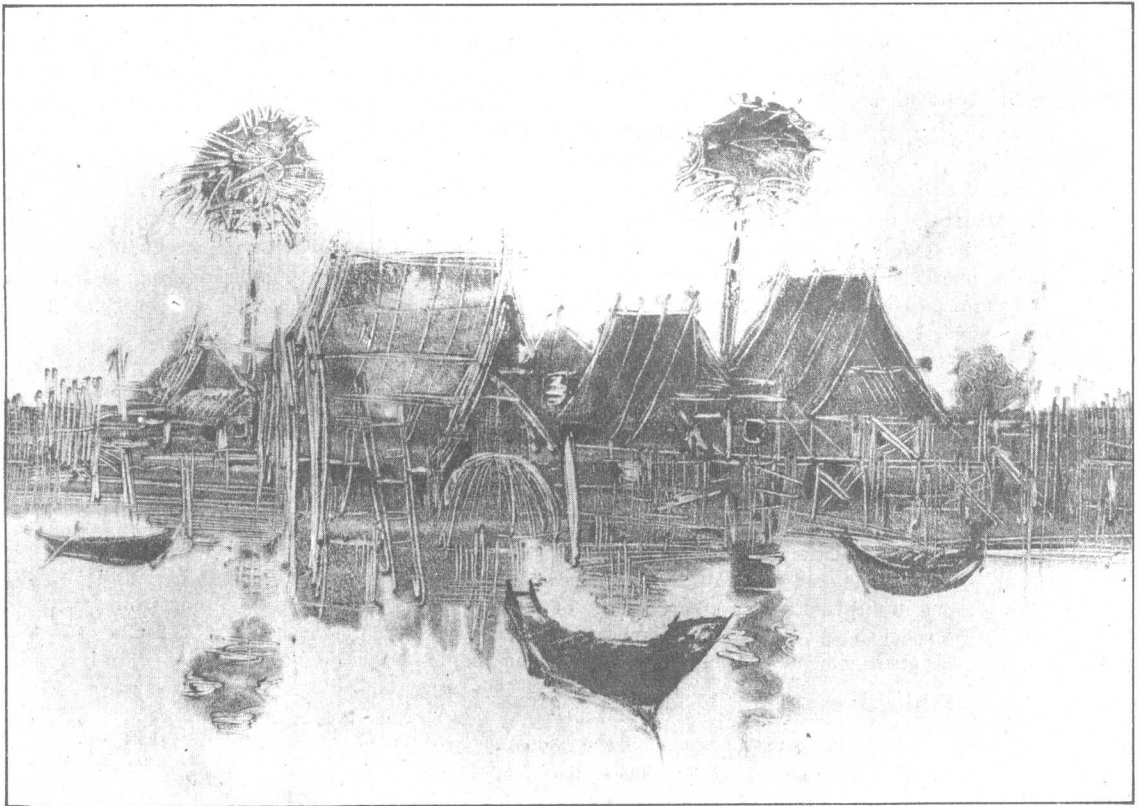


# SEEDS OF PEACE

Vol.3 No.2 MAY 2530 (1987)

## SPECIAL ISSUE

An International Symposium on  
“Buddhism and Peace :Seeking a Peaceful  
Solution to the Present Conflict in Sri Lanka”



**PLUS**  
**A Notion of Buddhist Ecology**  
**1987 Pacific Youth Forum**

# Bhikkhus willing to meet Tamil leaders to discuss peaceful settlement

BHIKKHUS FROM SRI LANKA AND THAILAND, and lay Buddhists at an international symposium on "Buddhism and peace" held at the Maha Chulalongkorn Buddhist University, Bangkok, expressed their willingness" to meet with Tamil leaders in a third neutral country to discuss a peaceful resolution to the current conflict" in Sri Lanka.

The symposium at which Ven. Nakorn Khemapali, Rector, Maha Chulalongkorn Buddhist University presided, was attended by representatives of peace organisations in Britain and USA as well.

Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa, Chairman, Thai Interreligious Commission of Development (TICD) said that many meetings were held in the past but the symposium was the first occasion which provided a forum for Sri Lankan and Thai bhikkhus and the Buddhist laity of discuss together the current problem and make an attempt to find ways and means of solving it.

He said the Thai people would be happy to be associated in this noble endeavour to help restore peace in Sri Lanka, because the religious ties between the two nations went back over a thousand years. The Thais hoped that the tradition of exchange and understanding would continue for the mutual benefit of the two nations.

In a five-point communique, the symposium appealed "to neighbouring powers to consider the conflict an internal matter of Sri Lanka and desist from taking any action that will undermine her territorial integrity and sovereignty"

and to use their good offices to resolve the conflict peacefully.

A Thai bhikkhu-laity delegation will visit Sri Lanka followed by a group from the International Buddhist Community to take the necessary steps to set up a fact finding commission to study the conflict. The symposium noted that this step was necessary because the international media and other interested parties had distorted facts relating to the problem.

The symposium appealed to all parties involved in the conflict to stop all destruction of innocent people, property, sacred rites and monuments of historical and national importance in the northern and eastern provinces.

The communique added that though bhikkhus in Sri Lanka had put forth peaceful proposals which in their view would lead to a peaceful resolution of the conflict, these had not received adequate attention of the world community. Hence they called for a wider distribution and publication of these proposals.

Sponsored by the Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University, the symposium was held in collaboration with the Asian Cultural Forum on Development, the Thai Interreligious Commission for Development, the United Nations University, the Peace Brigade International, the International Fellowship of Reconciliation and the War Resisters International.

Nemsiri Mutukumara

Sri Lanka ; DAILY NEWS, Thursday April 16, 1987

## Seeds of Peace

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### Objectives of TICD

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

**Guest Editor**  
Grant A. Olson  
**Cover**  
Uab Sanasen



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## Editor's Notes

This issue is primarily devoted to a recent symposium on "Buddhism and Peace: Seeking a Peaceful Solution to the Present Conflict in Sri Lanka" which took place in Bangkok between February 21-28. I was engaged as a coordinator and "reporter," and so it became my **kamma** to review the materials from this symposium and help to construct this issue of *Seeds of Peace*—it has been a pleasure and education. I wish to thank all symposium participants, but I want to especially thank all of the Sri Lankan monks and laity for their assistance and patience in taking time to explain the often painful issues that are so crucial to them at the moment. For this guest editor, the symposium on "Buddhism and Peace" served

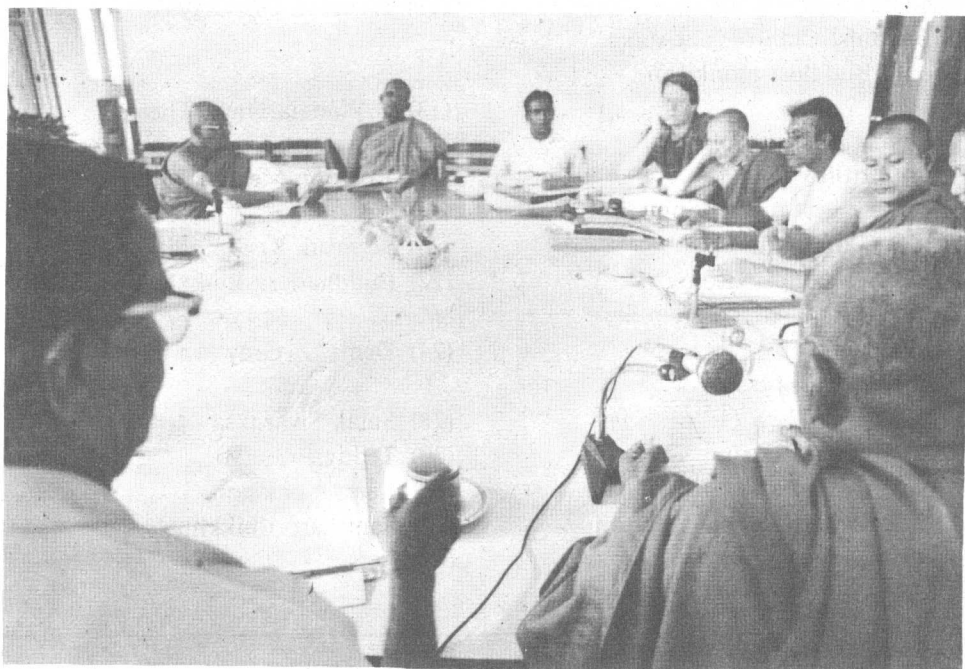
as a crash course on the current conflict in Sri Lanka.

The issues, as they are presented here, may seem a bit skewed or one-sided, as most of the participants were speaking from a Buddhist perspective; the future aims of this symposium, however, go well beyond this to include contact and dialogue with other parties involved in the conflict. It is our hope that this issue of *Seeds of Peace* will help readers to become more aware about some of the history of the conflict, some of the current issues at stake, as well as the kinds of hopes and exchange generated by the symposium.

Grant A. Olson

## The International Symposium on "Buddhism and Peace" Between Thailand and Sri Lanka

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WHILE RECENT NEWS REPORTS SPOKE of clashes between the Liberation Tigers of Eelam and the Sri Lankan government, an international symposium on "Buddhism and Peace: Seeking a Peaceful Solution to the Present Conflict in Sri Lanka," met in Bangkok and was deemed a success by all participants involved. The symposium was held between February 21-28, 1987, under the sponsorship of Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University, the Asian Cultural Forum on Development, the Thai Inter-religious Commission for Development, the United Nations University, in collaboration with the Peace Brigade International, the International Fellowship of Reconciliation and War Resisters International. The participants noted that so many meetings have already been held to no avail, but this is the first time both Sinhala and Thai Buddhist monks and laity have come together to try and

resolve the **current** conflict in Sri Lanka. The history of religious contact between the two nations goes back over a thousand years, and it was the hope of this meeting to carry on this tradition of exchange and understanding for the benefit of both nations. The delegates present realized their limitations, due to the fact that there were only Buddhists present, even so, the symposium helped to bridge a gap between Thai and Sinhala people. The commitments made at the symposium went beyond the two countries involved to appeal to the world Buddhist community to study the current conflict and participate in its future resolution. The delegates stated that they are willing to dedicate their lives together to lessen suffering due to violence and went on to say that they are willing to meet with Tamil leaders in a third neutral country to discuss future strategies for peace.



The delegates agreed to the following resolutions:

1) To appeal to neighboring powers to consider the conflict an internal matter of Sri Lanka, desist from taking any action that will undermine the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Sri Lanka, and to use their good offices to resolve the conflict peacefully.

2) To invite a group of Thai monks and laity to visit Sri Lanka and thereafter invite the international Buddhist community to take the necessary steps toward setting up a fact-finding commission to study the conflict first-hand. We feel this is necessary, because the international media and other interested parties have distorted facts relating to the conflict.

3) While noting that several cease-fire efforts have failed, we appeal to the government of Sri Lanka and separatist groups to lay down arms and begin negotiations immediately.

4) To appeal to all parties involved to completely stop all destruction of innocent people and property, sacred sites and monuments of historical and national importance in the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka.

5) The Sinhala Buddhist monkhood as a whole has put forth peace proposals which, in their view, would lead to a peaceful resolution to the conflict. These, however, have not received the adequate attention of the world community; we, therefore, call for a wider distribution and publication of these proposals.

Everyone present wished to thank all organizations who came together to offer various types of support and assistance which made this symposium possible. The delegates called upon everyone involved to see that the current conflict in Sri Lanka is resolved in a Buddhist spirit—a spirit of peace and non-violence.

Participants from Sri Lanka included: Venerable Dr. K. Ariyasena, Dept. of Buddhist Studies, University of Peradeniya; Ven. Dr. B. Wimalaratana, Lecturer on Buddhist Civilization, Sri Jayavardhanapura University; Ven. Dr. P. Gnanarama Thero, Lecturer at Buddhist and Pali University, Wadduwa; Ven. M. Sobhita Thero, a leading monk involved in social work in the Colombo area; Ven. Ananda Thero, involved in social work and president

of a trade union of health workers; Ven. Itthepane Dhammalankara, Principal, Vidyalankara Perivena; Professor Rohanadeera, Dept. of History and Archeology, Sri Jayavardhanapura Univ.; Dr. P. Dissanayake, International Relations, Colombo Univ.; and Mr. Nemsiri Mutukumara, editor, *New World Buddhism*. From Thailand: Phra Mahanarong, Acting Secretary-General, Mahachula Buddhist Univ.; Phra Mahaprayoon, Director of Academic Affairs, Mahachula Buddhist Univ.; Phra Maharongthong, Dean, Faculty of Humanities, Mahachula Buddhist Univ.; Phra Mahasomsiam Saenkhet, a Thai monk currently studying in Sri Lanka at Paramadhamma Buddhist Institute, Colombo; and Sulak Sivaraksa, editor, writer and instigator.

Throughout the symposium, the Sri Lankan monks stayed at Wat Mahadhatu, Bangkok, and performed morning and evening puja with the Thai monks each day.

On the first day (February 21), the symposium was officially opened by the Acting Rector of Mahachula, Phra Mahanakorn Khe-mapali, Maharongthong and Sulak Sivaraksa. Two background papers were presented on the history of relations between Thai and Sinhala, by Mahasomsiam Sangkhet, Thailand, and Professor Rohanadeera, Sri Lanka. Professor Piyasena Dissanayake, Sri Lanka, offered a short summary of the history of the Tamil-Sinhala conflict.

The monks took an offering of lunch at the Komol Keemthong Foundation (dedicated to the memory of a young Thai man who dedicated his life to freedom and worked in remote areas helping upcountry people; he lost his life in the process due to a misunderstanding between the "communists" and Thai government—the "communists" thought he was working for the government and the government assumed him to be a communist, although he had aligned himself with neither side).

On the second day (February 22), the symposium continued with short summaries of papers: P. Gnanarama Thero, Sri Lanka, and Phra Mahanarong Cittasobhano, Thailand, presented papers on the "Buddhist Concept of Peace"; Venerable K. Ariyasena, Sri Lanka, presented a paper on the "Buddhist

Way of Solving Social Problems," and Mahaprayoon Mererk, Thailand, presented his views on the "Buddhist Way of Solving National Conflict"; Venerable Dr. B. Wimalaratana Thera, Sri Lanka, presented his paper on "When Buddhist Culture is at Stake, What Could Buddhist Monks and Laymen Do?"; Dr. Piyasena Dissanayake, Sri Lanka, offered a paper on "The Role of the World Buddhist Community in Resolving the Sinhala-Tamil Conflict in Sri Lanka," Maharongthong, Thailand, summarized his paper on "How Could the International Buddhist Community Help to Solve the Sinhala-Tamil Conflicts?" Discussion followed each session of paper summaries and on this particular afternoon, time was spent for further planning and provisional resolutions which might guide the course of discussion to take place upcountry, outside of Bangkok.

On the third day (February 23), the sym-

posium continued at Camp Son (a branch of Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University about 500 kilometers from Bangkok), Petchabun Province. After having spent most of the day travelling together to Camp Son, the discussion continued into the evening: Venerable Dr. B. Wimalaratana led the session and asked Thai monks to offer their current perceptions (or misperceptions) regarding the conflict in Sri Lanka so that the Sinhala monks and laity might offer additional information and clarification, and know how to direct their comments and explanations for the remainder of the symposium.

