborers" will probably be the most important of all of you. They will prove whether or not Buddhadasa's teaching can survive successfully without disintegrating, to be implemented in ordinary communities all over the country and not only in well educated urban elites.

Louis Gabaude
Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient
Chiang Mai, July 3, 1994

BUDDHADASA'S BITTER POTIONS AS LEGACIES FOR THAI SOCIETY

If one thinks of a legacy as something to be valued and cherished by later generations, it is uncertain whether Buddhadasa's legacies would fit into this definition. This is because his life and work are actually "bitter potions" for Thai Buddhism. It is rather difficult to fully grasp his teachings and even more difficult to swallow his prescriptions.

However, if one was to leave his teachings unheeded, the maladies of Thai Buddhism could easily worsen, perhaps to a point of no return. It is therefore very important for any Buddhist to listen to him, to "see" him, to dwell in him and even to follow his path. This is not an easy task but it is a challenge to betaken up.

Buddhadasa's legacies can be examined through two major points of reference, namely his life and his work.

Challenges from his life: What he did and did not do

Buddhadasa was a Thai monk of Chinese descent born during the first decade of the twentieth century. He was a com-

moner. He grew up in a small town in a rural area; eventually becoming a small-scale trader in his family's business. Throughout his life, he remained proud of his rural roots even though his teachings are explicitly comprehensive and universal. Although his background was quite unique, his life could serve as a model for future generations of monks.

It could be argued that what Buddhadasa did **not** do was in itself a major contribution. He did not seek donations to build temples in order to gain ecclesiastical promotions. He did not bless people with "holy" water. He did not consecrate Buddha images and amulets to bring people good luck. He did not offer magic love potions for insecure lovers. He did not canvass for politicians. Nor did he "knock on" politician's heads to bless them as potential prime ministers. The absence of these actions in itself is a major contribution to Thai Buddhism, as it might be quite difficult to trace all these actions to the true spirit of Buddhism.

Both Thai and Western scholars have highlighted the fact that the Thai state has been the key factor in determining the shapes and forms of Thai Buddhism. It is therefore of prime importance for any serious Buddhist monk to consider this historical fact. On this issue, Buddhadasa walked the middle path. He neither levelled severe criticism against the Thai state nor submitted himself to the state's ideology. The fact that Buddhadasa kept a "comfortable distance" from the Thai state can serve as a more balanced alternative relationship to that apparatus of power.

Comparatively speaking, there are at least five possible alternative relationships between a prophet (by implication, a religion) and the state.

1) The state kills off the prophet, as in the case of Jesus.
2) The state negates the prophet, as in the case of Confucius.
3) The prophet walks out on the state, as in the case of LaoTzu.

4) The prophet incorporates state power into the religious sphere, as in the case of Muhammad.
5) The prophet keeps a comfortable distance from the state, as in the case of the Buddha.

Buddhadasa's life and work are a modern example of this canonical relationship with the state. Buddhadasa created his own name as "the slave of the Buddha" and used this name in all his sermons and publications; while the ecclesiastical titles were used only on official state-related documents. His teachings are not primarily for the state but for the Thai people and Buddhists in general. His final symbolic act was, of course, his detailed instructions on how to deal with his dead body and the ashes after cremation. No elaborate state-sponsored rituals were included. This "comfortable distance" provided a "religious space" with an extra degree of freedom to propagate his teachings. It can also serve as the fundamental condition where in a serious Buddhist monk can act as a voice of conscience or render spiritual guidance in times of social crisis. It is rather ironic that this fundamental framework is seen as being too radical within the Thai Buddhist context.

Challenges from his work: Four dimensional universalism

Dhamma as Nature

Buddhadasa expresses dissatisfaction with the conventional understanding of the term "dhamma" as either indicating the teachings of the Buddha or meaning what is right as opposed to what is wrong. He finds them inadequate. For him, dhamma indicates four basic meanings.

Firstly, dhamma means duty, namely a way of life one has to perform in accordance with the law of nature. He explains,

"Human beings know their duty as things they have to do other wise they will die... Animals know it is their duty to look for food and flee danger. These are their basic duties to perform for their survival. Animals do not speak, therefore they do not have a word for it. Human beings develop the use of language and therefore we set it down in the word dhamma.... This dhamma is duty."[1]

Secondly, dhamma indicates results of that duty. "When human beings act according to duty, the result is well-being. When they realize that such a duty produces good results, they aim for better results. Take eating for example. Nowadays people know how to produce more tasty food although in the past they ate raw meat. As time progressed, they began cooking their food; boiling it and adding other ingredients and using various processes to refine its flavour. This is an example of results from duty in the physical sense. In the spiritual realm, human beings can become more and more spiritually refined."[2]

Thirdly, dhamma means natural law. "When human beings know their duty and the results of their duty, they make observations and become wiser. They find and understand the relationship between duty and the results, that is, between cause and effect.... The highest law that man knows is the law of Dependent Origination which lies at the foundation of the sciences."[3]

Fourthly, dhamma indicates nature in her totality. He explains, "Finally, human beings know everything correctly, that is, they understand the whole natural world.... They can characterize things, explain their processes, and understand the nature of all things." [4]

Buddhadasa's explication of the four meanings of dhamma should not be understood as an attempt to equate Buddhist dhamma

with natural science. Actually, for him Buddhism is not against scientific principles, but it is a "noble science" which can lead human beings to peace of mind. In this sense it is very different from the existing practices of technological science which seek only to control, manage and exploit the natural world to satisfy endless human egoistic desires. On the contrary, to understand dhamma in Buddhadasa's sense indicates a respect for nature and her law. It should be noted that viewed in this way, Buddhist dhamma is the universal truth which goes beyond any traditional or cultural expression. In the Thai context, Buddhism should not be limited to serving as a basis for the identity of the Thai nation. Rather, it is congruent with scientific principles and has transcended them for a more peaceful purpose.

Dhammic Language

Buddhadasa's theory of "Human language - Dhammic language" makes a distinction between two levels of understanding, namely the physical and the abstract. He explains, "Human language follows the physical way of things which is felt by ordinary persons. Its basis lies in the physical world and thus it speaks about the physical world which can be seen with the eyes of ordinary people. Dhammic language, on the other hand, follows the way of the abstract world which is not physical... This dhammic language is spoken among those who know dhamma."[5]

He gives as an example, the word "Buddha". If you understand the world at the human-language level, "Buddha" means the historical person who propagated Buddhism some 2.000 years ago and passed into extinction. On the other hand, "Buddha" at the dhammic-language level, indicates dhamma as expressed by the Buddha. "Those who see the dhamma, see me. Those who see me, see the dhamma. Those who do not see the dhamma although they may be touching my yellow robe, they

cannot be said to see the Tathagatha."[6]

Budddhadasa's theory of language is highly significant for it grounds the understanding of Buddhism within the experience of Buddhist wisdom. In this sense, it transcends cultural and national expressions. It is the abstract and the universal which is the true context for Buddhist meaning.

Nibbana for all

The traditional **locus classicus** of religious life in Thai society has always been the way of the Sangha. Lay persons are basically supporters of the monks who pursue their paths to nibbana. Buddhadasa shows a very different concern. He believes that lay people are the basis of Thai society as they are the majority, while the number of monks is much lower and their problems less urgent.

He compares lay people to "those at the centre of the fire while monks are those who stay at the periphery. Lay people are those with urgent problems. If we can solve problems of lay people it would mean we can solve most problems of the world. If we could solve problems of lay people it means we can also solve the problems of monks because the former's problems are more severe."[7] He also makes an unprecedented move in the history of Thai Buddhism, namely, he proposes that, "Sunyata is for the benefit of the lay people, for all of them, always."[8]

This proposal led to a lively debate between Buddhadasa and M. R. Kukrit Pramoj. The latter argued that sunyata or "empty mind" cannot be applied to lay people in the same way as "one cannot pour the water of the whole ocean into a small cup."[9] M.R. Kukrit explained, "If people practice empty mind and become unselfish then they will not work. This is because to work implies

attachment..... I still cannot see how it is possible for people to work with an empty mind."[10] Buddhadasa responds that if monks and lay people have to follow different dhammas then they will be going in opposite directions and it would mean that Buddhism is irrelevant to lay society and to the majority of the people.

The fact that monks are the "field of merit" or the centre of religious activities has been well-documented by several Thai and Western scholars. It is also a traditional belief that "nibbana" as the highest state of religious achievement is a remote possibility within a lay person's life, both in terms of time and potentiality. Even the lord Buddha took some 500 lives before he attained nibbana, thus how is it possible for mortals like us to achieve it in the present life? This traditional conception is greatly downplayed by Buddhadasa who sees the inadequacy of such a widely-held belief. This is because it implies that Buddhist practices are inefficient or impotent in the present life. Buddhadasa emphasizes the "here and now" of Buddhist ideals. His approach highlights the creative potentiality and by implication, responsibility of all people in the quest for enlightenment.

Moral Responsibility - Social Equality

The traditional Thai cosmology is one of a hierarchical order. Sathirakoses compares the religious knowledge of the common people to the wide base of a stupa while that of the scholars to the steep top. This image of the hierachical nature of Thai Buddhism corresponds very well with the acute awareness of the Thai people concerning their "social space". This social space is basically determined by the principle of being "higher or lower" within the social structure. One Buddhistic concept which justifies such a hierachical structure is the belief that the king has accumulated the greatest merit in the land in his past lives. This belief carries important implications for the moral understanding of the

Thai people who generally view themselves as accumulating merit in this life so that the next life will be better.

Buddhadasa offers alternative perspectives on the situation. Firstly, he reinterprets the theory of Dependent Origination as covering the present life of a person and not the past, present and future lives as traditionally understood. The "birth" within this chain of causation is a psychological birth and not a physical one. The whole process of "three life spans" is actually within "the wink of an eye".[11]

Secondly, he points to the fact that the concept of "merit" (bun) as understood by the general populace is conducive to egoistic attachment, for one makes merit with an aim for heaven or a more comfortable future life. Buddhadasa makes a distinction between "bun" and "kusala". Kusala means wholesomeness which indi-cates a detached state of mind. If one offers food to the monks with pure intention, that act is wholesome, but if one makes merit as a form of investment, then it is not relevant to the Buddhist goal.[12]

Thirdly, Buddhadasa suggests that all people should practice the Ten Kingly Virtues so that it will create a condition wherein the king will practice his with more ease.[13] Such a re-orientation can only mean that the people should help shoulder the responsibility for the moral quality of the land. Moral responsibilities should not be the king's alone.

Taking these three points together, one can better see that Buddhism should be most relevant in the present life, true merit should lead to detachment, and moral responsibility for all implies social equality for all.

