WORLD BUDDHISM

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WORLD BUDDHISM, a bi-annual publication of the World Buddhist University, deals with current, on-going research in Buddhism and comparative studies conducted by Buddhist and Buddhist oriented scholars. Inquiries and comments may be addressed to the Editor-in-Chief, WORLD BUDDHISM, World Buddhist University, located at 616 Benjasiri Park, Sukhumvit 24 Rd., Klongtoey, Bangkok 10110
Introduction

This special issue of WORLD BUDDHISM proudly presents a review of some of the work accomplished by the World Buddhist University, which after five years of its official opening has not only expanded its network of regional centres but also initiated lively participation in regular programmes, such as lectures, talks and meditation instruction in addition to research facilities. But while the World Buddhist University functions mainly through information communication technology, in particular its regular website, and the general conferences organized at regular intervals aim to maintain the spirit of close cooperation, it is WORLD BUDDHISM, the journal of the World Buddhist University that attempts to make more permanent the thoughts once shared and ideas once expressed in all its activities through the printed word. Thus, the journal brings you a selection of articles, research papers and lectures held during the last two years to greet the administrators, delegates and general participants of the General Conference and the WBU Council Meeting held in Taiwan from April 18 – 23 B.E. 2549 (2006).

What, in fact, could be a better introduction to the World Buddhist University than the lead article by Alan Oliver, its Program Manager who aptly describes the functions of the university in the first part of his article and then moves on with future plans or perhaps dreams of what could constitute a new civil society or Buddhist world order in the future? Dreams, not totally different, of a society described by the late Ven. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, such as his concept of Dhammic Socialism, a kind of utopia, are here taken under the microscope by Buddhist scholar Tavivat Puntarigavivat, who acknowledges the achievement of
Buddhadasa as a great social thinker but hazards a more reflective view of the theory within the modern economic situation.

In a study by Banjob Bannaruji, the WBU’s Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, a good amount of time and space is also given to the question of what is essentially Thai Buddhism. He describes in detail how Buddhism has amalgamated with the indigenous culture of the ancient land of Suwannabhumi and flourishes as a basis of Thai wisdom. Moving away from the Thai context, the article Buddhism is all Around Us tells us of ways in which Buddhism can be practiced anywhere and from any source, but finally the infinite wisdom of the Ven. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu as a great teacher is reaffirmed here. What follows are lecture highlights reported by Suttinee Yavaprapas for the SUNDAY FORUM organized monthly by its director, Chris Stanford who also features as a guest speaker at times. In his tract on Buddhism and Modern Science he uncovers similarities between the Buddha Garland Sutra and Quantum physics. The well known environmentalist Professor Emeritus Daniel H. Henning sees the interconnectedness of human, animal and plant life in this world while Alan Oliver shows how the study of Buddha’s life is a great source to understanding Buddhism. Finally, meditation master and scholar, Ven. Phramaha Bhatsakorn Piyobhaso offers guidance on how to deal with undesirable emotions through regular practice of meditation. It is hoped that the selection in his issue will give the reader food for thought, something to ponder, something to practice, and to participate with papers on Buddhism of interest to the general reader of WORLD BUDDHISM to be published electronically or in print.

Suthira Duangsamosorn
Editor-in-Chief
Table of Contents

Introduction 2

The Nibbana Project: Buddhist Exploration and Attainment through all Stages of Life 5
*Alan Oliver*

Critique of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa’s Dhammic Socialism 18
*Asst. Prof. Dr. Tavivat Puntarigavivat*

Buddhism as a Basis of Thai Wisdom 59
*Asst. Prof. Dr. Banjob Bannaruji*

Buddhism is all Around Us 77
*Asst. Prof. Dr. Suthira Duangsamosorn*

Buddhism and Modern Science 89
*Dr. Chris Stanford*

Buddhism, Biodiversity and Beingness 97
*Professor Emeritus Dr. Daniel H. Henning*

Dealing with Emotions through Meditation 103
*Ven. Prahmaha Bhatsakorn Piyobhaso*

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The Nibbana Project: Buddhist Exploration and Attainment through All Stages of Life

Alan Oliver
The Nibbana Project:  
Buddhist Exploration and Attainment through All Stages of Life

Alan Oliver  
WBU Program Manager

The World Buddhist University is primarily a networking institution charged with promoting Buddhism, stimulating cooperation and sharing among all Buddhist traditions, setting up new linkages among scholars and programs and coordinating the offering of Buddhist insights to solving world problems. This involves creating web sites, contacting scholars and institutions, setting up networks and soliciting and summarizing contributions from a wide range of Buddhist sources. Modern electronic communication makes this possible. We can be in contact with the whole world while setting up and managing these many interactions.

Buddhism is now joining the “party” happening in cyberspace. Its challenge is to go beyond the traditional emphasis on personal or individual liberation and transformation to address cultural and social liberation and transformation. Many people and organizations are doing this work and it can be argued from an evolutionary point of view that there seems to be a conscious force pushing humanity in that direction with many stumbles along the way. A “life centered” knowledge and consciousness is emerging. What does Buddhism have to contribute to this global dialogue? What is the Buddhist point of view? As Buddhists add to the personal focus a public focus and going beyond the geography of Eastern and Southern Asia to the global scene, there is “room at the table” where the world wide dialogue is taking place. Others turn to Buddhists and say “So, what do you have to say?” Buddhists need to decide what Buddhism can contribute to the dialogue.

This dialogue is not new; there has been interaction between Buddhist teachers and groups and the West going back to the Greeks and Persians. It became more frequent in the 1800’s with translations of old Buddhist scriptures and the colonial period when the West, while imposing itself
on the East, came into direct contact with Buddhist teachers and their religious structures. It has only accelerated in modern times with the diaspora of Tibetan teachers around the world beginning in the late 50’s, the export of Zen teachers from East Asia and the increasing number of searching students who could now afford to go off to Asia to explore and seek a spiritual path. However, the main message was still one of personal liberation not societal change. Buddhists in a way have become the victim of their own success. People ask “Surely you have something to contribute to the general culture?” Engaged Buddhism, first coined by the Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Han, is a response to that question that many Buddhists pose to themselves.

So individual scholars and some Buddhist organizations, both monastic and lay, search around in our bag of teachings and are pulling out some amazing practical programs. One that comes to mind is the work of John Cabot-Zinn in the Boston area of the USA with his work on pain reduction and bio-feedback using Buddhist meditation and other “practice” methods. Due to the Dalai Lama’s work with brain specialists, we are learning much more about what actually goes on physically in the minds of experienced meditators. Psychologists are using meditation and mindfulness methods in their counseling and activists sometimes seek more balance between action and tranquility. Deep Ecology is heavily based on Buddhist teachings of interconnection, impermanence and an appreciation of the whole in addition to the parts. There is much insight among Buddhist researchers and at Buddhist centres, but it is disjointed and often not widely known or used.

What is needed is a whole new “translation” of traditional Buddhist scriptures. Buddhists, or at least institutions like the WBU, must work to assemble the new applications of Buddhist teachings into usable documents or web files that can be practical guides for groups like UNESCO, The World Bank or the national planning and development offices of any country. This takes Buddhist teachings beyond the religious function of Buddhist structures and makes them generally usable by everyone.
Religious structures will always have their place as preservers of the teachings and as a source of insight, ritual and daily practice to followers. The Buddhist teachings are universal and are part of the world heritage of knowledge. They must be made available in modern day languages in ways that are practical and useful. There is a difference in the perception of the teachings (reading them, chanting them and meditating on them) and the interpretation of the teachings for the wider society. Interpretation is going to require a lot of hard thinking, research and writing, but there are Buddhist scholars who are already engaged in this process.

The WBU and other institutions and networks like it have the responsibility to collect, coordinate, advocate and then be at the planning meetings for dialogue and application discussions. The world awaits these “new translations” and we are behind the curve of suffering that is being produced by corporate globalism, rampant consumerism, addictions, environmental degradation and psychological emptiness. These are not systems to be discarded entirely, but they must be “tamed” for the benefit of people in general and for the future balance in our societies.

The core of this “world heritage” includes such teachings as how we look at reality as never fully satisfying or as out of alignment, impermanence of all phenomena, how our conditioning prevents us from connecting directly with reality, and the nature of cause and affect in our lives. Wisdom and compassion are closely related in Buddhism as is how we are interconnected to all life forms as well as being responsible individuals. Buddhism describes how the mind works in its constant effort to keep things as they are or to change, how they are resulting in clinging and craving and attachment. Also it addresses how to stop these attachments. It looks at how we can be balanced and tranquil and really appreciate and learn from the present moment. Over all, it presents the possibility of a way of life, a path called the Middle Way, which can lead to happiness, productivity, balance and the ability to deal creatively with reality no matter what it is at the moment. There
are lessons in these teachings that go beyond any religious structure and that address many of the ills of modern life.

The Nibbana Project (see the definition of Nibbana in the attached appendix to this article) is an effort to identify a term that will give this “new translation” project a focus like the Genome Project was for the research into the human DNA. Actually, we are identifying the “DNA” of Buddhism in order to apply it to public policy issues. As a title it is a first step to focusing attention, getting people involved, identifying needed resources and organizing it so this can be accomplished in the next few years. Of course it is open ended as new insights emerge and are added to the base understandings. The teachings are extensive and deep enough that new insights and uses will constantly be found as we “practice” in engaged ways with the teachings.

Approaches will vary. We can use the teachings themselves as the structure to see how they play out in practical suggestions. We can use the subject topics like economics, environment, psychology, or peace and then find out what teachings apply to those disciplines. A third alternative is to use the target audiences to discover what applies. The work of the Nibbana Project will be to explore all these formats. In this article I offer the following examples based on the third model-target audiences. These sample programs are some that the WBU could consider pursuing as part of its contribution to the “new translation.”

**Youth programs (0-25)**

1. **Generic meditation instruction and practice as a part of all school curriculums:** Schools create an unnatural environment of large numbers of young people in confined areas which create high stress, psychological pressure and even violence. Why not include this long established and proven spiritual method in all schools to increase focus, reduce stress and decrease distractions. This methodology will provide students with a more balanced environment and give them a technique to create space for more
freedom from the constant bombardment they are subjected to by modern day society. The WBU should advocate this to all educational programs.

2. Through the use of motion pictures examine the basic questions of life as developed in Buddha’s teachings: Youth like films and films are filled with ego, desire, alienation, love, longing, emotions and disconnection with reality. Through presentation and discussion of films using Buddhist teachings, students can arrive at a much clearer understanding of their own lives and how to deal with situations in balanced, insightful ways.

3. The study of Buddha’s life and the inquiry process: Buddha’s life can be an inspiring example of the human search for meaning. Modern techniques of inquiry which stress the outer methods can be combined with the inner process of inquiry taught by the Buddha to promote a more balanced and complete inquiry model. This new East/West Inquiry Model can be a tool for use in any situation in the student’s life or any type of development process used in the adult world.

Adult programs (26 to 50)

1. Seminars for tourists which introduce the transformative opportunities when you leave home: Help tourists move from just objective perceiving to interpretation of what they experience in relation to their inner consciousness. When people move outside their regular context it is a great opportunity to help them see their conditioning and ego states. They can better see things freshly based on their moment to moment experiences. The very nature of the trip is impermanent so they can see that, but in the perspective of larger truths. Buddhist teachings have much to offer through this type of transformative seminar that could be offered to tourists anywhere in the world.
2. **Individual or small group discussion sessions about personal or public issues:** These sorts of discussion sessions offer the opportunity to match Buddhist teachings with personal or public problems. The leader does not counsel or advise, but tries to find teachings that match the states of mind, emotions or programs that are discussed. Just pointing things out or “naming” things has been found to be helpful in Buddhist practice. Is there ego present? What conditioning of the mind is there that plays a part? Does a letting go process need to be used? It is up to the individual person to decide what to use or how to use it.

3. **Arranging or suggesting retreat or meditation sessions for everyone:**
Every person needs “purification” at times or opportunities for leaving the regular schedule to simplify and get back to basics. To break the pattern of distractions, desires and roles is an important step to balance and sanity. In these quiet places, the mind can be cultivated to see with wisdom and compassion and beyond the ordinary experience that has taken over a person’s life without much conscious thought. Buddhists should advocate for this active mastery world wide as part of everyone’s right to mental freedom.

**Senior programs (51 to 100+)**

1. **Redefining retirement to mean transformation:** Currently retirement is talked about in terms of economic change (leaving your employment) and leisure opportunities. Buddhists should offer seminars, book study programs, adult study circles and general discussion opportunities to encourage people entering this linear time period to redefine what lies ahead. Studies have shown that positive or negative concepts of aging have a direct affect on the aging process. This is the result of conditioning along with the natural changes in the body. Transformation offers a whole different paradigm and Buddhists need to develop programs and advocate this world wide.
2. Training 50+ year olds to be Buddhist teachers: Buddhism needs a new corps of lay teachers who are trained in modern interpretations of the teachings and can practice and present these ideas in communities all over the world. This perhaps requires a new “order” of trained practitioners who are over 50 years old who want to dedicate their re-birth (after 50-the second half of their life according to Deepak Chopra) to the transformation of others and to the transformation of society. The role of “elders” was traditional in many societies and this can to be reclaimed for the global society. Buddhists can take the lead in defining this new “order” and offering training and guidance with the goal of becoming a master practitioner.

3. Redefining the role of retirement homes, assisted living, nursing homes and hospice programs: If the program at these important institutions is only focused on waiting to die, it is like the interminable delay at the “airport waiting area” waiting for your “plane” to finally board and take off. Are meaningless games, fake fun nights, vacant TV watching and senior outings all we can think of for this potentially vital part of life? All of these have their place and may offer moments of pleasure, but they don’t constitute a reason for being, for transformative living. Much more is possible as Buddha demonstrated into his 80’s. Buddhist teachings can help us redefine this part of life and the institutions that have responsibility for caring for people in these situations. Whether the institution is the family or a collective living situation, the philosophy should be one of “enrollment in a program,” a focus on developing awareness and wisdom and experiences that provide new insights and transformative moments of life. Programs need to develop a positive ideal for the senior stage of life. This needs to be a world wide movement and Buddhist teachings have much to share in shaping this program.
Conclusion:

These brief descriptions are a sampling of the programs and insights Buddhists can apply to public issues and personal and societal transformation. Buddhism is known for the broad view and are admired for those views. Other people know that Buddhism is for world peace, compassion for all creatures, a balanced “Middle Way” of living in tranquility and personal development. What they don’t know is how to apply these states of mind to the public sphere beyond the personal practice of individual Buddhists which has received the most attention.

I believe that collectively Buddhists have not done the hard work of rethinking the basic core teachings and translating them into actions and programs. We need a new translation of the teachings and we need to do it for today’s world. A kind, balanced, just world may depend on it.

To end on a Buddhist note from the scriptures: Each morning Samanere Rahula (Buddha’s son and then one of his monks) would wake up early in the morning and throw a handful of sand into the air saying, “Today may I receive from my instructions as much counsel as these grains of sand.”

The world community could well ask the same of Buddhists around the world, “Today may we receive from the Buddhists as much counsel (and practical programs) as these grains of sand.”

References:

2. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (2005) HANDBOOK FOR MANKIND, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Bangkok
   Also articles from “For You Information”: Buddhist Understanding of Managing Stress, Anxiety and Anger; Into The Golden Age; Aging Gracefully; Stress and Anxiety.

Appendix: The Meaning of Nibbana

Nibbana is a state of mind beyond description of words and phrases. This description is therefore just one impression of this mental state that every Buddhist strives to attain. It is not a location or related to the world of time and space, but is transcendental, a personal experience that goes beyond logic and reason. It is realized through intuitive wisdom.
Nibbana refers to the extinction of something. At its core it means the cessation of clinging, desires and greed, hate and delusion. It is the removal from clinging towards the conditioned state of Dukkha (suffering and alienation) and the attainment of an unconditioned or “empty” state of mind where there is bliss and tranquility. Once attained it is eternal and does not lose its flavor over time. When the mind attains this unconditioned state, it leads to the cessation of rebirth (in suffering) and leads to a state of eternal happiness. It cannot be forced or controlled, but will burst out when the conditions in the mind are conducive and suitable. Practicing daily with meditation and mindfulness is a gateway to the path towards realizing Nibbana. (This version is my own restatement of material on Nibbana taken from Jeffrey Po’s book, “The Buddhist Companion”. See the list of references.)
Critique of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa’s Dhammic Socialism

Asst. Prof. Dr. Tavivat Puntarigvivat
Critique of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa’s Dhammic Socialism

Asst. Prof. Dr. Tavivat Puntarigvivat

In response to rapid social change in Thailand, Bhikkhu Buddhadasa (1906-1993), a leading Thai Buddhist thinker, has interpreted Buddhism not only from a religious point of view but also from a socio-political perspective. After devoting most of his life to reforming Buddhism in Thailand, Buddhadasa found it necessary to address socio-political issues from a Buddhist perspective. In the 1960s, he articulated his socio-political position in terms of “dhammocracy” (dhamma-thipatai): the social and political order should follow the law of Dhamma—the teachings of the Buddha. Later on in the atmosphere of the student led Revolution in Thailand from 1973 to 1976, Buddhadasa presented his unique theory of “dhammic socialism” (dhammika sangkhom-niyom).