On the fourth day (February 24), discussion continued on whether or not monks should take a role in politics, and if they are to have a role what form might it take. One Thai monk said that monks in Thailand "unconsciously want to be involved in politics," and it was pointed out that Thai monks are "unconsciously

*Venerable sirs, ladies and gentlemen,*

*I would like to inform you that as Buddhists, we are concerned about how to solve a national and social crisis peacefully and non-violently. Unfortunately in 1983, there was a great upheaval in Sri Lanka. By the end of that year, Asian Cultural Forum on Development had its 4th Council in this country, and a resolution was passed that ACFOD should do something to help solving tensions between the Tamils and Sinhalese. Being a regional non-governmental and inter-religious organization, we did what we could in our small way. Some of us studied the problems seriously and made personal contacts with both ethnic groups as well as with others concerned in the matter. As I am also Coordinator of the United Nations University on its sub-unit on Buddhist Perceptions of Desirable Societies for the Future, the UNU gave us their blessing if ACFOD would try to organize any scholarly pursuit on this vital issue. If a solution could be found amicably, it would indeed be an achievement of our Buddhist effort for a desirable society in the near future. Indeed a few other UN agencies relate meaningfully with ACFOD, especially ECOSOC, FAO and UNICEF.*

*For this symposium, we have not only been encouraged by the UNU, but also by the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, Peace Brigade International, and War Resisters International. The latter two organizations formally requested at their triennial meetings in India early in 1986 that ACFOD should do something, especially from a Thai Buddhist stand point, whereas The Gandhi Peace Foundation in New Delhi, would try to do likewise from India, to get Tamils and Sinhalese together in meaningful ways.*

*This symposium would not have been possible without the financial assistance of Misereor in Germany, for which I would like to acknowledge our indebtedness. Misereor gave us the freedom to organize our symposium in any way suitable for us, without any interference at all.*

*Again if it were not for the full collaboration of our Sinhalese friends who kindly agreed to come all the way here to be with us, the symposium would not be possible. I should therefore like to thank our friends from Sri Lanka as well as our Bhikkhus and lay persons in this country who will be together in a genuine effort for solving conflicts peacefully and non-violently. I am sure we shall spell out our differences not only in academic manners but also with the best Buddhist efforts of good will and compassion. I hope we will also get to know each other better.*

involved in politics," often by quietly supporting the **status quo**.

By now all of the monks and lay participants, including our Sri Lankan guests, were beginning to feel much more relaxed. The conversation and exchange became more open and provocative, and continued to be so throughout the remainder of the symposium.

Participants travelled to Kho Mountain (Khao Kho), the site of a past communist stronghold in the area, where the Thai government struggled against the communist forces and finally won. The participants visited a new royal palace near the site and a monument to victory over the communist forces. Similarities between this struggle and the current

conflict in Sri Lanka were discussed.

The evening was spent redrafting tentative resolutions and meeting Achan Porn, the Director of Camp Son, who is interested in meditation, contact with the spirit world, and is currently undertaking the editing and publication of the commentaries of the Buddhist Canon, the Tipitaka.

On the fifth day (February 25), the symposium moved on towards the ancient capital of Sukhothai, where Thailand borrowed a great deal from Sri Lanka. On the way to Sukhothai National Park, the participants stopped at Phitsanulok and visited one of the most famous Buddha images in Thailand, the Phra Buddhajinaraja, and had an audience with the acting

0644 FOR DR. SULAK SIVARAKSA THIS IS TO CONGRATULATE YOU IN THE NAME OF THE RECTOR FOR HOLDING SYMPOSIUM ON BUDDHISM AND PEACE WHICH LOOKS TO US PRIME IMPORTANCE FOR CAUSE OF PEACE. WE PRAY FOR ITS SUCCESS GREETINGS (MUSHAKOJI UNATUNIV).

*The Thai Inter-religious Commission for Development has agreed to act as our local host together with other dayakas and dayikas who help us in many ways—both monetarily and in kind.*

*Last but not least, of course, is the Buddhist Research Institute of Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya itself, which has kindly done many things beyond any other organizations to make this symposium a successful one. You sir, Mr. Acting Rector, not only agreed to preside over the symposium, but also host our Sinhala Bhikkhus at your own residence, and allow us to use the University's other campus outside the turmoil of Bangkok, so that our foreign friends will have a chance to enjoy themselves and to know more about our country. For all this, we are very grateful to you personally and to all members of your staff as well as the University itself.*

*With all these blessings, I am sure our symposium is bound to have a happy ending, that is, I hope all of us participants will do what we can to lessen the suffering of all beings so that mettā and karuṇā will not only be the spirit of our deliberation here but will be with all humankind in this country and in Sri Lanka as well as in all other parts of the world.*

*With this in mind, may I, Venerable Sir, Mr. Acting Rector, ask you to declare our symposium open and please give us a few words of advice so that Buddhism and Peace will really be one—in theory, as well as in practice.*

*Respectfully yours,*

**Sulak Sivaraksa**  
Chairman, Asian Cultural Forum  
on Development (ACFOD);  
Chairman of the Administrative  
Committee, Thai Inter Religious  
Commission for Development (TICD);  
Member of the Advisory Board,  
Buddhist Research Institute,  
Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya;  
Council member of Peace Brigade  
International (PBI).



abbot there.

When we arrived in the new city of Sukhothai (before entering the ancient kingdom) we visited Wat Rachathani, where the Sri Lankan monks had a chance to greet the nearly two hundred novices studying there. They were very impressed with the patience and good manners shown by the novices. The Sri Lankan monks chanted in their own unique style and offered a message to the novices saying that it was their hope that understanding would continue between the two countries. Phra Mahanarong gave a humorous speech, telling the novices that they should study their "ABCs" to improve communication, but told them they must study at least until the letter "I" before they can arrive at "International."

The rest of the day was spent sight-seeing in Sukhothai National Park and visiting the sites mentioned in the early inscriptions of King Ramkhamhaeng, such as the Forest Temple

(Wat Araññika) where a learned monk from Sri Lanka was to have lived and helped to revitalize Buddhism in Thailand.

On the sixth day (February 26), sight-seeing continued at Sukhothai: The Sri Lankan monks were surprised to see the extent of the influence from their own country of the old capital, such as the temple named Lanka Corner Temple (Wat Mum Lanka).

The group moved on to Uthathani where the Sri Lankan monks joined Thai monks at Wat Dhammasobhita for *sangha-kamma*. This meeting was extremely unique in that representatives from all orders (nikaya) of monks in Sri Lanka (the Siyam, Ramañña, and Amarapura) joined Thai monks in the fortnightly recitation of the rules of the Buddhist Order together.

Lay participants took a swim in the river off of one of the floating houses there.

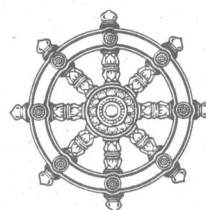
Before departing Uthathani, participants visited a footprint of the Buddha on a hill overlooking the town. From there, the group travelled directly back to Bangkok.

On the morning of the seventh day (February 27), discussion was finalized and a copy of the above resolutions drafted. The symposium was officially brought to a close.

In the afternoon, the press was invited to discuss the results of the symposium.

On the final day (February 28), members of the symposium had an audience with the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand.

Participants said farewell to each other and were free for individual discussion and sight-seeing. Sri Lankan participants were invited to stay on and visit other provinces or other Buddhist activities currently taking place in Thailand, if they wished. Most participants agreed that the meeting had, indeed, become what everyone had hoped for at the outset: an extension of a past tradition—between Thailand and Sri Lanka—that would continue to bring benefits to both for years to come.





## A Brief Sketch of the Background of Relations Between Thailand and Sri Lanka

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THIS IS AN HISTORIC MEETING, BECAUSE this may be the first meaningful step towards bringing our two nations close to each other once again as in the past. We were somewhat distant in the recent past, because of our habit of chasing after Western colonial masters for inspiration.

If we take a bird's eye view of what would have been going on between the two lands during the past centuries, we may see a series of missions clad in yellow robes, sailing across the vast stretch of blue waters of the Indian Ocean.

The motive behind both Lankan and Sukhothai kings could be political, but the deal has benefitted both nations immensely, by giving long lasting institutions of their respective cultures: Sihinga Buddha image (previously enshrined in Sri Lanka and now in Thailand) became the most popular attraction both poli-

tically and culturally throughout centuries, whereas the Araññika (forest) tradition in Siam founded by Tambalinga Dhammakitti, a Sri Lankan monk, became very famous during the 14th century and has continued to the present.

From the episode of Dhammakitti of Tambalinga, Sihinga Buddha, and the founding of Nakorn Si Thammarat, it becomes clear that Siam-Lankan relations, by the middle of the 13th century, had taken the shape of a two-way traffic benefitting each other—and the contact region was the area with Nakorn Si Thammarat as its center.

Another sacred object that attracted Siamese pilgrims to Lanka seems to be the Sri Maha Bodhi in Anuradhapura. A number of Bo trees, allegedly from Lanka, can be found at various places in Siam—in distant places such as Chiangmai, Payao, and Wat Simaha Bodhi,

Prachinburi.

During the 18th century, when Buddhism declined in Sri Lanka, a perservering young novice named Velivita Saranankara was determined to restore the Sangha and higher ordination on the island. The King learned from the Dutch sailors that Theravada Buddhism was flourishing in Siam. One mission was sent and failed. A later mission by Venerable Upali succeeded and returned to Kandy to restore proper higher ordination. Later, Velivita attained the rank of Sangharaja.

Six years after the succession of King Rama II, a Sinhalese monk named Sasanaramsa came alone to Siam and offered the King some Buddhist relics and a sapling of a bodhi tree in Sri Lanka.

A language barrier did not seem to exist between delegations of monks, as they were well-versed in Pali.

Bo tree saplings from Sri Lanka have ended up planted at Wat Suthat, Wat Saket and at Wat Mahadhatu—where King Rama IV also built a preaching hall and named it “Vihara Bo Lanka”; it is situated next to the bodhi tree. The relation and exchange between the two nations thus also takes the form of naming places of worship.

Many missions have consisted of retrieving, sharing and copying rare texts between the two nations. Siam has often considered Sri Lanka the reference point for the true texts and teachings.

The present King of Thailand has paid homage to the Tooth Relic in Kandy, and it is customary for Sri Lanka Buddhists visiting Thailand to pay homage to the Emerald Buddha.

We, therefore, do not think our meeting for this International Symposium on “Buddhism and Peace” is a new idea as far as the history of our relations is concerned. In earlier times, the Thai and Sinhala ancestors also met each other, exchanged ideas and helped each other in various ways. It is our hope that this meeting will do the same.

(Abstracted from Presentations by **Professor M. Rohana-deera** and **Maha Somsiam Saenkhet** at the Symposium on “Buddhism and Peace.”)

## The Sinhala



THE RECORDED HISTORY OF SRI LANKA begins in the sixth century before Christ with the settlement there of a stock of people called the Sinhala. Nearly seventy-five per cent of the population still inhabiting the island are known by that name. Their language is Sinhala (anglicised form: Sinhalese) which belongs to the Indo-Aryan group of languages. An overwhelming majority of Sinhalese are Buddhists.

According to the census of population of 1981, the Sri Lankan Tamils comprise 12.6 per cent of the population. A preponderant majority of them are Saivite Hindus. Their ancestry is not clear, but there is evidence suggesting that people speaking Dravidian languages started coming to Sri Lanka from peninsular India from early times either as invaders, traders or immigrants. It is the invaders who have received the most amount of attention by historians.



# Tamil Conflict



These invasions seemed to have had a definite pattern. The long-standing triangular contest for South Indian supremacy between the Pandyan, Chola and Chera kingdoms are well known. The victorious power often tried to extend its hegemony to northern Sri Lanka. The Sinhala kings always successfully repelled them, but a segment of the invaders stayed behind and integrated with the local population. But whenever there came a South Indian invasion again, these Tamils, motivated, perhaps, by ethnic sentiments, always sided with the South Indian enemy and acted as a fifth column. This disloyalty alienated the Sinhalese from the Tamils and would appear to be the origin of the grudge between them.

Yet, there is ample evidence to prove that, on the whole, the Sinhalese were tolerant and hospitable not only to the Tamils, but also to other ethnic and religious minorities who

lived in the country. For example, when the Portuguese began to persecute the Muslims in the Portuguese occupied maritime provinces, the Sinhala Buddhist kings invited them to live in the Eastern Province. This explains the large Muslim population in the east of Sri Lanka even today. Again, when the Dutch harassed the Roman Catholics, the Sinhala kings settled them at Wahakotte, in the Matales District, in the heart of the hill country. This is how there is a large Roman Catholic Settlement there even at the present time.

There has often been a collective fear among the Sinhalese that the fifty million Tamils in the neighbouring South India presented a threat to their freedom and sovereignty. This sense of fear is heightened by various South Indian extremist political movements. In the 1950s, a prominent South Indian politician publicly mooted the idea of a confederation of Tamil States by bringing into alliance all areas peopled predominantly by the Tamils in and around the Indian Ocean. This idea subsequently manifested itself in the WE TAMIL MOVEMENT. Moreover, the general Indian attitude towards her other small neighbours such as Sikkim, Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh has contributed substantially to further exacerbate these fears. It is not untrue to say that a genuine fear of Indian expansionism is lurking in the Sinhala mind!

During the British Colonial administration in Sri Lanka, the English introduced a new system of education, which aimed primarily at supplying people to run the machinery of their government. Most of the good schools were built in the Jaffna peninsula. This gave the Tamil community a disproportionate share of places and virtually denied all access to the rural Sinhala masses. Thus by the end of the British rule in 1948, an unduly large proportion of the most sought after jobs in the civil service and the professions were held by the Tamils.

Despite the fact that the leaders of the Sinhala community have held a dominant grip on the politics of Sri Lanka since independence in 1948, it is still the case that many Sinhala people feel that they are the aggrieved party as against the minorities. For example, even in 1969—21 years after independence from the





British — 48.9 per cent of places in universities were held by the Tamils.

The Sinhalese have been quite happy for thousands of years to have Tamils living in their midst and earning their livelihood. But the Tamils are vehemently opposed to the Sinhalese living in the Northern and Eastern provinces, which they claim to be their “traditional homeland.” In point of fact, nearly 52 per cent of the Tamils live outside their so-called “traditional homeland,” that is, among the Sinhalese and Muslims. According to the census of 1981, only 0.6 per cent of Sinhalese lived in the Jaffna peninsula and there are none today. Whereas the Tamils are at complete liberty to own land anywhere in the island, no non-Tamils are permitted to own land in Jaffna, where a special land law (Thesavalami) is in force.

The willingness of the Sinhalese to live in friendship and amity with the Tamils and other racial minorities is further demonstrated by the fact that all the political parties, without exception whatsoever, headed by Sinhala leaders are common to all ethnic groups and anyone, irrespective of race or religion, could join them. But every single political party headed by Tamils is exclusively Tamil and whose member-

ship is not open to the Sinhalese.

In 1956, when the Official Language Act—declaring Sinhala as the official language to replace English—was passed, the Tamils opposed it and performed ‘satyagraha’ demanding that both Sinhala and Tamil should be given equal status. However, the Constitution of Sri Lanka guarantees the right of the Tamils to transact business with the Government in their language and to receive education in Tamil medium even at university level. It further guarantees the right of the Tamils to sit at all public examinations including those leading to entry into the Government Service. Further the Tamil language has been recognised as a national language of the country.

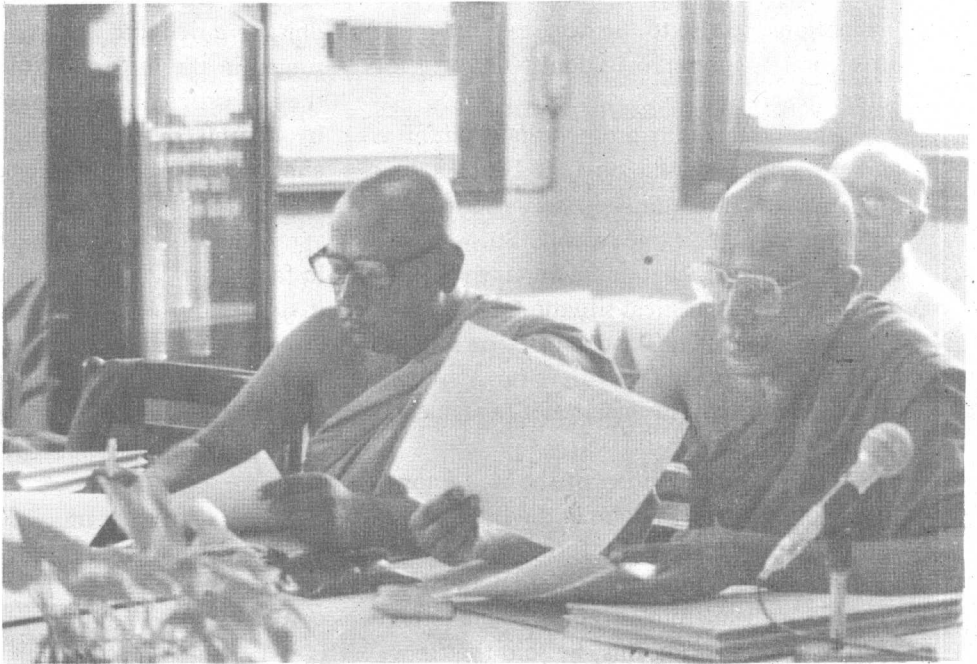
The situation radically changed following the adoption of a resolution by the Tamil Liberation Front (an umbrella organisation of Tamil parties) on the eve of the 1977 General Elections calling upon the Tamil people to vote for a separate state for themselves by merging the North and East.