Concluding Note

Perhaps the truest way to inherit a legacy is to follow the path of the benefactor. But Buddhadasa's way of life and the nature of his teachings are no bed of roses for anyone. We all need an act of will and perhaps a little flight of wisdom to dwell in and to pass on the depths of his legacies.

We, as individuals, are no knights in shining armor but we are also no dust on the side of the road. Buddhadasa was an ordinary man who had the courage to work out his full potential.

Suwanna Santha-Anand,
Faculty of Arts,
Chulalongkorn University,
Bangkok.

END NOTES

1. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. ***Mahidol Dhamma: Dhamma as the Land*** Bangkok: Atammayo. 2nd ed. pp. 19-23.
2. Ibid
3. Ibid
4. Ibid
5. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. 2517. "Human Language-Dhamma Language" in *Collection of Essays on Religion.* Pinit Ratanakul(ed.) Bangkok : Thammasat University. pp. 1, 3. Buddhadasa's theory of language carries wideranging implications for Buddhist - Christian dialogue in Thai society.
6. Ibid
7. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. 2519. *Sunyata Parithat II* Bangkok: Bangkok Publications. p. 342
8. Ibid
9. Arun Wejjsuwan (ed.) 2527. *Debates between M.R.Kukrit Pramoj and Buddhadasa Bhikkhu.* Bangkok: Praepitya. pp. 122-124
10. Ibid
11. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. 2517. *What is Paticcasmupada?* Bangkok: Dhammabuja. pp. 11-12
12. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. 2526. *Mountains in the Way to Buddhist Dhamma.* Bangkok: Dhammabuja. pp. 116-117
13. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. 2532. *The Ten Kingly Virtues* Bangkok: Project to Encourage Following the Footsteps of the King. p. 5

BUDDHADĀSA BHIKKHU'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE WORLD

As in the talk on which it is based,[1] this paper will focus on Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu's contribution to human life, thought, wisdom, and practice. The question, as later introduced by Sulak Sivaraksa, of how people (monks) like us can carry on his work will not be addressed in detail. Nonetheless, I will attempt a few brief suggestions at the end.

Concerning Ajarn Buddhadāsa's contribution to humanity, I have tried to think of things he has accomplished which are little known, perhaps even unknown in the rest of the world, yet of significance there. Unfortunately, I have no experience of Africa and Latin America, and only limited experience of Europe and Asia. Thus, although I may speak of the world, I base my observations and comments primarily on my knowledge and experience of the West, if you will tolerate my lumping together North America and Europe. So please forgive me if I must look at humanity in the very limited terms of the West. This is partly because I am from the West and writing in English, and partly because I would rather leave it to the Thais to report his contribution to their heritage. Nonetheless, the West's economic, military, political, and cultural hegemony almost excuses such over

-emphasis on the West; the imperialistic tendencies in European culture thrusts its values into "Third world" consciousness everyday. Even unwillingly, those who espouse alternatives are forced to give undue attention to the needs, obsessions, delusions, and behavior coming out of the West. Lastly, I am confident that Ajarn Buddhadāsa has some very real and important contributions which the West, in particular, should consider.

By "little known" or "unknown" I mean, first, that people in the rest of the world either do not understand or are not even aware of what he has done and, further, that they are not doing such things themselves. That is, I wish to discuss unique accomplishments that could help solve many of the world's problems if such perspectives, principles, and ways of living were taken seriously and widely practiced. To be fair, we must recognize that there have always been at least a few in the West who have understood such things and there are growing numbers in Asia today who do not understand.

Since his death last year, it is no longer possible to experience Ajarn Buddhadāsa's primary accomplishment, which I take to be voidness — the absence of self-centered thinking and behavior, freedom even from the concept of "I." As a living human being — and not just as words left behind in books — he lived out an open-mindedness, commitment, sincerity, curiosity, and creativity that culminated in a high degree of selflessness.[2] Accompanying this "spiritual" attainment was a high level of usefulness attested to by the thousands who sought his advice, learned from his books, and who benefitted from practicing accordingly. These, in fact, are the criteria he would have judged himself by: peacefulness (or coolness or voidness) and usefulness. In his last years, he often said that these two are the most a human being can hope for in life. Further, they are good enough, sufficient accomplishment to make life worthwhile, so that, as he often warned, we "need

not be shamed by the cats."[3]

While we no longer can meet and learn from him directly, it is still fruitful to learn from his writings and recorded talks, and from the accounts written about him by others. As his books will be his most accessible legacy, I will stress accomplishments which can be found in them. This will allow my observations to be verified and further studied. I do not expect foreigners to come to Suan Mokkh to see his material legacies. Perhaps we eventually may take Suan Mokkh to the West; however, until that is possible, we will rely on the books. Of these, I will stress those of his Dhamma teachings which seem to me most relevant to the modern, rapidly changing world.

I. A Morality We Can Get Interested In

This first accomplishment concerns something which is an enormous problem in today's world — moral confusion and decay. In North America and Europe, a wide variety of problems — social, environmental, and personal — exist due to a lack of *siladhamma* (morality). Our world is dominated by what some call "democracy" (others "liberal democracy") but this is often just a thinly veiled excuse for capitalism and its vaunted "free market," which in turn is just another manifestation of greed, anger (use of power to get its way), and delusion.[4] None of these can be a foundation for *sīladhamma*, which is why the main capitalist countries are facing so many problems despite their material (mal-)development. Due to their economic, political, cultural, and military domination of the rest of the world, their problems are shared around the world. Although this destructive export is increasingly acknowledged, seldom has it been viewed or discussed in moral terms.[5]

For a start, Ajarn Buddhadāsa has given us a clear and

relevant understanding of *sīladhamma*. It both differs significantly from Western understandings of morality[6] and might be highly applicable there if people would listen and make the attempt to adapt the principles to their own situations. At Suan Mokkh, whenever we bring up the issue of morality with the foreigners who come to study Dhamma, at least half will disregard, refute, or protest the issue immediately. Many of them have an emotional dislike of the word "morality," perhaps because many had morality pushed on them from childhood in authoritarian and self-serving ways both by religions and governments. Being overly controlled and suppressed by generally well-intentioned parents, teachers, and, finally, police and other bureaucratic functionaries has caused a revulsion toward "morality" in much of my generation. Consequently, it can be extremely difficult to explain morality or *sīladhamma* in a way that my generation can accept.

Nonetheless, many of us have a profound moral sense, nurtured by crises such as the Vietnam War, the Cold War and "Nuclear Menace," and the on-going environmental havoc. Thus, we do not reject morality *per se*, rather we object to the dogmatic, authoritarian, and corrupt formulations that have dominated. Unfortunately, we tend to lump all moral possibilities under the authoritarian category, having seen few if any alternatives. It takes time and effort to realize that morals and ethics can wear different clothes.

For those of us who are interested in religion, especially formal religion, the problem is of a different, although related, nature. We struggle to express the need for morality in religious life in a way that avoids the dogmatism and suppression often associated with the term. And we are often frustrated by our co-religionists who do not make the attempt. Most deeply, we are not yet free of the relativistic, individualistic, and self-indulgent tendencies of the times, all of which mitigate against a healthy, natural,

balanced approach to morality.

I.A. *Sīladhamma* Rooted in and Derived from *Paramathasacca*

For both those who throw the morality baby out with the bath water and those who try to purify the bath water in order to recycle it — in a way, I belong to both — Ajarn Buddhadāsa's explanation of *sīladhamma* can be very useful and up-to-date. He has derived his understanding of *sīladhamma* from *paramatha-dhamma* (ultimate reality) or *paramathasacca* (ultimate truth). Since the Greeks, Western thinkers always have construed morality in terms of good and evil. Such terms are inherently dualistic and fail to recognize the thusness (*tathatā*) of such distinctions and the reality they only partially describe. Things do not fit very well into simple black and white, this or that, cut and dried categories. Reality is almost always much more complex, diverse, and dynamic than can be described by dualisms.[7] Western notions of morality, to the best of my limited knowledge, never go beyond the limited perspective of "good" and "evil," never have a higher foundation for morality, and always are tainted by dualistic ignorance.

This is not to deny a certain conventional validity in applying dualistic terms like "good" and "evil" to a specific context and time. Buddhism and Ajarn Buddhadāsa, unlike some upside-down gurus, clearly advocate such distinctions when appropriate. When there is sufficient collective agreement (*sammati*), such terms and labels are socially useful and convenient. Nonetheless, they tend to hide or distort important aspects of the situation that elicits them. We should not be limited to them, while using them wisely.

Tan Ajarn, through his study of the Pali Tipiṭaka and his

rootedness in Thai-Asian culture, came to realize that the most correct *siladhamma* is not a matter of good and evil as most people think. Rather, Ajarn Buddhadāsa defined *siladhamma* (morality) as "1. the condition of being natural-normal (*pakati*), 2. The Dhamma which causes naturalness-normality, and 3. the thing which is naturalness-normality (itself)."[8] Thus, *siladhamma* is a matter of *pakati*, as all Thai Pali students are taught.

The Pali Text Society Dictionary defines *pakati* as "original or natural form, natural state or condition" and in its instrumental form means "by Nature, ordinarily, as usual."[9] In Thai usage, these meanings are retained, but with an emphasis on ordinariness, normality, and naturalness. The true normality of *"pakati"* must be natural, that is, derived from the Law of Nature rather than thought. *Sila* means *"pakati."* If anything leads to *pakati* and not to disorder, it is called *sila."* The Dhamma which brings this state about is called *sīladhamma.*[10] Without sacrificing the popular meaning of morality, Ajarn Buddhadāsa informs it with more profound roots; *siladhamma* is more than merely following rules or precepts, as it is often understood in Siam and elsewhere. It always must be rooted in Natural Law if it is to be wise, peaceful, and successful.

When we consider *siladhamma* as it is usually understood, that is, applied to our actions, speech, and means of sustaining life (corresponding to the third, fourth, and fifth factors of the noble eightfold path), "normality" concerns our relationships with other people, other living things, and the rest of Nature. As these relationships are naturally those of interdependency *(idappaccayatā)*, they are *pakati* (normal and natural) when they are free of conflict, for only then are they mutually beneficial. Freedom from conflict is absence of violence, injustice, exploitation, and abuse. In short, our relationships and the actions that compose them are moral or "normal" when they harm neither us nor others. "The word

'pakati' means not to collide with anyone and not to collide with oneself, that is, not to cause distress for oneself or for others."[11] All of society should be organized on this principle. "Setting up a system which makes society *pakati* or happy is called 'socialism.' If something causes disorder, it is a kind of immorality in society."[12]

Moral, normal, natural relationships which are both beneficial to all involved and free of harm require unselfishness. When the mind functions under the influence of ignorance — when it lacks wisdom — desire, attachment, and egoism take over.[13] Unless carefully restrained, egoism turns into selfishness and selfish behavior is always harmful, tends toward conflict, and often becomes violent. Ideally, by replacing ignorance with wisdom there is a selflessness which automatically creates the conditions for peaceful, harmless actions and relationships. "With mindfulness controlling the flow of *paṭiccasamuppāda,* self does not arise and selfishness does not happen. Then we are able to have Dhammic Socialism."[14]

But there is still more to this natural normalcy. *Pakati,* and thereby *sīladhamma,* is not limited merely to the realm of speech and actions, as morality is commonly understood in Theravāda Buddhism. Normalcy must refer also to how we relate to and treat our own bodies. Do we just use them as tools for sensual gratification and to carry out our desires? Or do we respectfully care for them, neither pampering nor punishing them, so that they are foundations for service to others and spiritual growth?

