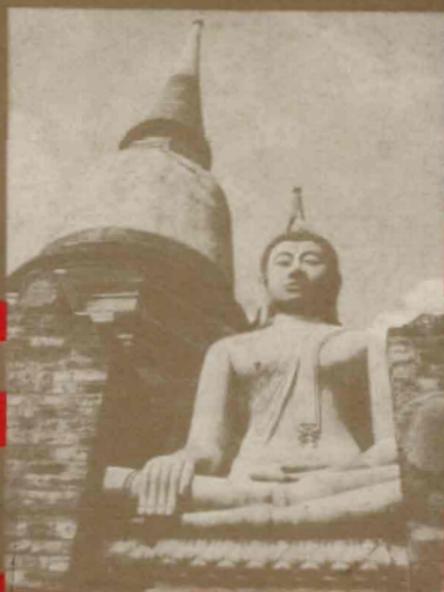


# Looking to America to Solve Thailand's Problems

Phra Rajavaramuni  
(*Prayudh Payutto*)

Translation by Grant A. Olson



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*This kingdom was known as Siam until 1939. when its name was changed to Thailand. Then it reverted to the original name again in 1946. Two years after the coup d'état of 1947 it was decreed that the country would be called Thailand, and it remains so officially. Ironically, the kingdom has since been ruled by one dictator after another – with very brief liberal democratic intervals. The name, Thailand, signifies the crisis of traditional Siamese Buddhist values.*

*The Siamese, Cambodian and Laotian Buddhist Era seems to be one year later than that of Burma, Sri Lanka and India. In fact, this is not so. The difference is that while the latter regards the year of the Maha Parinibbana as B.E.1, the former takes it to be the first anniversary after Lord Buddha's passing away. For example, this year is B.E. 2530 according to the Siamese, Cambodian and Laotian Calendar, but it is B.E. 2531 according to the Burmese, Sri Lankan and Indian Calendar.*

**Looking to America  
to Solve Thailand's  
Problems**

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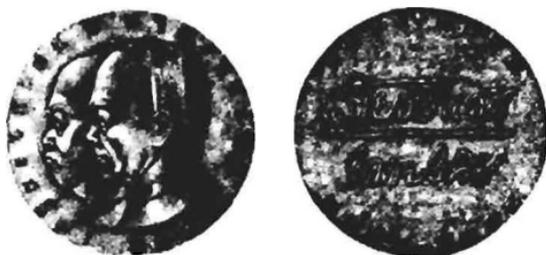
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Phra Rajavaramuni  
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Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation  
Bangkok

The Thai-American Project  
California

## FOREWORD

**O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us  
To see oursels as others see us!**

Robert Burns is not alone in his lament that we human beings lack the gift of seeing ourselves as others see us. Americans find foreign comments about their country fascinating, and sometimes (in the case of Alexis de Tocqueville, for example) very helpful. De Tocqueville examined American efforts to enjoy both freedom and equality and drew lessons from our successes and failures for his European readers.

Phra Rajavaramuni's subject is really Thailand, rather than the United States, though he draws on the American model as an example of what is going wrong in his own country. He, therefore, dwells primarily upon American weaknesses. I find it useful to look again at these failings in my own culture, particularly through the eyes of a wise Buddhist teacher.

Of course it would be possible to show how certain American themes—that have their source in earlier colonial times and develop through Thoreau, **Whitman**, and Muir to modern environmental, peace, social justice, and **micro-economic** movements—could be instructive for Thailand, as well as for other countries. But that would be another book.

I find Phra Rajavaramuni's work interesting on two levels: The first is the importance of building institutions from their origins. For example, American cities and highways developed with the automobile, for better or for worse. Our highways and the streets of our newer cities are, therefore, wide, and areas are set aside for parking. Forcing the **auto-**

mobile upon a country with an older transportation infrastructure creates havoc and disorganization that destroys the quality of life. We can see this havoc in older cities of the United States, as well as in parts of Europe and in Asia.

The second interesting point is the importance of building institutions upon traditional values. Christianity, it seems, has been largely neglected, or co-opted, in the development of Western capitalism. Buddhism, Phra **Rajavaramuni** suggests, is disregarded in Thailand's race to keep up with other nations.