A substantial number of voters in the Northern Province responded to the call while the majority of people in the Eastern Province rejected it. The youth groups affiliated to Tamil political parties organised themselves into a guerilla movement and campaigned strongly for the separate state idea. Later on, they broke away from their parties and intensified the separatist movement with assistance from India and other foreign sources and took to arms and other violent means to achieve their goal.

On the other hand, the Sinhala people are almost unanimous in their opposition to the bifurcation of the country and are determined to resist it. Yet they are willing to discuss any genuine grievances with the Tamils with a view to redressing them within the framework of the existing unitary Constitution. However, the Tamil guerilla leaders have persistently refused to come to the negotiating table.

Dr. Piyasena Dissanayake

(Presented at the symposium on “Buddhism and Peace”).



## When Buddhist Culture is at stake, what could Buddhist monks and laymen do?

WHEN WE REFER TO BUDDHIST SCRIPTURES, we come across a pronouncement that in some future time (it may not have come as yet) Buddhism would totally disappear from the universe. This idea that Buddhism is at stake and that it would totally disappear is not foreign to Buddhists. The beings existing in this world degenerate to such an extent it no longer becomes possible for even Buddhism to continue. So after a long, long period of time, a Buddha (an Enlightened One) appears in the world again, bringing happiness and solace to the suffering humanity. Such a Great Being in fact, does not invent anything, but rediscovers the truth which had been lying hidden. That is why the Buddha says in the Samyutta Nikaya that he discovered the Dhamma like a person who unearthed a grand buried city. Throughout its long history, Buddhism has had periods of setbacks and progress. I think that is equally true of the history of Buddhism in almost every country where it was practised. If we take India, the land of origin of Buddhism, we see

that it disappeared after centuries of flourishing, and revived some time back. If you take Sri Lanka, from where I have come, you will see it had periods of difficulties, as a result of foreign invasions, not only from the European powers but also from the adventurous South Indian rulers. Buddhism suffered great hardships during those periods. However Buddhist monks, through their indefatigable efforts, protected Buddhism through these periods.

I must say that the question as it stands is one-sided and needs reformulation. Buddhism is a world religion and has been a civilizing force bringing sanity and peace to the world. If such a system of thought is at stake, I see it is the duty of all human beings, whatever their personal beliefs and inclinations, to protect it for the good of future generations. For by any standard of judgement one may apply, Buddhism can be considered as a common heritage of mankind, which has to be safeguarded. So I would like to adopt a broader outlook in this matter. So, if Buddhist Culture is at stake at all, it would be the duty

of all cultured people, irrespective of personal inclinations, to rise to the occasion and make all efforts to preserve Buddhist Culture for future generations.

It will be readily granted that Buddhism and the culture based on it is beneficial to humanity and its continued existence is equally good for more than one reason. So, what are the remedial steps that could be taken if Buddhism is facing a critical situation. Buddhism being a menage of compassion based on rational thinking, it's possible to develop a human attitude for such a crisis in terms of fundamental principles of Buddhism.

Here I am reminded of the well-known advice given by the Buddha in the Brahmajala Sutta: The Buddha was informed by his disciples, that the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha were being ruthlessly criticized in certain quarters. On hearing this, he said that if we were to hear either the Buddha or the Dhamma or the Sangha were criticized, one should not get disturbed over it. In the same way, if one were to hear that the Buddha or the Dhamma or the Sangha was praised, one should not get elated over it. The reason being that if emotions get upset in any situation, that it would be morally harmful to themselves. What they have to do in such a case is to examine the situations objectively and see how far such statements are true or false. So, steps have to be decided on scientific grounds.

In the Mahaparinibbana Sutta, it is said that the Buddha was approached by Mara, the Evil One, and was invited to pass into Nirvana. The Buddha refuses saying that he would not do so unless he is convinced that his followers comprising Monks, Nuns, devotees male and female, are properly trained in the Dhamma and are in a position to explain it correctly and maintain it for the betterment of others. This passage clearly indicates that it is the duty of all Buddhists to study Buddhism and protect it for the benefit of others. But protection is not to be understood that it is to be pursued by any means. Buddhist ethics does not maintain the view that the end justifies the means. Even if the end is good and desirable, it should not be achieved by unBuddhistic means.

Protection of Buddhism has to be under-

taken by righteous means. Tolerance in Buddhism is a well-known fact. No wars have been waged in the history of Buddhism to distort the real problem. Foreign media has been fed by mischievous propaganda for some time and it is only now they are beginning to realize that there is a falsification of facts.

This is a very complex problem, which in fact has a distant beginning, though in fact it started in this form recently. Out of a 16 million population, the Sinhalese are 74%. Out of the Sinhala population, 7% are non-Buddhists. Sri Lankan Tamils are only 12%. Thus on the Island, 67% are Buddhists. There was a dragging problem of stateless citizens. They were in fact plantation workers who had been brought to the Island by the British masters who ruled the country for about 150 years. When Sri Lanka regained Independence, they left their labourers on the Island. Later there arose the citizenship problem for them, and the discussion started between Sri Lanka and India. During the period of their Government, they arrived at a settlement in order to solve the problem. In spite of this, until recently there was the problem of citizenship for about 93,000. With their natural increase it had become more than 100,000. I must tell you that as a kind gesture towards the solution of this problem, the Supreme Sangha Council agreed to absorb the whole lot.

Most people want to show that Buddhists are fighting against Tamils who form a minority. This is not true. We concede Tamils as a community that has its own problems. Certainly their problems must be solved to their satisfaction. Even Tamil leadership has not been able to pinpoint their particular problems. They speak in vague terms. If you read not only the present Constitution but also the earlier Constitutions of Sri Lanka, you will see that the fundamental rights of all citizens are guaranteed. In addition to the Tamil community, there are other minority communities: They are the Muslims, Malays and Burghers. All these are happily getting on with the majority.

Now there is a demand in Sri Lanka by Tamils for the merger of the East with the North. In the East, there are four communities: Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Burghers. It

is not the Sinhalese alone who are opposed to the merger. Muslims and Burghers too are opposed. When it is said that Tamils have problems, most people seem to imagine as if Sinhalese do not have any. As a matter of fact, their problems are more serious. During the 400 years of foreign rule, they suffered a lot. They were blatantly discriminated against. If you read the contemporary records, you will see how Sinhalese were massacred and forced to change their religion. Even after the Independence in 1948, Sinhalese did not get all their problems solved. During the British rule, the policy of divide and rule was followed. More opportunities were open to the Tamil community as they were better educated in English. They got better schools and higher jobs. It is only in 1956, the language of the majority was given the official status, and it was decided to switch over to Sinhalese as a medium of instruction and administration replacing English. But reasonable use of Tamil language was recognized.

During the colonial rule, only seven per cent of the total population was able to receive an English education. Among this fortunate class, Tamils who were racially a minority, became a majority.

One must have a correct perspective about statistics. The problems of the Sinhalese such as employment, education, health have not yet been solved. There are very backward areas in the predominantly Sinhalese provinces. Therefore, the problems of these separate communities are problems facing the whole population.

The country as you know is underdeveloped and undernourished, to tell you the truth. For instance, the problems that are found in any community are also found in other communities. The affluent, who are very few in numbers, are there in all the communities. What we have to do is to focus our attention to those who are in fact in need of assistance.

We Buddhists desire a peaceful political solution. We are against a military solution as we are opposed to any form of violence. But we believe that the pressure of armed forces in the trouble-torn areas is necessary to protect the life and property of people. The strife-torn areas are important for the Buddhists because

these places are sacred to them as there are Buddhist ruins. We fear that they are getting destroyed. The mark of ancient Buddhist civilization is little by little being effaced as it had already been done in certain areas. Until such time these things are protected, it is the responsibility of the Government to find ways and means for the prevention of destruction. To present new history to further their course, some are motivated to destroy ancient cities which go against their theories. Even during the peaceful times, these cultural treasures faced the threat of being destroyed.

Just take the case of culture: We have a Ministry for Cultural Affairs. I must say that it is not efficiently run. If I give you one example, I can cite the plight of the Buddhist Encyclopaedia, which started in 1956. After 30 years of its existence, they have just been able to come only up to the letter D. Even that is not complete. For the last one and half years, it has not done any work. The local press reported that it has ceased to function. The Government has created two more departments for cultural affairs for two other religious groups, one for the Hindus (Tamils) and the other for the Muslims. They are efficiently run and we must thank them for their efficiency.

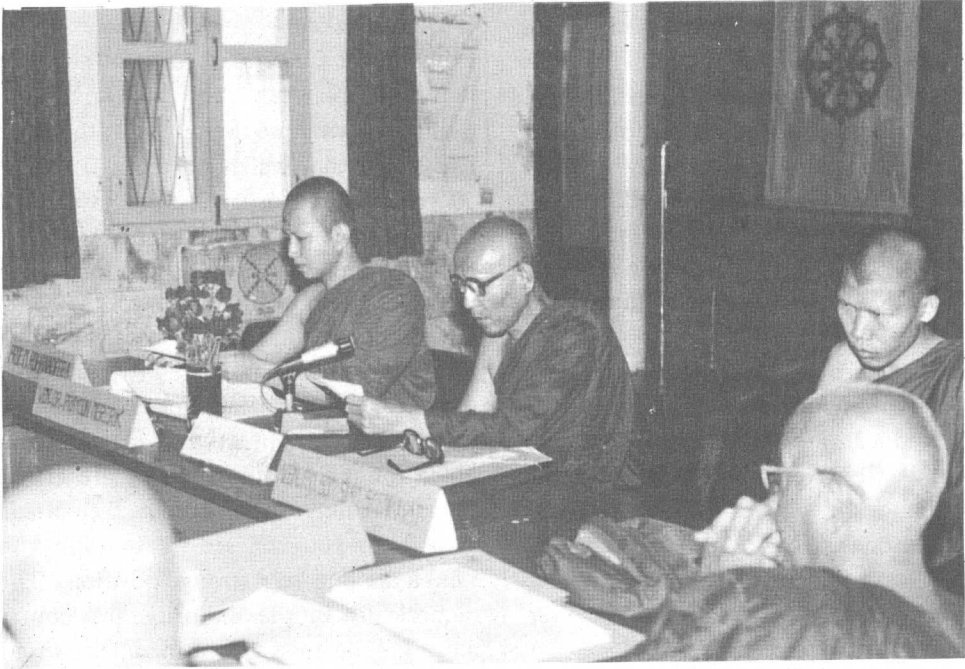
Thus you will see we Buddhists in Sri Lanka are in a very strange position. Though numerically in the majority and contribute more for the government income, I am afraid we receive less. No one seem to be worried about this. When a voice is raised about this sad plight, various forms of accusations, such as fanaticism and communalism are levelled at one. I would like to draw your attention to this problem.

There is no war between the Buddhists and the Tamils. A section of the Tamils is demanding a separate state for them. The conflict, in fact, is between the Government and that section. We Buddhists are unnecessarily forced to get involved in this fight. It is high time that the International Buddhist Community did something to ease this situation, because there is wanton risk to life and property.

Ven. Dr. B. Wimalaratana Thera

(Presented at the symposium on "Buddhism and Peace")

# The Buddhist Way of Solving National Conflict



**BUDDHISM PREACHES NON-VIOLENCE** and peace as its universal message. As Reverend J.T. Sunderland said : “Buddhism has taught peace more strongly among its followers, more effectively, during all its history, than has any other great religious faith known to the world.”<sup>(1)</sup> Peace is a central concept in the teaching of the Buddha, who came to be known as the “Prince of Peace” (*santi-rāja*). The aim of the good life is to attain a state of peace or “*santi*”, which is a characteristic of *Nirvāṇa*. And the practice of the good life consists in ‘peaceful living’ (*sama-cariyā*) with one’s fellow beings.

Peace is not a mere absence of war; rather it is the absence of conflict. *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary* defines peace as (1) “a state of tranquillity or quiet” and (2) “freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions.” These two definitions indicate that peace is a concept applicable to both personal and interpersonal relations. Peace is said to exist within a person when he has the peace of mind. It is known in Buddhism as “inner peace” (*ajjhata-santi*).

The term ‘peace’ is also applicable to the relation between two persons. When used to describe such conditions it means a state of

harmony or order, the opposite of which is conflict or war. In a state of peace, human beings live without fear of violence. They live in harmony. Hence peace has a negative as well as a positive meaning. It means absence of conflict as well as presence of harmony. This interpersonal peace is called "outer peace" (*bahittha-santi*) in Buddhism. It includes communal, national and international peace.

Inner peace is not separated from outer peace. Communal peace, for example, involves personal peace in the community. If each member of the community has peace of mind, the chance of conflict will be reduced to the barest minimum. Thus outer peace presupposes inner peace. It is in man's mind that conflict begins and it is in man's mind that the conflict is solved. Peace prevails in a community when its members cultivate peace of mind which is free from selfish desire (*taṇhā*).

Selfish desire for wealth, pleasures and power is the root-cause of human conflicts such as crimes, exploitation, corruption and warfare. Thus the Buddha observes: "It is on account of passion or desire that kings dispute with kings, Kṣatriyas dispute with Kṣatriyas... They enter into quarrel, conflict and dispute, attack one another with hands, rods and weapons... It is on account of passion or desire that they wage war, having taken sword and shield, having girded on bow and quiver and being drawn out in battle-array on both sides."<sup>(2)</sup>

In order to cultivate the inner peace, one has to practice meditation. The practice of loving-kindness (*mettā*) is an essential part of training conducive to peace of mind. *Mettā* is a boundless love for all fellow beings; it is analogous to a mother's love for her only child: "Just as a mother loves her only child even more than her life, do you extend a boundless love towards all creatures." The practice of loving-kindness was praised highly by the Buddha: "None of the good works employed to acquire religious merit is worth a fraction of the value of loving-kindness."<sup>(3)</sup> On hearing Ānanda's suggestion that half of the Buddha's teaching consisted in the practice of loving kindness, the Buddha said that it was not half

but the whole of his teaching. It is this emphasis on loving-kindness and compassion that makes it impossible for the Buddhists to use a violent method to solve a conflict.

However, the Buddhist adherence to peace invites some practical questions: What will the Buddhists do if there is a conflict between the Buddhists and non-Buddhists? Should the Buddhists use force to defend their country when it is invaded by enemies? The Buddhists give different answers to this question. There is no consensus. Some say that the Buddhist way of dealing with conflicts must be nothing but peaceful negotiation, since any use of violent force amounts to a transgression of the Buddha's teaching. Some say that the Buddha's doctrine allows the use of all methods, even the use of violence, to solve conflicts. Buddhism is sometimes used to justify killing during a war. It is claimed that the Buddhists are allowed to fight for the right and destroy their enemies in order to protect and preserve Buddhism. King Duṭṭhagāmaṇi Abhaya is a typical example in this case.

Duṭṭhagāmaṇi, a young Sri Lankan prince, waged war with a Tamil ruler, Elala. After a series of battles, the Sinhalese prince defeated Elala and killed him on the battlefield. According to Duṭṭhagāmaṇi, this war was a holy war and the prince made it known by this proclamation: "This enterprise of mine is not for the purpose of acquiring the pomp and advantages of royalty. This undertaking has always had for its object the re-establishment of the religion of the supreme Buddha."<sup>(4)</sup> After his conquest, Duṭṭhagāmaṇi reflected with dismay on innumerable lives sacrificed for the attainment of his end. Then he asked eight saints or arahants who came to console him: "Lord! what peace of mind can there be left to me, when I have been the means of destroying great armies?" And the arahants answered: "Supreme of men! From the commission of that act there will be no impediment in the road to salvation. Therein, no more than two human beings have been sacrificed; the rest are heretics and sinners, who are on a par with wild beasts. And as you will cause the religion of the Buddha to shine forth in great splendour, on that account, O



ruler of men, subdue your mental affliction.”<sup>(5)</sup> Thus was the king consoled.