Further, normalcy refers to our inner state, to the *citta* (heart-mind). When the heart- mind is *pakati,* it is free of attachment and defilement, that is, it is in its natural or original state, which in Pali is called the *"pabhassara-citta"* (luminous mind). Mind is "abnormal" when it is clouded by selfishness and defilement; mind is "normal" when it is free of "I" and "mine." This mental

normality is an even more certain foundation for morality.

Further, there is the spiritual level of *pakati* which consists of direct knowledge and experience of truth, namely, impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, not-self, and interdependency. Here, the names given to the truth are not what counts. What matters is seeing and experiencing directly for oneself the nature and inherent normality of everything. Everything is *pakati* when see without the blinders of liking and disliking.

Lastly, the ultimate *pakati* corresponds to the absolute itself, that is, *nibbāna*. The unchanging, timeless, unconditioned, Supreme Reality is the ultimate level and standard of *pakati*; in it morality is perfected and becomes automatic or completely natural. When we examine morality or *sīladhamma* fully, we see that it cannot be taken as just one level of human life, separated from the entirety of experience. Rather, it connects with all levels of human experience and reality from the deeply personal to the familial and communal to the universal and back. Thus, Ajarn Buddhadāsa's understanding of *sīladhamma*, whether we translate it as "morality" or "normalcy" is clearly holistic (*kevala*). Rather than setting up a dichotomy between the social and the individual, or between the moral and the spiritual, which would force them into conflict and confuse us, he saw them as being naturally integrated.

I.B. Non-Dualistic Morality

If something is truly *pakati*, it is not really describable in dualistic terms like "good" or "bad," "ugly" or "beautiful," "right" or "wrong," etc. To my knowledge, Western notions of morality usually are limited by such ordinary terms. As I never was trained formally in philosophy or ethics I cannot be one-hundred percent sure of this assertion, but from childhood through university in the United States I was only exposed to the dualistic kinds of morality.

I assume that all of my generation received the same. Further, most Thais, despite their Buddhist heritage, think that *sīla-dhamma* is a matter of good and evil — just like in the West.

The problem nowadays is that the scientism[15] which dominates the education and intelligence of everyone West and East has destroyed clear notions of "good" and "evil," replacing them with relativism. At first, morality was based in the spirits, then in the multiple gods of pantheism, and later in the God of monotheism. As science has undermined faith in these sacred sources of power and moral foundations, *sīladhamma* has lost its traditional foundation. As science found itself unable to prove what is good and evil through its method, good and evil have increasingly been seen as articles of personal faith. The main authority in modern culture has refused responsibility for ethical questions and moral debates. At the same time, scientism has undercut, demeaned, and replaced traditional faith. Enamored of the scientific method, many Western philosophers have given up on ethics or treated it as merely an historical subject. Now that Western material science has colonized the world views of most of the political, economic, and cultural leaders around the world and manifested ponderously in hegemonic materialism and consumerism, moral fuzziness has become acute.

If we hope to solve this moral dilemma, we must find a foundation for *sīladhamma* which is clear, certain, and independent of human-concocted beliefs. Therefore, Tan Ajarn has consistently argued that morality means a normal naturalness between one human being and others, between men and women, between humans and other living things, between human communities and their environments, between the individual and society, and among nations, religions, and all other human groups and organizations. He further explained this *pakati* as being non-violence, non-harming, non-abuse, and non-oppression in all forms of relationship,

thus resulting in happiness and peace.

This *pakati*, as he explained it, comes from Natural Law, which he claimed was the "Buddhist God." This God, however, is an impersonal god rather than the personal sort of god we usually hear about. When the foundation of *sīladhamma* is Natural Law it can be discovered and proved by everyone without recourse to belief. We only need observe life carefully and consistently in all its aspects. We do not have to put our faith in the authority of preachers, teachers, governments, or scientists. This point is important because scientists now have more authority than priests. If we must rely on the authority of scientists, there will be no foundation for *sīladhamma*. Fortunately, we do not have to believe external authorities because we can find things out for ourselves. This is necessary for something as important in our lives and societies as *sīladhamma;* we must discover and experience its necessity for ourselves.[16]

I.C. Morality Based in the Here & Now

In the past, morality usually had been understood in reference to some sort of afterlife, depending on the beliefs of the various religions. We were taught to do and be good in order to go to some kind of paradise or heaven; and we were threatened with various nether realms and hells should we do bad. Thais, for example, have given a lot of importance to "doing good" or "making merit," often by making offerings to monks. Mishaps, illness, and oppression were often blamed on bad actions (*kamma*) in past lives. Such references must be taken on faith and often depend on social conditioning, aculturization, etc; while the details vary the phenomenon is universal. But what happens when the dominant belief system of society changes and children are taught a scientific world view that does not see any heavens in the sky or hells under the ground? Morality loses its power. There is the moral breakdown that we

see all around us in crime, broken families, sexual violence, substance abuse, unemployment, corruption, racism, capitalism, environmental degradation, and so on. While I cannot advocate resuscitating beliefs in imaginary heavens and hells, it is clear that society desparately needs simple and clear references for morality.

Tan Ajarn emphasized that the practice of morality is a matter for this life, for today. He was able to explain Dhamma — especially Nature and Natural Law — in terms of today. He emphasized that the Law of Nature is *idappaccayatā*, the fact that everything depends on various causes and con-ditions in its arising, functioning, and ceasing. Or as the physicist David Bohm put it simply and beautifully,

> In nature nothing remains constant. Everything is in a perpetual state of transformation, motion, and change. However, we discover that nothing simply surges up out of nothing without having antecedents that existed before. Likewise, nothing ever disappears without a trace, in the sense that it gives rise to absolutely nothing existing at later times. This general characteristic of the world can be expressed in terms of a principle which summarizes an enormous domain of different kinds of experience and which has never yet been contradicted in any observation or experiment, scientific or otherwise; namely, everything comes from other things and gives rise to other things.[17]

This principle of interdependence and interrelatedness can be observed here today and need not depend on future lives.

When all human beings, all life forms, and all of Nature are inseparably interdependent, we must cooperate and live in harmony. Such harmony requires kindness and compassion, while precluding oppression, violence, hatred, and selfishness. In an

interdependent world, harming others harms oneself while helping others benefits oneself. If you like, this may be called "enlightened self-interest." Tan Ajarn tried to make wisdom and understanding of this natural law the basis for morality, human relationships, and social organization, not to mention spiritual practice.

I.D. Morality Of and For Communities

When our morality is rooted in Nature and the Law of Inter-Relatedness, it requires a healthy balance between the individual and the collective. Some Asian cultures have tended toward justifying the oppression of individuals in the name of the common good. More recently, this is done in the name of "development." Countries such as China, Indonesia, and Malaysia try to avoid human right issues by claiming them to be a tool of Western Neo-colonialism. While there is some truth in this accusation, it is unfaithfully and disingenuously used to excuse equal evils.

On the other hand, the West has developed an ideology of individual rights that ignores the equally important needs and rights of groups, communities, and cultures. We pretend that what we do only matters to us; morality is personal business. We are not concerned with the mental and physical pain that are behaviors and lifestyles inflict on others. Thus, we object when someone brings up the issue. We are afraid it might limit our freedom. Politically and economically this is expressed in our forcing open of markets for our non-necessary products and willingness to export waste to places where we do not live (usually inhabited by the poor and powerless). In families, parents divorce too quickly and easily, children insist that what they do is not their parents' business, and everyone pretend that substance abuse is not destroying the family's life.

Furthermore, Western dogmas about individual rights

are not balanced with an equal emphasis on individual responsibilities. Ajarn Buddhadāsa, however, bases his perspective in the unavoidability of responsibility. This is the purpose of the ancient principle of *karna. Karna* is not another version of the cosmic or divine reward and retribution that turns morality into an obligation.[18] "*Karna*" in Buddhism teaches us that we make intentional actions from which ourselves and others receive the fruits. To find health and happiness in life we must take responsibility for our actions so that they genuinely bring the happiness that we and others seek. Tan Ajarn roots *siladdhamma* in both individual responsibility and the community or social contexts in which we act.

A non-dualistic approach avoids making hard and fast distinctions between organically inseparable beings such as individuals and communities. It is impossible to have one without the other! So we must respect and nurture both together. Any morality that fails to do this is a fraud.

I.E. Morality and Science Are Not Enemies

This understanding of Nature and its Law is the heart of morality. You will have noticed that it does not conflict with genuine science, either. Here, we must remember that there is fake science and genuine science. There is a lot of the fake kind (scientism) in which people accept so-called "scientific facts" without examining and proving them personally. Theories that are only partially or conditionally proven are believed to be absolutely true. Even many who call themselves "scientists" get their knowledge from books, believing in the results of other people's work and not proving things in their own experience. Thus, science has become traditional knowledge, just like religion. This is what I call "fake science" or "scientism." When Buddhists proclaim that their religion is scientific, they had better clarify the science to which they

are referring. This point is important because we cannot do without science and Buddhism should be scientific. Therefore, it is imperative that we understand what science really is.

Real science involves experiment, reason, and direct experience. True scientists work out the important issues for themselves and verify facts in their own life experience. Further, such science cannot be merely material. Real science is a science of both the physical and the mental. Since *sīladhamma* is primarily a matter of human values and volition, its scientific foundation must be a science of mind. Material things do not care what is good and what is evil, or what is appropriate and true; they just follow their conditioned natures. Humans, however, need to know these things and thus require a proper science of the mind.

These are some perspectives on *sīladhamma* that Tan Ajarn taught for many years. I have given them a lot of space because he gave it so much emphasis in his work. Sentences like "if *sīladhamma* doesn't return the world will go to ruin" and "the morality of the young is peace for the world" must be understood in terms of *pakati*. This last sentence can be taken as his final words before the final stroke and coma: "the morality of the young is peace for the world." It was obviously important to him. I hope all of humanity will show a similar concern for *sīladhamma*.

This is one of the things that Tan Ajarn has done well and clearly, both in his teaching and way of life. If we can carry on and spread this understanding, it will be an important factor in "*sīladhamma* returning" in Siam and abroad; then "the world will not go to ruin." It is worth a try.