One can understand the logic of this neglect. Greed is our conspiracy, our way of breathing together. If a multinational corporate executive were to follow the injunctions of Jesus, he would be dismissed and discredited. If a minister in the government of Thailand were to insist upon the mutual interdependence of all beings as the basis for important decisions, he would probably suffer a similar fate.

In a real sense, then, Buddhism is no longer Thai, as Christianity is fundamentally no longer American, if indeed it ever was. Phra Rajavaramuni calls Thais back to wisdom, compassion, and upright thinking and behavior, as Dorothy Day called Americans back to the love that never fails.

Phra **Rajavaramuni** has presented Buddhism as sociology, economics, and political science. It was so in the old days, it can be so—must be so really—in our own times. I am grateful to him for reminding me, and I am grateful also to all who brought his talks into book form.

**Robert Aitken**

Koko An Zendo, Honolulu  
Spring Training Period, 1987

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## Translator's Introduction

At first glance, many readers' initial reaction to the title of this work by Phra Rajavaramuni (Prayudh Payutto) may be to ask if the author is advocating or criticizing the tendency for Thailand (and perhaps many other "developing" countries) to follow the Western pattern of development. To clear up this question right away, the following essay stands as a very unique Buddhist critique of the above tendency.

\* \* \*

The period of Thai history generally labelled by historians as the "modernization" period, occurs around the turn of the century with the reign of King Chulalongkorn. At this time, various pressures, including the threat of colonization, motivated the rulers to overhaul the administration of the government and institute a new system of education, primarily based on Western models. At first, the **monkhood** was involved in the task of national education, and then, later, government-sponsored education fell out of their hands, most of it even coming to be located outside of the temple compound itself. To many Thais, including Phra Rajavaramuni, the separation which developed between the secular system of education and the traditional Buddhist education is a regrettable part of this modernization process and still constitutes a major problem for education in Thailand.

*Looking to America to Solve Thailand's Problems*

Thailand's fascination with "development" began to escalate in the early sixties during the time Field Marshal Sarit served as Prime Minister. In the era of Sarit, the interest in development can be related to the build up of the Vietnam war and a large influx of capital (especially from America), which resulted in a large number of rural development schemes. These projects helped to bolster his administration and maintain his power base and control over the countryside. For Sarit, the use of tradition and the call to development became a political ploy. This call to develop the Thai nation, taking various forms and serving various purposes, has continued up to the present; every evening newscast is filled with development projects and development news; new teachers are asked to not only go out and teach, but also to develop the communities in which they come to settle. The Thai Buddhist **Sangha's** role in development was soon to follow, taking the form of "development monks" who went out to work in the upcountry as part of their Buddhist University training — such as the **Dhammadūta** ("Ambassadors of the Dhamma") and **Dhammacārika** ("The Wanderers for Dhamma").

Alternative interests began to appear due to dissatisfaction over the failure and narrow scope of many of the **government-**sponsored development projects, which even included some projects involving the Buddhist **Sangha**. New voices emerged, often from those working for NGO (or non-governmental

## Translator's Introduction

organization) efforts. One of the relatively recent books on the subject, coming from an author supporting alternative inputs to the development process and NGO interests, is **Sulak Sivaraksa's** slim volume, entitled simply *Religion and Development* (Chiengmai: **Payap** College, 1981). Sulak's book makes several points at a more general level and offers the impressions of a Thai intellectual (who is known for being outspoken — in 1984, he was on trial for a charge of *lese majeste*) regarding what he calls the "western patterns of development." He is critical of a pattern which he identified as a tendency for quantity over quality, a concern for materialism and consumerism over a curbing of desires and a sense of sufficiency, and too many short-sighted projects carried out in the name of "progress," instead of a concern for valuable traditions and more long-range, meaningful, "ultimate" goals of human beings. Most of his ideas about development are, therefore, grounded in his interest in Buddhism.

One of the principal figures in Thai Buddhism who has made significant contributions to relating Buddhism to social concerns is, of course, **Buddhadāsa** Bhikkhu. Buddhadasa has been one of the major spokesmen advocating a practical interpretation of the Buddhist teachings. He has made an extremely large body of knowledge on Buddhist suttas available to a more general public. His works often attempt to provide a bridge between early canonical material and modern conditions — much of which he has made more accessible by translating **Pāli** passages

into Thai and complimenting them with his own commentaries. Buddhadasa's work has done a great deal to stimulate and sustain interest in Buddhism for many people who had become disenchanted with its more "folk" aspects and thought it had nothing more to offer to the modern scene. His works comment on a whole range of topics from the application of general Buddhist principles to politics, economics, and even "dhammic socialism."