These words of advice which gave justification to killing during a war were recorded in the *Mahāvamsa*. It is doubtful whether the monks who uttered these words of violence were arahants indeed. Commenting on this curious statement of the *Mahāvamsa*, Walpola Rahula writes : “The *Mahāvamsa* clearly says that the above advice was given by eight arahants. But it is absolutely against the spirit of the Buddha’s teaching. Destruction of life in any form, for any purpose, even for the establishment, protection or propagation of Buddhism, can never be justified according to the teaching of the Buddha... But the learned mahatheras and other responsible people at the time considered this statement to be worthy of arahants and so recorded it in the chronicle.”<sup>(6)</sup>

In Thailand, there was a time when Buddhism was used to justify the idea of ‘just or righteous’ war. During World War I, King Rama VI declared war on Germany and Austria-Hungary. Prince-Patriarch Vajirañāpa-Varorasa considered warfare legitimate and morally appropriate in accordance with the Buddha’s teaching because its aim was to protect and preserve “right” (dhamma). The Prince-Patriarch said : “Your Majesty has broken off friendly relations with and declared war on the Empires of Germany and Austria-Hungary in the name of the Kingdom of Siam, and has put an end to peace, because you desire to uphold International Rights. When one considers the holy saying, “When right is in question, wealth, limbs, and even life itself, all must be sacrificed should the occasion so demand it; any other policy is thereby practically forbidden.”<sup>(7)</sup>

Later in 1976, a well-known Thai monk publicly advocated a righteous war on communists in terms which echo strongly the justification for killing given to Duṭṭhagāmani. He said : “Those who kill the communists are not sinners. Whoever kills the opponents of the nation, religion and monarchy is not killing persons for such bestial types are not complete persons. Killing them is to kill Māra or the

devil.”

Considering the Buddha’s teaching thoroughly, we find that the advocate of Buddhist violence is deviating from the Buddha’s true teaching. As is shown above, Buddhism is a religion of non-violence and peace. Hence there is nothing that can be labelled as a “holy or righteous war.” In the Buddhist framework, the phrase “righteous war” is self-contradictory since righteousness and war are incompatible.

Hence, the true Buddhists have to live a non-violent life. Under no circumstances is a Buddhist to resort to violence. A person who uses violent means to solve conflicts is not a true follower of the Buddha. In *Kakacūpama Sutta*, the Buddha says : “Though, monks, thieves and brigands were to cut limb by limb with a double-edged saw, even then one who defiles his mind (feels angry about it) is not the follower of my instructions.”<sup>(8)</sup> The Buddha teaches his followers to meet anger with love and not with anger; evil with good and not with evil. He says : “Conquer anger with love, evil with good; conquer the miser with generosity and the liar with truth.”<sup>(9)</sup>

The Buddhist way of solving conflicts by a peaceful means is well indicated in the *Mahāsīlāva Jātaka*. The Bodhisatta was once king of Banares under the name of Mahāsīlāva. His kingdom was attacked by the then king of Kosala. Even amidst the most provocative situation, the Bodhisatta remained firmly established in non-violence and peace, and finally succeeded in changing the heart of his enemy by sheer force of love.

The Buddha himself actually intervened on one occasion to solve an international conflict by a peaceful means. He gave a practical lesson in tolerance in the field of politics. A conflict had arisen between the Sākya and the Koliyas over the waters of the river Rohini, which flowed between their territories. From both sides soldiers had assembled and a battle was to begin. The Buddha personally intervened and stopped them by pointing out how foolish it was for them to destroy invaluable lives for a matter so trivial. He said : “Why on account of some water of little worth would



you destroy invaluable lives of these soldiers?"

The lesson that we can draw from the foregoing story is that any conflicts—be they national or international—should be solved by peaceful negotiation rather than by the use of force. This is the Buddhist principle. If this principle is applied in the field of politics, the world will be a peaceful place to live in. The present-day world is without peace because we fail to follow the teaching of the Buddha. As Jawaharlal Nehru observed : "The question that inevitably suggests itself is, how far can the great message of the Buddha apply to the present-day world? Perhaps it may apply, perhaps it may not; but if we follow the principles enunciated by the Buddha, we will ultimately win peace and tranquility for the world."<sup>(10)</sup>

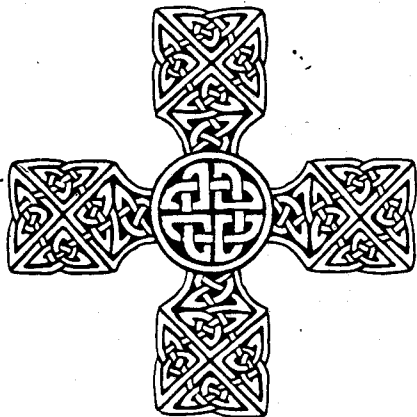
Ven. Prayoon Mererk Ph.D.

Mahachula Buddhist University, Bangkok.

(Presented at symposium on "Buddhism and Peace")

#### Notes

1. Quoted in K. Sri Dhammananda, *Great Personalities on Buddhism*, (B.M.S. Publication, Malaysia, 1965), p. 77.
2. *Majjhima-nikāya*, Vol. 1, Pali Text Society, p. 86.
3. *Itivuttaka*, Pali Text Society, p. 19.
4. *Mahāvamsa* ch. 25..
5. Ibid.
6. Walpola Raḥula, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, p. 228.
7. Vajirañāṇa-Varorasa, Prince-Patriarch, *Right is Right*, Vajiravudh, King of Thailand, trans., Daily Mail, Bangkok, p. 24.
8. *Majjhima-nikāya*, Vol. 1, Pali Text Society, p. 129.
9. *Dhammapāda*, 223.
10. *Great Personalities of Buddhism*, p. 75.



*For this Special issue. We would like to recommend the following titles for further reading :*

(1) **Sri Lanka – Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantling of Democracy** by S.J. Tambiah (The University of Chicago Press).

(2) **Peace Making in Sri Lanka in the Buddhist Context** by A.T. Ariyaratne (Sarvodaya, Moratuwa).

(3) **Gandhi Today—A Report on Mahatma Gandhi's Successors** by Mark Sheppard (Simple Productions) 12 East 15th Street # 3, Arcata, California, \$5 each to Third World.

(4) **DHARMA WORLD** for living Buddhism and interfaith Dialogue published bimonthly by Kosei Publishing Company 2-7-1 Wada, Suginami-ku, Tokyo 166.

#### Books & Periodicals distributed by Suksit Siam

**Dhammic Socialism** by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu 142 pp. 80 Baht locally (abroad US\$ 4 post free).

**Popular Buddhism in Siam and Other Essays on Thai Studies** by Phya Anuman Rajadhon 216 pp. 300 Baht (hardcover), 200 Baht (paperback) locally (abroad US\$ 15 hardcover, US\$ 10 paperback post free).

**Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society** by S Sivaraksa 276 pp. 120 Baht locally (abroad US\$ 6 post free).

**Siamese Resurgence** by S. Sivaraksa 492 pp. 260 Baht (hardcover), 180 Baht (paperback) locally (abroad US\$ 10 hardcover, US\$ 7 paperback post free).

**Angkarn Kalyanapong : A Contemporary Siamese Poet** by Angkarn Kalyanapong (Editor : Michael Wright) 82 pp. 80 Baht locally (abroad US\$ 4 post free).

*Please visit our bookshop at 1715 Rama IV Rd., (samyan) Bangkok*

# Radical monk gets recognition for work in Buddhism

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LAST SUNDAY SAW WHAT MUST HAVE been the most serene and peaceful of honorary degree presentation ceremonies.

The place is Suan Mokh. The Garden of Liberation. The forest monastery in Chaiya District, Surat Thani Province.

Full of natural serenity. Suan Mokh has become synonymous with the Thai monk who calls himself "Slave of Lord Buddha"—Buddhadasa Bhikkhu.

For more than 60 years, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, then considered a radical element in the Sangha, has been practising, working, writing books and giving sermons on the essence of Buddhism with his own interpretative approach that stresses simplicity and emotional detachment.

The radical monk was given names and labels. Among other things he was called a communist monk.

Last Sunday, the 81-year-old monk received a large number of guests comprising

big-name politicians and high-ranking officials and educators, who knelt down in front of him, paying respect on the ground before presenting him with a token of worldly recognition in the form of an honorary doctorate degree in philosophy.

The honour was from Prince of Songkhla University. As Silpakorn and Ramkhamhaeng universities have already conferred degrees on the revered monk, this was the third honour Buddhadasa Bhikkhu has received from the new generations that have come to appreciate his message.

In respect to the serenity and simplicity of the location, the ceremony was held without the grandeur and pomp that usually mark such occasions.

Rector Pasuk Kullavanijaya said of the decision to present the degree to the elderly abbot:

"It was an unanimous vote from the university council. Throughout these 60 years,

Phra Buddhadasa—with his thorough knowledge and commitment in Buddhism—has contributed tremendously to Buddhism in Thailand.”

After 60 years of unrelenting work, the abbot's reaction to the worldly praise and recognition that keeps flowing in is characteristically humble:

“Thanks for making my work a little bit easier,” he said self-effacingly. “Receiving degrees is like receiving stamps of approval from institutions. Directly speaking, it is a credit that will ease my work to serve Buddhism. More people will lend an ear and the dharma will be ever more spread out.

“Please let me, as a humble servant of Lord Buddha, thank you all for helping make it a bit easier for me to do my work spreading out Lord Buddha's dharma.”

On behalf of the Surat Thani residents, Surat Thani MP and Minister of Science, Technology and Energy Banyat Bantadtan praised Phra Buddhadasa for his contributions in disseminating Buddhism.

“He is a thinker against the stream. He has his own approach and principles and avoids getting trapped in ceremonious forms. His knowledge springs from his own true experiences. He is a great thinker. And we are all very proud of him.”

Apart from over 500 Thais who gathered at Suan Mokh's grounds, the ceremony was attended by more than 100 Westerners who had come from far and wide to the Garden of Liberation to learn meditation and free their souls of mind-clouding illusions and defilements.

In gratitude, they sent one representative to express their thanks in Phra Buddhadasa's efforts to share the universal realm of dharma—the natural truth that cuts across cultures and religions—with anyone interested, regardless of sex, race or religion.

It was almost noon when the ceremony came to an end. Everyone listened even more intently when the elderly abbot began his sermon, which touched on a theme repeatedly stressed in all his works—the eradication of self.

All the world's confusions stems from



one cause, he pointed out—selfishness.

“Selfishness is the most dangerous enemy to human beings of any religions. That is why all religions teach us to eliminate selfishness. If human beings can reduce it, all crises would cease to come about.”

At one point, Phra Buddhadasa commented on the worldwide campaign for the international year of peace.

“It is a funny idea to create peace. Peace already exists. It's the human beings who create crises to disturb and wipe away peace. When human beings stop creating crises, peace will return. And you can do that by simply ceasing to be selfish.”

At 81, Phra Buddhadasa is still looking active and healthy, despite the illnesses that come with age.

It is probably because he is still enjoying his life and his work.

The project that is now occupying the elderly abbot is the International Garden of Liberation where foreigners can come freely to study meditation, mindfulness and spiritual techniques to obtain inner peace.

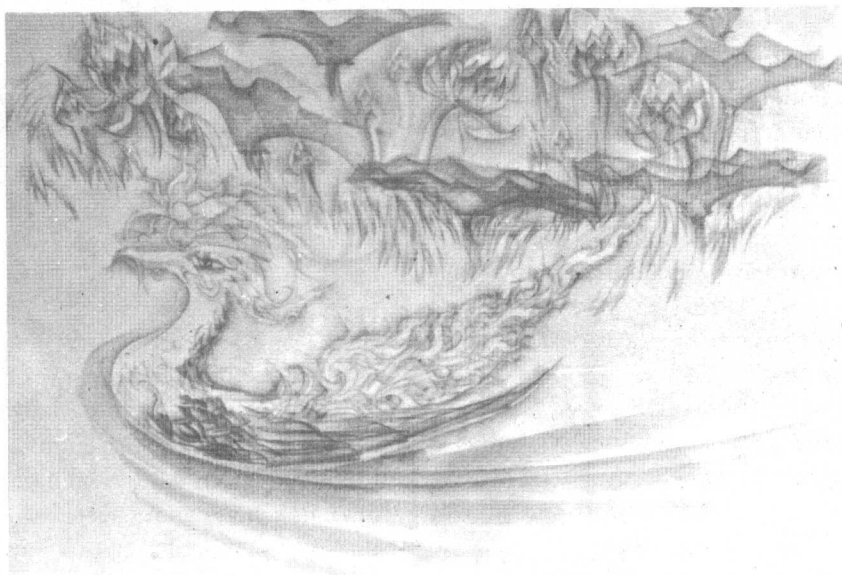
One of the most often asked questions he encounters is: “Sir, don't you ever feel tired, after all these years?”

The question always receives the same answer, with the same compassionate smile.

“According to Lord Buddha's teaching, one is practising dharma through working. That is why I am working. And that's why I am happy doing it.”

Sermasuk Kasitpradit

from the *Bangkok Post*, February 11, 1987.




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## A Notion of Buddhist Ecology

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### Introduction

The following is a translation from Thai of one of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's translations and commentaries of a Pali sutta. Buddhadasa has become well known for taking this approach in order to make Pali sutta materials more accessible and up-to-date.

This work comes from a chapter entitled "The Degeneration of the *Sīla-dhamma* (Morality) in the External World," contained in a larger work *Sīla-dhamma and the Human World* (Bangkok: Thammathanmuni, 2520/1977), which, unfortunately, is currently out-of-print. The Pali sutta referred to in this text is from the *Anguttara-nikāya*, *Catukka nipāta* sutta (Rev. Richard Morris, ed., London Pali Text Society, 1955, pp. 74-6; thanks go to Professor David Kalupahana for helping me with this sutta). The sutta is very similar to

the *Aggañña* sutta and "The Buddhist Apocalypse" (Henry Clarke Warren, *Buddhism in Translation*, New York: Atheneum, 1974, pp. 481-6) which both discuss a degeneration of man and the natural conditions due to human ignorance. The overall tone is moral: Man becomes ignorant of his interdependent relationship with the environment and society; he becomes lazy, selfish, and irresponsible, which, in turn, narrows his world-view. The consequences of his actions are his (the world's) undoing. Once a true "dhammic" relationship is realized, the sutta and commentary claim that our problems are over.

(Since our typesetter has limited capacity to produce Pali characters, I have kept their use to a bare minimum here. Those who wish to refer to the Pali may seek out the above sources.)

## The Text

Now, let us take a look at a degeneration which is called external degeneration. Let us be aided by sutta, for this will be better than simply following our own feelings. I would just like to say that even though we may find a way to gain intelligence, we cannot exceed the intelligence of the Buddha, or, we will not come up with anything different from the words which the Buddha has already spoken. So, if we talk about anything, we can be aided by the words that Buddha spoke. This will be more beneficial and then we can use our own understanding about these matters to make them crystal clear.

The downfall or degeneration of the sila-dhamma (morality) in the external world is mentioned in a Pali sutta which we can refer to as a **paṭiccasamuppāda** or the "12-fold chain of causation," of human beings which is disabled, bad or low. When I say "we human beings" I mean the whole world; therefore, this is the external world where the degeneration takes place. Now, let us speak of the far-reaching external world surrounding us which is in a compounded state of flux, constantly changing and finally results in human beings living in bad conditions: life expectancy is short, our complexion is bad, our strength is limited, we are susceptible to a variety of diseases and pains.

The basic cause of this degeneration of the external world comes from not acting in accordance with the dhamma; those very people who do not act according to dhamma are the fundamental cause of this degeneration.

All of the kings do not act according to dhamma—this is the first point. You may have some misunderstandings about the word "rāja": In the modern world he may already go by another name, what we are really talking about amounts to anyone who holds power, who controls the government on a large scale. Sometimes we refer to a president or a constitution of a nation. Some countries have a system with a prime minister or premier holding power and there is no king in these countries. There are very few countries that still have a person who is called king and these are becoming

fewer and fewer; their day is almost over.