Buddhadasa bases his theory of dhammic socialism on nature. To him, nature represents the state of balance for the survival and well-being of human beings, animals, plants, and the ecology of the world. In the state of nature, every being produces according to its capacity and consumes according to its needs; no being, whatever form it has, hoards “surplus” for its own sake. Buddhadasa calls this balanced state of nature socialistic. Problems arise, however, when human beings begin to hoard a “surplus” for the sake of their own profit; this leaves others facing scarcity and poverty. According to Buddhadasa, human beings can and should produce a “surplus,” but the “surplus” should be distributed for the well-being of everyone, and Buddhism provides the ethical tools for this fair distribution. Philosophically, dhammic socialism is based on this principle: none of us should take more than we really need. We should share whatever extra we have with those who have less. Social problems are fundamentally a result of greed. In other words, greed is at the heart of scarcity and poverty. Buddhadasa’s individualistic approach to social and economic problems, solved by the personal practice of self-restraint (sila “precepts” and vinaya “discipline”) and giving (dana), is, in many respects, reflective of his Theravada Buddhist world view. Within the modern economic situation, however, he fails
to address the issue of scarcity and poverty at the structural level caused by the global market economy. In this paper, I propose to analyze and critique Buddhadasa’s theory of dhammic socialism from a more structural and comparative perspective.

**Buddhadasa in the Thai Buddhist Context**

Buddhadasa is one of the most important reformers in the history of Theravada Buddhism in Thailand. From the socio-political perspective, Buddhadasa is a leading reformist monk whose rationalistic interpretations of Buddhism are continuous with the reform of Thai Buddhism initiated by King Mongkut in the nineteenth century. Buddhadasa has rationalized Theravada Buddhist doctrines and the Thai Buddhist tradition in response to modern scientific empiricism and the growing Thai middle class of professionals and intellectuals. In the process, Buddhadasa lays a theoretical framework for an alternative social and political order. From a doctrinal perspective, his emphasis on the study of the Pali Suttas and on “right understanding” (sammaditthi) has identified him as a representative of the Buddhist emphasis on the centrality of wisdom (panna) in Buddhist praxis.

The publication of the series of Dhammaghosana (propagation of the Dhamma), nearly 70 volumes of Buddhadasa’s lectures, is probably the largest publication ever produced by a single Theravada Buddhist thinker in the entire history of the tradition. When the publication is completed, it will be even more extensive than the Pali Canon itself. Donald K. Swearer evaluates the role and status of Buddhadasa in the history of Theravada Buddhism in the following way:

*History may well judge him as the most seminal Theravada thinker since Buddhagosha, and may evaluate Buddhadasa’s role within the Buddhist tradition to be on a par with such great Indian Buddhist thinkers as Nagarjuna with whom he has been compared.*

A number of Buddhadasa’s lectures have contributed a Buddhist perspective to the discussion of socio-political issues—particularly those concerned with his theory of dhammic socialism.
Buddhadasa’s Dhammic Socialism

The term “socialism” (sangkhom-niyom) in the Thai language is interesting in itself as it reflects a Buddhist perspective on socialism. The term sangkhom comes from the Sanskrit root sangha (community), and niyom from the Sanskrit root niyama (restraint). So sangkhom-niyom literally means the restraint of each member of the society for the benefit of the community. The restraint of oneself is one of the most basic teachings of the Buddha: sila (normality, “precepts”). As Buddhadasa understands it, the Buddhist sangha (community of monks) is a living example of the socialist way of life and the socialist community in Buddhism. For him, “dhammic socialism” is a socialism of the Dhamma. Buddhadasa bases his idea of dhammic socialism on his insights into nature, the teachings of the Buddha, and the practice of the Buddhist Sangha.

A. Dhammic Socialism and the State of Nature

According to Buddhadasa, the spirit or essence of socialism is rooted in nature (Thai: dhammadhati ‘born of dhamma’) The state of nature in its pure sense is an example of pure socialism. Buddhadasa sees that:

*The entire universe is a socialist system. Countless numbers of stars in the sky exist together in a socialist system. Because they follow a socialist system they can survive. Our small universe with its sun and planets including the earth is a socialist system. Consequently, they do not collide.*

Buddhadasa further develops his conception of the state of nature by introducing the Western theory of evolution, but while always keeping in mind the Buddhist notions of “conditionality” (idappaccayata), and “interdependent co-arising” (paticcasamuppada). He sees that after the earth became separated from the sun, it gradually cooled and hardened. As years went by this stone-like matter eroded into soil and dust, and various elements took shape. Nothing existed or came into being independently.
The primordial waters gave rise to the first single-celled organisms we call life. Over time this life evolved into multi-celled forms and then into plants and animals. All aspects of nature combine in an interdependent relationship. Buddhadasa maintains that,

*Even an atom is a socialistic system of interdependent parts. A molecule also exhibits socialistic characteristics in that it is made up of several interdependent atoms. On and on it goes—molecules combine to form tissue, tissues combine to form flesh or leaves or whatever, all interdependent and in balance, according to the principles of Nature's pure socialism.*

Buddhadasa observes that among all forms of life in the natural world, no one species takes more than its share. In all these various levels of living beings, none ever consumes more than it needs. Even the first cellular organisms took in only what their simple cell structures required to survive. Groups of cells consumed only enough to sustain the colony. Then plant life evolved, each plant consuming only what it needed to maintain itself. Then followed animals—types of fish, birds, and others. All consume only as much as their systems require. A bird eats only what its stomach will hold. It is incapable of taking more than it must have to live.

Throughout the process of evolution, according to Buddhadasa, from single celled organisms right up to the appearance of the first primitive human being, the natural world remained inherently socialistic. Nature did not provide any of its various forms with the means of hoarding more resources than were necessary for survival and development. Buddhadasa argues that in this state of nature:

*Birds, insects, trees—all consume only as much as Nature has given them the means to take in, a level of consumption perfectly adequate for their needs. It is precisely this limiting...aspect of nature that has allowed the plant and animal world to survive and multiply in such profusion and diversity.*
Buddhadasa points out that in this condition of normalcy, stones, sand, trees, and insects simply are; no artificial theory or social system directs their interrelationships. They exist in a natural state of balance, or pure socialism. To elaborate more on his theory, Buddhadasa argues from an anatomical point of view that,

*In these realms nothing exists independently: eyes work in conjunction with the ears, the ears with the nose, the nose with the mouth... All organs, big and small, need to work together performing according to their true nature (dhammasacca) as bodily components. Similarly, the spirit of socialism exists in everyone: the necessity of living together in a properly harmonious, balanced way.*

When human beings first evolved, argues Buddhadasa, and inhabited the forests and jungles, they had no granaries nor storehouses. They ate only what was necessary to survive; they gathered daily whatever food they needed. Buddhadasa claims that in this earliest period, no person or group stockpiled a surplus of anything, so social problems as we know them today did not yet exist. They lived according to a natural socialism for hundreds of thousands of years. We are here today because nature has maintained a harmonious socialistic balance through the entire evolutionary process. Buddhadasa argues that this natural balance was threatened, when a few “un-natural” human beings began to hoard more products for themselves than they needed. This hoarding left others with a shortage and gave rise to rivalry instead of cooperation. Human intelligence was then applied to methods of hoarding resources—grain, food, and other products—and accumulating wealth and power in order to take advantage of others. Buddhadasa contends that,

*Nature would have each of us use no more than we actually need. For years people have failed to heed the way of Nature, competing with one another to take as much as they could, causing the problems that we live with to this day. If we were to take only what is enough, none of these problems would exist, because then people would not be taking advantage of others and oppressing them.*
The question, then, is how much is enough? Buddhadasa suggests that there is no set rule. It varies according to the time, place, and situation. He complains that these days it seems nothing is ever enough—"Even two entire mountains of gold are not enough to satisfy the desires of a single person"—human desires keep multiplying, increasing our wants at the expense of other people. Once supplies were hoarded, problems of unequal distribution and access arose. The problems multiplied over time. Leaders of various groups would be in charge of stockpiling supplies for the group, and fighting among the groups was inevitable. To maintain control over society and to limit human greed (kilesa), laws and moral systems were developed.

Social justice, according to Buddhadasa, can be obtained when people "return" to the balanced state of natural socialism. To him, socialism is based on a principle in accord with the way of nature; that none of us should take more than we really need, and we should share our surplus with those who have less. We all have a natural right to take as much as we need, but not more. People all over the world should learn to share a portion of what they have, even if they consider what they share to be essential to their own well-being. Such sharing would be in accordance with morality (siladhamma), and everyone would benefit from it. After all, this does not mean that we should not produce a surplus. People have a right to produce more than they need, and it is even appropriate to do so if the surplus is shared with others.

From a religious perspective, Buddhadasa's argument contends that in the state of nature there exists the perfect essence of morality (siladhamma): the condition of harmonious balance and normalcy. Buddhadasa calls this balance and normalcy the plan or intention (cetana) of nature. People existed in this condition for ages until they lost morality and natural socialism as a consequence of their ignorance (avijja). When they transgress the natural balance in the cosmos they suffer the consequences of their ignorance. Nature punishes them for their ignorance and the destruction they inflict on it. This was the beginning of sin (papa). For Buddhadasa, socialism was not actually the creation of human beings, but rather the original state of nature.
which encompassed both the human and animal worlds. Social problems arose when human beings acted against this original intention of nature. More and more problems arose over time as a result of human effort—more and more distinctions were made among people. At some point it became necessary for human beings to construct a socialist system themselves because they had so separated themselves from nature.

From a Buddhist perspective, the truth (dhammasacca) or the essence of nature (dhammajati) is the essence of the dhamma. It is simply this: things are imbued with the spirit of socialism; miraculously, all things exist in unity with one another even though we may not have the eyes to see this truth or the wisdom to comprehend it. Nothing can exist independently; everything exists interdependently. Socialism, from a Buddhist perspective, includes not just human beings, but also all living beings and the entire natural environment. Buddhadasa argues that if each of us were to exercise our natural rights to the extent allowed by nature, this world would be filled with a contentment such as we attribute to the realm of Buddha Maitreya (the Buddhist Utopia), where there is no suffering (dukkha) or dissatisfaction. For Buddhadasa, this is the highest law of nature and the basis of his theory of dhammic socialism.

Buddhadasa’s theory that the natural state of plants, animals, and human beings is socialistic is insightful and well received. One may argue, however, that his interpretation of cosmic and atomic systems are also socialistic is problematic. The movement of stars and planets in the cosmos and of atoms in a molecule are mechanical and do not reflect ethical or social values. The same is true for the functioning of cells and organs in living beings. But here Buddhadasa uses “socialism” as a comprehensive term for all levels of being. His view of nature, however, is similar to Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution. In his book, The Origin of Species, Darwin writes:

*It may metaphorically be said that natural selection is daily and hourly scrutinising, throughout the world, the slightest variations; rejecting those that are bad, preserving and adding up all that are good; silently and insensibly working, whenever and wherever opportunity offers, at*
the improvement of each organic being in relation to its organic and inorganic condition of life. We see nothing of these slow changes in progress, until the hand of time has marked the lapse of ages, and then so imperfect is our view into long-past geological ages, that we see only that the forms of life are now different from what they formerly were.

Yet, what is behind Buddhadasa’s state of nature is quite different from Darwin’s theory of natural selection. According to Darwin, man not only evolved, but evolved by natural selection. Natural selection pictures the world in a constant process of change, but without any apparent prior intention of going anywhere in particular or of becoming anything in particular. In other words, Darwin’s principle of evolution is without what Buddhadasa calls the plan or intention (cetana) of nature. According to the Darwinian theory of natural selection, living organisms are all engaged in a “struggle for existence” in which only the fittest survive. But some Darwinians have also found among plants and animals some forms of “mutual aid” and “mutual support” for the maintenance of life, the preservation of each species, and its further evolution. This modification of the survival of the fittest would align Darwinism to a certain degree with Buddhadasa’s view of nature as “socialistic cooperation.”

Darwin’s zoological conceptions of the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest reinforce Thomas Hobbes’ (1588-1679) socio-political theory of the human state of nature. Hobbes maintains that nature has made human beings equal in their faculties of the body and mind. For the physical body, even the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest by various means. For the faculties of the mind, prudence is but experience which, with equal time and opportunity, equally bestows on all human beings the same capacities. From this equality of ability, argues Hobbes, arises equality of hope in attaining one’s ends. Therefore, if any two men desire the same things which evertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies. In his book, Leviathan, Hobbes maintains that in the state of nature, if one (person) plant, sow, build, or possess a convenient seat, others may probably be
expected to come prepared with forces united, to dispossess, and deprive him, not only of the fruit of his labour, but also of his life, or liberty. And the invader again is in the like danger of another.

According to Hobbes, three principal causes of strife among human beings are competition, diffidence, and glory. The first makes men invade for gain; the second, for safety; and the third, for reputation. Hobbes writes:

*Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war, as is of every man, against every man.*

And again,

*To this war of every man, against every man, this also is consequent; that nothing can be unjust. The notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice have there no place. Where there is no common power, there is no law: where no law, no justice.*

According to Hobbes, the passions that incline human beings to peace are fear of death, desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living, and a hope by their industry to obtain them. For these reasons, human beings drew up agreements and made laws in order to obtain peace. Hobbes’ state of nature is fundamentally at odds with Buddhadasa’s. While Hobbes maintains that in the state of nature, human beings are at war against each other; law and order and peace are the creation of human beings. Buddhadasa’s theory of the state of nature is just the opposite. Buddhadasa says that in the state of nature, human beings are socialistic, cooperative, and at peace. War is the creation of mankind out of the unnatural desire for “surplus.” While Hobbes discusses only the socio-political dimension of the human state of nature, Buddhadasa’s theory is more holistic: it embraces the entire world of nature—cosmos, plant and animal species as well as human beings. Buddhadasa’s theory provides a positive foundation for solving today’s world-wide ecological crisis. In his book, The Dream of the Earth, Thomas Berry, a contemporary American eco-theologian, writes:
We are beginning to move beyond democracy to biocracy, to the participation of the larger life community in our human decision-making processes... we must now understand that our own well-being can be achieved only through the well-being of the entire natural world about us.

With the contemporary environmental crisis—the destruction of the tropical rain forests, the expanding pollution in the atmosphere, and the extinction of many living species—Buddhadasa’s theory of the socialistic, balanced state of nature represents a progressive ecological worldview.

B. Dhammic Socialism and Religion

Buddhadasa argues that Buddhism, and all world religions for that matter, are essentially socialistic in nature. Buddhism in particular is a socialist religion, both in its principles and its spirit. Buddhadasa maintains that the Buddha was born into this world to help all beings—not to benefit any one person or even himself. If we consider the Buddha’s compassionate behavior toward all living beings, we can see the highest form of socialism. The socialistic ideal of Buddhism finds expression in the concept of the bodhisattva. The bodhisattva is one who not only helps others, but sacrifices himself or herself, even his or her own life, for others.

From Buddhadasa’s interpretation, the founders (sasada) of all religions have affirmed that they came to the world for the benefit of all beings; all have spoken out against excessive consumption. Buddhadasa claims that the founders of every religion have wanted people to live according to socialist principles in order to act in the interest of society as a whole. He also maintains that Buddhism and all religions are founded on the ideal of love and compassion toward all beings. This attitude engenders equality and freedom, and the sense of the essential interrelatedness of all beings. All religions are, therefore, socialistic in this sense.