Phra **Rajavaramuni** is another of Thailand's foremost Buddhist thinkers. He was born in Central Thailand in 1939 and became a novice (*sāmaṇera*) at the age of twelve. He is well-known for having been one of only a few monks in the last century to pass the highest **Pāli** exam (grade 9) at the age of twenty-two, while still a novice. He worked at Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University as both Assistant Secretary-General and, later, as Deputy Secretary-General. At his position at the Buddhist University, he helped to expand and develop curriculum in Thai and English, and instituted programs involving monks in community development work. It is Phra **Rajavaramuni's** contention that monks can still be an important voice even in government-sponsored development. His constant concern for the Thai **Sangha** has also kept him in the **Sangha** and not an advocate of separatist "reform" movements which, he feels, only result in further factionalism in a **Sangha** which is already too divided.

Phra **Rajavaramuni** also became abbot of Wat Phra **Phirain**,

## Translator's Introduction

in Bangkok, but eventually chose to step down and free himself from administrative duties and devote himself to writing. In 1971 (B.E. 2514), he published one of the first versions of a book entitled *Buddha-dhamma* (later expanded editions were to come out in 1982 and 1986). *Buddha-dhamma* has been heralded by some as the best, most complete and systematic (or even “scientific”) explanation of the Buddhist doctrine in the Thai language in the last one hundred years. Some have put no time limit on its value and simply say it is the best explanation in the Thai language. In August of 1986, Phra **Rajavaramuni** was given an honorary doctorate in Philosophy from Thammasat University, and later that year another honorary doctorate, in Education, was awarded to him by Silapakorn University.

This present work, *Looking to America to Solve Thailand's Problems* (originally a lecture given on behalf of the Faculty of Education at **Chulalongkorn** University and subsequently published by Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University in 1983/B.E. 2526), follows the above trend in Thai Buddhism by attempting to apply the religion to concrete modern problems. Phra **Rajavaramuni** characterizes his work as a whole as dealing with three main concerns: 1) Giving an accurate representation of Buddhist teachings found in the **Pāli** canon; 2) Problems of education in the Thai **Sangha**; and 3) Applying Buddhist thought to wider social issues. This volume essentially represents the third concern — bringing Buddhism to bear on social issues. It is unique

in that Phra **Rajavaramuni** speaks from first-hand knowledge based on his own sojourns to America to lecture at Swarthmore College and Harvard University. (For a slightly more detailed account of his life, see the brief biography which follows his essay). From this direct experience, we are given a very clear, often critical and challenging, account of his views concerning the good and bad aspects of both American culture and Thai culture. In the end, he tells the Thai people to investigate the real conditions in American society before they so willingly embrace their ways and pattern of development. He goes on to state that maintaining superstition or building a system of laws to instill fear and coerce people into ethical behavior will only break down and lead to failure, and ends by making suggestions about how attitudes must undergo a more fundamental change, based primarily on cultivating the Buddhist notion of *chanda* (proper resolve), before development or even democracy, another Western import, can succeed.

\* \* \*

I have maintained the original form of the **Thai** manuscript. In other words, sections which originally appeared in italics have been kept as such, and sections which were highlighted have been kept that way. I have tried to provide some Thai and Pali romanization when I or other readers thought it helpful to do so. **In** that case, I have used the Library of Congress system for romanization of Thai. This text employs Pali Buddhist

## Translator's Introduction

terminology instead of Sanskrit (in other words, *dhamma* instead of *dharma*, etc.). Most frequently used **Pāli** terms have been italicized only upon first appearance. In some instances, I have translated the ambiguous *chit-čhai* as "heart-mind," since it carries both of these senses, but it might just as well have been rendered "mind-heart." Other notes about usage appear as footnotes in the text. Westerners who do not like being called *farang* may not like my maintaining the term throughout the text, but this is something they must get over **themselves**.