The word "rāja" is already disappearing from the world; but it is still true that the power to govern the country may be invested in an individual or groups of individuals; for instance, in some countries, the congress or parliament is a group of individuals who have the power to govern the country. Some organizations that we refer to as a government may hold all of the power over the country. However, there still remains something hidden beneath all of this, for instance, actually the capitalists or the laborers may hold the power of the country. The statement that first emerges is "All rājas do not act in accordance with the dhamma"; the statement first appeared over 2000 years ago; the meaning of this in our present context refers to any people or groups of people who hold the power of governing the country.

When people who hold the governing power of the country do not act in accordance with dhamma, there is another result: The teachers and the people with the power of money become people who do not dwell in and follow the dhamma. This is due to the fact that those who come from the upper levels (of society) cannot withstand (the practice of the dhamma). When the upper levels of society already do not act in accordance with dhamma, then bit-by-bit the lower levels, following this example, do not act in accordance with dhamma either. So, neither the brahmins nor the people with money act in accordance with dhamma.

Now we will see much more clearly that when teachers do not act in accordance with dhamma, are not upright in their duty as venerable people, they become people for hire who teach. They take their monthly wages and, for the most part, simply offer vocational training. And when people with wealth and money do not act in accordance with dhamma and instead of assisting people, as was the custom for rich people in earlier times, the rich become people who use money as power to squeeze more out of people. This is called not acting according to dhamma.

Now, when the brahmins and people with

money already do not act according to dhamma, the city people and country people do not act in accordance with dhamma, so it follows that **both** the city and the country people do not act according to dhamma. What we have referred to as not acting according to dhamma comes to us from the first periods of history, it is the starting point from which the present order has progressed.

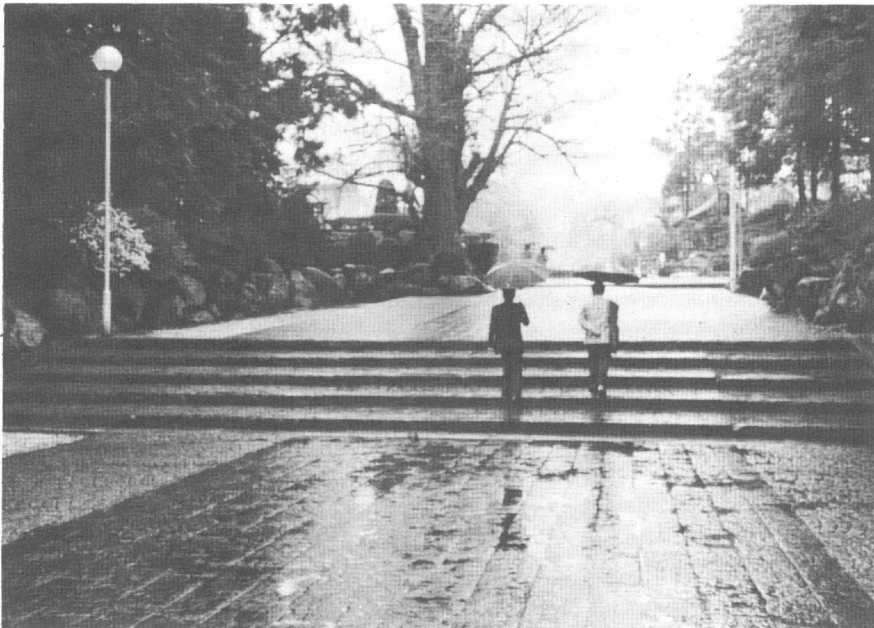
When we have reached the point where all people do not act according to dhamma, there arise uncertainties, fluctuations and abnormal conditions in all of nature: The orbit of the moon and sun is fluctuating and uncertain. At present, we can already see that the stellar system has been disturbed by the

ambitions of very greedy people, people who do not act according to dhamma. The sun and moon orbit in a fluctuating and mixed up manner:

- When this is already the case, then all the constellations and planets also orbit in a fluctuating manner.
- When that is already the case, then day and night occur in a fluctuating and mixed-up manner.
- When that is already the case, then the month and the half-month, that is to say the month and the fortnight, occur with uncertainty in a fluctuating and mixed-up manner.
- When that is already the case, then the seasons and years occur in a fluctuating and

MANICHI DAILY NEWS

## Buddhism Being Used To Help Save Asia's Environment



BANGKOK, THAILAND—TWO THOUSAND five hundred years ago, the Lord Buddha forbade monks to cut down trees, set rules for preventing water pollution and urged his fol-

lowers to co-exist peacefully with all living things.

Today, Buddhists in several Asian countries are beginning to harness these environmental messages to halt the great ravage of



mixed-up manner.

– When that is already the case, then the wind blows in a fluctuating and mixed-up manner.

– When that is already the case, then the pattern and course of the winds fluctuates with uncertainty. Most likely, you have never heard the term **panjasa** before. Most books print this word as **apanjasa**, but the correct word is really **panjasa**. It means having a pattern or order.

– Now, when the **panjasa** is fluctuating and in disorder, then the order of the universe is all mixed-up.

– When this is already the case, all of the gods are in disorder. This might seem strange almost

like a fable or myth, but wait and listen further, just try to grasp the essence of the story.

– When the gods are already mixed-up and in disorder, the rain does not fall properly according to established patterns.

– When that is already the case, then the rice does not ripen evenly or on schedule. When human beings eat rice like this, they develop frail qualities: short life span, bad complexion, limited strength and susceptibility to a variety of diseases and pains.

Perhaps a better starting point might be looking at the item which mentions that we are susceptible to disease and pain. We have this weakness because we eat incorrect food, food that is unsuitable, that has come from

forests, wildlife and water resources across the continent.

Thai social critic Sulak Sivaraksa believes “a kind of Buddhist revolt against the deterioration of nature” has begun, still small in scope but with the potential to influence the religions’s half billion faithful in a dozen countries.

Efforts range from individual monks instructing villagers to plant trees to a regional organization like the Buddhist Perception of Nature, founded in 1984 by Thais, Tibetans and an American to link Buddhism and conservation through education programs.

The Buddhist stirring appears related to worldwide searches for a “conservation ethic” that could be added to the standard environmental arsenal of laws, technology, funds and education.

“A new and powerful alliance has been forged between the forces of religion and the forces of conservation,” Prince Philip, president of the World Wildlife Fund, said last year.

The Duke of Edinburgh spoke in the Italian town of Assisi, where representatives of Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism each declared that practical care of nature was an important tenet of their faiths. The Swiss-based WWF has ongoing projects to capitalize on religion’s power to sway attitudes.

While Buddhists have been as wanton as any in wreaking environmental destruction, scholars note the religion is well attuned to conservation.

Buddhists, for example, release fish and birds into the wild to “make merit,” hoping thereby to attain a higher status in future reincarnations. Monasteries often become safe havens for wildlife since killing is forbidden within their boundaries. Meditation amid natural surroundings and the building of monasteries in forests are traditional features of the religion.

Monkeys, which dare not venture into the surrounding countryside for fear of hunters, stroll brazenly through the streets of Mount Popa, harassing food-carrying visitors to one of Burma’s major pilgrimage sites. In Thailand, fruit-eating bats—shot by angry orchard keepers—home in on monastery trees where they can hang in peace.

#### Wat Phailom

The WWF says open-billed storks might well be extinct in Thailand had they not found a welcome at Wat Phailom on the outskirts of Bangkok. The temple compound is now Southeast Asia’s largest breeding ground for these migratory birds.

Some abbots, like Pongsak Tejadhammo, have become conservation activists.

Shocked by the wholesale razing of forests



inconsistencies. The relationship between nature and people is incorrect in this case. People in former times held beliefs about this relationship. Still, if we do not have reason to oppose these views, we might as well remain quiet for the time being; but take a good look and see the aim of these views, which is that if human beings are bad, nature, as a result of this, will also be bad. As nature becomes worse and worse, the people surrounded by nature will suffer greater consequences.

Human beings have long since brought about injustices which have left their mark on nature; this has resulted in nature behaving incorrectly. When nature is disrupted, it surrounds humans and brings about their continued

downfall until it affects their physical bodies and their heart-mind; when our physical processes are disrupted, then our heart-mind also becomes mixed-up.

However, we should try to look at it this way: The aim of this Buddhist sutta is to bring about a special interest on the part of those who hold the power of government. People who hold the power of government are the basic cause of general degeneration; we can say that if the people who control the power of government act in accordance with dhamma, all things will improve: Human beings will be good; the rain will fall correctly according to the season, nature will follow its proper course and people will be filled with

in the hills of northern Thailand, Pongsak and his followers fenced off part of a 70-square-kilometer (27-square-mile) area that they are restocking with trees and indigenous wildlife. The regenerated watershed zone, he says, will replenish dwindling streams and other irrigation sources at lower elevations, thus vividly demonstrating to farmers the need to preserve forests.

The abbot, who has gathered some grass-roots support, speaks out against corrupt officials who engage in illegal logging as well as hilltribes practicing slash-and-burn agriculture that has stripped hill after hill of forest cover.

The Buddhist Perception of Nature project has drawn together Thai Buddhist scholars and followers of the Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual leader, who fled to India in the wake of communist China's takeover of his country. Serving as international coordinator is Nancy Nash, a Hong Kong-based conservationist dubbed the "Panda Lady" for her work in China to save those animals.

Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh, a leading Buddhist scholar, said the group is about to distribute 3,000 books of stories and teachings drawn from Buddhist scriptures that relate to the environments.

These will be followed by 50,000 others to all monasteries—still vital centers of education and social life in rural areas—as well as the country's 36 teacher training colleges. Au-

dio-visual and television programs also are planned.

Similar literature is being distributed to schools in the Tibetan refugee camps of northern India. The books—believed to be the first compilation of environmental themes in Buddhism—include vivid tales of monks and laymen who chopped down trees or killed animals and parables in which Buddha used nature to illustrate how life should be lived and how humans and animals were part of the same continuum.

"We hope these pilot projects will serve as models for others, not only Buddhists but those of all beliefs," Chatsumarn said in an interview.

Miss Nash, an American who has obtained financial support from the WWF and other international organizations, hopes the project can soon expand to countries like Japan, which has strong Buddhist roots, considerable resources for fighting environmental problems and a much-criticized conservation record.

"It's going to work in the long run. But it must be inculcated into our children so when they grow up they feel close to nature," says Chatsumarn. "Once you love nature you don't even have to teach about conservation. You nourish it naturally."



joy.

If we hold strictly to the words in this sutta, we must heap the demerits and mistakes in all the external world on those who hold the power of government, who do not act in accordance with dhamma, be they the congress or parliament, government, president, prime minister or premier or whatever the case might be. The name is not really important. Whoever holds the power of government in his hand, whether it be for a country or the world, that person must act according to dhamma. When it becomes otherwise, not acting according to dhamma will spread far and wide until nature can no longer stand it, the world and the universe will shake and end up scrambled together. This external degeneration all occurs because people do not act according to dhamma.

I would like to ask everyone to become interested enough in this so all people will act according to dhamma. Do not allow nature to fluctuate out of control. Do not make the gods angry or the rain will not fall properly like the sutta says. We should meditate together thinking: Please let the people who have the power of government in this world become people who dwell in dhamma. Then, these problems will gradually disappear.

The basic cause of all of this degeneration of the sila-dhamma (morality) in the external world is beings and humans not acting according to the dhamma. The downfall of the internal world can be related to the mind that is full of demerit and anxiety. The internal and the external are the two interdependent channels through which compounding and change flow.

To summarize the contents of this lecture, let me say that there are two kinds of degeneration

of the sila-dhamma, one relating to the internal inside of our heart, and the other relating to the external world that surrounds us. They both overlap and we cannot separate them. It is just like a fruit that has an outside covering and meat inside, or think of it as an egg; if there is no covering, then how will the inside of the egg exist. There must be two elements or conditions present. So, when people make mistakes along these two lines, the internal and the external, then the degeneration of the sila-dhamma takes place.

If we summarize this in the shortest possible way, then what was referred to as acting according to dhamma or not acting according to dhamma is the source of progress or degeneration, respectively. If we refer to all of this in the shortest possible way, we need only mention the word "dhamma"; the Dhamma is the basic cause behind everything—it can cause degeneration or progress. If you make a mistake according to the Dhamma, degeneration results; if you act in accordance with the Dhamma, progress results. Everything is related to just this word "dhamma."

Even though we refer to "sila-dhamma" this is "dhamma" just the same; sila-dhamma is the routine dhamma. If something is absolutely free to follow the dhamma, it finds its own normal way, but now we have built up adhamma to resist dhamma until there is no more sila, no more normalcy; but even this is still the dhamma according to natural occurrence, we cannot really call it good, bad, **sukha** or **dukkha** according to the dhamma. Still, this lesson carries a strong meaning for human beings with a heart-mind, with feelings like **sukha** and **dukkha**. These people cannot live with the adhamma, so they must work to solve the problems that they do not like or get rid of the things that they do not like; people generally refer to dhamma or sila-dhamma in this way. At the same time, we will see that we have the dhamma as something to depend on and we have the dhamma as something to reflect upon. If you act according to the dhamma, your problems will disappear.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu

Translated by Grant A. Olson

# Japan in SE Asia – Master or Partner – A Thai View



LOOKING BACK THROUGH THE LAST 16 years since my first encounter with the International House of Japan, I have seen many positive Japanese contributions towards improving better understanding between different cultures, a genuine effort from many Japanese quarters for peace, social justice and ecological improvement in Asia and the world. Philanthropic organizations have sprung up for humanitarian causes and for providing opportunities for members of the younger generation in Japan and Asia to get to know each other so that real friendship and respect for each other's cultures on equal basis would be possible in the near future.

I really admire these young Japanese who go out of their way to live in the slum of Bangkok, in the Kampongs of Malaysia, or on small islands in the Philippines – not to master the languages in order to exploit the poor in those areas, but to befriend them, respect them, and stand by them, especially when their indigenous cultures and ways of life are being seriously threatened by the so-called development policies of those governments who work in collaboration with some gigantic Japanese companies and the Transnational corporations. Many who suffered in the Hiroshima and Nagasaki events as well as from the Minamata disease really work hard to prevent such suffering taking place again elsewhere in Asia.

I have been privileged to collaborate in small degrees with the International House of Japan and other admirable Japanese organizations in these positive ventures, especially our joint efforts in trying to work out cultural relations for the future, which was conceived by the present rector of the UN University when he was still Indonesian Ambassador to the US – over a decade and a half ago. Our

joint efforts in establishing a Pacific Ashrama about the same time has been continued under the new name of Pacific Youth Forum, which is being generously supported by the Mitsubishi Bank Foundation. The Toyota Foundation has also done much in promoting better understanding between Japan and SE Asia, as well as among SE Asians themselves, and SE Asia with China and South Asia.

I must also mention that in 1973, Dr. K. Mushakoji, who was then at Sophia University, helped me greatly in establishing Asian Cultural Forum of Development, which works hard in bringing together persons and groups in most countries of the Asian and Pacific region into a movement which participate in integral development – aiming at promoting social justice and human dignity, especially from the grass-roots or riceroots viewpoints.

All of these are of course new efforts. Hence, there is room for improvement. And I can cite more positive contributions from Japan in building partnership with Asia, especially in recent years – all of which show genuine desire of many Japanese to be our partners, and they would be shocked to hear that most of us in Asia do not regard Japan as our partner. Is Japan then our master?

Before answering such a question, one must be quite clear that partnership signifies equality, whereas mastership implies the relationship between a superior and an inferior. Of course a partner can also take advantage of his counterpart, especially if one is stronger than the other. But if equality is the base, although one may be more equal than another, there are some methods for agreement. One can even agree to disagree, yet partners have something in common at stake. They have to be allies. They have to stick together. They

have to use diplomacy, bargaining, and different devices to remain partners, to be on equal terms.

Right now, most people would agree that Japan and America are partners, despite the fact that straight after the Second World War, the US was Japan's master for quite a number of years. Of course, was not by fault that Japan became an ally and a partner of the US, but through her economic recovery and, if I may say so, it was through economic victory that Japan is now in the Richmen's Club. She is the only country in Asia which enjoys membership in the Economic Summit. Even within that summit, Japan is only next to the top economically. Every time Japan attends the Economic Summit meeting she is supposed to represent and safeguard the rest of Asia, as the USA is supposed to have the welfare of the world at heart!