In Buddhism, all members of the Buddhist community (sangha)—monks and laity—are not only taught but are required to consume no more than their fair share of material goods. Excessive consumption is wrong
and demeritorious. True Buddhists, argues Buddhadasa, have an unconscious ideal of socialism. It has existed in the Buddhist doctrine as well as the practice among Buddhist communities since the Buddha’s time. Buddhadasa recalls:

*We must keep in mind that socialism is not something new and faddish. If we were to go back about 2000 years we would meet the finest socialist system which was part of the flesh and blood of the Buddhist community. Consequently, if we hold fast to Buddhism we shall have a socialist disposition in our very being. We shall see our fellow humans as friends in suffering—in birth, old age, sickness and death—and, hence, we cannot abandon them. Everyone here should be able to understand this statement. The elderly, especially, may remember how our forefathers taught us to be altruistic, to consider others as friends in all aspects of life and death. This ideal of pure socialism must be acted out, not just talked about, and just for political purposes or for one’s selfish, devious and false gain. Buddhists need to become familiar with the socialism inherent in the Buddhist community, using it as a weapon against bloody forms of socialism which promote one’s own evil deeds and forces them on others.*

According to Buddhadasa, a good way to look at the meaning of socialism is to think of it as not taking more than one’s fair share—using only what is necessary so that the rest is available for other’s use. Both in the teachings of the Dhamma and in the rules for the monastic order (vinaya), it is written that Buddhist monks must live with only the bare necessities. All of these rules are given simply to guarantee that monks will not take more than their share, so that others will be sure to have enough to meet their needs. Buddhadasa argues further that the Dhamma teaches us to be content with what we have—to accumulate and own just enough to take care of our material needs. Accordingly, it places great emphasis on being generous with what we have. A true Buddhist community, according to Buddhadasa, would be content with the basic necessities of life. Whatever a person did not really need would be left available for the use of the entire community. Buddhadasa recasts the historical past of Thailand as a kind of Buddhist Utopia:
Religion was the foundation of our culture, our siladhhamma. Countless generations of our ancestors have been practicing religion as a central part of their culture. It was a fundamental part of each person’s life, of every home, and even of the entire country.

He observes that when villagers in his home area went out to the fields to plant fruit trees, vegetables, or grain, they recited this little verse as they planted the seeds:

Food for a hungry bird is our merit;
Food for a hungry person—our charity.

The villagers considered that they would receive merit (punna) if a bird ate food from the plant; if a hungry person took food from their fields, they considered it alms-giving or charity. The villagers always planted enough food plants so that birds and hungry people could have what they needed.

For Buddhadasa, the socialist characteristics of dhamma manifest themselves in the harmonious balance of everything. He argues that when people fall out of harmony with this natural balance, they experience suffering in the form of social injustice, tension and anxiety. So, instead of putting emphasis on solving social problems at the symptomatic level such as food shortages and hunger, Buddhadasa suggests that we should lead the society back to the socialistic and harmonious principle of dhammic socialism. Buddhadasa believes that “life in the truest sense is sustained by the Dhamma not just by food.”

Buddhadasa’s proposal seems to presuppose a religiously grounded society not unlike the monastic sangha.

Buddhadasa’s dhammic socialistic ideal may be relevant, if it operates naturally and spontaneously on a voluntary basis. There is a problem, however, if the sangha’s rules are to apply to society at large. Louis Gabaud comments that,

A civil society is composed of members who did not choose to get into it, who do not want to get out of it, and who do not have the same
ideals. A society of “renouncers,” such as the religious disciples of the Buddha, is composed of members who chose to “get out” of a civil society and to live according to a given ideal embedded in precise rules. Is it valid to assume that the principles of a community of “renouncers” apply to the society from which they wanted to leave?

In the modern context, if the Buddhist principles of self-restraint (sila and vinaya), loving-kindness (metta-karuna) and giving (dana) are voluntarily practiced by those Buddhists inside and outside of the sangha, they are acceptable to everyone in the society. But, from a modern socio-political perspective, to impose the religious rules and regulations of the Buddhist sangha onto a secular society would violate people’s freedom of religion. People should be left with their freedom of choice to accept or reject any religious rules or traditions. To impose the norms of a voluntary religious community in a society is both unrealistic and problematic. It would turn a dynamic modern society like Thailand into a static religious fundamentalist state. Furthermore, it is naive to think that a model of sangha government could order a diverse, pluralistic modern nation-state.

C. Dhammic Socialism and Social Ethics

From a social and ethical point of view, Buddhadasa makes the distinction between “socialism” and “individualism.” For him, to carry out the task of social work, or services to society, we must embrace the “social-ism” of the work; otherwise we are advocating “individual-ism,” or service in the interest of individuals. Socialism, according to Buddhadasa, focuses on the welfare of people in all sectors of a society as well as the examination and correction of social problems at all levels. In a society that puts the interests of individuals above those of the community, social problems cannot be effectively addressed. Buddhadasa criticizes individualism holding that, as the basic principle of most democratic societies, it cannot provide a basis for the well-being of all people in the society because it promotes individual benefits rather than social benefits. He argues that dhammic socialism, on the contrary, is more concerned with social benefits and can save the world
from what appears to be self-destruction—the world of individualism and material development which promotes consumerism, selfishness and the devastation of natural resources and the environment. According to Buddhadasa, social problems arose as societies formed. When people lived isolated from one another or in small groups, as in the Stone Age, social problems did not exist or were very few. As the population increased and people began living together in larger and larger groups, social problems began to appear. As societies grew and multiplied, people oppressed one another and the problems grew until they became crises. In this analysis, Buddhadasa’s concept of urban society differs from the German sociologist Emile Durkheim’s theory of the division of labor. In his book, The Division of Labor in Society, Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) explores how human beings, as social beings, create a division of labor and progress in civilization. Durkheim’s main thesis is that the volume and density of population are the cause of the expanding division of labor, and hence the cause of civilization. By the volume of population, Durkheim means the number of people living in one area; by the density of population, he means the dense and rapid social interaction among people in a given society. It is, for Durkheim, the volume and density of population that force people to specialize their work in order to improve survival in the new social environment. This division of labor is the cause of progress and civilization. Like Durkheim, Buddhadasa sees the volume and density of population in a given society as the cause of social tensions. But, while Durkheim regards social tensions as the cause of the ever more diverse division of labor in society, which results in a progressively better civilization, Buddhadasa regards social tensions as the cause of social conflicts and crises which need to be solved by returning to the spirit of sharing and loving-kindness under dhammic socialism. In short, Buddhadasa seems to propose a return to a pre-capitalist state.

Buddhadasa suggests that whatever system is laid out for the functioning of a social group, the principles of such a system must be for the good of the society as a whole, not just for individuals or for any one person. Buddhadasa argues that the content of society is social, not individual.
Even the need to procreate and produce children is, after all, a social matter. Human survival depends upon the support of others in the spirit of cooperation and care. From his emphasis on the public good, it seems that Buddhadasa disagrees with the capitalist conception of private property. This would align Buddhadasa with Karl Marx on this specific issue. Marx describes Adam Smith as the “Luther of political economy.” According to Marx, Adam Smith did to political economy exactly what Luther did to religion. As Luther transformed the external theology into the inner essence of man, Adam Smith transformed external property into private property. Adam Smith, in Marx’s own words, is the “prophet” of the “religion of private property.” Private property is embodied in a human being, and human beings have become the essence of private property. Marx comments that,

Just as Luther recognized religion and faith as the essence of the external world and in consequence confronted Catholic paganism; just as he transcended external religiosity by making religiosity the inner essence of man; just as he negated the idea of priests as something separate and apart from the layman by transferring the priest into the heart of the layman; so wealth as something outside man and independent of him—and therefore only to be acquired and maintained externally—is abolished (aufgehoben). I.e. its external and mindless objectivity is abolished inasmuch as private property is embodied in man himself and man himself is recognized as its essence—but this brings man himself into the province of private property, just as Luther brought him into the province of religion.

Ironically, whereas Buddhadasa disagrees with Adam Smith’s internalization of public property into private property, he finds himself on the same religious grounds as Martin Luther. Just as Luther internalized Christian teachings and deconstructed a formal priesthood into the inner essence of human beings, Buddhadasa internalizes Buddhist teachings and symbols into inner or psychological states.

Buddhadasa openly looks back into history for a more harmonious human condition. In order for people all over the world to live in
happiness, Buddhadasa suggests that we must go backwards and return to the way of the Dhamma: the harmony and balance of the socialistic state of nature. In performing any kind of social service, this basic principle should be borne in mind. At this point in history, according to Buddhadasa, the highest form of social work is to enable people to back up and get onto the right track. In his view, people nowadays have gone so far off course that the world seems headed for disaster: “We are about to fall into an abyss, if we have not gone over the edge already.” The problem of poverty, for example, is a result of people having gotten off the track. Even the current problems of illiteracy and ignorance of good health practices arise from having gone in the wrong direction.

By getting on track Buddhadasa means the recognition that human beings all face the same basic problem: overcoming suffering (dukkha). The most fundamental problems are not material ones like overpopulation and poverty, but rather the increase in desires (tanha), defilements (kilesa) and ignorance (avijja) which are the causes of psychological suffering. For Buddhadasa, solving social problems means returning to these basic causes of suffering. Social work for the benefit of all humanity in the most basic sense is to overcome this suffering. Buddhadasa comments:

*It is almost laughable simply to speak of solving the problems of hunger, illiteracy, and illness, because these are not the real problems at all; they are only symptoms. The fundamental problem is the lack of religion (sasana) and moral principles (siladhamma) in modern society. If we were to solve these basic problems, would illiteracy, hunger, and illness disappear? Even if they did not, people who had never learned to read could still be happier than the most literate among us.*

Again, he criticizes the current situation because many groups claim to be working for society, but they are actually after personal gain and glory:

*How can people who form international organizations solve the world’s problems when they are made up of selfish people?... Why do we not,*
instead, solve the problem by becoming human in the fullest sense of the word, according to the way of God and Nature, that is, putting the welfare of others before our own selfish interests.

As a religious leader, Buddhadasa condemns killing, war, and the preparation for war. The cataclysmic nature of warfare threatens all forms of life. Even animals are unintentionally subjected to the brutal behavior of human beings. Instead, he suggests the practice of the Buddhist ethical principle of loving-kindness (metta-karuna):

_Today people are so cruel that they have dropped a bomb knowing that it could kill (hundreds of) thousands of human beings... Both so-called socialist as well as capitalist countries are prepared to drop such bombs... If we want peace we should choose the path of peace. Killing others will only lead to being killed. The only way of living harmoniously together is to act out of loving-kindness (metta-karuna) ... We should overcome evil with good, for evil cannot be overcome by evil._

For Buddhadasa, social problems are mainly concerned with social ethics. Solving social problems, according to Buddhadasa, depends largely on people following these moral principles: we should act in the best interests of the entire community; avoid the consumption of goods beyond our simple needs; share with others what is not essential for us, even if we consider ourselves poor; give generously of our wealth if we are well-to-do. Buddhadasa believes that following these principles will lead to the solution of various social and economic problems.

Although Buddhadasa believes that the nature of society is essentially social—a set of complex social relationships—not simply a combination of individuals, and advocates “social-ism” rather than “individual-ism,” his approach is still individualistic. For him, personal greed is the root of social problems. No matter how hard we have tried to change social systems, if we do not apply the Buddhist ethical principle of self-restraint to ourselves and to every one in society, we are bound to failure in solving social problems. Buddhadasa’s individualistic approach might work well in a simple traditional society of the ancient past or in remote
rural Thai society, but it would fail to solve any structural problems in a complex society like contemporary Thailand, which is influenced by the highly organized global market economy under capitalism.

**D. Dhammic Socialism and Capitalism**

Ideologically, dhammic socialism is different from capitalism in that it offers a different economic system and a different political ideology, and their leaders have different moral qualities. Buddhadasa makes the distinction between a “capitalist” in the Western sense and a “wealthy person” in the Buddhist sense. A person of great material wealth (Sanskrit: sresthi) in the Buddhist tradition differs significantly from the contemporary capitalist (Thai: nai-thun ‘master of capital’) A capitalist, according to Buddhadasa, is one who keeps accumulating material wealth far beyond what he or she actually needs. A sresthi, on the other hand, is a wealthy person who uses his or her accumulated wealth to build rong-than (almshouse) for the sake of social welfare. A rong-than was an almshouse or a communal place where the poor could come and receive what they lacked materially. The status of sresthi was measured by the number of their rong-than. If they had no almshouses they could not be called sresthi. The more rong-than one had, the wealthier one was considered to be.

Buddhadasa argues that during the Buddhist era, even such terms as slave or servant had a socialistic meaning. He portrays a Buddhist Utopia in which slaves did not want to leave the sresthi. On the contrary, under capitalism, “slaves” hate capitalists. Buddhadasa claims that,

*Sresthi during the Buddhist era treated their slaves like their own children. All worked together for a common good. They observed the moral precepts together on Buddhist sabbath days... In those days slavery was socialistic and did not need to be abolished. Slave and master worked for the common good. The kind of slavery which should be abolished, exists under a capitalist system in which a master treats slaves or servants like animals. Slaves under such a system always desire freedom, but slaves under a socialist system want to remain with*
their masters because they feel at ease... Slaves were recipients of love, compassion, and care.

Buddhadasa argues that Buddhists have espoused socialism since antiquity, whether at the level of king, wealthy merchant or slave. Buddhadasa claims that most slaves were content with their status even though they could not be ordained as monks. According to Thai Buddhist tradition, however, the worst thing that could happen to a Thai man was the violation of his religious right to be ordained as a monk. Consequently, one can hardly agree with Buddhadasa that a male slave would be happy with his status without the right to ordination. Buddhadasa also claims that the slaves could be released from their obligations, or continue in them, as they chose. Buddhadasa’s view of Thai slavery is too utopian and too positive. He ignores the negative aspects of it, including parents abusing their children by selling them as slaves to pay the parents’ debts, being born into slavery and the arbitrary beating and torture of slaves. Buddhadasa’s claim that Buddhist socialism in those days was pure and totally different from the socialism of today is historically unfounded.

Buddhadasa maintains that without loving-kindness (metta-karuna) and charity (dana), the rich are strictly capitalists who simply accumulate wealth and power for themselves. They oppress their workers in order to make profit, accumulate excessive wealth, and reinvest for their own further profits. Buddhadasa places too much emphasis on the moral quality of the rich without asking the ethical basis of the prevailing social structure. Modern economists argue that the decision of the rich to make a profit and reinvest is rational. Under a market economy, economic laws and productivity take the place of moral responsibility. Adam Smith, for example, argues that the free market transforms private vice into public good. It turns greed into economic productivity. In The Wealth of Nations, Adam Smith maintains that by following the logic of profits, those who hold capital and make economic decisions, however unintentionally, eventually help the poor through their economic activity. Smith writes:
He generally, indeed, neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it. By preferring the support of domestic to that of foreign industry, he intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this case, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention.

For Smith, people are rational and calculating when it comes to their own self-interest. So, he argues, let these self-interested, free-market consumers associate with competing producers. Soon they will have products of high quality at the lowest possible price. Self-interest among consumers, combined with competition among producers, will transform individual greed into the fuel of an efficient economy.

This view differs radically from the economy of dhammic socialism. Buddhadasa proposes that the wealthy person (sresthi) in dhammic socialism employs workers in a cooperative effort for the welfare of the entire community. Wealthy people during the Buddhist era, according to Buddhadasa, were respected by the proletariat rather than attacked by them. Thus, the rich should not be capitalists who exploit their workers and hoard wealth, but sresthi whose high economic and social position enables them to be benefactors to the workers and the poor. In contrast to Adam Smith, Buddhadasa depicts the ideal economy as rather static without economic competition and a market economy, but with a high level of social welfare based on the personal moral behavior of the wealthy. Furthermore, Buddhadasa does not question the basis of such wealth whether it was fairly acquired or not.

Under contemporary capitalism, Buddhadasa rightly points out that people are destroying the earth’s raw materials, natural resources, and environment. Buddhadasa complains that the earth’s resources are being consumed in unnecessarily large quantities, only to be used carelessly and wastefully. Often times they are turned into instruments of harm: minerals are taken from the earth and made into weapons of mass destruction. Eventually those resources will become depleted, having
been used for wasteful and utterly useless ends. Buddhadasa comments that,

*If we were to use the earth's resources according to the laws of Nature and within its limits, we would not need to use as much as we do now. There would be plenty for everyone for years to come, or even indefinitely. Nowadays, however, we are squandering the earth's minerals so destructively that before long they will be gone. Acting in such a way is contrary to the Dhamma... If we were to use them as we should, according to the laws of Nature, there would always be an abundant supply.*

Buddhadasa maintains, furthermore, that if people would use only what was necessary, the world would have sufficient resources for all. According to Buddhadasa, excessive hoarding leads to scarcity, and scarcity leads to poverty. Therefore, not to take or consume in excess will lead to the elimination of poverty. Here, Buddhadasa seems to have a contradictory view. One could ask if, in such case, there would be any wealthy benefactors.

In Buddhadasa's view, human beings have exploited and devastated nature until many species of animals and plants have become extinct. Even some races of homo sapiens have become extinct because of the selfishness and oppression of other human beings. In Buddhadasa's view, selfishness has led to great disparities among people with some becoming excessively rich and others excessively poor. Both the rich and the poor, according to Buddhadasa, do not understand socialism correctly. This ignorance has been partially responsible for their respective conditions: the poverty of the poor and their exploitation by the rich. Buddhadasa maintains that wealth need not be condemned in and of itself. The rich should work to alleviate the conditions of the poor for the good of society. The poor, for their part, should improve their own conditions by working diligently and avoiding the kinds of misconduct which leads them to poverty. Buddhadasa's class analysis here is based on personal moral grounds without any regard for the
structural causes of social and economic class. Here again, he reveals his individualistic approach to social and economic problems.