\* \* \*

I have many people to thank, and **so** this can be only a partial list which has filtered through an imperfect memory. I want to thank Dr. Robert Bobilin, Religion Department, University of Hawaii, for first mentioning Phra **Rajavaramuni's** name to me; I want to thank Sulak Sivaraksa and **Arthorn** Techatada for a vast amount of help and encouragement (for this publication would not exist in its present form without them), Dr. A. Thomas Kirsch, Anthropology Department, and Dr. Milton **Barnett**, Rural Sociology, **Cornell** University, for reading early drafts, Dr. **Allan** Grapard, Religion Department, UC Santa Barbara, for always encouraging me to make the thoughts of foreign thinkers available to a wider audience, and to Dr. Lee Siegel, Religion Department, University of Hawaii, who always said that he does not do translations anymore because if the translation is good, the original author gets **all** the credit, and if the translation

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is bad, then the translator catches all the flak.

Phra **Rajavaramuni** has given his precious time to check this translation, however, as always, I will take responsibility for any faults that remain. If this translation is of benefit to anyone, let its merits go to the original author, to all the Thai people who have been kind and patient with me over the years as I struggle to learn their language, and to my family, **Chalermsee** and Teal Mettā.

Grant **A.** Olson  
**Cornell** University

# Looking to America to Solve Thailand's Problems.

Phra **Rajavaramuni** (Prayudh Payutto)

Translation by Grant A. Olson

*Greetings and blessings to the rector, faculty, students and all interested people.*

I would like to express my appreciation to the Faculty of Education at Chulalongkorn University for inviting me to speak on this auspicious day, the 25th anniversary of the foundation of the Faculty. I appreciate your arranging this event to recognize the good deeds others have done. These good deeds started with the foundation of the Faculty itself and include the contributions it has made to the Thai nation and society. Let's be thankful for the activities that have been set up to make this day more meaningful and fruitful.

The topic that you asked me to talk about today seems to be a rather long story. It is so long, in fact, that the time we have will necessarily be too short — if we had four or five hours, that would be nice. The requested topic is Buddhist teachings and the solution of the problems of education in Thai society in the future. I will try to keep this brief by freely combining and dealing with the problems of education and the problems of society as one issue. In fact, the goal of education is to benefit

society; on the other hand, whatever happens in society is caused by education. These two issues are linked with each other, therefore, today I might not speak directly to problems of education, but I will emphasize social problems which will reflect problems in education. Whatever kind of life we lead will reflect the society in which we live, and by the same token, whatever social conditions exist will reflect the lives of its individuals.

## The State of Thai Society

When we speak of solving problems with a methodology, it is necessary to identify the problems first. This is the procedure for solving problems; that is to say, we must know the state of the problem that exists at the present moment and inquire into the cause in order to establish a method for its solution. First, we must consider the problems in Thai society, but in this limited time it is not possible to talk about all social problems in great detail. I must, therefore, find a way to condense my talk so that you will see the whole picture. I have thought of the words of two **farang** which I will use to illustrate the state of Thai society.' Please keep in mind that the terms I refer to may supersede the truth slightly; I do not intend these words to be absolute truth from now on. They are only to serve as a reference, a reflection to allow us to see the condition which we will come to understand together. First, I heard a story from a person in academics in a Bangkok metropolitan office (it is not necessary for me to 'mention the speaker's name) about a **farang** who came to analyze some problems in Cambodia. This consultant was advised by several **farang** not to go there; it is dangerous; there

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1. I have kept the Thai word *farang* in this text whenever it has been used. It refers to Westerners, or, here, Americans. Some have suggested that *farang* comes from *français*, referring to colonists who earlier posed a threat to Thailand's borders — trans.

is a lot of fighting, attacking and killing. But later, he had reason to go and, finally, found himself on his way to Cambodia. When he arrived he saw various conditions which were quite frightening. Having already come as far as Cambodia and so close to Thailand, one of the largest countries in Southeast Asia, he thought he should travel here too. After he returned home he concluded that "Thailand is one of the most frightening countries in the world!" He regards the fact that he escaped with his life as very fortunate. In other words, he found Thailand much more frightening than Cambodia. He expressed problems concerning personal safety, such as crime, accidents, and safety on the streets (he especially stressed safety on the streets); he said that being in the road in Bangkok is more frightening than fighting a bull. If he fights a bull, he still has a red cloth to hold onto to defend himself, but when he is standing in the street in Thailand, he has nothing at all to use to help himself. This is one view I have heard from others. We have a general knowledge concerning the conditions of safety; recently, the traffic police and the Ministry of Public Health released information stating that the death toll on the major roadways in Thailand increases about 28% per year. More people die on the highways than die from disease. According to the statistics from the year 1979 (B.E. **2522**), a total of **16,000** people died from accidents and in the same year heart disease accounted for a mere **13,000** deaths. This shows that there are many deaths from accidents.