Dr. Herbert P. Bix, in the last issue of the 1985 volume of the *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, however, stated that the US-Japan relations are being rationalized into a new partnership in the military domain and to make it appealing to the Japanese sense of economic prowess and heirarchical position, the Reagan administration revived concepts of Pacific cooperation, Pacific community and Asian Pacific alliance. All these themes, dating from the late 1960s have a coercive underlying intent.

Looking back beyond this century, one can see that through her military strength, especially her victory in the Russo-Japanese war, Japan became an equal partner to the Western powers, which were then centred around Europe rather than in the New World.

Was it a fear of being mastered by the West that moved Japan to try to be an equal

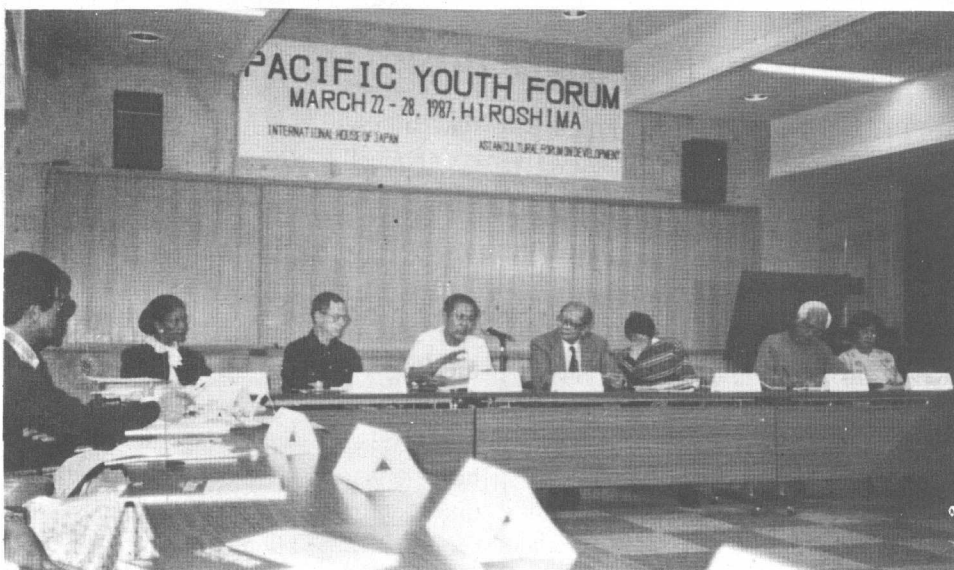
partner with them, trying to catch up with them in their scientific achievements and technologies to compete with them in commercial enterprises and to build up the armed forces to show them her strength? Indeed Japan is not only good at imitating, but she could even outdo whoever she imitates or borrows from.

If we trace back even further in time we can see how Japan received from and improved upon Chinese civilization. Without being rude, I must tell you a story: During the height of the so-called Cultural Revolution in China, a Chinese was supposed to have said "You know, the Japanese are good at imitating us. The main things they got from us were three

and they still stick to them even nowadays: 1) They learnt how to eat with chopsticks. Although their food is tasteless, they have become civilized in the habit of eating; 2) They got our Chinese scripts, which made them literate and could advance in the arts and sciences; 3) They got our Confucianism, which prevails everywhere, not only in their family and bureaucracy, but also in their commercial networks and world view. We think this is detrimental. Here in China, we are getting rid of Confucianism, but the Japanese approve of it."

Whether such a saying is true or false is beside the point. The third point in the saying is worth thinking about. Of course you all

## 1987 Pacific Youth Forum



ORGANIZED BY THE INTERNATIONAL House of Japan and the Asian Cultural Forum on Development (ACFOD), and generously sponsored by the Mitsubishi Bank Foundation, the Asia Foundation, and the Fuji Xerox Kobayashi Setsutaro Memorial fund, the 1987 Pacific Youth Forum was held in the Nishi Nihon Sogo Center near Hiroshima from 22-27 March. The week-long gathering was attended by some forty participants from Taiwan, Indo-

nesia, Japan, Malaysia, the PRC, the Philippines, Korea, Thailand, UK and the USA. Similar to the two previous forums held in 1984 and 1985, the participants—consisting of leading lecturers, researchers, lawyers, and graduate students from various disciplines—once again attempted to grapple with the elusive theme of peace and development and related issues, including security and economic cooperation.

While the need for peace as a prerequisite

know that the Chinese Cultural Revolution failed, which in a way is a great pity. Perhaps because of the Communist Party's reaction to the Cultural Revolution the worst aspects of Confucianism prevail much more so in China. The officials are very arrogant. Despite their false modesty in appearance, they look down upon their inferiors, especially the masses, to whom they pay so much lip service.

I know Confucianism also has many positive values and I read Prof. Michio Nagai's report on Confucian Industrial Society with great interest. But fundamentally, Confucianism signifies an unequal relationship in the family, in the state, and between states. It also demands unreserved loyalty from the inferior to the

superior. In a way, mastership is the keyword in Confucianism. A disciple cannot question his master, a subject cannot question his emperor, a son or daughter cannot question the father. And in industrial society, I presume an employee cannot question his boss or his employer.

Ideally of course, the master, the father and the emperor are supposed to be good, and as superiors, they are to set moral examples for us inferiors to follow. The father is only superior in his family, and the master is only superior to his disciples, whereas the emperor is superior to them all. Hence, in Neoconfucian industrial society, we have so many new emperors like Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, Chiang

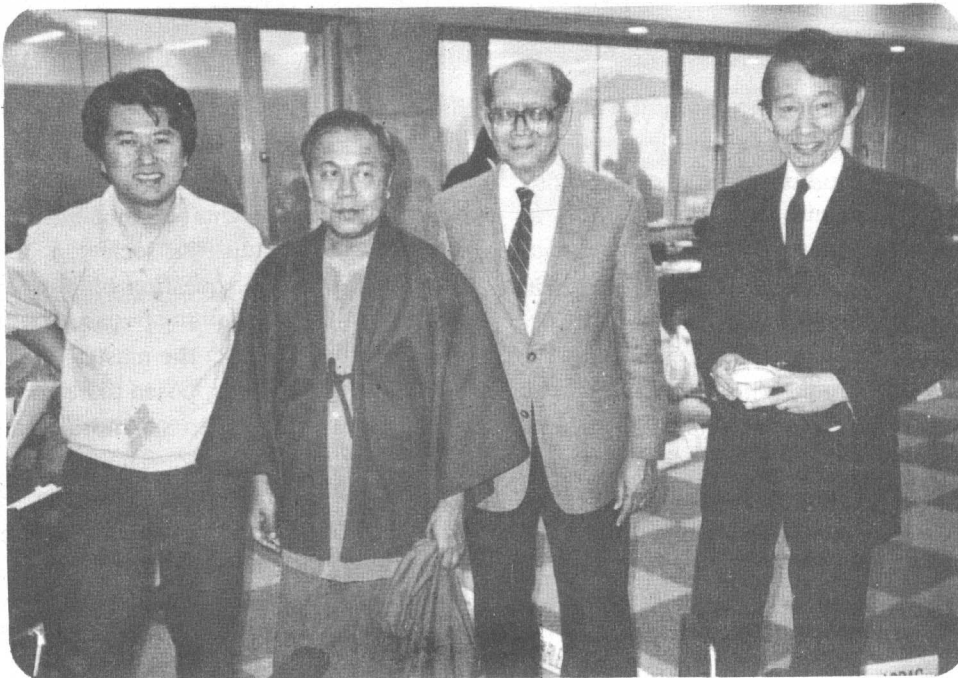
to implement any form of development is easily understood through the selection of Hiroshima as a venue, the term development itself appeared to be so difficult to define that towards the end of the Forum, participants were each asked to submit their own definitions of development. The term "development" has often been viewed from a material perspective only—such as the increase of GNP and standard of living—but the Forum agreed that such a view carried serious drawbacks, such as a decline in the quality of life and the tendency to increase human selfishness and greediness.

The quality of the 1987 Pacific Youth Forum was enhanced by the presence of Tokyo-based UN University rector Dr. Soedjatmoko who, in his inaugural address, stressed the need to build a solid infrastructure—a human network—among the participants, not only during, but also after the Forum with a view towards promoting peace, friendship and understanding in the region and the world. This is necessary because since the end of World War II, the world has seen some one-hundred and fifty regional wars or conflicts, most of which occur in the "Third World" countries. Dr. Soedjatmoko went on to say that the Third World countries have not only impoverished themselves by joining the futile arms race, but have also been unable to unite amongst themselves to cope with the existing challenges.

Being a former diplomat and a prominent humanist figure in his country, Dr. Soedjatmoko does not indulge in the habit of pointing an accusing finger at those who might have caused the misery of the Third World countries. He would rather see human beings on this planet work together and get ready to face unexpected challenges of the future, including the rise of the sea level, the destruction of tropical rainforests and the rapidity of social change, which can result in dangerous religious fundamentalism. In his closing address, however, he stressed that there is still the hope—especially among the younger generation—that human beings will be able to meet such challenges.

The inaugural address was followed by formal sessions in accordance with a time-table neatly prepared by the International House of Japan, covering such topics as the following: Peace and Development in Historical Perspective; the Management of Social and Political Changes—the Case of the Philippines; Development Aid and Self-Reliance; Peace and Security in the Pacific Region (a joint session with a group from the International Christian University and the University of California, Berkeley, who stayed overnight at the Center); and Women, Peace and Development (an interesting and thought-provoking session with a prominent member of the Japanese feminist movement).





There were lively and vigorous discussions amongst the participants when Sulak Sivaraksa, ACFOD chairman and social critic from Thailand, questioned Japan's economic role in assisting Third World countries, asserting that these countries should never emulate the "First World" countries' model of development, which he believes is based on greed, inequality and exploitation. His views were supported by some participants who pointed out that multi-national corporations had caused industrial pollution in their home countries. Worse still, their own government seems to be oblivious to the serious ecological destruction caused by the multi-national corporations. These people, therefore, seemed to view foreign investment and aid as being harmful rather than helpful.

Despite the serious tone during many of the discussions, the Forum also had plenty of its light and informal moments, namely through sports activities, a picnic lunch, some late-night carousing, as well as a few informal spontaneous debates. For some participants, the Forum also provided an opportunity to be initiated into some aspects of Japanese culture, such as trying the **ofuro** (hot bath), wearing the **yukata** robe, and tasting the Japanese food served daily. Some others, however, are so conditioned by their native food that they had to bring along their own chili sauce and other condiments!

A solemn atmosphere prevailed among participants when they were taken on a day-long excursion to visit the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation and had the chance to listen to a first-hand account given by one **hibakusha** (survivor of the atomic bombing) as to what happened on that fateful day of 6 August 1945. A tour of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum had, in turn, created a lasting impression of the horrors of a potential nuclear war and reminded the participants—the majority of them born after the war—of the urgent need to preserve peace in this already troubled world.

The 1987 Pacific Youth Forum is over and what now remains are the memories of the great week of living together and exchanging ideas in a friendly and peaceful manner. In this connection, we fully agree with Sulak when he said that one week may be too short to get to know each other reasonably well and that future Forums should be held longer, preferably in a non-industrial country, to allow participants to directly experience the plight of the underprivileged local people. Finally, however, in the eyes of this writer, nothing is more ironic than discussing the hunger and starvation of less fortunate people while at the same time indulging in the luxurious food that is readily available at one's beck and call.

Teddy Prasetyo



Chu Kuo of Taiwan, and Chun Doo Hwan of South Korea. Luckily Queen Elizabeth II or the Governor of Hong Kong are not taken seriously by the Chinese inhabitants there. However, they may be switching to follow the new Emperor of China, Deng Zhao Ping, soon, if they have not done so already. Yet, so far, unlike the three other Newly Industrialized Countries (NIC), Hong Kong, being a British crown colony, at least enjoys some basic human rights and a fair amount of individual freedom. Criticizing the government is allowed. If Hong Kong is totally Confucian like the rest of the NICs, the fate of its citizens is entirely at the discretion of the new Emperor.

To me, these 4 NICs are the new Gang of Four, which try to catch up with Japan, GNP-wise, at the expense of social justice and human dignity within their countries, and they also look down upon the rest of Asia as backward or semi-barbarian, yet they try to milk every benefit out of the rest of Asia.

In Confucian philosophy, only those who are well-versed in and accept the basic tenants of Confucianism, are civilized – the rest are inferior. And the more you are experts in Confucian philosophy and literature, or are up in the Confucian hierarchy, the more superior you are. Greek civilization was likewise. If you did not speak Greek, you were barbarians, which in Greek, means precisely that. Many Westerners unfortunately still hold a similar opinion.

Now, in the new Confucian industrial society, new emperors need not be only heads of states, as the new empires could be the Trans-National Corporations. If what the TNCs decide cannot be challenged, then the most profitable trade nowadays is armaments and those having to do with industries, which are detrimental, not only to human rights but to human survival. The Japanese habit of throwing away each pair of chopsticks after their usage affects the livelihood of most small fishermen in SE Asia and also contributes to deforestation in that part of the world.

Yet, Confucianism would not help to stimulate the people to ask fundamental questions concerning oneself, one's lifestyle or

one's society and the environment. Confucianism leads us to conform to and to accept the **status quo** and the dictate of the superiors. Nowadays, the government and the TNCs are by and large in control of the mass media and educational systems. Especially when the young are taught to prepare themselves to be employed, or to be experts in specialized fields, rather than to be educated as fully developed human beings, it is easier to have the masses follow the leaders; although these leaders are so selfish and corrupt. They claim to be democratic and to be responsible to the people, yet most of them cling to the powers as permanently as possible. In the Confucian jargon, these leaders are supposed to worry before the rest of the people and enjoy their own worldly pleasures after the multitudes. Do we find such leaders anywhere in the world? Do they have so much wisdom, like Plato's Philosopher-king, that we must not challenge them at all? I fear in the Confucian culture it is not possible for the citizens to challenge their political leaders, as citizens are taught subconsciously to feel helpless and inferior. They are satisfied with their economic scarcity and strive to achieve it rather than worrying about fundamental problems of mankind. Those who challenge the Government in Korea are mostly Christians – not Confucians. Unfortunately the so-called Buddhists in these Confucian countries are so Confucianized that they are confused or are on the whole non-entities politically or socially.

As I said earlier, in Confucianism there is no room for partnership or equality. Despite the fact that Japan took Confucianism from China, she wanted to compete with the Middle Kingdom and repaid her gratitude by invading that great country, otherwise Japan would remain inferior to China.

In like manner, when Japan was catching up with the West in the last century, she ended up in the Second World War. To me that was also a subconscious effort on the part of Japan not to be a partner of the west – not to be equal, but to be superior.

Nowadays, the question as to where the Japanese partnership with the USA will lead

us anywhere is very interesting. Despite the fact that most people regard Japan as a partner of the US, I think there is an element of inferiority complex in Japan, which makes many Japanese feel that the US is still superior to Japan in many respects. Once the Japanese feel inferior, they will do everything possible to master that complex. This could be very good or could be very bad.

Towards other parts of Asia, however, Japan feels or behaves like master due perhaps to Confucian philosophy and the pride in her scientific, economic and technological superiority. Of course Japan always pays lip service to us that she would like to be our friend and partner. She gives a lot of financial aid to various governments in the region. In some countries, Japan as an aid-giver is second only to the USA. In Sri Lanka, for instance, Japan has even outdone the USA.

Is giving aid a way of buying friendship or partnership? Without equality as a base, or a real respect of others as equals, could you build real partnership or friendship? Not words but deeds, not money but sincerity, are required for real collaboration and understanding.

Japan may have sincere feelings towards us, but we doubt her sincerity. Economic exploitation has not decreased. Sex tourism has increased, disregarding our indigenous cultures, destroying our ecological balance, exporting pollution to our part of the world and disturbing our labour situation are prevalent.

As I said earlier that there are efforts to contribute constructively against these negative and ugly aspects of Japanese ventures in SE Asia, yet they are minimal compared with what the Japanese government and big companies are doing for short term economic gain. Indeed, some of us who collaborate with our Japanese friends to do something for social justice and human rights in that region have even been suspected sometimes by our own people who still doubt Japanese motives. Once the people trust us, our own government thinks we are dangerous as we try to change the course of development — not to make the rich richer but for the poor to survive meaningfully and with dignity.