II. Nature & the Law of Nature are the Heart of Religion

Tan Ajarn's explanation of the essence of religion was

always broad-minded and never limited to just Buddhism. He was interested in all the religions of humanity and Nature. He punned on the Thai word "*rawd*," which means both "survival" and "salvation," and claimed that all animals and plants have a religion appropriate to their stage of evolution. All living things require something in order to survive and be saved; this something is the level of religion needed by each.

His perspective on this multiplicity of religions is that the heart of every religion is Nature and Nature's Law. This understanding actually comes from the traditional wisdom of the Thai people who have always lived very close to Nature. Only recently, with the consumerism of television and air-conditioning, have large numbers of Thais become alienated from Nature. With this change has come the destruction of vast expanses of the environment. Swimming against that current for many years, Tan Ajarn has argued that the essence of all religions, most especially of Buddhism, is Nature and the Law of Nature. He also stressed Duty according to Natural Law and the Fruits of performing that Duty. One of the other contributors has discussed these four essences of religion as a set, so I will limit myself to certain aspects of the first two.[19]

This perspective on religion is in harmony with the modern science of Ecology. Nowadays, everybody has become interested in the environment. Even businesses are going green and trying to make money out of products advertised as "green." The various governments of the world, as well as international organizations like the World Bank, have also jumped on the bandwagon; we hope they are sincere. Unfortunately, the cultural and religious mainstream of the West promoted the domination of Nature for centuries and the momentum of this error has not yet been reversed.[20] Even in Buddhism, the majority merely took the subject for granted.

Tan Ajarn was talking about Nature fifty years ago and his observations are in line with the needs of us social animals today. Every religion now must be able to make humanity harmonize with Nature; otherwise our species will go extinct. This is how he understands concepts like "obeying God's will." When religions have allowed themselves to be overly influenced by materialistic thinking, they have tended to see Nature as something objective to be used merely for the benefit of humanity. For the most part, such benefits are understood in narrow materialistic terms, for example, as "natural resources." Trees are seen as dollars and yen, things to be farmed, managed, marketed, sold, and exported. It has become obvious what the effects of this mentality have been and continue to be.

What happens, then, when we realize that true religion is just Nature, its Law, our Duty to conform to the Law, and the Fruits derived thereby? Naturally, we must transform the way we relate to Nature. Nature can no longer be seen as material things out there, separate from us. Nature is also imbued with consciousness and feeling. While the Buddha knew this, and our indigenous sisters and brothers have always known this, our societies have forgotten to teach this wisdom. Yet if we start anew, we will be empowered to resist the Great *Māras* (Satans) of the modern world — materialist capitalism and consumerism.

Ajarn Buddhadāsa's teaching not only fits with ecology, it is a more profound ecology than most scientists realize. Ecology grew out of biology, which now is studied primarily in physical aspects such as chemistry. Tan Ajarn's ecology grows out of a more profound biology, one that treats consciousness as fundamental and primary. Only when human consciousness can be seen correctly within the ecological picture will humanity be able to harmonize — as it once did — with Nature. Unfortunately, "consciousness studies" are still controversial for many scientists

in the Western tradition.[21]

III. *Idappaccayatā* : the Heart of the Buddha's Teaching

Another one of Ajarn Buddhadāsa's contributions which has value beyond the borders of Thailand concerns his resurrection of the terms "*idappaccayatā*" and "*paṭicca-samuppāda.*" While the Lord Buddha used these terms and explained them in numerous instances, they have not been well-understood or properly explained by traditional Buddhism. Often, they have been passed over as "too profound" or "too difficult" for the laity.

On the other hand, some Western thinkers have started to give prominence to this principle. Generally, Western thought has been dualistic, as we mentioned above when discussing morality. Furthermore, there has been a tendency to distinguish and then segregate things, and to develop highly specialized fields of knowledge. Ordinary people cannot understand what the specialists are talking about and many experts cannot communicate with their counterparts in other fields. Medicine is an easy example. When the doctors brought Ajarn Buddhadāsa's body up to Siriraj Hospital in Bangkok during his final illness (28 May through 8 July)[22], there was a huge team of experts, each responsible for a particular organ or system: nerves, lungs, heart, kidneys, skin, blood, urine & feces, nutrition, rehabilitation, infections, x-ray, etc. One day, a heart specialist came in, looked at the various monitors and clipboards, listened to Tan Ajarn's heart, smiled, and declared, "my organ is fine." He was safe for the time being. There was not one doctor who could see the whole picture: that the situation was hopeless and Ajarn Buddhadāsa's wishes to remain at Suan Mokkh were being violated for nothing. Dr. Prawase Wasi calls this "treating the disease rather than the patient."[23]

When we leave knowledge to the experts and they special-

ize in increasingly narrow ways, society loses track of the human being. We dissect ourselves into pieces — economic, political, sexual, artistic, emotional — but cannot grasp the meaning of the whole. We reduce ourselves to a sum less than the parts. And we have forgotten how to put ourselves — modern Humpty-Dumpties — back together again.

Fortunately, Eastern forms of wisdom, and especially Buddhism, are clear about *idappaccayatā* (conditionality, interdependence). Unfortunately, many of our Buddhist preachers and experts hardly ever speak about it. They particularly avoid the subtleties of this principle's application to the workings of the mind and the concoction of desire, attachment, and ego-birth through the power of ignorance, what the Lord Buddha called "*paṭicca-samuppāda*" (dependent co-origination). They claim it is too lofty for ordinary people to understand; I suspect that most who say this have not understood it themselves. In fact, anybody with eyes and ears can understand it because it is happening right here in all our moments of experience. The theory may be difficult for some, but the reality must be faced by all who would make an end to *dukkha* (stress, suffering).

These days, perhaps, humanity has begun to re-orient itself. The concepts and theories of evolution, ecology, and relativity are showing the limitations of dualistic thinking. The forefront of science has been looking at the universe in important — and sometimes strange — new ways. So we find physicists talking about "orderliness" and "the implicate order."[24] Anthropologist Gregory Bateson uses the beautiful phrase "the pattern which connects."[25] Also recall David Bohm's passage cited above. Surely we can transform our world views and behaviors accordingly.

Putting this principle — by whatever name — at the center of our thinking, as the Buddha did, will provide a point of integra-

tion and co-operation. We will be able to appreciate the valuable contributions of all valid systems of knowledge and thought. Fields like systems theory and chaos theory, as far as I can tell, link up easily with this perspective. We will be able to communicate with them intelligently and learn what we can from them. We will have insights to share with them as well. This fits the open-mindedness needed in a diverse and complex world.

This is one of Thailand's most important resources and is something the Thai people can share with the world. Sharing their beaches, food, and entertainments is nothing special (and sharing their children's sexuality is a crime), while sharing the wisdom of Dhamma can change the world and bring genuine peace. The Dhamma most in need of understanding is *idappaccayatā* — the Law of Nature. Tan Ajarn has thereby helped the Thais and all sincere Buddhists to find their role in the world.

IV. Rediscovering the Lord Buddha's Original Purpose & Meaning in Teaching *Paṭicca-Samuppāda*

Another aspect of the Law of Nature is called "*paṭicca-samuppāda*" (dependent co-origination). The explanation of *paṭicca-samuppāda* that Tan Ajarn discovered recovers the Buddha's original purpose in teaching it, namely, the thorough and final ending of *dukkha*. Other explanations serve a moral purpose by underpinning the belief in rebirth, future lives, merit, *kamma*, etc. These are useful but not sufficient for liberation. Further, they are not significantly different from the Brahmin or Hindu teachings that eventually swallowed Buddhism in India, nor from the plethora of moralistic afterlife scenarios found around the world.

Ajarn Buddhadāsa's insights bring *paṭicca-samuppāda* back into the reality of the present and relate it directly to spiritual liberation. The way he explains this principle and related concepts

such as "kanma," "rebirth," "future lives" — even "heaven" and "hell" — makes it possible for them to be discovered and verified by each practitioner for herself. We should not settle for a materialistic understanding of rebirth in which the emphasis is on bodies and particular times and places. We will profit more from a spiritual understanding of this word, one that is observable today.

A brief summary of his interpretation of *paṭicca-samuppāda* will be found in the next section. Here, let us note that the key to understanding *paṭicca-samuppāda* is his insistence that *jāti* (birth) means a mental birth of the "I am," of ego, of self, whenever we foolishly take sense experiences to be positive or negative. When birth is seen happening right now — and it is going on all the time — we no longer need depend on beliefs about the future, even ones attributed to the Buddha. Nonetheless, such beliefs will still have efficacy for those have not yet seen the birth of "I" here and now.

This insight is not only of value to Buddhists. I have friends in other religions who have deepened and refreshed their understanding of and their faith in God by seeing "It" in the light of *idappaccayatā*_ and *paṭicca-samuppāda.* Tan Ajarn's approach helped them to disentangle from the superstitious accretions that muddle every religious tradition. There was no need for them to become "Buddhists" for they came to an understanding that does not separate humanity into different religions any longer.

The Lord Buddha taught that *dukkha* happens in the present through causes and conditions directly related to it, the most important of which are immediate and simultaneous. He further declared that *sukha* (happiness) and *dukkha* are not dependent on "old *kamma*, chance, or God." Instead, they are to be understood in the present reality of their conditional relationships. The same holds for *dukkha's* quenching. Then why are teachings that point

out the way to liberation from *dukkha* — such as *paṭicca-samuppāda* — so often dragged into the past and future? I am sure there are good reasons, but no reason is good enough to justify deleting their application in the timeless present. Tan Ajarn has undeleted them because Dhamma is *akāliko* (timeless, unlimted by time).

V. The Ultimate Psychology: *Paṭicca-Samuppāda*

When *paṭcca-samuppāda* is observed, understood, and practiced in terms of the here-now workings of our minds, it becomes the "ultimate psychology." Western schools of psychology and methods of psychotherapy, sometimes borrowing from the East, have had a tremendous impact in their societies and have done much good. (There have been blunders, too.) Important new insights into human life and experience have been discovered. These enable people to live more happily, with fewer problems, with more purpose and meaning. Nonetheless, none of these psychologies is capable of leading us to the realization of *nibbāna*, the ultimate reality.

We need a psychology that can explain what obstructs such realization and point out the way to remove it. The key to such a psychology is the principle of *paṭicca-samuppāda* and the practices derived from it. This psychology of dependent co-origination thoroughly analyzes how ignorance (inability to see things as they are in the light of truth) interferes during sense experience, thus creating problems out of the feeling-qualities (*vedanā*) that occur naturally with all experience; how we react to these feelings with foolish desire; how desire is then attached to egotistically (even more foolish); how attachment concocts identity, which leads to ego-birth (the most foolish thing of all) in some state, circumstances, or another; how the whole thing is inherently

undependable, unsatisfying, and dangerous; and how we can cut through the whole process. This *paṭicca-samuppāda* is the psychology that can explain the most subtle aspects of all our tears, torments, tensions, and turmoil.