Next, I would like to mention a work by a **farang** who came to do research in Thailand and wrote a book entitled *Modernization Without Development*.<sup>2</sup> He speaks of Thailand, and in fact the whole book is all about the Thai case. In summary, he says that *Thailand has modernized, but is not at all developed*. In other words, Thailand has many grand and fancy buildings, and virtually all kinds of luxury items which contribute to people's comfort and convenience. When a foreign country, such as America, has something, whoop, in a flash Thailand has it too. We have modern social and political institutions, but look at their make-up, and look at the plight of the poor and the needy — there has been no improvement there. The gap in status and economics grows ever wider, and society in general is pervaded by a lack of discipline (Thai, *winai*; Pāli, *vinaya*), crime, drug addiction and allurements which lead to ruin (Pāli, *apāyamukha*); opportunities in society are not evenly distributed; development is still not balanced between the country and the city, and so on. Or look at this in terms of politics; the political system has taken the shape of a democracy, but this democracy has not developed as it should. It stumbles, pulls itself up, stumbles again and gropes along. Loosely speaking, it has been referred to as "semi-democratic." This is an example which supports Jacobs's essential opinion

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2. Norman Jacobs. *Modernization Without Development: Thailand as an Asian Case Study*, (New York: Praeger Publishers. 1971) 420 pp.

that Thailand has achieved a variety of modern accomplishments, but has not yet developed. That is to say, Thailand has the external features, the material artifacts and the appearance of something modern, but the substance of the various institutions has not yet developed its own potential which allows them to improve. What we have said here so far may be a partial observation from a pessimistic perspective, but it is the point of view of outsiders who look at us. I think that it is good to be willing to listen to the criticisms of others, because this is a way to adjust and improve ourselves. This is the way, in a very condensed fashion, that I will speak of the state of the problems in Thai society, because I do not have the time to relate the long story.

Now, if we want to see the way to solutions, we must know the path that Thai society has already walked, and the path which it intends to tread in the future. This is important in two ways: I **will** talk about the path which we seem intent on first. We cannot deny that Thai society is bent on following Western society, which stated more clearly might be: *We go for America!* Although we express some disapproval of them, the current feeling is really the above. We take America as a model for almost all things. If something happens in American society, it seems that people in our society are excited and thrilled to accept it. As we follow along, we should study them in order to know what the current state of American society is like and to know what their trends are for the future; so if we follow them, we will know what they

are all about. We can familiarize ourselves with the experiences they have had and the lessons they have learned. The things which they have met with and found to be bad, or have led to a bad result, should be avoided. To the extent which we say we follow them, are we really walking the same path or not? This is something we should take up as a point for consideration or suspicion.

Now, I would like to take the opportunity to talk a little bit about the state of American society. As I speak right now, I am not trying to set myself up as a sociologist (a sociologist might speak in much more detail), I only wish to suggest some general views which are a train of thought, or observations which may help us to understand what follows. At any rate, when I speak about America, I must beg your pardon, when you folks hear a monk speak English you might feel it is grating to your ears, but today it is necessary to use some English **words**.<sup>3</sup> Actually, language is just a medium of meaning for us to come to an understanding together.

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3. I have included almost all of the English terms Phra Rajavaramuni used in this talk (except where they were repeated several times). In this text, for reference, they appear in quotes upon first usage — trans.

## The State of American Society

We already have a general knowledge of the condition of American society, because when we see them progress, we generally take them as a model. The progress of American society is related to an abundance of material goods, convenience and various **comforts**.<sup>4</sup> This is the picture we have and this is the one that American society accepts. They believe that their society is an affluent one, a society abundant with goods, but at the same time, in the midst of all of these ready-made goods, if you look at them more deeply from another angle, they accept that their country is experiencing a "cultural crisis." This crisis may result in radical changes in the near future and is related to this very abundance in terms of materialism. How this is all connected is something demanding further explanation.