Buddhadasa promotes the use of technology only if it is for the benefit of society at large. He agrees that modern technology should be used to produce a surplus, but this surplus should be made available to all who are in need, not for the profit of individuals. He believes that if people were to use technology in producing the products they all need and if shared, there would be plenty to go around. For mass media technology, Buddhadasa proposes that communication technology such as radios, televisions, and computers not be used solely for personal gain, but for the welfare of society. If these inventions were used in a dhammic socialistic way, he believes that peace and happiness in the world could be achieved in a short time. In short, Buddhadasa supports the use of technology as a means to produce a surplus for the welfare of all people in society. But wasteful technology simply promotes greed and devastates the environment. Unfortunately, Buddhadasa does not indicate what is an appropriate use of resources beyond the limits of necessity. More importantly, he does not propose any measurement for the fair distribution of the surplus among various sectors of society besides the personal voluntary charity of the rich.

**E. Dhammic Socialism and Democracy**

As Buddhadasa defines it, “True politics is a struggle against misunderstanding, wrongview, craving after defilements and the like.” All over the world politics has become a means to take advantage of others, and politicians speak only for their own advantage. This, according to Buddhadasa, poisons the real meaning of politics (Thai: kara-muang ‘making a town’.) He suggests that, “We need to see politics as a form of practical morality... when politics is seen as a form of morality, it can help the world.” Buddhadasa argues that,

*Politics is a moral matter. For a political system to be moral it must be consistent with the truth or the essence of nature (the sacca of dhammajati). A moral political system embodies dhamma, whereas a*
political system not based in morality is dishonest, destructive and inconsistent with the essence or fundamental truth of Nature.

Buddhadasa links the terms "politics," "socialism," and "religion" together. The word "politics" in its root meaning, according to Buddhadasa, can be defined simply as "concerning many people or things." Politics is a moral system based on social cooperation to solve the problems that arise from an increasing number of people living together. It is a strategy for addressing social problems. In this meaning of politics, argues Buddhadasa, "socialism" is a more moral political system than any other since it concerns social cooperation and the well-being of the whole society. In this sense, socialism is a system which brings about balance (prakati) in society. Buddhadasa defines "religion" (sasana) as the most perfect state of morality. Since a political system should be essentially a system of morality, politics and religion have an essential relationship and share a common ground. As Buddhadasa understands it,

The study of society, the "social sciences" (sangham-sastra), should be seen as basically a moral enterprise. The term sastra originally meant that which is sharp, used for cutting... When sastra is applied to society as sangham-sastra (social sciences) we can see that it means something sharp which will cut through the problems of society whether political, economic or social. Politics, as one of the social sciences, can be seen as a method of cutting through social problems.

Again, Buddhadasa points out:

The "social sciences" (sastra-sangham) is fundamentally ethical in nature for it proposes to "cut through" the problems of society in all its facets in order to bring about a natural harmony and balance among the parts. We need to see politics as a form of practical morality, not morality in the philosophical sense.

Concerning the political institution of "democracy," Buddhadasa maintains that democracy, on the one hand, can be a means of taking
advantage of and destroying others. On the other hand, it can be an instrument to create peace. "The term is used by both capitalists and the proletariat against one another. Capitalists use it to defend their acquisition of wealth and property, while the proletariat use it to deprive them of it." In his own terms, Buddhadasa approaches "democracy" from two perspectives. From a social perspective, democracy increases the likelihood for economic prosperity, individual freedom and human rights. But from a spiritual perspective, individual rights and freedom for people governed by defilements (kilesa) are the rights and freedom to indulge themselves in material goods. In this sense, democracy leads to consumerism, and consumerism inevitably destroys the Buddhist teaching of the welfare of all.

Buddhadasa classifies democracy into two categories: "liberal democracy" and "dhammic socialist democracy." Liberal democracy is the type of democracy known in the West that promotes, at least in words and pledges, equality, rights, and freedom for each individual in the society. It promotes material wealth and consumerism which, according to Buddhadasa, never satisfy the common people's greed (tanha), and it also devastates natural resources and the world's ecology. Buddhadasa criticizes it saying:

Liberal democracy, above all, upholds the ideal of freedom (saeri). But the freedom it upholds is so ambiguous that it seems always to be controlled by the power of human defilements (kilesa). Though the ideal of freedom is beautifully portrayed in the philosophy of liberal democracy, it is difficult to put into practice. The liberal philosophy or ideology of freedom does not have the power to resist the strength of human defilements. The ambiguity of the meaning of liberal democracy promotes the idea that anything one wants to do is all right... We must accept the fact that we all have defilements. That would be true even if all the people of the world were joined together. Liberal democracy cannot deal effectively with this fact.

Buddhadasa argues that "freedom" or "free democracy" in the Western sense is an individual matter which shifts the focus from social benefits
to individual interests. An emphasis on personal freedom for individuals ruled by defilement or greed (kilesa) goes against the fundamental meaning of politics which is concerned with the good of the whole. Buddhadasa maintains that a political system should be concerned with the well-being of the whole society as well as the issue of individual defilements. Any political system that does not emphasize the benefit of society as a whole is an immoral system.

Dhammic socialist democracy, in contrast to liberal democracy, promotes loving-kindness and compassion (metta-karuna) among people in a given society. According to Buddhadasa, all the material wealth produced in the dhammic socialist economy would be fairly distributed through the spirit of sharing and cooperation. He argues that the Buddhist spirit of giving (dana) would enrich people’s spiritual wealth and reduce material consumerism, which is destructive to the world’s environment. Buddhadasa maintains that:

* A more controlled form of democracy which is better able to cope with human defilement is socialism (sangham-niyama) which is opposed to the ideal of the individual freedom of liberalism. Socialism focuses on social utility, and the examination and correction of social problems... Dhammic socialism can save the world from what appears to be its self-destructive course... Worldly freedom which characterizes liberal democracy has a dangerous flaw, i.e., it fails to account adequately for kilesa or defilements. It contrasts with socialism in the most complete sense, “dhammic socialism” or socialism rooted in dhamma.

Buddhadasa advocates a dhammic socialist form of democracy, not a democracy of individualism which, as he sees it, fosters self-centeredness. He criticizes constitutional forms of democratic government which allow individuals to accumulate vast amounts of material wealth at the expense of the rest of the society. A dhammic socialist democracy, he argues, would put the needs of society as a whole first; individuals could not appropriate excessive amounts of wealth for themselves. A dhammic socialist democracy would adhere
to the principle of natural balance, thereby respecting the rights of all beings.

Buddhadasa’s idea of democracy is in vivid contrast to Western conceptions of democracy. Whereas Buddhadasa promotes a fair distribution of wealth through the personal Buddhist practice of loving-kindness and giving, Western thinkers would argue that a fair distribution of income could be achieved only through law and democratic political institutions. John Locke, one of the greatest spokesmen for political liberty, maintains that man is born with perfect freedom and all the rights and privileges of the law of nature and is equal to any other man, or number of men. In Locke’s terms, man by nature has the power not only to preserve his property—his life, liberty, and estate—against the injuries and attempted incursions of other men, but to judge and punish infractions of that law by others. Here, his philosophy may be a justification for the order of society at that time. When men formed a society, he argues, every one of its members surrendered his natural rights to the community. Those who are united into one body and have a common established law and judicature to appeal to, with authority to decide controversies between them and punish offenders, are in civil society one with another. Locke writes,

*Men being...by nature, all free, equal, and independent, no one can be put out of this estate, and subjected to the political power of another, without his own consent. The only way, whereby any one divests himself of his natural liberty, and puts on the bonds of civil society, is by agreeing with other men to join and unite into a community, for their comfortable, safe, and peaceable living one amongst another, in a secure enjoyment of their properties, and a greater security against any, that are not of it... When any number of men have so consented to make one community or government, they are thereby presently incorporated, and make one body politic, wherein the majority have a right to act and conclude the rest.*

Similar to Adam Smith’s argument in the field of economics, Locke argues in the field of politics that men surrendered the equality, liberty,
and executive power they had in the state of nature to society, to be disposed of by the authorized legislative powers as the good of society shall require, only with an intention to better preserve themselves, their liberty and property. Here, we find John Locke taking a position in opposition to Buddhadasa. Buddhadasa does not trust any political system or institution, but instead, he believes in personal ethical practice of reducing each individual’s greed (kilesa) for the good of the society. John Locke, on the other hand, believes in the rule of law, checks and balances of power to guarantee everyone’s right, equality, and liberty, and thus the good of the society. Once again Buddhadasa proposes an individualistic rather than a structural or systematic solution to a problem.

F. Dhammic Socialism and the Role of Leadership

Buddhadasa proposes that in a dhammic socialist society a just government could be obtained by having moral rulers who care for the welfare of the people rather than for themselves. Buddhadasa portrays the ideal leader of a dhammic socialist country as dhammaraja, a leader with the “ten royal virtues” (dasarajadhamma). He bases his theory of the emergence of a political leader on the Pali scriptures:

According to the Pali scriptures it became necessary to extend natural socialism to the political foundations of the community when oppression in the community became intolerable. People saw fit to invest a particularly capable, just leader with their trust and power. This leader or raja would govern in such a way that no one could oppress anyone else and the community would thus enjoy contentment (Thai: po-cai). Indeed, the word raja actually means contentment. Socialism as a political system, then, is truly socialistic in so far as its leaders secure the contentment of the entire community.

Buddhadasa further clarifies his theory of the emergence of political leadership by referring to a legend from the Agga—a suttanta. According to this legend, in the olden days when people lived in the forests and jungles without “culture” as we know it today, they all had sufficient
resources to meet their needs and they lived in peace. This original socialistic condition prevailed until they began to hoard, steal and quarrel, being incited by their greed (kilesa). People took advantage of one another causing widespread trouble. King Sammadiraja—the legendary first king in the world—appeared to bring peace and order. He was a strong, clever, and righteous leader who brought contentment to the people. He prevented quarrels, instructed the people, punished wrongdoers, and rewarded those who were good and righteous. This seems to be the basic model of political leadership for Buddhadasa. Such leaders strictly observe the ten royal virtues, the Buddhist ethical principles of leadership. The ten royal virtues as given in the Jataka text are as follows:

1. Dana (liberality, generosity, charity). The ruler should not have craving and attachment to wealth and property, but should give it away for the welfare of the people.

2. Sila (a high moral character). He should never destroy life, cheat, steal and exploit others, commit adultery, utter falsehood, and take intoxicating drinks. That is, he must at least observe the Five Precepts of the layman.

3. Pariccaga (sacrificing everything for the good of the people). He must be prepared to give up all personal comfort, name and fame, and even his life, in the interest of the people.

4. Ajjava (honesty and integrity). He must be free from fear or favour in the discharge of his duties, must be sincere in his intentions, and must not deceive the public.

5. Maddava (kindness and gentleness). He must possess a genial temperament.

6. Tapa (austerity in habits). He must lead a simple life, and should not indulge in a life of luxury. He must have self-control.
7. Akkadha (freedom from hatred, ill-will, enmity). He should bear no grudge against anybody.

8. Avihimsa (non-violence), which means not only that he should harm nobody, but also that he should try to promote peace by avoiding and preventing war, and everything which involves violence and destruction of life.

9. Khanti (patience, forbearance, tolerance, understanding). He must be able to bear hardships, difficulties and insults without losing his temper.

10. Avirodha (non-opposition, non-obstruction), that is to say that he should not oppose the will of the people, should not obstruct any measures that are conducive to the welfare of the people. In other words he should rule in harmony with his people.

The character of the ruler is the crucial factor in Buddhadasa’s dhammic socialism. If a good person becomes the ruler, then the whole system of dhammic socialism will be good. On the other hand, a bad ruler will produce an unacceptable type of socialism. Buddhadasa’s dhammic socialist state depends almost exclusively on the virtues, the responsibilities, and the decisions of its leadership. Buddhadasa cites a number of legendary and historical kings as the exemplary righteous rulers such as King Sammadiraja (the legendary first king in the world), King Asoka of India, and some Thai kings of the Sukhothai and Ayutthaya periods. Kingship based on the ten royal virtues is, according to Buddhadasa, a pure form of socialistic leadership. He maintains that,

The best example is King Asoka... He purified the sangha by wiping out the heretics, and he insisted on right behavior on the part of all classes of people... He was a gentle person who acted for the good of the whole society. He constructed wells and assembly halls, and had various kinds of fruit trees planted for the benefit of all. He was “dictatorial” in the sense that if his subjects did not do these public works as commanded, they were punished.
Again, he argues that:

Rama Khamhaeng [a king in the Sukhothai period] ruled socialistically, looking after his people the way a father and mother look after their children. Such a system should be revived today.

This model might have worked well for some kingdoms in the remote past, but for a highly structured and complex society today, checks and balances on power are required for social justice. The question to be raised here is about the idea of the “common good.” Who decides what the common good is? In all contemporary societies there are tough moral questions involving the common good, such as the abortion debate. In the case of Asoka, it may be easy to look back and say that what he did was for the common good and therefore the punishments he imposed on those who refused to work for that goal were justified. Because none of us were there to experience Asoka’s rule, we can idealize it. It is much easier to determine a generalized common good in retrospect than during the time the decisions are being made. In contrast to most Western thinkers, Buddhadasa’s approach lacks the perspective of a more structurally advanced model of society and its leadership. For Buddhadasa claims,

If a monarch rules with tyranny, of course such governments should be done away with. If, however, the monarch fulfills the Ten Royal Virtues, then his rule will embody the principles of socialism and bring about contentment in society. Under such rule there would be no capitalist oppressors or division of labor according to wealth and power; there would be no underclass of angry laborers resentful at being oppressed and at not having the power to accumulate wealth for themselves. A truly socialistic government would embody the characteristics of dhamma. It would not allow for class distinctions based on wealth. Nor would it permit anyone to accumulate private wealth at the expense of others.

Louis Gabaude comments that Buddhadasa’s vocabulary is problematic: he uses common words but with his own special meaning. Gabaude
argues that Buddhadasa’s model of rulership is unrealistic in the modern world:

“Socialism,” “democracy,” “dictatorship” have a common meaning affected by the historical implementations of their ideals. They refer not only to a precise set of ideas but to actual experiences. Buddhadasa’s new sets refer only to principles, to ideas and to dreams. As for experiences or facts, a Jataka King, a 3rd century B.C. ruler like Asoka, or a 13th century A.D. Sukhothai ruler, Ramakhamheng, can hardly be realistic models for ruling our complex societies and our independent citizens.

The democratic process is a time-consuming one, often at the expense of the community’s good. Hence, Buddhadasa adds the concept of dictatorship, not in the sense of a tyrant, but in the sense of a protector of the common good. As Buddhadasa understands it, the term “dictatorship” (Thai: phadetkan) has two meanings. As a political ideology like those found in the authoritarianism of a military dictatorship, it is certainly undesirable. But as a means of leading to a desirable goal, it means to handle things expeditiously. Buddhadasa’s notion of “dictatorial”—meaning to obtain a desirable goal, especially peace and justice in the society—developed at a time of social turmoil during the 1973-1976 period of political unrest in Thailand. During that period, it seemed that democracy could not really solve the problems facing the Thai people, who were ideologically divided between the extremes of right and left. To be able to bring peace and justice to Thai society, Buddhadasa argued that “dictatorial” meant the exercise of virtue and wisdom (dhammaraja) to end the hatred and turmoil, and to lead society to peace and order. Buddhadasa explains “dictatorial” as a means to obtain peace and justice in dhammic socialism thus:

Let us examine a very controversial notion, “dictatorial democracy” (prajadhipatai-phadetjakara). We tend to shy away from the word, “dictatorship,” because we are so infatuated with liberalism (saeri-niyama)...
To sum up, there are various forms of democracy such as liberal democracy and socialist democracy. The ideal form is dhammic socialist democracy in which “dictatorial” means are used to expedite solutions to social problems. We must not be misled by the usual associations of the word, “dictatorial.” Dictatorship in the sense of tyranny has no place in dhammic socialism. If dictatorial methods are consistent with dhamma, they will help expedite moral solutions to social problems, and should be used to the fullest extent. Our own country is currently in great turmoil, and we seem to have no clear vision of where we are headed. If we were more “dictatorial” in a dhammic way, we would be able to solve our problems quickly.