Many psychologists fail to recognize that we are neurotic (and sometimes psychotic) due to our own selfishness, which in turn arises from attachment to self. Explanations for our disorders often emphasize external factors, such as childhood environment and parents. This can denigrate the necessary sense of agency and personal responsibility, both moral and spiritual. External factors are important, but we must see how they dependently co-originate with the phenomena of the inner structures. *Paṭicca-samuppāda*, especially as Tan Ajarn taught it, can correct the imbalance biased toward external material factors.

I am not arguing that Tan Ajarn's approach to *paṭicca-samuppāda* should replace the various psychologies ancient and modern. Rather, it is a powerful tool for correcting and completing all those psychologies that still have something to offer humanity. *Paṭicca-samuppāda* can serve this purpose because it is not merely concerned with abnormal psychology. It focuses on mental processes that are involved in all forms and levels of consciousness, providing a framework for observation and analysis. Each person, if sufficiently sane and mature, can do so personally. Further, practicing according to the insights thus found, leads to the highest consciousness (*suññatā*, voidness), which is inseparable from the highest realization (*nibbāna*).

This knowledge should be spread throughout the world, especially in the universities and medical schools. It would not hurt in religion either, let alone government and business. The state of the planet and many societies cries out for a psychology that conquers selfishness.

VI. Meeting Point for All Knowledge

Without trying to explain everything about all things — a so-called "Law of Everything" — Tan Ajarn provided a frame work in which all things can be intelligently discussed from a religious, moral, and spiritual perspective. While the tendency of most academic programs is to separate and specialize, Tan Ajarn has given us an approach which allows a holistic, systems approach to all areas of human knowledge and experience. Further, his approach is not biased toward the material and quantifiable at the expense of the mental and spiritual. He even speaks of going beyond the subjective-objective split. Non-dualistic and non-extremist, his approach contains the possibility of integrating the huge diversity of human thought, knowledge, and experience.

The power of modern communications systems and the vast curiosity and creativity of the human mind requires points of integration. By "points of integration," I mean concepts and theories that enable the many fields, schools, and traditions to "interface" or "dialogue" (whichever metaphor you prefer). Otherwise, we will dissect ourselves into increasingly minute and scattered bits and pieces. To be comprehensive and effective these integration points must serve the moral, scientific, and spiritual needs discussed throughout this essay.

The key to such an approach, once again, is *idappaccayatā-paticca-samuppāda*. I hope that readers do not become bored with the repeated references to this principle. Its importance — on a par with "God" — cannot be over-stressed. Tan Ajarn's talent has been to study it carefully both in his own mind-body and in the trees, animals, communities, and society around him. He has presented it from many angles and has made beginning linkages with economics and politics ("Dhammic Socialism"), psychology, medicine, education, social work, ecology, art, culture, and reli-

gion.

It remains for us, as Donald Swearer points out in his paper, to follow up his beginnings by developing concrete practices that achieve tangible benefits. Further, we should explore areas that he barely touched, for example, gender justice. He did what he could to forge theoretical linkages and put them into practice whenever he could. The hard work of building bridges and unifying (but not homogenizing) humanity is a pressing challenge and a wonderful opportunity. Tan Ajarn has provided an essential element, the rest of us must contribute our part as well.

VII. There's Still Hope for Socialism

Despite the claims of some cold-warriors, socialism is still an alternative to capitalism, if the socialism is Dhammic. This topic may seem out-of-date to some, but the ebbs and flows of history will again give Socialism a place in the sun, and a prominent one. Even now, socialist parties in Europe struggle to revamp themselves. Will they be able to find a more pure and workable form than the bureaucratic centralized constructions of Eastern Europe and China?

To the end of his life, even after the so-called "demise of communism" in Eastern Europe, Tan Ajarn continued to advocate his vision of Dhammic Socialism, a socialism derived from the natural law of *idappaccayatā*, based in personal responsibility, and resulting in *pakati*. Capitalism is inherently corrupt, based as it is on greed and selfishness, which in turn spawn anger-hatred (e.g. militarism) and delusion (e.g. the concocting of false needs through deceitful advertising). We are forced to call the alternative "socialism," for we must put the good of the whole above, or at least equal to our own. Marx, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao, along with less

famous communists such as the Filipino Jose Maria Sison, failed because they lost track of the common good after confusing it with the good of the Party, then of the ruling clique, and finally with their own personal power. Nonetheless, their failures are not necessarily the failure of socialism. At most, they are the failure of materialist socialism. At the same time, they point out the need for mechanisms which restrain and decrease self-interest and the defilements. Such mechanisms are what Tan Ajarn means by "Dhammic."

The question is not whether capitalism has finally succeeded in conquering socialism. Capitalism has far too many weaknesses to make such grandiose and self-serving claims. The question, then, is whether we desire and are able to organize society according to higher principles or whether we will surrender to the lowest common denominator approach of capitalism. Capitalist apologists, such as Nobel laureate Milton Friedman, claim that greed is the most practical means for organizing society and therefore the best. For Tan Ajarn, their approach brings constant low-intensity conflict along with major wars; a greedy system cannot make a peaceful or decent world. He also considered Marxist-Leninist-Maoist communism to be vengeful and bloody-thirsty; an angry system is no better. Tan Ajarn preferred the middle way of peace.

Let us not be hasty, however. Tan Ajarn's formulation is not yet sufficient to implement Dhammic Socialism in today's world. First, the necessary conditions are not ripe; the forces of egotism are still very strong. Second, it is incomplete, lacking in practical details and workable methods. Nonetheless, it does highlight the main requirements for a peaceful, moral, and just society. This is the purpose of his idealism, which is a practical albeit lofty one. The details must be worked out by competent and Dhammically trained social scientists and politicians. The role of the monk is to secure the moral perspective needed to guide the social

workers. As religious beings, we must further develop the latter role; as social actors we must collaborate with right-minded social scientists. Once again, Tan Ajarn's contribution is also a challenge to us.

This is a good place, as this essay nears its end, to point out that the challenge is not merely idealistic and theoretical. He also personified those ideals on a high level, as those who knew him well can attest. He always put the Dhamma first and did not go much into his personal stories.[26] His books are important but cannot express the whole of the man.[27]

The purpose of his books was to proclaim and propagate (*ghosanā*)[28] Buddha-Dhamma for the sake of right understanding (*sammādiṭṭhi*), the guiding factor of the noble eightfold path. He hoped to help all of humanity develop enough *sammādiṭṭhi* for individuals to make their own decisions and choices wisely, that is, to be personally responsible for their lives, actions, and minds. He did not, however, separate personal responsibility from society. Personal responsibility always has a social context and society can be transformed only when individuals take responsibility for all aspects of their lives. That he could discern a Middle Way that incorporates both — personal responsibility within a social-environmental context — is what gives his Dhammic Socialism its depth and power.

VIII. Religion Without the Mumbo-Jumbo

Humanity's involvement with the thing called "religion" has been a mixed bag, at best. The person from who Marx stole the famous quote was correct — "religion is the opiate of the masses " — but not wholly correct. First, "the masses," here, must include all classes. Religion can become an opiate for even the richest,

most powerful, and most educated. Second, religion has elements which are the opposite of a narcotic. When used properly, religion can awaken us and make us fully conscious and free.

Throughout this paper the reader will have seen that Ajarn Buddhadāsa is proposing a different appoach to religion, especially to Buddhism. There is need for faith, but not blind faith in scriptures, Ajarns, Rimpoches, rituals, or any other external authority, no matter how "holy" or "enlightened." Faith, as he understood it, is to be centered and cultivated on the Triple Gem found within each of us, in the 3 Cs (the qualities of cleanliness, clarity, and calm), in our own mindfulness and wisdom. As he often quoted, "the world, the origin of the world, the end of the world, and the path that ends the world are all found in this fathom-long living and conscious body." We can find everything we need right here. In the end, liberation requires that we depend on nothing.

For six decades, Ajarn Buddhadāsa struggled to free Buddhism of superstition, irrationality, mystification, and ritualism. His approach to Buddha-Dhamma is for those who are willing to think carefully and at the same time look deeply at life from the heart. He made no demands, nature has already made enough. Whether we listen or not is our business not his. He did his duty as well as he could and left the rest to us. He tried to explain the ins and outs of liberation as plainly, simply, and directly as he could. At the same time, he tried to leave himself out of the picture.

Nonetheless, the majority of his "disciples" disregard or fail to comprehend his warning, "Don't come wheedling to me as `Teacher, Teacher' if you don't practice what I teach." We choose, or are subconsciously compelled, to cling to his person. At most, we point to others as being the object of the warning and fail to see ourselves — my self! — in it. Louis Gabaude's comments on this subject — turning Tan Ajarn into a *phra kreuang* (power amulet)

are very appropriate. Unfortunately, they may not be heard by those who most need to hear them.

This, then, is the answer to those who wonder what will happen to Suan Mokkh after Ajarn Buddhadāsa is dead. The survival of Suan Mokkh as he intended it to be depends on us putting his teaching into practice. If we remain stuck on the person and lose track of the meaning, we will betray both.

IX. Everyone has the Right to be Buddhadā sa

Tan Ajarn did not consider the name "Buddhadāsa" (Servant of the Buddha) to be his personal possession. Every day monks throughout the world declare themselves to be servants of the Lord Buddha and that the Buddha is their Master. We all have the right, the calling, and, in fact, the need to be *buddhadāsa*. The same applies to *dhammadāsa* and *sanghadāsa* to which we also declare our service; we cannot serve one without serving all three, for the Triple Gem is inseparable. Over the years, he tried many ways to help others, both lay and ordained, to develop the ability to serve the Triple Gem through proclaiming the Dhamma. The question, then, is not what to do, but how each is to do it according to one's causes and conditions. This, then, is the first thing we must do to carry on his work. Each of us must transform ourselves to become more truly servants of the Lord Buddha.

At Suan Mokkh, the basic principle by which we try to live is unselfishness. Only by understanding this, more or less, have I been able to fit in and be happy at Suan Mokkh these nine years. At first, I was a true *farang*, highly individualistic and critical of others, according to my intellectual training in a good Western university. (I still have these habits but they have been moderated somewhat.) Intelligence and the ability to think rationally

are respected at Suan Mokkh, but are secondary to the quality of unselfishness.