This abundance has positive aspects, but what we will examine here are some of its negative aspects. American society can be referred to as representative of Western societies in one area: Their progress has come to the point that we now call the current times a "Push-button Age"; in other words, an age in which,

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4. In most cases, I have chosen the word "abundance" for the Thai *phrang-phrām*. The meaning of *phrang-phrām*, however, often goes beyond simple abundance to also suggest a state of preparedness, readiness ("ready-made-ness." "fully-assembled-ness") repleteness, or being well-stocked. In this text, it often carries these additional meanings—trans.

as you come and go, when you want to do anything you just push a button and it is accomplished with comfort and convenience. For some things, Thailand is already this way, such as washing clothes which no longer must be done by hand, simply put them in the machine and push a button; and when you want to dry them, you do the same thing. Everything can be done in a moment with ease and comfort. It is so convenient and easy, in fact, that one could say the following: In the future, it will not be necessary to use muscles, just flex a finger — and then probably just the pointer finger at that.

Anyway, I would like for us to understand first that while we have referred to American society as prosperous and replete, that is not to say that it is a country without people suffering from poverty. There are plenty of poor people. In large cities, there are many slums; in some states, there exist backward and needy conditions. But when you weigh all of this, the poor make up a small portion of the whole. The condition of comfort and convenience, and machines to maintain this condition, are widespread, thus most people have the chance to benefit from them.

In the midst of the abundance, comfort and convenience, and all the rest, there exists a negative phenomenon. Please allow me to give an example of some statistics (and here I will ask you to try to withstand a bit of boredom). Please listen to these statistics.

Let me start by talking about the physical body first. A book by a **farang** doctor describes the comfort and convenience of the Push-button Age, especially in terms of American life, and calls it a "Western Way of Death." In other words, the progress of this pre-assembled, Push-button Age is related to the death of **farang** or leads to a kind of death for **farang** of some sort. The important issue this doctor raises has to do with heart disease; he says that *this kind of progress leads to heart disease* and that this heart disease is related to the body and the mind.' The writer states that *heart disease is the major cause of death over all other causes of death in America.*<sup>6</sup> Two years ago, in the year 1980 (B.E. 2523), 342 people in one-hundred thousand died of heart disease. Cancer was the second major cause of death, following way behind; about half of that number, only 186 in a one-hundred thousand, died of cancer. As for those who died in accidents of all kinds, there were only 47 in one-hundred thousand. This is an insignificant number, way behind heart disease. The rate of increase of those who have contracted heart disease is very high. In 1973 (B.E. 2516), 244 people in one-hundred thousand had it, and in 1980 (B.E. 2523), this increased to 342 people in one-hundred thousand. In other words, the rate increased

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5. Malcolm Carruthers, M.D., *The Western Way of Death*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), pp. 11-132.

6. For statistics from here on, see *Information Please Almanac 1982 and The Hammond Almanac 1981*.

almost **100** per one-hundred thousand.

Next, let's go directly into the subject of mental illness. If we count only the people in hospitals and care facilities, in the year **1975** (B.E. **2518**), there were **6,400,000** people in a total population of more than **200,000,000** suffering from mental disorders, while in the ten years previous to this time, there were only **2,600,000** people. In other words, in the space of ten years there was an increase of almost three-hundred per cent.

Another important phenomenon to consider next is the rate of suicide. In America, the suicide rate is higher than the murder rate, more people kill themselves than kill each other. In the year **1977** (B.E. **2520**), **28,681** people killed themselves, but the number of murders was **19,966**, a difference of almost **10,000**. The number of suicides continues to increase: If we compare a period of five year increments, in **1960** (B.E. **2503**), there were **19,041** suicides, in the year **1965** (B.E. **2508**) there were **21,507**, in the year **1970** (B.E. **2513**), there were **23,480**, and later, in the year **1977** (B.E. **2520**), there was an increase over the previous figure of more than **5,000** suicides.

This kind of progress is something worthy of attention and seen more extensively it could be said that *there is a great deal of suicide in countries that are widely developed*, and not only America. As mentioned above, America has a suicide rate of **12.5** for every **100,000** people; and if we look at Mexico, a poor country which connects up to the southern part of America,

their suicide rate is 1.7 for every 100,000 people. Or to put it more simply, look at the figures within a single country: South Africa has two groups of people, the whites and the blacks. The whites are more developed, while the blacks remain at a lower level. Here, the suicide statistics are different. The **whites have** a high suicide rate of 14.5 for every 100,000 people; the blacks have a suicide rate of 5.6 per **100,000**, almost three times less than that of the white population. In an area where poverty exists, people wage a full-time struggle for existence, but they will not have or are not likely to have people killing themselves. In progressive and prosperous countries, people are more faint-hearted; if they do not succeed in getting some little thing, they think of killing themselves.