To me the future of SE Asia will have to be free from American domination, disengaging more from the present consumer culture and capitalistic enterprises. We must also keep China, Japan and the USSR at arm's length. We should rely mostly on our indigenous cultures, respecting each other in the region and seek collaboration among ourselves, rather than from outside. The spirit of ASEAN will be entirely different from nowadays. There must not be big gaps between Burma, Indochina and ASEAN. Despite ideological differences, we need not turn our backs to each other and spend too much money from our meagre reserves for armaments.

You may think this is wishful thinking on my part, but unless you take these seriously, you will miss the bus.

In the Thai context, nowadays people only concentrate on the monarchy and the military. I think these two institutions may be important, but we must take others as seriously if not more seriously, especially the *Sangha* or the Buddhist brotherhood, the non-governmental organizational network in developing the country towards self-reliance, and the young intellectuals. For most of you who are here, the name Buddhadasa Bhikkhu may not mean very much, but he is perhaps the greatest Thai or Buddhist thinker alive who has a real concern and an alternative approach for society and the world.

Again, the name Pridi Banomyong may be unknown outside Siam or even within the country his name is only whispered in polite society, despite the fact that he passed away in Paris almost 3 years ago, having been an exile for 20 years in China and 13 years in France. Yet he was the founder of Thai democracy, the preserver of Thai independence and the monarchy. Besides, his vision for the future of free and independent SE Asian States conceived about half a century ago is still relevant. Unless there are Japanese efforts in understanding which collaborate with us in this venture, Japan will not be our friend and partner in the future.

It is too difficult to ask the average Japanese to understand and respect our cultures

in SE Asia, unless they can rebel against their Confucian background, which is even more difficult. But Japan got both Buddhism and Confucianism from China simultaneously. Unfortunately, Buddhism in East Asia has become part and parcel of Confucianism, so much so that for the average Japanese, Buddhism means ceremony, or even funeral ceremony only.

Since Japan is now learning so much from the West, she should realize that the latest Western contribution to the world is her understanding of Buddhism, especially with a small *b*, which is concentrating on the message of the Buddha, ignoring Buddhist myth, tradition, culture and ceremony, which could be positive and negative. It is very negative indeed where Buddhism is established as a hard core for nationalism, ethnicity and chauvinism as in the case of Thailand and Sri Lanka. But the most positive Buddhist contribution is that the message is universal. It has no dogma; it does not require that one has to declare oneself Buddhist. But if one accepts its message, or thinks about it, it implies that one should cultivate self-awareness and self-criticism. There are several methods to help people in all Buddhist traditions. One could also use any other religious or non-religious method. It could lead one to be less selfish and to be more selfless, more compassionate towards all beings. At least we should be aware at the head level as well as the heart level that all human beings are equal. We are fellow sufferers in this *samsarā* or cycle of life and death. There are no superior or inferior persons, but only partners and friends. The Buddha only claims to be a good friend KALYĀṆAMITTA who could help pointing the way for us to overcome personal suffering as well as social ills. But only through self-criticism, as well as criticizing our own society, in order to improve ourselves, could partnership and friendship be possible.

There seems to be much conformity in Japan, and Japan seems to be heading only for economic growth and technological achievements. There are even talks about rearmament, which may lead again to ruin. Yet the good thing about Japan is that there is so much



diversity as well and there are so many concerned people for peace and justice within themselves and the world. A lot of Japanese thinkers have now started questioning their development model too. If these Japanese would take the Buddhist message seriously, beyond their various sects, schools of thought and Japaneseness in Buddhism, they could perhaps be our good friends and equal partners in the future.

Instead of borrowing or competing with the West blindly, the Japanese are in a very good position to lead in the field of Buddhist politics as well as Buddhist social and natural sciences. The West has dominated the scene too long. If Japan could be in that picture, with Buddhist awareness, and will not be the master but be a partner with our Western friends, they would also be more humane, less materialistic and egocentric. Then, and only then, could Japan think of us in Asia, especially those of us with Buddhist background, as her equal and we will really be friends and good partners, for the benefit of all mankind and all sentient beings.

**Sulak Sivaraksa**, from a lecture given at the International House of Japan, Tokyo, 27 March 1986.

## US blamed for Thai woes

WHY HAS THE THAI MILITARY SO MUCH influence in politics? Author Sulak Sivarak thinks he has the answer. He blames it on the US domination of Southeast Asia since the end of the World War II until the end of the Vietnam War.

He said the US supported the rapid build-up of the Thai army in the wake of the Korean War and the communist uprising in Indochina.

Many US-trained Thai army officers personally benefited from US military aid to Thailand during the 1950s and 1960s, causing them to reject civilian rule, he said.

Speaking on the topic "The Military Institution and the Politics in Thailand" at Thammasat University, Sulak urged the Thai military to stop following the US blindly. "Let's stand up and tell the Americans they don't have to brief us on security issues anymore," he added.

He also suggested that the military try subtle ways to win the hearts and minds of the people, making the people feel that the military is part of them.

He said many of the conflicts in Thailand are a result of differences between the US and the Soviet Union. Some problems are a direct result of the Thai military following the policy of the US.

Having a premier who does not like to make decisions is another problem, he noted.

*The Nation*, Sunday, May 3, 1987.

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## Peaceful Possibilities

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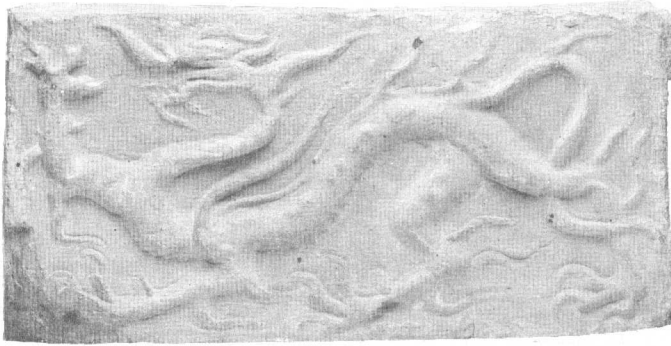
### A Critique



AMONG MANY WESTERNERS, THE 20TH century suspicion that the human species may not have that much longer to live has recently deepened into something like a conviction. No social evolution or revolution on the world horizon looks to have any significant chance of reversing soon enough either the political, organizational, and technological drive toward nuclear extinction or the commitment of the great economic powers to genetic and environmental destruction. Nor do mainstream Western traditions of social inquiry seem capable of offering even the most tenuously theoretical way out. As the brilliant Cambridge political theorist John Dunn has recently put it, "There simply is no plausible capitalist vision of a

morally possible future for human beings"; nor does there exist "any alternative mode of organizing production which is in practice ideologically more prepossessing."

A similar mood prevails among many distinguished and dedicated Western peace activists. The social historian E.P. Thompson has bleakly remarked that the most the peace movement can hope to do is to "throw what obstacles that remain in our culture" in the path of the advancing machinery of destruction. George Kistiakowsky, President Eisenhower's science adviser, while pointing out that the nuclear threat leaves us "no time to go through channels," could suggest no more definite course of action than to "take to the



streets.” Dr. Helen Caldicott, when asked how she can continue her antinuclear work in the face of such dismaying odds, is reduced to saying that if the end comes, as seems likely, at least she will know that she did what was possible.

Many Thai intellectuals concerned with peace, while more than willing to join such Western activists in their attacks on First World policies, may be inclined to look impatiently on this seeming lack of inspiration. There are ways of preventing disaster, they insist; it’s just that they’ve been ignored. The Ven. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, for example, has urged a “government of an enlightened ruling class based on the ten royal virtues” as the “kind of socialism which can save the world.” Other Thai thinkers, echoing centuries-old traditions of intellectual resistance in Europe, India, and China, work to help renew village cultures in their struggles against the destructiveness of modern societies. Still others turn to popularized accounts of counterculture trends within the West itself, such as Fritjof Capra’s *The Turning Point*, as sources of ideas for a livable future.

Such reactions to the current situation are both encouraging and necessary. They help counter the odd idea, still common among Westernized intellectuals, that non-Western societies have no choice nowadays but to turn away from cultures which have proved their staying power over centuries toward a culture which has already more or less given up on its own future. They also help bring out vividly a truth seldom appreciated in the West: that changing course permanently toward peace

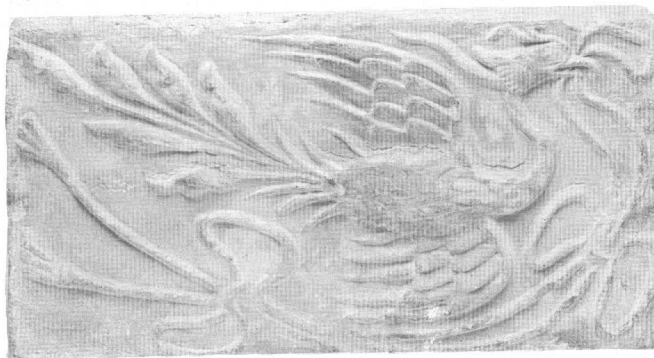
will require large numbers of people working out some way of getting out from under what Phra Rajavaramuni, another renowned Buddhist thinker, calls the “self-centered motives” of excessive materialistic desires, lust for domination, and the desire to block the road of communal inquiry.

Many Thai activists are correct, moreover, in suggesting that the prevailing “current of hopelessness” (to use the words of Phra Paisarn Wisalo, a prominent development figure) is to some extent merely a reflection of First World elites’ dissatisfaction at the prospect of losing “world domination, stability, and privileges” in the years ahead.

It would be a mistake, however, to say that the pessimism of all Western peace activists and social theorists originates in this way, or that it is based on obliviousness to alternatives. The gloom of a Dunn or a Thompson is not the result of brainwashing or of closed-mindedness, but rather of a lifetime of close attention to the details of the historical development of various societies, using a number of theoretical approaches.

Thai activists themselves might benefit from more such study. The most significant social thinkers of the future are likely to be Third Worlders who have assimilated and transcended — rather than sidestepped — the historical and political thought of the West.

Western critics looking for such thinkers on the contemporary Thai scene are likely to be disappointed. They may admit the cogency of (say) the Ven. Buddhadasa’s criticism of modern societies, and admire his sense of the presentness of the past, but they are likely to



find his thinking somewhat short on historical self-awareness. Buddhadasa's vision of a "system of mutual aid called 'pure socialism'" is very attractive, they will feel, but how did such systems come about in the past, what was their relationship with the economy and society of their time, and how are we to bring them about today? To many interested in the actual possibilities of renewing Buddhist practice, Buddhadasa's assurance that his "dictatorial Dhammic socialism" is "in the nature of things" is likely to seem unimpressive — just the sort of thing philosophers are always saying about the practices they support — and his insistence that the "fundamental problem is the lack of religion and moral principles in modern society," rather one-dimensional.

Activists seeking to revive and carry on village traditions also frequently lack any comprehensive views on the mechanisms of social change. And the historical, sociological, and philosophical ignorance of writers like Capra prevent them from offering much of theoretical interest or practical value to the peace movement. Even the writings of Sulak Sivaraksa, while initially bracing, seem finally quite mild to the Western observer used to more thoroughgoing statements of protest.

Except for a small group of young critical social scientists, in fact, Thai peace theorists as a whole seem to shuttle back and forth between abstract talk about ideals, rights, justice, and non-violence, and equally ahistorical descriptions of particular, often idealized communities. There is a tendency to shy away from determined analysis of the dynamics of social change, perhaps because such analysis is felt

to be too dangerous, or is vaguely associated with Marxism, which is often caricatured as a shallow set of bloody-minded tactical political prescriptions. Whatever the cause, however, the result is that the serious study of social change has been left, by and large, to those whose interest lies in maintaining the current momentum toward destruction, catastrophic violence, and thought control.

Thai and Western peace activists, in sum, may each tend to view the other as insufficiently radical. The Westerner, by concentrating on politics or technique, may seem to the Thai to be, in the words of the Ven. Buddhadasa, "trying to wash something muddy with muddy water." The Western activist's Eurocentric point of view, moreover, may look to the Thai to be both touchingly insular and imperialistic.

To the Westerner, on the other hand, the Thai peace activist's thought may seem to lack the multi-dimensional, self-critical, highly developed quality of the best alternative Western inquiry. Thai activists, by giving short shrift to the actual workings of social change, may seem to Western critics to be running the risk of devoting all their energy to ineffectual gestures.

In truth, the two groups' strengths and weaknesses are complementary. There is no particular point in taking sides any more than one is forced to do so by one's background. What is important is for the two groups to find ways of getting together more often for serious study of each other's insights and approaches.



# An Introduction to Thomas Merton



I HAVE BEEN CURIOUS ABOUT THOMAS Merton since first hearing about him and his death in Bangkok. Thus, when a friend recommended some Merton reading, I didn't refuse, although I've far too many books around. My friend produced the books, and I read them. In the end, he asked that I write a review. Not being a critic, I offer this appreciation instead.

Thomas Merton wrote many books and much has been written about him. The two books I read cover both categories: that is, *The Seven Storey Mountain* is Merton's autobiography through his first thirty-three years and *Merton* is Monica Furlong's biography of his entire life that necessarily depends on his own writings, both published and unpublished. These are enough to get one started.

Merton is worth reading because there is much we can learn from him. This fundamental truism should not be obscured by his talents as a writer and the drama and interest of his story. He offers us sincere, difficult, human, practical insights into spiritual living in our, for the time being, modern world. This is of great interest to me and I am thankful that Merton has helped to kindle a similar interest in many hearts and minds. That we may be working in different traditions becomes more tenuous and superfluous as I learn from him, as he helps me to practice Buddhism—or someone else their Christianity, Taoism, or whatever—more rewardingly in this here-now world.

This being a subjective essay, a few words about the writer are called for. Raised in the

American Mid-West and liberal Protestantism, I had opportunities to develop both a faith in God as pushed by some and an atheism as argued by others. Not that I didn't wonder and ponder about God. I even studied Medieval Christian theology and culture, with some Taoist and Hindu classics on the side. But God, Tao, and Dhamma remained just words and nifty abstractions that I could neither believe nor deny wholeheartedly, until the U.S. Peace Corps brought me to Siam and Siam helped me to Buddhism. Now I'm a **bhikkhu** whose mentor chases me out of hiding in labels and forces me to exploit my own resources fully. Many of those resources either were nurtured in a Christian culture or are common to all cultures, thus I see nothing sinful or unwholesome (**akusala**) in a person of my position learning from Merton.

Merton's life, like just about everyone's, was not easy. He was born into World War I and shared with us Stalinism, the Holocaust, Hiroshima, environmental degradation, and multi-national corporations. He died during the Viet Nam War, while we must cope with over-population, massive drug addiction, genetic engineering, global stock markets, and computer literacy. For whatever reasons, we have been born into this world and must struggle to survive in it physically and spiritually. Merton found the means to survive in the same

ancient forms—primarily Christian, but eventually Buddhist and Hindu as well—that many people consider irrelevant to modern problems. He saw through and fought free of the materialism, as ancient as any religion, on which we place our bets. This is Merton's first lesson for us, that our enemy is the same old one and that our true friends are also the old ones. He helps us to recognize and learn how to benefit from these old friends in words appropriate to our modern delusions.

Merton's childhood was tumultuous and unsettled in ways that those of us born in the last forty years can really appreciate. The trappings of religion were never physically distant, but he, like us, was moving too fast to notice. The pace of change was accelerating and the white man's children saw it deliver proliferating variations on the same old trap. More people—in Merton's day still almost exclusively males—than ever were able to frolic in the "good life" of fun, drink, sex, and self-aggrandizement. Merton was a success at it, although today's youth might not understand why fathering a child out of marriage and frequent "partying" (as it was known during my formative years) could prevent him from spending a second year at Cambridge. But fast living takes its toll for it lacks the restorative and energizing satisfaction of spiritual living. Physical problems and psychological suffering clicked certain switches for Merton. Friends turned up as books, teachers, and fellow students (he had enrolled at Columbia in New York City), and in the architecture and decoration of churches (not the first time this had happened in his life). He began to pay increasing attention to Truth's offer, but kept on with most of the self-destructive habits. Conversion to Catholicism helped, but wasn't enough to clean up his life. Caught up in guilt and inherent stupidity entered a Trappist monastery, thinking it the only place where he could win the struggle. By now he had learned that the struggle was not with others, but with ignorance-blindness-selfishness.