Generally speaking, the notion of a dictatorial dhammic socialist ruler in Buddhadasa’s thought is problematic because it is based almost exclusively on the personal “moral” qualities of the ruler. He seems to believe that with the ten royal virtues, the “dictator” would not go astray. Unfortunately, the justification of forcing people to do things for the common good comes frighteningly close to the old idea that the ends justify the means. One person is empowered to define the common good and then enforce it. This is a questionable approach to politics because it could potentially provide the opportunity for corruption and the misuse of power due to human fallibility. Furthermore, one may ask these questions: Does personal morality guarantee political ability and efficient rule? Who will check the virtues of the ruler? Who will decide that he is lacking those virtues? When should he quit? And what if he is not willing to quit? And what about the other sub-powers in the society itself? Louis Gabaude has raised these questions and points to the European experience in discussing the question of dictatorship:

Buddhadasa understands that, lacking of a common ideal, dictatorial power is needed to rule society according to the Dhamma. The problem is to define what actually, precisely, fits with the Dhamma and what does not. He trusts the dictator to decide, in a rather Manichaean way, what and who should be “dhammic” and what and who should not. Europeans still remember that, between the two World Wars, joint refusal of liberal democracy and communism gave all dictatorial powers to a
“Caudillo,” an “Il Duce” and a “Fuhrer” who were even supported sometimes by some religious groups in the very name of social order, morals, and efficiency.

Like many of Buddhadasa’s supporters among progressive Thai Buddhists, Sulak Sivaraksa is a strong proponent of democratic processes in government who finds it difficult to accept Buddhadasa’s claims about the desirability of a dictatorial form of Buddhist government. Sulak Sivaraksa comments:

*I think a weak point of Buddhadasa lies in this matter of “dictator,” because dictators never possess dhamma, and it’s like this everywhere because we abandon ourselves to having dictators. Even the abbots at almost every temple are dictators, including Buddhadasa as well.*

Buddhadasa sums up his political position saying, “I favor a Buddhist socialist democracy which is composed of dhamma and managed by a ‘dictator’ whose character exemplifies the ten royal virtues (dasarajadhamma),” and “In particular, small countries like Thailand should have democracy in the form of a dictatorial dhammic socialism.” In discussing these views, Louis Gabaud further points out how unrealistic the political position taken by Buddhadasa is in terms of the actual world, observing that Buddhadasa’s political thought is not convincing because no one can see how the three components of his utopian regime—dictatorship, dhamma, and socialism—could possibly be implemented at the same time in modern Thai society as it is.

Donald Swearer maintains that Buddhadasa’s dhammic socialism has three basic principles: Firstly, the principle of the good of the whole deals with political, economic, and social structures. Secondly, the principle of restraint and generosity governs individual behavior. And thirdly, the principle of respect and loving-kindness prescribes the right attitude toward all forms of life. He argues that Buddhadasa’s vision serves as a critique of both capitalism and communism and provides the basic principles for a political philosophy with the potential to help
guide Buddhist Thailand to a more just and equitable social, political and economic order.

Louis Gabaude takes a very different view. In developing his critique of Buddhadasa’s proposed political regime, he argues that Buddhadasa is assigning all the good to his dictatorial dhammic socialism. At the same time, he is assigning all the evil equally to liberal democracy and communism. Gabaude points out that the only difference is that liberal democracy and communism are real, actual regimes, while dictatorial dhammic socialism is a projection or mental construction.

Buddhadasa’s dictatorial dhammic socialist leadership reminds one of the philosopher king in the Republic of Plato. In his socialist republic, Plato categorizes people into three classes: philosopher king(s), warriors, and merchants (including all kinds of laborers). The philosopher king is the ruler who is the most virtuous and has the most wisdom. Plato’s philosopher king is similar to a ruler with the ten royal virtues in Buddhadasa’s dhammic socialism. Plato’s republic, however, was criticized by his famous disciple, Aristotle, who advocates more democratic forms of government. In his fourth book of the Politics, after describing the four principal forms of government as monarchy, oligarchy, democracy, and aristocracy, Aristotle adds: “But there is a fifth... Constitutional government may be described generally as a fusion of oligarchy and democracy, but the term is usually applied to the forms of government which incline towards democracy.” Aristotle’s constitutional government serves as a more democratic contrast to the leadership of both Plato’s republic and Buddhadasa’s dhammic socialism.

A more modern critique of the hierarchy of power explicit in Buddhadasa’s dictatorial dhammic socialism comes from the contemporary French philosopher Michel Foucault. In his book, Power/Knowledge, Foucault argues that the universal or superstructural theory of power has created problems in human civilization. As Foucault points out,
Where Soviet socialist power was in question, its opponents called it totalitarianism; power in Western capitalism was denounced by the Marxists as class domination; but the mechanics of power in themselves were never analysed.

What we need, argues Foucault, is not a political philosophy that is erected around the problem of sovereignty, or around the mechanism of law and prohibition, but a political theory that advocates the elimination of central power. Foucault analyzes the mechanics of power as something which circulates, or something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localized here or there, never in anybody’s hands. Power is exercised through a net-like organization. It is concrete power which every individual holds, existing only in action. Individuals are the vehicles of power and the individual is an effect of power and the element of its articulation. Foucault concludes that one needs to investigate historically, and beginning from the lowest level, how mechanisms of power have been able to function. By his new theory of power, Foucault has challenged not only a hierarchical structure of power such as that of a virtuous dictatorial ruler in Buddhadasa’s dhammic socialism, but also an institutional democratic structure of power. The best form of government for Foucault is probably the most decentralized which, being as abstract as Buddhadasa’s conception of dhammic socialism, has yet to be found.

In conclusion, Buddhadasa’s theory of dhammic socialism represents a particular Buddhist response to rapid social change in a modern Asian state. For an ideal political system and society, Buddhadasa always refers to the “golden age” of the historical past—whether it be a society during the time of the Buddha, King Asoka of India, or the kings of the Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, and Bangkok periods in Thailand. Buddhadasa portrays those ancient societies as full of the spirit of dhammic socialism with the leadership observing the ten royal virtues, people practicing Buddhist ethical principles such as self-restraint (sila and vinaya), loving-kindness (metta-karuna), and giving (dana). As in any traditional society, people in those periods might have had more intimate social relations and have followed religious disciplines more strictly. But
Buddhadasa forgets the historical fact that those societies contained various forms of social oppression such as slavery, annual indentureship, an inhumane and arbitrary legal system, and many assassinations in the recurring power struggles for the throne. Buddhadasa’s theory of dhammic socialism reflects his view of a Buddhist Utopia. As a political program, it fails to address realistically contemporary political, economic, and social issues facing Thailand today. The importance of Buddhadasa’s political thought lies in the fact that dhammic socialism serves as an indigenous traditional critique of modern economic and political theories as well as the construction of moral guidelines to create a new political philosophy. Buddhadasa’s greatest contribution lies in his theory of the state of nature which provides a philosophical agenda for solving the environmental and ecological crises facing the world today. As a leading reformist Buddhist figure, Buddhadasa has laid a religious foundation for contemporary Thai thinkers to search for a more realistic political ideology which would link traditional Thai culture to the modern problems under the influence of the global market economy.
Buddhism as the Basis of Thai Wisdom

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Buddhism is a great treasure, not only of Asia, its homeland, but also of the world. Thailand takes much pride in Buddhism which over the centuries has become the basis of Thai wisdom. Thai wisdom, wisely refined through its amalgamation with Buddhism, provides three social benefits: the propagation of Buddhist teachings, the maintenance of these in ways of Thai life and the intellectual development of Thai society, joining the ranks of civil societies in the world.

The Monarchy in Thailand also plays a key role of supporting Buddhism which can be witnessed through royal ceremonies, thus the application of Buddhist teachings in royal activities and everyday life is a sign of good relation between the two institutions that have been steadfast with the Thai nation for over 700 years.

Introduction

Just like Cambodia, the land now called Thailand, before the arrival of Christianity and Islam, had for a long time been a stronghold of Brahmanism and Buddhism, which were handed down to the Thai tribe from tribes alternately occupying the land. Thais, who first became familiar with Brahmanism, yet later did not hesitate to embrace Buddhism as their state religion, while respectfully keeping the former by its side.

While it is known that in their homeland – (Jambudipa or modern India) – Brahmanism and Buddhism posed a serious conflict, in oversea lands, especially in Suwannabhumi, where Thailand and Cambodia are located, the two religions coexisted peacefully. Noting this difference, Prince Damrong reasoned that “…as both religions were alien, their missionaries needed to be aware of a peaceful coexistence, they were, along with propagating their own religions, required to bow to native rulers and to teach natives to respect laws and kings …” (Prince Damrong. 2517: 127)
Brahmanism is believed to have been introduced by Brahmins with the Indian traders’ supports, thus Brahmins and traders played a key role in making their religion known outside India. Around 500-600 B.E., the Brahmin Kondanna is known to have travelled to Cambodia and married a native princess named Soma. Then he ascended the throne there and established his own royal dynasty. (Sphearin. 2541 : 1)

However, trade between Jambudipa and Suwannabhumi not only introduced Brahmanism, but also Buddhism, in particular along the Jambudipa-Suwannabhumi route wherever trade was flourishing. Thus, approximately in 239 B.E., after the Third Buddhist Council, King Asoka with the Venerable Moggaliputta as an adviser dispatched a team of Buddhist missionaries led by the Venerables Sona and Uttara to Thailand. Along with the introduction of Brahmanism and Buddhism, their respective cultures, traditions, ways of life as well as languages were introduced. Brahmins represented Brahmanism and Sanskrit while Buddhist monks introduced Buddhism and Pali. In fact, the preceding culture of Brahmanism was very useful to Buddhism; as native tribes accustomed to Brahmanism easily opened their minds to Buddhism, because both beliefs, even different in principles, were alike in contexts in terms of homeland and circumstances. As a result, Suwannabhumi (in particular Thailand and Cambodia) with Buddhism as the state religion, still embrace Brahmanism as their way of life.

The coexistence of both religions in Suwannabhumi has been analyzed by a late French historian scholar besides Prince Damrong. The French historian reasoned that “as Indian religions, Buddhism and Brahmanism shared their roles in society; Buddhism taught practical doctrines useful to people of all walks of life and even of the low class, so it resulted in the popularity among common people of all classes, while Brahmanism taught the art of living useful to government, thus attracting people of the ruling class and resulted in the popularity among them. That this difference created no conflict between Brahmanism and Buddhism must also be attributed to the wisdom of their missionaries, who sought a peaceful coexistence and bowed to natives’ decision.” Likewise, Prince
Damrong ascertained that "... no conflicts related to Buddhist or Hindu faiths took place here. Upholding either for suppressing another was not found, it was found only to place either more or less emphasis or equal [weight] on both. The evidence was seen in a late Khom kings' edict showing the different venerations by different kings over different sacred images; someone venerated the Buddha, someone Isvara or Narayana, and someone both. This practice resulted in the construction of stone palaces or temples for Buddhist or Hindu veneration still being discovered even today. In Siam (modern Thailand), the stronghold of Buddhism, the royal consecration and ploughing ceremonies and others rites are still being performed according to the Brahmin tradition. Embracing both religions in everyday life of the Thais can be traced back to the era of the Khom domination. (Prince Damrong. 2517:2)

Modern Thailand as part of Suwannabhumi, has continuously been visited by waves of Buddhist missionaries. After King Asoka's missionaries first introduced Buddhism at Nakhon Pathom in 239 B.E., there have been among the arrivals three distinctly different groups. Of those, the second (960-1300 B.E.), known as Mahayana or Vajrayana Buddhism penetrated into the kingdom of Sri Vijaya, believed to be the location of modern Surat Thani in the southern part of Thailand. The third (1600 B.E.), known as the Pukam Theravada Buddhism, occupied the area of the northern part like Chiang Mai and Lamphoon. It was introduced by King Anoratha Mangcho (or Anuruddha Maharaja), who was thirsty for his own political power expansion. The fourth (1800 B.E.), known as the Lankan Theravada Buddhism, was introduced first into Nakhon Si Thammarat and spread onwards into the kingdom of Sukhothai by King Ramkhamhaeng, who had a deep faith in Lankan Theravada monks and invited them to establish Theravada Buddhism in his kingdom. Theravada Buddhism, sponsored by the king, became popular not only in his kingdom but also in the kingdoms of Lanna and Ayuthaya, where it was studied and practiced well, and has since then been maintained as the invaluable national treasure and state religion.
The Basis of Thai Wisdom

Buddhism, even though not recorded in the Thai constitution, is practically and in spirit accepted as the state religion of Thailand, because most Thai citizens are Buddhists. Their lives and culture are based on Buddhist teachings. Consequently, Buddhism is regarded as the basis of Thai wisdom. *Thai wisdom* is here a key word worth an analytical study. In a western theory, wisdom is said to be a result of knowledge plus experience. If the meaning is proper, I conclude that Thais have gained much from the experience of seeking knowledge from Buddhist teachings that they wholeheartedly uphold. *What then is Thai wisdom?* It is difficult to clear this question within a short time limit, but I will attempt an answer by studying some aspects of Thai wisdom here as follows:

1. *The Knowledge of Life.* It is a central idea. According to Buddhism, a man who knows life knows the value of life. What is life? Different answers are given by different people of all walks of life. For example, life is dew by a poet, a journey by an author, or strife by a hard man. Buddhism accepts these definitions and proposes yet another meaningful definition of life, namely the knowledge of *composition and origin*.

   1.1 *Composition* - Buddhism points out that life of man and animal comprises the five aggregates of corporeality, sensation, perception, mental formations, and consciousness. And it gives the following details of the aggregates.

   The aggregate of corporeality is divided into two main groups: the group of the four primary elements and the group of derivative materiality. The first group is earth, water, fire and wind, the characteristics of which are respectively described as extension or solid element, cohesion or fluid element, heat or radiation element, and vibration or motion element. The second group is the quality of the first, taking origin from it.

   The characteristics of the first group are found in parts of the body: *earth* - head hair, body hair, teeth, nails, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone marrow, kidney, heart, liver, midriff, spleen, lights, bowels, entrails, gorge, dung, *water* – bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease,
spittle, snot, oil of the joints, and urine, *fire* – warming fire, aging fire, and burning up fire, and *wind*– up-going winds, down-going winds, winds in the belly, winds in the bowels, winds that course through all, in – breath, and out – breath. (Buddhaghosa. 2001: 380)

The characteristics of the second group are found in a) the five sensitive material qualities of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body, b) the four material qualities of sense fields – form, sound, smell, taste, excluding tangible objects, c) the two material qualities of sex – femininity and masculinity, d) the physical basis of mind, e) the material quality of life, f ) the edible food, g) the material quality of delimitation, h) the space element, i) the two material qualities of communication – gesture and speech, j) the three material qualities of plasticity or alterability – lightness, elasticity, and adaptability, k) the four material qualities of integration, continuity, decay, and impermanence.

*The aggregate of sensation* is divided into a pleasant sensation, a painful sensation, and a neither pleasant – nor painful sensation.

*The aggregate of perception* is divided into the perceptions of form, sound, smell, taste, and tangible objects.

*The aggregate of mental formations* totals 50 in number, excluding sensation and perception, (usually included in mental formation).

*The aggregate of consciousness* is divided into eye-consciousness, ear- consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness and body-consciousness. (S.3)

All these are naturally incorporated into *life* of man and animal (including divine beings). Thai Buddhists learn about life through the knowledge in the beginning. It leads to search for the origin of life.

1.2 *Origin of Life.* Buddhism, just as Theism and Sciences, takes an interest in it, too. While Theism refers to God as the supreme creator and sciences reveals the co-working of sperm and egg, Buddhism mentions the three factors of life thus: “a) There is the union of the mother and father, b) It is the mother’s season, c ) The being to be reborn is present. And it concludes that through the union of these three factors the conception of an embryo in a womb takes place” (
M.1). After that, Buddhism gives the details of the embryo’s development: “First there is the kalala, from the kalala comes the abbuda, from the abbuda the pesi is produced, from the pesi the ghana arises, from the ghana emerges the limbs, the head-hair, body-hair and nails, and whatever food the mother eats, the meals and drink that she consumes. By this, the being there, the person inside the mother’s womb, is maintained.” (S.1).

This kind of the knowledge of life is believed not to have been found anywhere else, except in Buddhism that is the basis of Thai wisdom. It contributes to the knowledge of how the mind-body relates and how it functions. One of the observations that Thais get accustomed to is that life always changes under the three conditions of impermanence, suffering and selflessness.

2. The Practice of Taking Refuge in the Triple Gem and Asking for Precepts. The knowledge of life also provides an idea of life after death. According to the Buddhist tradition, rebirth is believed to be determined by mind; a good rebirth is be led by a wholesome mind and a bad rebirth by an unwholesome mind. What can keep mind in a wholesome condition? The answer is the Triple Gem and Precepts. For Buddhists, the three jewels, the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha are the supreme refuge as the objects of veneration. The Buddha is remembered that as the Great Teacher, He is ornamented with the three great virtues of purity, loving-kindness and wisdom, contributing to His great missions to the world. The Dhamma is praised as a good guide for life covered by clouds of sufferings, that the Buddhist teachings are true and practical, and maintain a practitioner’s true happiness. The Sangha is the assembly of Buddhist disciples (initially only monks, but later enlightened laymen were included) and remembered as the witnesses of Buddha’s enlightenment. They follow the way pointed out by the Buddha and win success as the Buddha did, after which they devote themselves to serve the Buddha roaming from place to place and giving sermons.