I would criticize this thing or that person according to my opinions and moods. But nobody would listen, especially Ajarn Poh,[29] the one to whom I took many of my complaints. He would be patient, would smile, would listen, but never gave my criticisms credence. Eventually, after beginning to help in the work of Suan Mokkh and showing that I had some capacity to go behind my self-centeredness, I learned that selflessness, at least unselfishness, was the criteria. If I was able to sweat and sacrifice for the sake of others, my words would be taken more seriously. Words alone mean little; are the words backed up by commitment and sincerity? Of course, the words have to make sense also. Here is the second thing we must do to carry on Tan Ajarn's work; we must dedicate ourselves to practicing unselfishness and, further, to selflessness (voidness).

Third, we must follow Tan Ajarn's example of curiosity and creativity in explaining Buddha-Dhamma according to the terms, concepts, and fields of knowledge that are most relevant to our constituencies. This does not mean abandoning the Pali language and the formulations found in the *Tipiṭaka*. Tan Ajarn cherished these ancient resources but at the same time recognized that many of his contemporaries could not relate to or make sense of them. Space-Time is always changing; therefore, we must constantly renew our expressions and explanations of Buddha-Dhamma. It is not enough to repeat the words of the Lord Buddha, Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, or any other teacher.

Lastly, as mentioned above, there is much left to be done in the areas Tan Ajarn pioneered. We must avoid the temptation to canonize him — turn him into a sacred Buddha amulet, as Louis Gabaude puts it — and find comfort in believing that everything

he did was perfect and complete. Then, there would be nothing left to do but repeat his teaching. Without realizing it, we would fossilize him and his teaching, effectively killing it. I can only wonder what it is people are bowing to when they prostrate before the fiberglass dummy. Does it have anything to do with Dhamma?

While this attitude has always been common in religious circles, it does not reflect Tan Ajarn's own understanding. If he felt this way about the Lord Buddha, he never would have become Buddhadāsa. True faith must be in an eternal, living Buddha, not in something static. Further, he was always aware of his own limitations, that there was much he could not do or had not succeeded in as he wished. Once, when discussing the many problems in the world and the *dukkha* experienced by just about everyone, he lamented that he had not done his duty well enough. He did not try to put the blame on others.

I doubt that we can succeed completely either. One hundred percent success may not be possible in this world. But we can do our best. Each of us can serve the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha by researching, reflecting upon, and deepening aspects of Nature, Its Law, our Duty, and the Fruit of doing that Duty correctly that are not yet fully understood by humanity. Work will never be lacking; a lifetime of joyful service awaits us.

POSTSCRIPT

In this paper, I have given prominence to *idappaccayatā*, the Law of Nature, and the central role it has in the teaching of Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. While this is correct, it is not yet complete. There are other terms and principles that he taught as the "Heart of Buddhism." To do full justice to his contribution to humanity, we would have to investigate more of them. At least, we should give

equal prominence to *suññatā* (voidness) and related terms like *cit waang* (void-free mind). In fact, *suññatā* and *idappaccayatā* are different faces of the same coin. Because all things are interdependent with and conditioned by other things, no self (*attā*) can be found in, as, or connected with them. Thus, they are void of self. And because all things are void of any independent essence, they must be dependent on other things. These two teachings complement, balance, correct, and complete each other. Thus, we have dealt with it indirectly, and in the same way with *tathatā* (thusness, suchness).

Still, a proper discussion of Ajarn Buddhadāsa's contribution concerning *suññatā*, *tathatā*, and other matters will have to wait for another time and place.[30] Perhaps the papers in this collection will serve as a start.

Santikaro Bhikkhu
Rains 1994
Dawn Kiam

END NOTES

[1] This paper is based on a presentation given as part of a panel discussion with Suwanna Satha-anand, Donald K. Swearer, Louis Gabaude, and moderated by Sulak Sivaraksa, on 6 July 1994 at the Dhamma Vicaya Hall of Mahāculalongkorn Rājawitayalaya Buddhist University, Bangkok. While the original presentation was given in Thai to an audience composed mainly of young student monks, this paper has been adapted to a Western, lay audience.

[2] It is beyond the ability of this writer to judge whether or not Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu was "enlightened" or totally freed of self. I know, at least, that he came close but preferred to avoid indulgent claim.

[3] *Buddhadasa's Way of Building Wisdom*, a summary of how Ajarn Buddhadāsa trained himself and others, is available in manuscript from the author.

4. I will not take time to discuss the lack of freedom inherent in this so-called "free market." the reader is referred to *The Development Dictionary*, ed. Wolfgang Sachs (Zed Books, London: 1992), especially the chapters "Market" and "Equality."

[5] Only recently has the moral dilemma begun to receive much attention, for example, in some of the UN's new programs on culture. Sadly, they remain superficial, their foundations having been destroyed.

[6] In fact, "*siladhamma*" and "morality" are not exact equivalents, coming as they do from different philosophical, cultural, and religious traditions. "Morality" comes from the Latin *moralis*, term "ethics" (derived from the Greek *ethikos*, ethics; from *ethos*, character, custom, a man's [sic] normal state) comes closer to the

meaning of "*siladhamma.*"

[7] For example, see the theories of quantum mechanics; also see the discussion of *idappaccayatā* below.

[8] Dharmaghosaṇa Atthānukrom (Dhamma Propagation Book of Meanings), (Alliance for the Propagation of Buddhism, Bangkok: 1990), p. 216.

[9] Rhys-Davids and Steede, ed., *The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary* (The Pali Text Society, London: 1979), p. 379

[10] "The Value and Necessity of Having Morality" from *Dhammic Socialism*, (Dhammika Sangamaniyama), ed. Donald K. Swearer (Komol Kimtong, Bangkok: 1986), p. 134

[11] Ibid., p. 136

[12] "Socialism According to Religious Principles" in *Dhammic Socialism*, p. 46. Tan Ajan did not equate socialism with the forms it has taken under communism and in the authoritarian, overly-centralized regimes of Eastern Europe, China, and Vietnam. We must not let Capitalist propaganda deceive us on this point. "Socialism"(Thai: *sangama-niyama*, literally, "preference for society") as understood by Ajarn Buddhadāsa is foremost the point of view and attitude that the common good comes first, that society is more fundamental than the individual, that the interests and needs of society as a whole come before those of the individual." For more discussion on this point, see my paper "Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu: Life & Society Through The Natural Eyes of Voidness" (in *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, ed. Sallie King & Christopher Queen, to be published soon by SUNY Press, Albany, NY) and Donald K. Swearer's Introduction to *Dhammic Socialism.*"

[13] This is the essence of the Buddha's *paṭicca-samuppāda* (dependent co-origination), as Ajarn Buddhadāsa understands it.

[14] Ibid., p. 27

[15] I use this term to specify science treated as a belief system that is accepted blindly without the devotee reasoning, experimenting, and working through its premises and conclusions by himself. For the majority of humanity,who do not really understand it very well, science is degraded into scientism.

[16] In Tan Ajarn's view, these ideas are not limited to Buddhism and foreign to other religions, including those dominant in the West. Rather, he believes that all religions have similar insights, although they express them in different terms and images. His many friends from other religions have supported him on these points. Needless-to-say, there are people– including Buddhists– who do not accept his belief in the numerous commonalities among all religions.

[17]. *Causality and Chance in Modern Physics*, David Bohm(Harper & Brothers, NY:1961) p. 1

[18] Phra Dhammapitok (Bhikkhu P. A. Payuddho) points out that Buddhism is an "ethics of happiness" rather than an "ethics of obligation," as in Western thinking. (From his talk "World Stream, Dhamma Stream" Given at Suan Mokkhabalārāma on 22 September 1994.)

[19] He has spoken on this theme repeatedly and some English translations are being prepared. A number of tapes are already available in English.

[20] Of course, there were important exceptions like St Francis of Assisi, St Hildegard of Bingen, and Meister Eckhart. Still, none of them were accepted by the mainstream until after they were dead and had been watered-down and distorted.

[21] See, for example, "Can Science Explain Consciousness?," a recent overview of the field in *Scientific American*, July 1994, p. 72 ff.

[22] Some details in the forthcoming issue of Evolution/Liberation; I eventually hope to publish a longer reflection in book form.

[23] *Banteuk Wejakaam Thai* (Glai Maw, Bangkok: 1981).

[24] See, for starters, Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* (Shambala, Berkeley: 1975) and *The Turning Point* (Simon & Schuster, New York: 1982); Gary Zukav, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters* (William Morrow, New York: 1979); and Humberto Maturana & Francisco Varela, *The Tree of Knowledge: the Biological Roots of Understanding* (Shambala, Boston: 1987).

[25] Mind and Nature: A necessary unity (1979)

[26] The important exception is the series of interviews edited by Phra Pracha Pasannadhammo, *Lao Wai Meua Wai Sondhaya: Ataji vaprawat kong Tan Puttatat (As Told in the Twilight Years: the Memoirs of Venerable Buddhadāsa)*, (Komol Kimtong Foundation, Bangkok: 1986), which amount to Tan Ajarn's memoirs.

[27] A study group at Suan Mokkh is working to gather and publish examples of how he lived out these ideals.

[28] *Ghosanā*, in a modified Sanskrit form, is currently used in Thai for "advertising" and "propaganda."

[29] Buddhadhammo Bhikkhu, now the Abbot of Suan Mokkh.

[30] In the meantime, some aspects are covered in my essay "Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu: Life and Society Through the Natural Eyes of Voidness" op. cit." 1."Socialism According to Religious Principles" in *Dhammic Socialism*, p. 46.

APPENDIX

THE QUEST FOR A JUST SOCIETY

"When Acharn Buddhadasa founded Suan Mokkh in 1932, he talked of the coming crisis when no one else did. Now 50 to 60 years on, the crisis is here — rampant violence, environmental destruction and global tension," began Dr. Prawase.

The social crisis, he pointed out, arose because of human *micchā diṭṭhi* (misconception) and the social structure of violence.

Acharn Buddhadasa's teachings, he said, promote such intellectual power.

"I'll talk of five concepts of his teachings. One is the intellectual freedom, freedom from attachment.

"Another is the fact that *dhamma* is rules of nature. Nature exists long before everything. Look for answers in nature. You'll gain the truth"

The third thing is the Rule of *Idappaccayatā*.

"It's in the Buddha's teachings, but few pay attention to it. Buddhadasa placed great emphasis on this rule, writing a thick book on it.

"According to this rule, all things are inter-connected. Nothing stands by itself"

The root of the social crisis, he said, is the human misconception in seeing things in a compartmental fashion.

"People separate economy from life and culture, body from soul, living things from non-living things, small animals from large ones. In fact, these are all connected in a holistic manner."

The fourth concept emphasised by Buddhadasa, said Dr. Prawase, in *sunyatā*, or the law of emptiness.

"It's not emptiness for the sake of emptiness, but one that allows wisdom to be born."

The monk's fifth teaching is how members of every religion should try to deeply understand his religion as well as others.