In *The Seven Storey Mountain*, Merton goes whole hog for Catholicism and, a bit later, the Cistercian approach to it. The fervency and conviction of the new convert is verbally

powerful, to the point that he often seems to be looking down at Protestants and followers of non-Christian traditions. But Merton is incapable of long-term narrow-mindedness, as shown in his respect for and gratitude toward William Blake (who didn't like Catholics) and Bramachari (a Hindu monk) during the Columbia days in which his conversion took place and the Buddhist and Hindu teachers he came to know in his later years, such as D.T. Suzuki and the Dalai Lama. His life ended in Asia, soon after a powerful spiritual experience before the Buddha images of Polonnaruwa, in Sri Lanka. Yet while there was a tremendous opening up to persons and teachings outside his own tradition, Merton in no way abandoned his Catholic foundations. This ought to inspire those of us who at times see our own faith as the best or only vehicle of Truth. To shut ourselves up within one tradition is a false security, while a faith that can honestly communicate with other traditions has nothing to fear. It is open to many strengths and resources, it avoids religion's ugliest errors. We need not try to blend all teachings into one, but an appreciation of our common ground is necessary if we are to survive the threat of the capitalist and communist materialisms. The complexity and interconnectedness of today's world gives us no choice. Fortunately, it's a very good choice for all who seek spiritual peace, as Merton shows us.

Another conflict to be faced is the dualism of world and spirit. It haunts most religious traditions and many dedicated devotees (nuns, monks, priests) are trapped by it. Many of us find ourselves, at some time, fleeing the world and hiding in our spirituality. But no matter where we go or what we do the world is always here, it can't be transformed by flight. Early in his life, Merton thought it was necessary to reject the world and struggled to do so, but if our problems grow out of a selfish and unbalanced relationship to the world, then our salvation must involve that relationship. Only in blindness can we avoid asking certain questions of ourselves. What can be done about the suffering, physical and mental, of our fellow creatures? What are the practical meanings of spiritual values such as love, compassion, chari-



ty, mindfulness, wisdom? How much should we "get involved"? It is enough to love our fellow monks? Our answers will be individual and varied, we must each find our balance within the world-spirit relationship. Perhaps, then, the false distinction will disappear. It seems to have done so for Merton.

Merton chose to be a Trappist (Cistercians of the Strict Observance), a member of the most austere and ascetic of the Catholic orders. Although he thought penances and physical hardships necessary, his health was often poor. Later, he was less antagonistic to the body and openly enjoyed the "worldly pleasures" of his hermitage in the woods, which included picnics, an occasional beer, and Bob Dylan songs. Once again, we may not agree with all of his choices, but we can appreciate his working through the problem with honesty, intelligence, and creativity. Not only was he willing to confront issues that many of us never quite face, but he is able to share his learning and experience with those who read him. We all must view and use this body and its difficulties with understanding and compassion.

Spiritual tranquility is found in the resolution of conflicts such as these. This must happen inwardly, not in contractual arrangements with the ecclesiastical, economic, political, and social powers that be. With sincerity and dedication, Merton probes within himself to sort out the roots of conflict. While there are almost always external players to use as a scapegoat, the true sources of conflict are within our own sins and defilements, in individual selfishness. Until we work out the inner

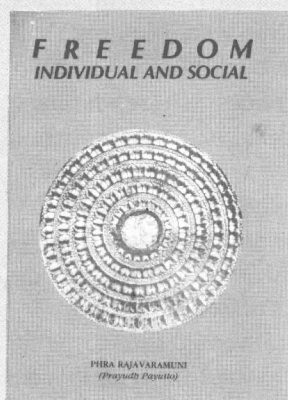
obstinacy that refuses Natural Law, we can never respond to life healthily. Merton seems to have found his health in what Buddhists call the Middle Way, in an equilibrium that is no longer caught up in extremes. Those who bury themselves in one extreme or another, if not one after another, can't appreciate the fluidity, beauty, and peace of the middle, for they don't acknowledge ignorance and its selfish spawn. But once Merton found his inner balance, he could sort out what was reasonable in himself, others, and the world. He could then respond with clarity and peace to the former problems of Abbot, public, world, and personal conditioning.

I will allow myself only a few critical comments. First, Merton is a fine writer and he is fun to read. He uses words with a skill beyond most of us—intelligent, caring, alive, wise, witty, powerful, aware. Second, Monica Furlong brings adequate skill to her task; she doesn't burden the reader with her own opinions and psychological interpretations, while she does her best to understand Merton and his life. Her only failing seems to be a lack of insight into the ways and rationale of monastic life, when she judges obedience, conformity, and asceticism on worldly grounds, rather than for their spiritual efficacy.

Thomas Merton entered the Middle Ages when he joined the Trappists, but he was living in the modern world when his body died in Bangkok. He found peace and happiness in this very world. For anyone—ordained or not, of whatever tradition—who seeks peace and happiness in this life, in this world for oneself and all of humanity, there are many valuable lessons in the life, work, and spiritual journey of Thomas Merton. The two books which inspired this appreciation are a good place to begin learning, but this **bhikkhu** will not stop here.

Santikaro Bhikkhu  
Suan Mokkhabalarama  
Chaiya, Surat Thani, Thailand

Thomas Merton. *The Seven Storey Mountain*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1948).  
Monica Furlong. *Merton*, (New York: Bantam, 1981).



## Freedom: Individual and Social

Phra Rajavaramuni (Prayudh Payutto), *Freedom: Individual and Social*, (Bangkok: Grapico, 1987) 53 pp., free distribution, paperback.

This short volume contains two essays, "Buddhism and Peace" and "Sangha: The Ideal World Community"—the latter delivered in January 1986, at the 4th International Congress of World Buddhist Sangha Council held in Bangkok, and the former in December 1986, at a seminar observing the **International Year of Peace**. In both essays, Phra Rajavaramuni attempts to use Buddhist principles as a model for arriving at a more peaceful, free and democratic society. In the first essay, he suggests that development of technology has taken precedence over the development of human beings—or mental cultivation. He cites selfish desire, egotistical hunger for power and dominance, and clinging to views, faiths and ideologies as the primary obstacles to peace. In the second article, he points out how civilization may become truly civilized, using the Sangha as a model for an ideal community.

This edition was printed

from lay donations and distributed free of charge.

## Buddhism and the Future of Cambodia

(Rithisen Temple: Khmer Buddhist Research Center, 1986) 165 pp., 120 baht, paperback.

*Buddhism and the Future of Cambodia* is a collection of essays by a variety of hands from various lands: including Son Soubert's "The Historical Dimensions of the Present Conflict in Cambodia"; Ieng Mouly's "Causes of the Suffering and the Options of Strategy to Rebuild the Khmer Society"; Khmer Buddhist Research Center's "The Vietnamization of Cambodia: An Irreversible Fact?"; Dr. Somboon Suksamran's "The Buddhist Concept of Political Authority and Society as Basis to Rebuild the Khmer Society and Nation"; Trevor Ling's "A Buddhist Concept to Build the National Economy"; and the final essay by Son Sann, from which the book derives its name, "Buddhism and the Future of Cambodia."

The book is predominantly a multi-faceted statement of the role of Buddhism in Cambodia and the future possibilities for its survival; the Khmer Buddhist Study Research Center states that they have offered this collection in order to inquire into how Buddhism may continue to "protect our beloved homeland of Cambodia, now and forever."

## Back to the Roots

Phongphit, Seri, ed., *Back to the Roots: Village Self-Reliance in a Thai Context*, (Bangkok: Rural Development Documentation Centre and Village Institution

Promotion, 1986) 165 pp., 120 baht, paperback.

This book is collection of essays by a team of Thai authors involved in development work in Thailand. The volume includes the following essays: "Village Institution and Development Work" by Vichit Nanthasuwan; "Village: an Autonomomous Society" by Aphichart Tongyu; "Two Ways of Thinking" by Bumrung Bunpanya, which divides developers into two groups—those who think like the villagers and those who think as "outsiders"; "Where do I stand?" by Yongyut Trinuchakorn, a penetrating autobiographical approach to explaining the author's own experience and views on development; "A Farmer's Enlightenment: Vibul's Way to Self-Reliance" by Surachet Vetchapitak, which offers a profile of one villager who worked to attain self-sufficiency and avoid the "wheel of poverty"; and "The Village Economy in Pre-Capitalist Thailand" by Chattip Nartsupha.

The editor has constructed a volume which offers us insight into NGO efforts of development. Articles range from topics of the village as an institution with a tradition of self-reliance, to attempts at mapping out the path tread by villagers and developers in seeking a more meaningful course of development. It is clear that the essays have been written from first-hand involvement by a dedicated group of development workers interested in true alternatives. This is an important volume for those interested in development work and current changes in village-level Thailand.



## Christianity and the World Religions

Kung, Hans. *Christianity and the World Religions*, (London: Collins Publishers, 1987) 460 pp., 20 pounds, hardcover.

In this ambitious volume, Hans Kung, Professor of Dogmatic and Ecumenical Studies at the University of Tubingen, Germany, takes on scholars of Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism and attempts to offer a Christian response to each. The book looks like a German forum on world Religions with Kung having the last word: Josef van Ess offers the Islamic perspectives, Heinrich von Stietencron the Hindu, and Heinz Bechert the Buddhist—with Kung taking his turn at every step of the way to offer his Christian response to each.

Kung states that he seeks a dialogue of "reciprocal information, reciprocal discussion and reciprocal transformation" in order to arrive at a "mutual critical enlightenment, stimulation, penetration, and enrichment of the various religious traditions." According to Kung, this, however, must be carried out in such a way that the result is not an "uncritical mishmash," a kind of new unified world religion. Finally, he suggests that there can be no world peace without religious peace and understanding.

There is no easy way to summarize this stimulating tome in the space available to us here. Kung has taken a big bite—even attempting to address important and complex issues of schools and traditions in each religious tradition. You must peruse this work for yourself and decide whether or not he has bitten off more than he can chew.

## Journal of the Siam Society

*The Journal of the Siam Society*, Volume 74, 1986, 260 pp., 300 baht (or US \$15).

The current volume of the *Journal* is now available from the Siam Society (G.P.O. Box 65, Bangkok, Thailand). It includes the following articles: Jacques Ivanoff, "Les Moken: Litterature Orale et Signes de Reconnaissance Culturelle"; S. Singaravelu, "The Episode of Maiyarab in the Thai Ramakien and Its Possible Relationship to Tamil Folklore"; Thomas John Hudak, "Meta-Rhymes in Classical Thai Poetry"; Richard O'Connor, "Merit and the Market: Thai Symbolizations and Self-interest"; David L. Gosling, "Thailand's Bare-headed Doctors: Thai Monks in Rural Health Care"; Geoffrey C. Gunn, "Shammans and Rebels: The Batchai (MEO) Rebellion of Northern Laos and North-west Vietnam (1918-1921)"; Nai pan Hla, "Remnant of A Lost Nation & Their Cognate Words to Old Mon Epigraph"; S. Sivaraksa, "The Last of the Princes: A Centennial Reflection on the Life and Work of Prince Dhani-nivat Kromamum Bidyalabh"; and Klaus Wenk, "Some Remarks About the Life And Works of Sunthorn Phu."

This interesting volume also carries a large number of current and relevant book reviews by a host of international reviewers.

## Buddhism and Education

Phra Rajavaramuni (Prayudh Payutto), with translation and poetry by Grant A. Olson, *Buddhism and Education*, (Bangkok: Equanimity House and Chulalong-

korn University, 1987), 21 pp., free distribution, paperback.

This small volume published to commemorate the first birthday of a baby, includes an essay by Phra Rajavaramuni on the role of traditional monastic education in Thailand, which, he feels, is still significant in many parts of the nation due to the inability of the State education system to actually make education available for the masses in all parts of the country. It is valuable for those interested in both Buddhism and the problems of modern education in Thailand.

## Pasa Thai Khab Khon Roonmai

(Language and Today's Generation)... — looking at the roots of the Thai language.

When a disciple asked what he would do first to reform the State, Confucius replied:

"...Correct language...If language is not correct, then what is said is not what is meant; if what is said is not what is meant, then what ought to be done remains undone; if this remains undone, morals and art will deteriorate; if morals and art deteriorate, justice will go astray; if justice goes astray, the people will stand about in helpless confusion. Hence there must be no arbitrariness in what is said. This matters above everything."

Many people, except for certain linguists, may argue until they're blue in the face over the accuracy of the above thought. Not Sulak Sivaraksa, the volatile social critic/historian who quotes it at the beginning of his recent book, *Pasa Thai Khab Khon*

*Roonmai* (Language and Today's Generation). Sulak's many observations would turn a lot of people scarlet in the face—from indignation or anger, but nevertheless most of them are fact.

Being a scholar who cherishes truth, Sulak once again adheres to his true form in this publication which has been rewritten by the author himself from his talk given at Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Art last year. The author brings one's attention back to what's believed to be the roots of the Thai language, Sanskrit and Pali. He makes distinctions between "spoken and written" language, giving as examples several works by scholars, past and present, and explains why language degenerates.

One of the forces of decay in the Thai language is the dubbing of English words into our own. Words like "station", which became 'satay-tan' and later 'sata-nee'. "For words which we don't want to sound Thai, or Thai mixed with Indian, we keep the original like the word 'communist'...", gibes Archarn Sulak.

This publication is thoroughly interesting. But Sulak does comment earlier that he's in no way a "linguist". He leaves plenty of his wisdom for one to ponder on. "As long as the Thai language is being controlled by educated people, it will not move according to its past structure. But it will have its own course of development, both spoken and written..." He adds one "shouldn't be too narrow-minded" to accept this. The author is referring to development from tradi-

tional Thai to contemporary Thai, not from the Anglo-Saxonised in this case.

In conclusion, the author expresses his ardent concern and proposes a three-point plan as to how we can save our language from being drowned in the polluted water surrounding us. Briefly, he blames the "capitalistic culture—the sexual appetite of the mass media in which television has replaced scholastic institutes; the bureaucratic system that's half colonial and half elite; and others which I've earlier described."

An Appendix, Sulak's essay in English on the processes involved in the compilation of Thai dictionaries in 1917 is a treasure as far as its depth is concerned. It was written in 1983 when Thailand celebrated the 700th anniversary of the Thai alphabet invented by King Ramkhamhaeng. At the time Archarn Sulak called for the "reorganisation of the Royal Institute" without which it "will not be in a position to lead the public academically, intellectually or culturally".

*Pasa Thai Khab Khon Roonmai* was published to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Suksit Siam, Sulak's publishing and book centre last month. A long history of this famous point of literature is given in the beginning. Included are poems contributed by the country's many leading scholars and poets written at different periods of time for Suksit Siam. Amongst those are Por Na Pramuanmark (Prince Chand Chirayu Rajani), Khanchai Boonpan, Angkarn Kalayanapongse, Naovarat Pongpaibul and Vittaya Chiangkul.

The drawing on the cover is Angkarn Kalayanapongse's work.

Can one hope to get more out of a publication that costs only 20 baht?

by Gap

*Bangkok Post*, Sunday May 3, 1987

## Forthcoming Books Worth Waiting For

### **Sivaraksa, Sulak, *Religion and Development*.**

This is a reissuing of an earlier volume of Sulak's Sinclair Thompson Lectures (9th Series, February 1976). At these annual lectures held in Chiang Mai, Sulak chose to speak on the role of religion in development and how religious values may inform the development process; he, essentially, compares what he calls "quantitative" development—mainly concerned with statistics—with "qualitative" development which carries concern for the more far-reaching values of mankind, especially those values found in various religious traditions.

### **Phra Rajavaramuni (Prayudh Payutto), *Looking to America to Solve Thailand's Problems*.**

This book will be published by the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation in Bangkok and should become available within the next month or two. It is a unique Buddhist critique of development in Thailand and the tendency to blindly look to the West for development models. It is based on Phra Rajavaramuni's experience and observations while living, teaching, and travelling in the United States.