As for precepts, they refer to morality and aim at keeping bodily and verbal manners calm and proper. As we know, there are several kinds of precepts. Among those, the five precepts are regarded as a basic moral rule of human society and so much preached in Thai society that
the ceremony of asking for the five precepts is performed on all merit making occasions.

Created to preserve the basic Buddhist teachings from generation to generation, the ceremony of taking refuge in the triple gem and asking for the five precepts has come into being and has successively been practiced until now. So if you go to join a Buddhist ceremony in Thailand, where Buddhism is practiced in everyday life, you will see the form performed first in which a head layman utters the praising words to the triple gem and afterwards starts the above said ceremony. Then, a head monk supplies his demand, granting him going to the triple gem for a refuge and five precepts. The concluding words at the end of five precepts are a Pali verse, very meaningful and worthy of writing down here:

Silena sugatin yanti    Silena bhogasampada
Silena nibbuting yanti  Tasma silan visodhaye.

By morality heaven is reachable,
By morality wealth is reachable,
By morality nibbana (nirvana) is also reachable,
Because of that, morality should be purified. (Mahachula. 2540 :10)

The few words are wonderful to help Buddhists understand a true and complete value of morality within a short time. The source of the verse cannot be found anywhere but in a Thai Buddhist culture. Therefore, it is believed to be a product of Thai wisdom.

3. The Practice of Tying a Dead Body.

Samsara means the Circle of Life or literally translated as a non-stop journey. Thai Buddhists like to add to its end the term vatta, which denotes a circle or a round, thus “samsaravatta” means a round of non-stop journey to the planes of heaven and hell. In fact, the term can be used for rebirth after rebirth. Through Buddhist teachings, Thai Buddhists fundamentally accept the knowledge of rebirth directly caused by defilement (kilesa), action (karma), and result (vipaka). The three factors support each other; that is; defilement forces a man to do either good
or evil karma and karma is immediately followed by its own result, and then result itself supports defilement and karma to continue. Of those, defilement is viewed as the main cause of an endless round of rebirths. It is divided into three key groups of lobha (greed) dosa (anger) and moha (delusion). Thai Buddhists have known them in the name of Akusalamula or the root of unwholesomeness and it is also known that delusion is supporting greed and anger, the former of which is more difficult to destroy than the latter. This knowledge is expressed in a Thai verse:

A child represents a noose tied to around the neck,
Wealth, to around feet,
Wife (and husband), to around hands,
These three nooses removed by anyone,
He is freed from rebirths. (Silpabarnagar. 2505 : 20)

The verse reflects greed in everyday life, found relevant to lovely things – child, wealth and wife and husband. Removing the greed is the beginning of following removals leading to the cessation of the cause of suffering, one of those endless rebirths.

The ceremony of tying a dead body takes place before laying it down in a coffin, whereby an undertaker must tie the body with three nooses of holy threads in line with a magical method, which is differently interpreted by different persons: by a magician, the spirit is controlled, by a medical doctor, the body is kept in a good manner, and by a Buddhist teacher (monk), three nooses represent three rounds of defilement (kilesa), action (karma), and result (vipaka) tying beings to rebirth after rebirth. The practice is performed even nowadays.

4. Wall Paintings. This knowledge relates to the afore-said knowledge. In Buddhism, heaven and hell are the abodes of the departed, called by westerners “the world after death” or “the unseen world.” Buddhism, by the Buddha, ascertains the existence of the abodes and points out the practices leading to those in sutras. Even there is somewhat of a doubt about such abodes among Thai Buddhists, most of them practically do not defy the Buddhist teachings. On the walls of the sacred halls in great ancient temples, such as the Emerald Buddha Temple
and the Suthat Temple, paintings of heaven and hell can be seen. In fact, wall paintings had for a long time been drawn since the Sukhothai period and express a strong belief in Buddhism, and the purpose of the art has been explained in different ways, as follows:

4.1 It is seen as a concerted effort by the artists and writers of each age who tried to visualize the teachings by the Buddha through words and pictures. Thus, painters preserved the authors’ imagination for the sake of transfer of knowledge through the ages when moral instruction was the only known form of education. Thai societies of old were truly agrarian, where agriculture was the main occupation which for each family generated work and income, and where social problems were not complicated. So, the system of moral education was not needed for this life but for the next and as a result, heaven and hell, the worlds of the next life were of greater interest.

4.2 In ancient Thai societies, Buddhist temples played the role of schools managed by the teachers who were monks. Monks were held in high esteem by people of all classes and regarded as educated persons. When monks gave sermons, the wall paintings were a kind of teaching instrument that held the listeners attention, both by ears and eyes.

4.3 Buddhist temples throughout the ages were used as recreation centres of villagers. Important festivals and recreations were popularly held at temples where the villagers gathered to witness these. Wall paintings were recreation instruments, too. At this point, I remember, when I was a child I liked to go to the temple to see the paintings of heaven and hell. On one occasion, when I returned home, I started to feed birds, because I had seen a painting bearing a man who gave food to crows and was reborn in heaven after his death. I wanted such a rebirth.

On the other hand, heaven and hell may be viewed differently by some Thai Buddhists made known by a Thai proverb which says, “Heaven and hell hide in the heart.” It signifies that a heaven represents happiness and a hell suffering, they both are found in daily life in the human mind. The proverb is believed to have been derived from a Buddhist teaching known as hell through the six bases of contact, a translation of the Pali word “Chaphassayatanikaniraya” (Khu. Su. 25).
According to the Buddha’s explanation, whenever there arises a mental suffering caused by either contact through eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind, the suffering is hell, and whenever there arises a mental happiness by either opposite way, the happiness is heaven. Thai Buddhists acknowledge Indra, who was all his life associated with the Buddha and approached him on occasions, as the guardian of heaven, Tavatinsa. The name Indra is very often found in Thai literature and also in royal ranks. It indicates dignity and appreciation for the deity by Thai Buddhists.

5. Thai Proverbs. Karma is a main idea related to the knowledge of life, circle of life and heaven and hell. Karma has been defined as: a) action supported by volition (cetana), b) action immediately followed by its result (vipaka), c) action influencing a doer’s way of life. Of those, the first signifies that all actions are supported by volition, a mental formation, constituting a mental action (mano karma) known as the foundation of bodily and verbal actions. The second shows that immediately after any action is done, a result comes into being, thus lies in a doer’s unconscious mind as a mental quality, and accompanies him like a shadow. To ascertain this, the Buddha said: beings have karma (and result) as a personal property, as a birth giver, as a relative, as a refuge… (M.3). The third reveals that beings inevitably receive a result of either good or bad action done by themselves, resulting in either a good or bad way of life. (ibid). In this regard, karma (and result) is viewed as a manager of life, too. The knowledge of karma helps a man attain freedom and self confidence to express his potentiality based on morality.

However, some Thai Buddhists, although they believe in karma, misunderstand that karma is only for a bad situation. Thus, when a bad situation falls upon someone, they call him or her khon khoh rai (a person with bad luck or an unlucky person). Kho is derived from grah (to hold) in Sanskrit and is used for a cluster of stars in astrology. Kho is divided into good and bad characteristics that influence the earth and life on earth. When someone has bad luck, a fortuneteller predicted that this is because of a bad star’s orbit and guides the person to perform a magical
ceremony to reduce the star’s influence in exchange of some payment. On the hand, when anyone wins a good thing, he is called khon mee boon (a man with merit). According to their view, boon (from Punna in Pali and Punya in Sanskrit) is not karma, only kho is.

Despite the unclear understanding of the meaning of karma, Thai Buddhists open their minds to the matter of karma-related previous births and express their belief in following words: Boon tam kam taeng (บุญทำกรรมมาเอง), khao tamkanma (เอาตำแหน่กมา), khao sang boon ruam kanma (เอาตรงบุญรวมกันมา), khoo khai khoo khao (ธุรกิจั่นจ่า), khoo laew mai khaep kan (สุนทรีย์ไม่เกินกัน), buppe sannivas (บุญเพิ่มเติมวิสภัณฑ์), khoowen khookam (ทำเร็วเกินกว่า).

In this way, “boon tam kam taeng” is used for expressing a sense of yielding to inborn things, especially physical appearances, either attractive or unattractive. “khao tamkanma”, a sense of a mutual violence between two person. The violence is believed to be inherited from any previous birth, in which the two met and took revenge against each other. “khao sang boon ruam kanma”, a sense of rejoice at support and success. There are many apparent supports and successes of husband and wife, friend and friend, boss and labourer. Their good cooperation is believed to be repeated in this birth from a previous one. “kho kai khoo khao”, a sense of a proper love or marriage of a couple. “kho laew mai khaep kan”, a sense of successful marriage through difficulties. “buppe sannivas”, a sense of an accidental love only by seeing face or hearing name. The three kinds of loves are said to come from previous births, through which their love has been maintained for a long time. “khoowen khookam”, a sense of revenge marriage. The marriage always brings about a conflict leading to unhappiness or perhaps to destruction.

Through strong faith, men and women are often motivated to make merit and take vows to meet with luck in love, both in the present and in later births.

6. The Bodhisattva Ideal and the Accumulation of Perfections. The term Perfection is a translation of Parami in Pali, literally meaning the virtues contributing to success – the attainment of nibbana (nirvana).
The accumulation of perfections is an ideal made known to Thai Buddhists in the Sukhothai period and is a word mainly used for a Bodhisattva or a Buddha-to-be. In Theravada Buddhism, there are three kinds of Buddhas: Sammasambuddha – the Buddha who attains supreme enlightenment by himself and establishes Buddhism, Pacekabuddha – the Buddha who attains enlightenment by himself and establishes no Buddhism, and Anubuddha or Savakabuddha – the Buddha who attains enlightenment under a Buddha’s guidance. The word Perfection used for all the Buddhas described here. However, we speak of the Bodhisattva Ideal in with different emphasis. The reason why a different term is used here is not clear. However, in my thought, it is possible that the stories of the Buddha, especially the birth stories, were so often quoted in sermons by monks that listeners paid no attention to the accumulation of perfections by lay followers.

Bodhisattva can be defined as a being to be a Buddha in the future. He accumulates the perfections through sacrifice of the self to grant services to others, without any condition for repayment. In the Buddha’s birth stories, the Bodhisattva kindly served and saved others from suffering, despite his own difficulties. In the Thai society of the Ayutthaya period, a king has been believed to be a Bodhisattva. So he was given a special name, the Buddhakura – the Sprout of the Buddha, which means the Buddha-to-be.

The main reason for such a name of Thai kings is that they are devout Buddhists and govern the country in line with the ten royal virtues on the ground of wishing people happiness. Also in the Ratanakosin period, King Phutthayotfa, the founder of the Chakri Dynasty, was referred to by an elder monk as Bodhisattva. This was due to his bringing the country back to normalcy and reviving Buddhism after a political uprising (Bimaladharma. 2526: 102). The same honour has been granted to all later kings, including the present king, His Majesty King Bhumibol who is regarded as the Great Father of The Nation. During his long reign, he has devoted himself wholeheartedly to the rural developments under the royally initiated projects and as a result, Thailand has risen in status among the developing countries. This success is ascertained in the opening words of his speech given on the occasion of His Royal Consecration, reading: “I will govern the land by virtue.” All time, he has followed the words in accordance with the Ten
Royal Virtues (dasavidhara "ja" dhamma), through which he is believed to follow the Bodhisattva way.

7. The Custom of the Three-Month Ordination. The custom is not found anywhere else but in Thailand. According to a Thai tradition, Buddhist laymen, aged 20, before getting married, are required to enter the Order and stay in the monkhood for three months of the rainy season, or lent which was a tradition allowed by the Buddha for his disciples. The concept of keeping lent was first practiced by general ascetics in the pre-Buddhist Indian society with the aim to stop roaming and stay in a certain place for three months in the rainy season when it was naturally inconvenient to travel because the earth was wet and muddy and perhaps the fields of rice and vegetables would be damaged by the mass roaming. The Buddha accepted and applied the concept for his disciples after his Sangha (the Order) grew in numbers. Ancient Thais after their conversion to Buddhism, created the custom of a three-month ordination based on the Vinaya rule of keeping lent. The objective of the ordination was to gather young men of twenty years under a Buddhist training course before getting married in order that they become sought-after householders. This practice has been accepted widely and has continued until now. Most Thai kings, in particular of the Chakri Dynasty, entered the Order at one time and stayed in the monkhood for a while.

Conclusion

Buddhism has taken deep root in Thai society. It is regarded as one of the main institutions of "Chaat, Satsana, Phra Maha Krasat", which is translated into English as "Nation, Religion, Monarchy.". They are represented as the three colours in the national flag and support each other like a threefold stick does. Red represents the Nation, Dark Blue the Monarchy, and White the Religion. I would like to quote here the interpretation by King Vajiravudh, the sixth king of the Chakri Dynasty, who said, "...White represents Buddhism as the state religion". (Tantaya. 2542: 9 – 10)
This interpretation was reiterated by the present king on occasion of the state visit of Pope John Paul II with the words: “...Thailand is the land of Buddhism...and has Buddhism as the state religion.”

Over the long passage of time, when Buddhism first arrived in Thailand, Buddhism has been transferred as the Thai way of life which so profoundly Buddhism, and absorbed the Buddhist teachings as the basis of Thai wisdom until today..

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Buddhism is all Around Us

Asst. Prof. Dr. Suthira Duangsamosorn
Buddhism is all Around Us

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I would like to begin my talk on Buddhist practice in everyday life with an example of a person who is far from ordinary. Her quest for enlightenment is something we would find hard to put into practice ourselves. I am referring to Tenzin Palmo, an English woman ordained in the Tibetan tradition. I will talk a bit about her life and her achievement, and then proceed on to my own search for knowledge and understanding of the Dhamma. I hope that this will encourage other regular participants of the forum to present their views on Buddhism. I will talk a great deal about my teachers, the books I have read and what I believe is the most significant part of the Buddha’s teaching. Finally, I hope to show by some examples, of how I practice the Buddha’s teaching in everyday life.

To begin with Tenzin Palmo, I must first mention Vicki Mackenzie, a feature writer well known in England and Australia. She beautifully tells the story of the Tibetan nun, who was born Diane Perry, the daughter of a fishmonger from London’s East End. Like most young Londoners she was fond of dancing and dressing up. But to people in her family it soon became evident that Diane was also drawn to rather unworldly things, in particular Buddhism. It was in the 60s when she met a group of Lamas who attended university in England and spread Buddhist wisdom in the West. As a consequence, her encounter with Buddhism, in particular Tibetan Buddhism in her native England encouraged her to search for the truth proclaimed by the Buddha.

The story is told how she agonized over all the choices open to her for many months. In the process she even gave up the idea of marriage to a very kind and loving man from Japan, and at last arrived in India to begin her quest for truth. Suddenly, in 1976 Diane cut herself off from the rest of the world and went to live in a remote cave 13,200 feet up in the Himalayas. Her goal was to attain enlightenment as a woman. Here
she spent 12 years of her life in intense Buddhist Meditation, at night she slept in a traditional three-foot square Tibetan meditation box. She carried out her daily chores, grew her own food, and once when supply of grains and pulses from the lower valleys was hampered because of snow, almost faced starvation; indeed she lived through extremely cold winters and had to guard herself from attacks by wild animals and avalanches. She might have spent the rest of her life in the Himalayas, in her self imposed vow of silence had it not been for the Indian immigration authorities who summoned her down to the plains to settle the issue of her overstay in India. Although she had been happy in her solitude, but once forced to break her silence, she could not go back to the cave.

As the book by Mackenzie, *Cave in the Snow* sums up: *In 1988 she emerged from a cave with a vision to build a convent in northern India dedicated to helping women to achieve spiritual excellence. From living as a mendicant on 50 a year, she became a globetrotting fundraiser, talking to thousands of people from the fount of her profound wisdom. As such, Tenzin Palmo had come full circle: being of the world, leaving it, and returning once more to help it.*

Tenzin Palmo’s feat is extraordinary and not so easy to emulate, however there are less formal means of practicing Buddhism. At the most her example shows the extent to which the teachings of Lord Buddha hold sway over the hearts of minds of people in the West. Most of them come in touch with Buddhism through the monks who disseminate the Doctrine, whether they are from Tibet, Japan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos or Vietnam. This East West encounter is by no means new. Western scholars and their translation and commentaries of ancient Indian books have spread the rich philosophies of the sub-continent, including Buddhism for ages. Today there are less formal means of spreading Buddhism, which should not be ignored, such as art, literature, film and television. These can be very effective channels of imparting Buddhist knowledge, for it to become more tangible and have a longer lasting impact. Some of you will remember the presenter on a previous forum, Mr. Martin Seeger from Germany. He told his audience in a
Dhamma Talk presented at Samphraya Temple in Bangkok that his first and most impressive memory of Buddhism was a speech delivered by the Dalai Lama on German television. He was deeply touched by the Dalai Lama’s loving kindness and infinite wisdom. Ever since, Seeger has not only engaged in research on Buddhism, but also ordained in Thailand as a Buddhist monk for a period of time. “I cannot say that I am unhappy or suffering. Neither am I so poor that I have no way out of life, but I took the yellow robe, because I strongly believe that Buddhism has no meaning unless one has strong faith in the teachings of the Buddha and practices them,” he told his audience, many of them monks. Seeger said he was working towards his doctorate degree on Buddhism.