"Buddhadasa always said every religion is valuable; if you can capture its heart, it's a great benefit. Also, one should try to create cooperation among religions. One religion suits one culture. In every field, diversity creates stability. Business knows that."

NATURE OF CRISES

The crisis the world now faces, Dr. Prawase said, is related to poverty, environment, cultural and spiritual matters, politics, governmental systems and education.

"The more they try to close the economic gap, the wider it becomes. This gap in turn affects politics and society. Twenty percent of people in the world possess 81 per cent of all the income.

"The US now suffers unemployment, which *Time* magazine called a permanent problem. Those jobs will not come back. Several cities are non-livable because of violence. Even in Japan, the smartest economic machine, over ten thousand companies have gone bankrupt."

On another front, the world faces destruction of trees, soil and air.

"Politics should be a device to solve problems, but as it is in our country, it's stuck. People sell and buy votes. Our politics is low quality.

"Governmental power covers every inch of our country. It spends our tax money, but lacks efficiency. It has power, but

little understanding and fllexibility."

The educational crisis stems from the fact that the country's teaching process is ineffective in building knowledge, and truth about other people.

"Our education circle is full of those who are ignorant of truth. Problem-solving must be true in every step.

"City people live with artificiality. Turn on the tap, and water flows. They don't know where the water comes from.

"When teenagers go to shopping centres, they never think of how these places play a major part in our environment destruction. One such arcade consumes so much energy. Where does this energy come from?"

The process to secure this energy, he said, affects rural people, i.e. the building of dams and electricity generating plants.

Youngsters go to shopping centres. They can't connect in their minds the places and their effects on other things.

Dr. Prawase then turned his critical eye on institutions of higher learning.

"At present, university is a machine that makes people more stupid. People graduate, but not knowing how to think. Doctors see the fever, but not the patients; they don't see their humanness. This is because we study in compartmentalised ways.

"We study with emphasis on subjects, not on truth. Students learn laws, political science, or economics as technical knowhow, not understanding how it is conected to human beings. So, they turn knowledge into a weapon to harm society. The saying 'Educated into barbarianism' applies here."

All six crises, he said, combine to make the social crisis.

"Why does Thailand, a Buddhist country, have the second highest rate of homicide? Why does it have so much crime, child prostitutes? Why do parents sell their young?"

One piece of research, said Dr. Prawase, reveals that 20 groups of people profit from sending a child into prostitution. "Middlemen, immigration officers, doctors too."

Currently, Thailand, being a consumerist nation, is stealing resources of its neighbours. "Before, we robbed the countryside of its resources, then we stole their daughters. Now we're taking gas from Burma, electricity from Laos, water from the Salween River, and exporting AIDS to Malaysia, Burma, Cambodia and China.

"In the future, when we look back to this time, it's a period of the nation's shame that we're so consumeristic that we eat ourselves up, then take from others."

CAUSES

For us to understand the nature of the social crisis, we must grasp the present cause-and-effect rule, said Dr. Prawase.

"In the old days, one event didn't have effects in wide circles. Now everything is interconnected. Whatever happens anywhere affects us. A decision of one man, say President Clinton, can affect our nation. A decision of the chairman of the US Federal Reserve to raise or lower the interest rate affects the whole world."

The present structure, he said, makes the rich richer and the poor poorer.

"For example, when a group becomes richer, things then get more expensive. The poor, who benefit little from such economic booms, have to pay more for the items."

Modern day theft, he said, is done on a grand scale.

"People can steal thousands of millions of baht from other people through structures. If we don't realise this thing, Buddhists will become accomplices to this violation."

The stealing, he pointed out, also extends into the future. "We even steal from those not yet born. Look at concessions. What right does the government have to issue concessions to cut down forests?"

The five causes of the social crisis, he outlined, are igno-

rance, the power system, the economic system, the structure of violence, and lack of social immunity.

"On one level, it is ignorance of how things actually are. For example, not knowing how rural people live, because one lives in artificial environment.

"On another level, it's ignorance of how things are interrelated, how nature is linked together in a holistic manner.

"It's not enough that the minority knows, but that the knowledge must reach everyone. And that there must be agencies to keep watch of things.

"There's a saying that, 'It's dificult to be selfish in front of the public.' It's true.

"One example is how some accident victims were turned away by several hospitals, which claimed they had no bed. But now some people call *Cho So* 100 in advance that they're heading for such-and-such hospital, and the hospital doesn't dare refuse them as everyone (listening to the channel) would know."

"The centralised power system, another cause of the crisis, fails because it can't comprehensively oversee things.

"And because with great power comes corruption. Most things should be decentralised, with the community being able to keep surveillance. Only a few things should be centralised, for example, the military, foreign affairs."

The current economy, third villian on Dr. Prawase's list, damages because it's based on greed.

"The system designates money its zenith. Yet money is the device of greed; it enables local greed to combine into a global greed."

The social structure that promotes violence, he said, leads people to use violence without realising they're hurting others.

"Such as soldiers who shot down protesters in Ratchadamnoen (during the May 1992 Incident). They didn't feel they were committing any sin."

Bangkokians damage the environment because they con-

sume a great amount of resources, but because of existing structures, they don't realise they're committing damage.

"Graduaters of *khana nithet* (faculties of mass communications) aspire to enter advertising, not feeling any guilt that what they'll do stimulates people's *kilesa* (desire) to consume more and more."

In our society, such stimulation is intense, with much budget and skills invested, he added.

Structure can lead people askew in other ways, too.

"When Buddhadasa fell gravely ill the last time, he didn't want to be sent to Bangkok for treatment. He said, 'How could one run away from death?' But they took him anyway; a great amount of money was spent to prolong his suffering. The persons responsible did so because structures dictated to them"

The fifth factor leading to the crisis, he said, is the lack of immunity.

"It lacks the community-ness, or social cohesion. Compassion for others.

"In the old days, when families and communities were intact, people actually lived together, they behaved well. Children got to live with, and worked alongside their parents. They were happy as they got to be with the people who loved them most."

Members of a community once knew one another while the temple was its spiritual guide. Currently, families break down as they are pressured by economy, anxiety and crime.

"These great forces ram into people's lives, breaking them down."

Such is the case of migrant worker families.

"Take children whose parents work as sugarcane-cutters away from home, earning 150 baht a day each, and children whose parents spin and weave under the house, earning 70 baht a day. Which group has the better quality of life?

"The former suffer loneliness, being left at home; while the latter get to live close to their parents, able to share and learn

and help their parents.

"For me, the 70 baht is worth far more than the 150 in terms of human value."

When families disintergrate the community disintegrates. they have no immunity, and whatever disease attacks, they suffer greatly.

SOLUTION

Hopeless as the task seems, Dr. Prawase said, hope lies in re-creating community at all levels.

"This is a mechanism that can stop wrongness in an integrated way. Such new communities must have organisation, and a learning process with analytical skills."

Communities have limitless potential because of their three qualities.

"One is spiritual development— when people have spiritual ties, they have great power. The other is continual learning of every member of the society — to every member of the society — to bring knowhow into community development without promoting the learning process can never succeed. The learning process must be interactive learning through action."

Problems cannot be solved by one side telling people what to do, he emphasised.

"Those facing problems must analyse problems themselves. In the process, true leaders will naturally emerge."

The second dimension is management — "using knowledge to build knowledge" in Dr. Prawase's words.

"It's said that 'Management makes the impossible possible." Many NGOs are weak in this. They look down on management as a capitalist tool. In reality, capitalists simply apply management to their work."

Addressing NGO workers, several of whom figured among his audience, Dr. Prawase said: "NGOs work with commitment,

but some eventually become *chit-salai* — or burn-outs— because they don't practise dhamma and don't learn."

A strong community can solve all kinds of problems, including such health-related ones as AIDS, he said.

Steps toward creating a true community should proceed from study training, and promotion.

"First, thoroughly study theories and practices of community building," he said, adding that several good books exist on the topic, including one named *A World Waiting to be Born* by a US sociologist.

"Secondly, organise and promote training in many places, so communities can be born everywhere, in slums, schools and families, universities. These can then expand to become networks, joining with those abroad to become a global community.

"A good time is now," Dr. Prawase emphasised. "International warfare has decreased, allowing people to build communities, and to connect at a transnational level to create power."

Community building must be promoted both in terms of policy and budget.

"We're talking with the government, they've agreed to support community work. The finance Ministry will use its Savings Bank to stimulate the forming of communities among the poor."

STRUCTURE OF VIOLENCE

How do you correct a social structure that gives rise to violence?

First, study it to understand it, said Dr. Prawase.

"Secondly, set up institutions to promote peaceful struggle and conflict management. Every university, every teacher college should set up such an institution. Actually, you're so already, but you don't realise it," said Dr. Prawase, addressing academics among his audience.

"I'll ask the government to allot budget to support every institute of learning in setting up such institution, " he added with a smile.

The third suggestion on his list is to change from *micchā setthakit*(wrong economy) to *sammā setthakit* (right economy).

"In short, the right economy is one that recognises how everything is interconnected, and so takes into consideration all aspects.

His fourth recommendation is promoting a political system that promotes fair distribution of power.

"This requires thorough consideration, not just whether to elect governors of not," he cautioned.

Reform of the education system is a must

"Less classroom learning, more on-site learning. Every school should thoroughly study the biodiversity of its locality — its flora and fauna, their uses and potential benefits. If such learning takes place, people will develop great love of their land."

Dr. Prawase gave examples of how several local plants have great medicinal value, yet few Thais appreciate or cultivate them.

"*Payayor* works as effectively as Zovirax (anti-infective drug). *Sadao*, or neem, keeps pests away. When grown alongside other plants, it can keep bugs away.

"Currently, we bury our heads in texbooks either from abroad or from Bangkok, but we know little of our own home towns."

Students must be trained to observe, record, present, listen, learn to ask and find answers, to conduct research.

"Some knowledge cannot be found in computers, but through the elderly, or the rural people. An example is cultural knowledge. Also, when youngsters get to talk to the old, they will develop respect for them."

Research must be encouraged at all levels.

"Even primary schoolchildren can do research. This will

yield financial gain in the long run. Ignorance actually makes people poorer."

Knowledge differs from wisdom in that it concerns specific areas, while wisdom is the ability to link bodies of knowledge together to solve problems, he added.

Six, to rectify despair, or hopelessness, one must concentrate on three things: freeing oneself from selfishness and from wrong thinking, and widening one's scope of learning so it's interconnected.

"Also, don't be a lone wolf, join an activity group or set one up to do things for others in whatever way. Acknowledging the suffering of other people will help lessen one's own. Both sides will feel lighter. For example, when listeners of *Cho So* 100 hear that other motorists, too, are stuck in traffic jams, they feel better, knowing others share their misery.