Everyone who steps into the Headquarters of the World Buddhist University has some knowledge of Buddha’s teachings. That is what draws our audiences here. Here we exchange views and experiences. One talk I found very enlightening was on Buddhism in the United States. The speaker, the previous director of the Sunday Forum, Dr. Alan Lopez, explained that at meetings in America, everyone seemed to have a different agenda and all brought with them their own brand of Buddhism. Some wanted to meditate, other wanted to read and do research, most of them wanted answers to their questions, but few looked for salvation. This I would say is natural because we are at various stages of learning and practicing Buddhism. In fact, we may hold different views on what Buddhism is, but then again, this is part of becoming a buddha or one who knows. I would like to give an example.

A friend of mine was known to meditate regularly. He often complained that his meditation did not give him the desired result. He consoled himself that in his next life he would continue to practice meditation. So I asked him what he wanted to achieve by meditation to which he replied that he wanted to know who or what he would be in his next life. With my inborn, stolid German sense of reality, I asked him if he truly believed that there was a soul and he would be reborn. He was aghast that I could ask such a question. He told me, “You are not a Buddhist if you don’t believe in rebirth.” Now it was my turn to be
worried about my brand of Buddhism. I immediately went to consult one of the most revered monks in Thailand, telling him the story and asking who was right. The reverend monk replied: “The purpose of the Dhamma and its practice is to overcome suffering. The recognition that there is suffering, the understanding of what the causes of suffering are and how to arrive at the cessation of suffering through the Eightfold Path will lead to Nirvana.” Never had the message of the Buddha came to me with such clarity.

I have read a great number of books, titles I do not remember now. But the understanding of the Dhamma does not come through reading. Experience can often be conveyed through non-verbal means and images. Until today I will never forget the sight of a group of Thai monks in their yellow robes waiting every morning at a particular bus stop in the city of Bombay. They were students on their way to college. Their lively chatter and smiling faces brought home to me the happiness derived from leading a wholesome life. I came across the same image in the novel *Heat and Dust* by Ruth Prawar Jhabwalla. I was surprised to read the ending of the novel where the heroine mused over true happiness at the sight of monks going up their mountain retreat, carrying food, chatting happily and laughing.

I arrived here in Thailand in 1967 with the intention to study the Dhamma. At that time there were very few English speaking Thai people, leave alone monks explaining the Dhamma. At this point, however, I would like to mention some of the books I read and found useful. Since I do not read Thai, leave alone Pali, I relied much on a book entitled *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, a modern Indian who interprets the Buddhist canon by emphasizing the inherent differences between Buddhism and Hinduism. The other book, *Buddhist Outlook on Daily Life* by Nina van Gorkom is my meditation manual. In the late sixties, Nina van Gorkom gave regular talks on Buddhism broadcast by Radio Thailand, and I was an avid listener. It is only after I had learned enough Thai, that sermons on radio and television helped me to understand Buddhism much better.
Even today, what strikes me as the most important part of the Buddhist canon are the Four Noble Truths expounded by the Buddha in a very systematic and easy way to understand: Suffering, the causes of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the Noble Eightfold Path or the Path leading to Nirvana. Some of my friends have called the Buddha’s teaching simplistic. One in particular, horrified that I was converting to Buddhism warned me that Buddhism had no answer to the mysteries of life. I bravely encountered that I was studying Dhamma to find out if this was true. The teachings of the Buddha have been bought closer to many people in Thailand through the Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. (The meaning of his names is “The One who serves the Buddha” or “Slave of the Buddha”). Like a good teacher, the Venerable Buddhadasa kept things simple. He was a true minimalist. In a discourse entitled “The True Nature of Things” he explained the significance of the Four Noble Truths thus:

*Essentially the Buddha’s teaching as we have it in the Tipitaka is nothing but the knowledge of “what is what” or the nature of things - just that. Do keep to this definition. It is an adequate one and it is well to bear it in mind while one is in the course of practicing. We shall now demonstrate the validity of this definition by considering as an example the Four Noble Truths. The First Noble Truth, which points out that all things are suffering (all things cause suffering), tells us precisely what things are like. But we fail to realize that all things are a source of suffering and so we desire those things. If we recognized them as a source of suffering, not worth desiring, not worth grasping at and clinging to, not worth at teaching ourselves to, we would be sure not to desire them. The Second Noble Truth points out that desire is the cause of suffering. People still don’t know, don’t see, don’t understand, that desires are the cause of suffering. They all desire this, that, and the other, simply because they don’t understand the nature of desire. The Third Noble Truth points out that deliverance, freedom from suffering, Nirvana, consists in the complete extinguishing of desire. People don’t realize at all that Nirvana is something that may be attained at any time or place that that it can be arrived at as soon as desire has been completely extinguished. They are not interested in Nirvana because they don’t know what it is.*
The Fourth Noble Truth is called the Path and constitutes the method for extinguishing desire. No one understands it as a method for extinguishing desire. No one is interested in the desire-extinguishing Noble Eightfold Path. People don’t recognize it as their very point of support, their foothold something which they ought to be most actively reinforcing. They are not interested in the Buddha’s Noble Path, which happens to be the most excellent and precious thing in the entire mass of human knowledge, in this world or any other. This is a most horrifying piece of ignorance. We can see, then that the Four Noble Truths are information telling us clearly just “what is what.”

The Noble Eightfold Path, again, is a clear instruction of how to proceed in the practice of the Dhamma by keeping to the Right View, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. John Bullitt in a tract posted on his website entitled “What is Theravada Buddhism?” explains, “despite the stepwise structure of the eightfold path, progress on the path does not follow a simple linear trajectory. Rather, development of each aspect of the eightfold path fosters the refinement and strengthening of others, leading the practitioner ever upwards in a continuing spiral of spiritual maturity that leads, step by step, towards Awakening.”

An amusing story is told by Sumetho Bhikkhu when he was practicing meditation under the Venerable Ajahn Cha at Wat Par Nanachat. The American monk, after many days of practice began to feel that his meditation was yielding wonderful results, which he measured by the fact that he could sit in complete peace and happiness, extending loving kindness even to the plentiful mosquitoes that were biting him. Sometime later, when he had to visit the Immigration authorities for extension of his stay in Thailand, he was surprised at his sudden anger that broke out over a minor obstacle with the officials. He then knew that he still had a long way to go in his practice. Perhaps, immigration authorities in any country are a real acid test whether one has progressed on the path to Nirvana.
The Venerable Buddhadasa was a great advocate of Insight Meditation. Again, the World Buddhist University has on its website his entire discourse on “Insight, by the Nature Method.” If one is to practice Insight Meditation successfully, one must learn to look into oneself. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu maintains that our natural concentration is normally enough for such reflection, and that it can be done any place, anytime. My experience is that I can meditate in a crowded bus, standing in a long line, or while doing chores like cooking or washing dishes. Nina van Gorkom’s book is helpful here. She speaks of our “cittas” or mental states and explains thus:

Many Thais listen to lectures about Abhidhamma, not only those who were educated at a college or the university, but those who did not receive a higher education as well. I heard of cases in which the study of different cittas helped people to lead a more wholesome life. I heard of someone who was at first inclined to have feelings of revenge towards other people, and who gradually was able to overcome those feelings, in understanding what those feelings were. Many Thais know about the realities taught in the Abhidhamma, and they know how to apply their knowledge in daily life. Foreigners usually do not hear about this, because nobody speaks to foreigners about Abhidhamma.

I heard at least one person in the audience once use the term chitta, when speaking about the deep knowledge of psychology that characterizes the Buddha’s teaching. But Nina van Gorkom finds that the English translation of the term citta as mental state or state of mind is not really adequate, because it could imply that citta is something that stays, that does not change. She explains that no citta stays for even a second. In her words, “each citta that rises falls away immediately, to be succeeded by the next cittas. Cittas determine one’s one life and the life of other people, they condition the actions one performs in life.” It is important to understand one’s cittas, because there are both unwholesome mental states and wholesome mental states that a realities of daily life. She maintains that having knowledge of one’s cittas can change a person’s life.
Three simple lines, often called the Chief of All Teachings, summarize the heart of Buddhism as: Avoid evil, Do good, Purify the mind. Most practicing Buddhists are satisfied that they strictly follow the adage. They accumulate good deeds, and purify their minds. But in reality the big question remains how does one purify one’s mind? The words of the Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikkhu in his discourse, “The True Nature of Things” throw perhaps more light on what it means.

We have seen that we have to know the nature of things. We also have to know how to practice in order to fit in with the nature of things. There is another teaching in the texts, known as the Chief of all Teachings. It consists of three brief points: “Avoid evil, do good, purify the mind”. This is the principle of the practice. Knowing all things as impermanent, worthless, and not our property, and so not worth clinging to, not worth becoming infatuated with, we have to act appropriately and cautiously with respect to them, and that is to avoid evil. It implies not to break with accepted moral standards and to give up excessive craving and attachment. On the other hand, one is to do good, good as has come to be understood by wise people. These two are simply stages in morality. The third, which tells us to make the mind completely pure of every kind of contaminating element, is straight Buddhism. It tells us to make the mind free. As long as the mind is not yet free from the domination by things, it cannot be a clean, pure mind. Mental freedom must come from the most profound knowledge of the “what is what.” As long as one lacks this knowledge, one is bound to go on mindlessly liking or disliking things in one way or another. As long as one cannot remain unmoved by things, one can hardly be called free. Basically we human beings are subject to just two kinds of emotional states: liking and disliking (which correspond to pleasant and unpleasant mental feeling). We fall slaves to our moods and have no real freedom simply because we don’t know the true nature of moods or “what is what.” Liking has the characteristic of seizing on things and taking them over; disliking has the characteristic of pushing things away and getting rid of them. As long as these two kinds of emotional states exist, the mind is not yet free. As long as it is still carelessly liking and disliking this, that, and the other, there is no way it can be purified and freed from the
tyranny of things. For this very reason, this highest teaching of Buddhism condemns grasping and clinging to things attractive and repulsive, ultimately condemning even attachment to good and evil. When the mind has been purified of these two emotional reactions, it will become independent of things.

This is a message we can try to understand, perhaps not over night, but slowly as we go on with our daily life. I will refrain from summarizing any of the ideas I have conveyed and leave things open for discussion. But to end I would like to read a poem.

MASTER TAKES A DISCIPLE

"Teach me how to meditate, O Master
So that I can see things, understand life.
Oh, for that blissful state. Teach me, O Master."

"Go and wash the plates."

Among pots and pans and greasy plates,
The pupil bides his time. His chores done
He waits to see the Master.

"Teach me how to meditate, O Master
So I can understand, see things.
Teach me, O Master."

"Go and wash the plates."

And he washes the plates, the pans
And the pots and wonders when
It will be time to ask the Master
To teach him how to meditate
So that he can understand
See things, attain Enlightenment.
“Go and wash the plates.”

Plates, pots and pans. Pans, pots
And plates and he contemplates
How he would approach the Master
To teach him how to meditate
That he can understand and see
Things, maybe attain Enlightenment.
And among the thoughts of the Buddha
He suddenly notices the hungry dogs,
Feeds them from a vessel, he cleans
The mess, and sweeps the yard,
He waters the plants, and cleans the hut,
He wipes the floor and spreads the mat
To sink gratefully to sleep and then
The Master stands at his feet.

“Tomorrow I shall teach you
How to meditate so that you can
Understand and see things as they are.”
Buddhism and Modern Science

Dr. Chris Stanford
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**Guest Speaker:** Dr. Chris Stanford  
**Moderator:** Mr. Alan Oliver  
**Rapporteur:** Mrs. Suttinee Yavaprapas

On the First Sunday of the Month of May B.E. 2548 (1 May 2005), Dr. Chris Stanford, Director, Centre for Information and Cultural Affairs, World Buddhist University, was the guest speaker of the Buddhist Forum to present the topic “Buddhism and Modern Science.” Elaborating on the terms, he said Buddhism can mean all that has emerged from the historic Buddha, the philosophy, the practice, the implications and the way of living. The Buddhist philosophy in Sanskrit reached its maturity about the second century A.D. in Northern India and Central Asia. Following that time, translations were made into Chinese and various other languages. Yet, the actual thinking was pretty well set in stone to some degree by King Ashoka. On the other hand, science can generally be defined as an attempt to come to terms with the physical manifestations of our environment. It is something that mankind has been struggling with since the Greek time. It is the philosophy and the philosophers who addressed the scientific questions of what is matter, what are the essential ingredients of the world, etc.

Classical science was developed in the later part of the 17th century by Isaac Newton, who was both a physicist and a mathematician. He was arguably the greatest scientist that ever lived. He was prolific in scientific and mathematical thoughts and ideas. What he put together: the laws of motion, the laws of gravity and the laws of optics were unquestionably the way the world was. They were verified again and again. Rene Descartes, a philosopher and mathematician preceded Newton by a hundred year, laid out a mapping system detailed what is known as the Cartesian Coordinate system. Descartes, for whom ‘cartography’ is named, theorized that given a unit of measure and reference points which form a virtual grid, we could accurately map anything. A combination of Descartes’ mathematics and geometry and Newton’s physics has created the reality that sustains the world.
Modern scientists included Max Planck and Neils Bohr who claimed another theory. The first contribution was the explanation of blackbody radiation in 1900 by Max Planck, who proposed that the energies of any harmonic oscillator such as the atoms of blackbody radiation are restricted to certain values, each of which is an integral multiple of a basic, minimum value. This quantum theory allows for a drafting of a relationship between matter and energy, i.e. matter being a blackbody heating up and the blackbody emitting radiation. At this point the scientists were prepared to work with the idea of quantum but we had no idea of the significance of quantum until thirty years later. Classical physics described an enduring world around us. Quantum physics does not tell us about a continuous world and how it is behaving. The quantum mechanics have brought into particles of matter, which do not exist as particles of matter forever. The electron and other sub-atomic particles are associated with the proton and the neutron and hold them together. The proton we see in one incident is not the same proton that we see in the next incident. It has gone through several million transformations. The point is these sub-atomic particles are continuously transforming themselves and becoming something else. This is contrasted to Newton's idea that once we have a piece of matter that matter remains as it is until it is attached upon by other material.

One idea more cherished by Neils Bohr than any other; was the principle of Complementarity. Bohr recognized that matter has a fundamental duality about it, as wave and particle. These two aspects of all matter could not be blended together, nor could one be reduced to the other. They simply are as different as the two sexes, and in the same way needed their better half and only by seeing them as a pair is their wholeness, their oneness became evident. He called this balanced still life of duality Complementarity. Complementarity is revealed at the foundation of modern scientific and artistic thought.

As Bohr had emphasized, a proton and a neutron must be viewed as being simply two aspects of the same single entity. The positron is proved to be the matching particle of electron. This kind of duality is the heart and soul of quantum theory. Neils Bohr declared that in fact it was
necessary to accept two distinct physical realities, one at the quantum level with its laws and the other at the level of classical physics that applied different laws. Relativity seemed caught between worlds, sometimes viewed with classical physics and sometimes of central importance to quantum physics. Classical physics is based on real numbers. Quantum physics has the strange mathematics of complex numbers at its foundation. Such a number has two parts, one real and the other imaginary. The solutions to problems are two-fold. The quantum world is the realm of atoms, and fundamental particles such as electrons and photons, out of which everything is made. They are bundles of energy, and most importantly — they interact with one another in ways that can only be described as paradoxical. Quantum physics shows that we cannot decompose the world into independently existing smallest units. As we penetrate into matter, nature does not show us any isolated basic building blocks, but rather appears as a complicated web of relations between the various parts of the whole. It is necessary to think about groups of particles rather than individual electrons or photons.

One of the most basic things to understand about quantum physics is Einstein’s discovery that light is both a particle and a wave. We might think of an electron as being sometimes a well-mannered particle and sometimes a wave, depending on whether we imagine it to be flying at the speed of light. But the subtlety of Complementarity requires that we realize that there are two sides to the one electron coin — not two distinct entities, one a wave and the other a particle. All they ever see are particles. One of the main quantum facts of life is that we radically change whatever we observe.

To sum up:

1) The quantum theory is a logically consistent system that is consistent within itself. And it is inconsistent with all known experiments involving quanta.

2) It is incompatible with our classical view of reality.
3) Physicists are the only people who view the world in the particle position. In fact, Buddhists and Hindus have long held a very similar world view. Physicists and scientists have discovered the phenomenon that is very close to what was written down in Sanskrit two thousand years ago. References are found in the Heart Sutra and the Buddha Garland Sutra. According to the Buddha Garland Sutra, each part of the physical reality is constructed of all the other parts and become them all.

Fritjof Capra, in his classic "The Tao of Physics", originally published in 1975, now with its fourth edition in 1999, makes an excellent point of the concept of physical things. A phenomenon has transcended manifestation of an underlined fundamental entity which is not only a basic element of quantum field theory but also as a basic element of an eastern worldview. The intuition behind the physical interpretation of the subatomic world is in terms of the ultimate underlined reality. The Buddhists express the same idea when they call the ultimate reality as Sunyata or emptiness or void. It is a living void which gives birth to all forms of the phenomenon world. It is the void of the eastern mystic compared to the quantum field of self atomic physics.

Things exist in a transient nature and things are always changing. Nothing is sustainable. While the quantum physics tells us that there is a mass of ever changes of subatomic particles, the Buddhist philosophy tells us that part of our sufferings is we become attached to our condition arising. We become attached to the things that we construct in our mind. Then we become unhappy.

One among the questions from the floor was if Buddhism is a science. Here, Mr. Stanford referred to the definition of Buddhism, which, according to a professor of Chiang Mai University, is a therapy. It does the duty of a doctor with a prescription "eight-fold noble path," an ongoing way to treat ourselves and a follow up therapy. Using quantum theory, it is a kind of science, the spiritual path and therapy depend on how we look at the elements. In the Newtonian world, we have to define
things the way they are. In the quantum world, it is always flexible and changing. Buddhism sometimes is a philosophy. We can define enlightenment as quanta of enlightenment. If enlightenment is a thing, it is something we achieve. With an object, we practice and we can achieve enlightenment. Thus, Buddhism can be defined as a philosophy, a science, a therapy or a practice. In this connection, we should be looking at Buddhism as a set of things. There is no distinction between practice and theory.

Mr. Prakit Vongvaiveroj, however, held the view that science and Buddhism are different. Impermanence (Trailak) in Buddhism and changing conditions in modern science are not the same. Buddhism aims at absence of desire while science aims at finding facts about the natural world. The truth each has found is not the same. The goal of a study of science is not the same as Buddhism. Dhamma leads us to learn of the truth as revealed by the Buddha. When we study and practice Dhamma, we are not actually dying as we can be reborn again and again in the wheel of life. In science, death is defined differently. When we are dead, we exist no more.

Mr. Tony U-thasoonthorn added there are two sets of truth: the sensual world truth and the spiritual world truth.

Mr. Stanford then said Newtonian Science is dealing with the concrete world while Buddhism is dealing with conditions. When science is relevant to quantum, the two worlds are overlapping. In fact, we can learn a lot from different approaches. The Sanskrit translations are grounded in the late 19th century using words in a way of the Newtonian world. Buddhist teaching can be changed if it were translated by using words of quantum theory.

The question if absolute truth and relative truth are the same was raised. Mr. Stanford said it is one and the same. Ms. Phillis Morgan said in this connection that as far as she can understand, in the relative truth, there is just one reality which is always changing. Mr. Frank Newbold pointed out that from the European thinkers, there is a world perceived by the
senses. Yet, from the Buddhist perspective, everything that we see is conditioned. Ms. Phillis Morgan added we can see for ourselves and examine them deeply through the message of meditation. Mr. Jim Platzek, agreed with what has been pointed out by Ms. Phillis Morgan, reiterated that we can have our own self changing, the others can change and interactions are changing.
Buddhism, Biodiversity, and Beingness

Dr. Daniel H. Henning
Buddhism, Biodiversity, and Beingness

Guest Speaker: Dr. Daniel H. Henning
Moderator: Dr. Somboon Duangsamosorn
Rapporteur: Mrs. Suttinee Yavaprapas

On the First Sunday of the Month of November B.E. 2546 (2 November 2003) Dr. Daniel H. Henning, professor emeritus of political science and environmental affairs at Montana State University, featured as the guest speaker of the Buddhist Forum on the topic “Buddhism, Biodiversity and Beingness.” He began his talk by explaining the concept of oneness in which everything is interrelated and interdependent. It is the oneness of a consciousness of what is beyond our minds. Human beings driven by ego, ignorance, delusion and greed seldom recognize the interrelationships with each other and all living beings. On another plane, at the moment most of our activities with the United Nations and with governments are geared towards development, which makes the number, diversity and variety of plants and animals disappear rapidly from the face of the planet earth. And this is due to one species—Homo sapiens and their ego-mind thinking and identification. In essence, one species is dominant and driving out all the other species. By the year 2050, we will basically have dominated approximately 80% of the planet earth and the population will be over twelve billion. By the year 2020, almost all of our tropical forests will be gone as a result of our complex way of life and the worst deterioration will be seen in the pollution of the environment, air pollution, water pollution etc., Dr. Henning asserted.

The future indeed looks grim, and it would seem that there is nothing we can really do about it? But for Dr. Henning there is a way. We have to take a spiritual approach. Buddhism frankly can help here a tremendous amount. He recommended taking a look at the essential teachings of the Buddha which are related to deep ecology and vice versa, especially in regard to oneness, ecocentric and spiritual orientations. This combination creates awareness, compassion, love, kindness and caring for all living beings, especially trees and not just
human beings. The mutual relationships between Buddhism and deep ecology could be made to protect natural forests and the environment. It could also contribute to a different version of what it means to be a human being, in an interrelated and interdependent world. The self-realization of deep ecology and the interdependence tenets of Buddhism have helped human beings to go beyond anthropocentric consciousness. The personal self has become an ecological self which includes all other beings and the planet itself. This has broken the illusion that we humans are separate from the rest of nature.

For the Buddhists, trees have a special place in their worldview. The famous Thai monk Phra Prajak once said, “Without trees, people cannot exist.” In fact, he might say that trees are a part of us, we are one and the same. We are part of the bio-sphere or bio-diversity; we cannot separate ourselves from the other parts. We have to look at ourselves as living beings. We are part of nature and not its master. That is the point of oneness. It is when we get to this state of beingness when we are all one, we can actually do something about protecting the environment. There has to be a much deeper transformation. In essence, amidst the ecological crisis, an individual and collective spiritual transformation is important to bring about major social change, and to break the dominance of the industrial society. We need inward transformation so that the interests of all species override the short-term self-interest of the individual, the family, the community, and the nation.

In this connection, Dr. Henning related a story of a young forest ranger. One day, he was out shooting wolf. He then saw a female wolf on a mountaintop. He took his rifle and shot that wolf. He ran up to the wolf and looked into her beautiful green eyes only to see her dying. Faced with the experience, something happened to him. We might call it an emotionally significant experience. Some kind of transformation came over him towards consciousness that went beyond the egocentric mind. He could no longer be a forest ranger shooting wolf or cutting down trees. He became a consciousness man of spiritual and philosophical conviction.
Mankind is one species and we are members of a community of species and the world’s bio-diversity. Yet, with technology, we can destroy and do anything we want. Thus, the only way we can reverse destruction of our environment and give some kind of light and chance for an option is by meditating and studying the Dhamma, Dr. Henning suggested. He cited the book, *The power of now* and said we can only attain consciousness by being in the “now” as well as quietness. We need to control our minds and let go of fixed ideas and open up to oneness, which is the heart of Buddhism, i.e. to care for all living beings. This is our collective intelligence.

In conclusion, realizing the true nature of all things, which we call reality can transform the beings in such a way that compassionate action occurs naturally. We should be sympathetic through Buddhism. It can contribute to the humbling of human arrogance, essential for ecological change and help man find the inner strength or moral courage to go out changing this world.

In the ensuing Question and Answer session, a participant pointed out that the collective intelligence on the planet is the collective human intelligence. It is the only intelligence we know that exists anywhere in the universe. It would be nice to think that there are many places in time and space and many other universes and other intelligence scattered through time and space. Our universe is among 200 billion stars. As a matter of fact, the life in the universe is a collective intelligence of humanity that we can communicate more or less through human language. It is now time for a paradigm shift, which means total restructuring of our relationship to the globe, to a planetary ecosystem. This is not a matter of individuals. What we have to realize here is that all of us are a part of the large Buddhist community, a part of Thailand and a part of Asia.

We need a shift away from worldwide failure of the most respected and trusted human institution to realize that we are operating under the wrong paradigm of over development, over population, over expansion and over exploitation by taking everything for ourselves. We are converting
the natural habitats of almost all the other organism on the planet. We are depleting the environments that support one hundred percent of the bio-diversity of the planet to support the bio-diversity of human races. It is actually not only Buddhism that can pay a vital role but any religion in the world. Buddhism can help other faiths to see the global consciousness of man in recognizing the interrelationships with each other. We need the concept of respect for life to help reverse destruction meted out by human hands. Respect for life and the quality of life will improve if we have clear water, clean atmosphere; not having to worry about water pollution and global warming. The quality of life becomes the main consideration for economic development. We have to increase our contribution required to sustain the quality of life which include Buddhism, teaching, care of the old, care of the young, lifelong education. We also have to stop being competitive and be more cooperative.

Another point of view from an educator was that it can be difficult to strive to find the line between reality and the harsh reality that we have seen in the condition of our planet and not loosing the average attention of man’s challenge. There is a lot of negativity, a sense of hopelessness when it comes to the condition of the world, in particular pollution. It is interesting to see how Buddhists teachings have influenced people in the field of ecological awareness.
Dealing with Emotions through Meditation

Venerable Phramaha Bhatsakorn Piyobhaso
Dealing with Emotions through Meditation

Guest Speaker: Venerable Phramaha Bhatsakorn Piyobhaso
Moderator: Dr. Chris Stanford
Rapporteur: Mrs. Suttinee Yavaprapas

On the first Sunday of the month of July B.E. 2548 (3 July 2005), Venerable Phramaha Bhatsakorn Piyobhaso featured as the guest speaker at the Buddhist Forum. Dr. Chris Stanford introduced the speaker as a meditation master, a Dhamma teacher, and lecturer at the Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University reading the Tipitaka in English. He graduated with Pali IX (Highest Level), and obtained a Bachelor of Arts (First Class Honours) from Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University and a Master of Arts (Ethical Studies) from Mahidol University. The topic of his lecture was “Dealing with Emotions through Meditation.”

Dr. Stanford said it was appropriate to have a look at the definition of what we mean by emotions; what are emotions, where do they come from and what they do. Human emotions are a topic of much human and academic interest. Academically speaking, emotions are currently a focus of interest in several disciplines including neuro-science, psychology, philosophy and sociology. Emotions are easier to recognize than to define. The current psychological thinking with respect to emotions is that they reside in the primitive regions of our brain. As such, emotions are thought to be a very primitive system that can be traced back to the evolution of animals. They are a defense mechanism that we use to protect ourselves and to preserve our existence. Emotions have been handled in many different ways by many different cultures over time. The later half of the 19th century saw a major change of attitude and how people conceptualize emotions. Indeed, the term “emotions” was not used much before the mid 19th century. Prior to that time, people made a distinction between what they called “passion” and “affection.” Passion provoked a violent and spontaneous reaction. Affection remained more reflective and constructive. The 19th century saw a change with an increasingly secular approach. The most influential late 19th century thinker on the theory of emotions was probably William James.
With this introduction, Venerable Phramaha Bhatsakorn Piyobhaso began his lecture by explaining whenever we practice meditation, emotions or Aromana can easily be a meditation object while breathing in and out. Emotions here referred to feelings. In the dictionary, emotions mean strong feelings like love. Love can change to be hatred, be the subject of conversion or the base of crime. Joy is another kind of emotion, and so are hatred or anger. To be angry is not wrong. However, we need to know how to deal with anger. When anger arises in the mind through meditation and the practice of awareness, we can do away with anger. This can be compared with the building of a dam or the inner of mind to stop the stream of anger. If the dam is not strong, the dam will be damaged. To do away with anger we need time to practice. Once we are aware of anger, the degree of our anger will slowly die down and finally disappear. To be aware of anger is different from appraising the feeling. If we weigh or appraise anger again and again, it will make us aggressive. On the other hand, to be aware of the true nature of anger means that anger can arise but will finally pass away. Not so many people understand the three characteristics of existence (Anijja, Dukkha, Anatta). If we understand these phenomena deeply we will realize that things are impermanent. That things change, it is beyond our control. Therefore, we not want to attach ourselves to anything, if we develop the nature of non-attachment. Understanding the characteristics of anger can reduce the stream of anger. We often read in newspapers about such sudden incidents where a nice person becomes a criminal because of emotions. This is because he does not know how to deal with his emotions. To date, people tend to be easily aggrivated by the stress of a hectic life and economic and social problems. How can we deal with such stress? We can never succeed amidst this changing society unless we try to adapt our mind and attitude in order to behave accordingly.

Not only hatred but jealousy is also part of the range of strong emotions. Jealousy is common to all. It depends upon our first condition. At the moment when we know that we are jealous, we should think further. We can change jealousy to be sympathetic joy if we have a positive attitude. We need to practice and develop the four brahmavihara (the nature of a brahma, which means a sublime or divine state of mind, in
which the four pure qualities are present): the brahmavihara of infinite metta (loving kindness), the brahmavihara of infinite karuna (compassion), the brahmavihara of infinite mudita (sympathetic joy), and the brahmavihara of infinite upekkha (equanimity).

Equanimity means we understand things as they are. We can see the cause and condition of things. We know how to act accordingly and deal with them in a right way. We sometimes have compassion but we lack sympathetic joy. These four brahmavihara need to be developed in our mind little by little. It is easier to adapt our mind and the way to adapt our mind is through meditation practice. Here Venerable Phramaha Bhatsakorn Piyobhaso gave some examples. According to his experience, at first, he thought meditation was to go to some quiet place, sitting cross-legged, closing his eyes, doing nothing and trying to make the mind blank. Having studied more and more, he realized that meditation is something entirely else. In the Tipitaka, meditation is “Bhavana,” which means mental development or mental nature. Meditation is actually the way to make the mind awake and aware of what is going on. When we are totally angry, we can be aware of that anger. Anger, if we realize, brings us suffering. Love makes a person blind. Yet, love without condition can be applied to loving kindness. Venerable Phramaha Bhatsakorn Piyobhaso pointed out that Aromana or emotions in Buddhism are six in number: form, sound, smell, odour, taste and mind. These are objects that can cling to the mind. Aromana can be compared to a stick. We have to depend on things. When we see the object, the conscience of sight will depend on what we see. At that moment, we cannot decide. We cannot judge it. The Abhidhamma says the conscience of sight arises accompanied with equanimity or neutral feeling.

There are two kinds of Aromana or objects: 1) Itaromana, a desirable object, 2) Anitaromana, undesirable object. The figure of the Buddha is a desirable object for the Buddhists, but it may become undesirable for non-Buddhists due to judgment in mind. We thus need to know how to deal with these objects in the right way. Whenever we have a desirable object, we feel that we like it and want to possess it. If we know how to keep it in control, the desirable object will not bring any harm. For an undesirable object, we should adjust our mind. Acharn Cha once
mentioned that while practicing meditation, let things happen according to their own nature. We should try to be mindful and aware, and we finally can see the nature of our own mind. Once we practice meditation, no matter by what technique, we can experience peacefulness. However, only peacefulness is not enough, we need to develop “sati” or awareness. To be aware of what is going on can help develop wisdom. To sum up, any form of meditation can be useful for dealing with our emotions.

When the floor was open to the listeners, Mr. Frank Newbold said as a westerner, he was trying to make his mind blank as well as making judgment of proliferating things what is desirable or undesirable. It is quite hard to deal with both objectives while practicing meditation. Mr. Alan Oliver said what we want to do in meditation is to let go. It helps to facilitate the cutting of the stream of likes and dislikes. By observing, by becoming aware, by not catching likes or dislikes, attraction or aversion, our mind automatically becomes blank or at least aware until we realize the interconnection of all beings, compassion will arise. In this regard, we have awareness of our body and we can cultivate our mind through direct perception.

Mr. Richard Rubacher asked about “the secret drugs of Buddhism,” a term that comes actually from a book entitled Secret Drugs of Buddhism. Dr. Chris Stanford thought this might be found in Tibetan Mahayana but he was not aware of it. As for the term referring to the taking of drugs and the intentional injecting of substances to bring about alternative meditation, Dr. Stanford explained that the Buddha did not prescribe it and that Buddhist practitioners did not experiment with it. To this point, Mr. Alan Oliver said we have to appreciate that Buddhism has been mixed with many other traditions, and certainly the shaman traditions of all the cultures have drugs. We might find some corners of Buddhism that may use shamanistic elements and incorporate them in Buddhism.