"Get students out of classrooms and into real situations," he emphasised.

One way he suggested is for students to do volunteer work.

"Volunteering to help others is no small matter. There are many college students. Why not enocourage them to volunteer in all areas of society? This can change the direction of development. And students will find a kind of happiness they haven't encountered before,"

DHAMMIC SOCIETY

According to Dr. Prawase, the term *dhammicka sangkom* or "Dhammic Society", directly translated, means society which operates on the rule of dhamma, or rightness.

"It's society with freedom from four kinds of pressures — physical or material, social, spiritual, and intellectual.

"Physical pressure can mean such economic restriction as poverty. Or that connected to health or environment. While Bangkokians are stressed because of traffic, rural people suffer

anxiety because of drought."

Social strain, he said concerns culture, society and politics.

"Thailand, using the centralised system, has a hard time solving its problems. This applies in politics and economy as well as culture. "If we use economy as the base factor, every community is a satellite of Bangkok, which in turn is a satellite of Tokyo and New York. This dependency makes community meaningless, stripping it of pride and honour."

With right understanding, people should promote cultural diversity.

"Every culture has its history and prestige. Southern culture is no less than northern culture. Isan culture is as good as Central. Each shouldn't be raised over others"

Spiritual pressure, he said, is a result of the mind under the influence of greed, anger and ignorance.

"Even when rich people don't escape this pressure. Savouring the beauty of the diversity of nature can calm the mind, and help develop one's love for fellow beings and nature."

Intellectual stress comes from ignorance.

"While studying, students sufffer because their teachers aren't effective enough to clarify things for them. Joy can come from thorough understanding of things."

Such learning must be continual. "Buddhadasa on his own could affect society more than a university could, because he could learn every day, from every situation.

"One day a person asked him why he kept so many dogs and chickens around the monastery. He said, 'So they can be my teachers,' He also said each bout of sickness made him wiser.

"If more people share his vision, we may get close to the Dhammic Society."

Wipawee Otaganonta summarized Dr. Prawase Wasi's lecture in Thai at a seminar at Suan Mokkh on 28 May 1994 to mark Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's birthday.

The article was first printed in **The Bangkok Post**, 8 July 1994.

LIST OF OUR PUBLICATIONS

ANGKARN KALYANAPONG : A Contemporary Siamese Poet, Edit by Michael Wright. Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation Bangkok 1986, 82 Pages 80 Baht (US$ 4, £ 2 Post free).

***BUDDHIST PERCEPTION FOR DESIRABLE SOCIETIES IN THE FUTURE** : Papers prepared for the United Nations University,* eidted by Sulak Sivaraksa et al. Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation, 1993, 288 Pages 300 Baht (US$ 15, £ 8 Post free).

***A BUDDHIST VISION FOR RENEWING SOCIETY** : Collected articles by a concerned Thai intellectual,* Sulak Sivaraksa. Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development 3th printing 1994 ISBN 974-7493-41-1, 380 Pages 250 Baht (US$ 13, £ 6 Post free).

DHAMMIC SOCIALISM, by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. Chief translator and editor Donald K. Swearer, Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development Bangkok 1986, 142 Pages 120 Baht (US$ 6, £ 3 Post free).

ESSAYS ON THAI FOLKLORE, by Phya Anuman Rajadhon. (3th

edition)Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development/Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation Bangkok 1988 ISBN 974-315-229-6, 422 Pages 400 Baht (US$ 20, £ 10 Post free).

FIVE CYCLES OF FRIENDSHIP *by Friends of Sulak Sivaraksa to honour his sixtieth birthday anniversary,* Suksit Siam, Bangkok 1993, 132 Pages 100 Baht (US$ 5, £ 3 Post free).

THE KING OF THE WHITE ELEPHANT, by Pridi Banomyong. The Thammasat Association Los Angeles, California 1990 ISBN 974-335-169-8, 170 Pages 200 Baht (US$ 10, £ 5 Post free).

LOOKING TO AMERICA TO SOLVE THAILAND'S PROBLEMS, by Phra Rajavaramuni (Prayudh Payutto) Translation by Grant A. Olson. Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation(Bangkok) /The Thai-American Project(California), 94 Pages 90 Baht (US$ 5 , £ 3 Post free).

POPULAR BUDDHISM IN SIAM AND OTHER ESSAYS ON THAI STUDIES , by Phya Anuman Rajadhon.Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development/Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation Bangkok 1986, 216 Pages 200 Baht paperback (US$ 10, £ 5 Post free).

RADICAL CONSERVATISM : BUDDHISM IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD, A Volume in celebration of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's 84th year written by e.g. Thich Nhat Hunh, Gabriel Lafitte, Phra Debvedi, Bhikkhu Sumedho, Lewis R. Lancaster, Sulak Sivaraksa, John A. McConnell, G. Lubsantseren and David W. Chappell etc; 576 Pages 750 Baht paperback, (US$ 40, £ 20 Post free).

RELIGION AND DEVELOPMENT, By S.Sivaraksa. Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development, 3th Edition 1987, 84 Pages 120 Baht (US$ 6, £ 3 Post free).

SEARCHING FOR ASIAN CULTURAL INTEGRITY: *Papers from*

Inter-Cultural Seminar in Bangkok 1990, edited by Sulak Sivaraksa et al. 222 Pages 200 Baht (US$10, £ 5 Post free).

SEEDS OF PEACE *: A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society* , Sulak Sivaraksa Foreword by H.H. The Dalia Lama. Parallax Press International Network of Engaged Buddhist Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation 1992 ISBN 0-938077-78-3, 186 Pages 200 Baht (US$ 10, £ 5 Post free).

SIAM IN CRISIS **:** *A Collection of Ariticle*, By S. Sivaraksa, Revised 2th Edition. Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute & Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development, Bangkok 2533/1990 ISBN 974-86967-0-7, 371 Pages 300 Baht (paperback)(US$ 15, £ 8 Post free).

SIAMESE RESURGENCE *: A Thai Buddhist Voice on Asia and a World of Change*, by S. Sivaraksa. Asian Cultural Forum on Development Bangkok 1985, 492 Pages 180 Baht (US$ 10, £ 5 Post free).

A SOCIALLY ENGAGED BUDDHISM, By S.Sivaraksa A Controversial Siamese. Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development, Bangkok 1998, 206 Pages 200 Baht paperback (US$ 10 , £ 5 Post free).

SOME TRADITIONS OF THE THAI, by Phya Anuman Rajadhon.Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development/Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation Bangkok 1986, 196 Pages 200 Baht (US$ 10, £ 5 Post free).

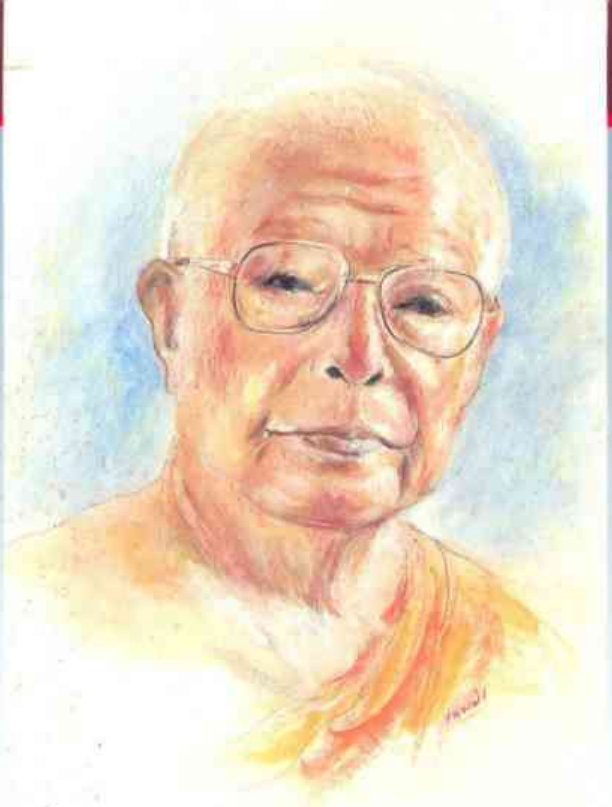
WHEN LOYALTY DEMANDS DISSENT : *Sulak Sivaraksa and the charge of lese majeste in Siam 1991-1993*,. Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute/ Ashram Wongsanit/Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation, 350 Pages 500 Baht (US$ 25, £ 13 Post free).

LIFE AND WORK OF BUDDHADASA BHIKKHU **:** Documentary English language video presenting an interesting and informative account of the history and thought of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, the prominent Thai Theravada thinker. 500 Baht (US$ 20 for PAL, US$ 30 for NTSC).

SEEDS OF PEACE, Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development. 3 issues/year, suggested minimum subscription rate US$ 15 per annum. If you could afford more to help this worthy publication, please do so. Vols 7 & 8 (1991-92) bound in hard cover Baht 400 (US$ 20, £ 10 Post free).

Please send your orders to SUKSIT SIAM
113-115 Fuangnakhon Rd., Opp.Wat Rajabopit, Bangkok 10200 SIAM(THAILAND)
Personal cheques from UK & USA made in the name of "Suksit Siam" are accepted.

Printed in Bangkok by
Ruan Kaew Printing House (Mr. Theera Jiaraditarporn)
947 Arunamarin Rd., (opp. Siriraj Hospital)
Bangkok 10700 Tel. 411-1423, 412-6552



BANGKOK,Thailand, July 8 (AP) Buddhadassa Bhikkhu, a monk whose nontraditional ideas transformed Thai Buddhism and earned him an international following, died today at his temple in southeastern Thailand. He was 87 and was reported to have suffered a stroke in May.

As a critic of superstrtious beliefs, materialism and militarism, Buddhadassa provoked re-examination of the religion that is followed by 95 percent of Thailand's 58 million people.

He was ordained as a monk at 20 and took a name that means "monk who serves the Buddha." By tradition, most Thai males become monks for at least a short time as a rite of passage.

In 1932, Buddhadassa founded Wat Suan Moke, a monastery in the forest about 300 miles southeast of Bangkok and a popular center for meditation for Thais and foreigners, including Europeans and North Americans. His numerous books and pamphlets have been translated into several languages.

Buddhadassa's teaching challenged social convention, the monastic hierarchy and, occasionally, the Government. In The 1960's, Buddhadassa was accused of being a Communist because of his attacks on the growing materialism of Thai society.

"He taught that spiritual development should come first, then human and cultural development, taking into account the environment," said Sulak Sivaraksa, a Buddhist scholar and social critic. "He felt that politics without morals is dreadful."

Again breaking with tradition, Buddhadassa said in his will that he wanted to avoid the elaborate cremation ceremonies often held for high-ranking monks.Instead, he asked to be buried at Wat Suan Moke without delay.

From *The New York Times* 9th July 1993.