But this is not so frightening; what is more frightening is suicide amongst adolescents, which is currently a disturbing problem in America. In the years 1977 or 1978 (B.E. 2520 or 2521), **400,000** teenagers in America tried to kill themselves, with **4,000** of them actually succeeding. Many more survived, but **4,000** is no small number. This is something that we should stop and wonder about. I feel these are disturbing figures. They say that within 2-3 years the number of teenage suicides will increase by over 200 per **cent**.<sup>7</sup> The arising of these conditions is

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7. News Center 5 TV, New York, February 1, 1978; there are many other kinds of interesting problems of American youth, such as students causing trouble, hurting their teachers, fighting amongst themselves, some of them

something which makes those people take notice and wonder what their society is all about. This is one way of seeing into the state of some things. It shows us that people in the midst of progress, or abundance, have some kind of problem hidden or held among them *and suicide is one method, in a host of methods, which teenagers try to use to escape a society of abundance with which they are bored and loathe.*

What are the other ways that youngsters — especially both men and women of the new generation — try to find a way out of their own society? Reactions in the very recent past are a new phenomenon. In American society, the new generation has rejected their own society. At first, groups of hippies rejected the existing order and models of society. They went off to live together in groups, had a style of dress and lifestyle that was highly unusual, and they abandoned the whole culture of the existing society. Aside from this, it also followed that they took drugs, ranging from LSD to heroin, but later the drug which became most popular was marijuana.

There was one other thing which became more prevalent

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even fighting in the street. In just the months of September 1976 to February 1977, there were 2,800 cases of such student problems. The percentage of pregnant female students in New Jersey high schools, amounted to twenty-percent. In the year **1971**, **22** million young girls between the ages of 15-19 years had already had sex, and by 1976 this increased to 32 million (CBS News Radio 88, New York, April **1**, 8, 20, 1977).

and served as an exit from society. Since its popularity is already established, we must agree that it is something quite important which will have a deep, significant, and lasting effect on culture and society in **America**.<sup>8</sup> For short, we can refer to this phenomenon as "Young America Turns Eastward." In other words, people of this new generation have turned their interest towards Eastern religions, often referred to as the "New Religions" which are, of course, old religions, even older than their own religions. But after the Eastern religions travel to America, they become new religions. There are many kinds of Buddhism, such as Zen and Lamaism of Tibet, and many groups interested in aspects of Hinduism, such as yoga and Hari Krishna. *Above all else, they are interested in the practice of concentration meditation (samādhi)*, but we cannot say that they are only interested in practice, they are interested in teachings as well. They search and probe with their mind for values they can apply towards a solution to the problems of their mind. This comes from a feeling of social oppression in their own society. So this preference for Eastern models has increasingly spread. There was one meditation teacher (Alan Watts) who conveyed a prediction for his society, but he said things which went beyond the truth. He suggested that "in another fifty years or so, people in India will drive around

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8. For this section, see: Jacob Needleman and others, *Religion for a New Generation*, (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1973) and A.K. Bierman and others, *Philosophy for a New Generation*. (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1973).

in cars, live in suburbia, and play baseball, whereas people in America will sit in caves in Oregon and in the Rockies and meditate on their navel and on **ātman** and **nirvāna**.”<sup>9</sup> These are the words of an American writer. I would like you to believe that they are beyond the truth; they intend to give a picture of his society, suggesting actual tendencies existing at present, but they go too far.

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9. Jacob Needleman and George Baker, eds., *Understanding New Religions*, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978) p. 155.

## Eastern Religions Enter America

I am going to tell you one case as an example of the interest in Eastern religions, or to show you the condition of the psychological aspects that have entered American society. At Harvard University, there is a man named Professor Harvey Cox who teaches at the "Divinity School." This man observed the phenomenon in American society that young Americans had become very interested in Eastern religions. He felt provoked by this and did not like it a bit. Professor Cox felt that Eastern religions would lead to psychological values in opposition to the American social system and result in degeneration. He tended to think that society must solve society's problems by confronting issues of injustice, for example. He thought that Eastern religions would lead to a value of cultivating only the inner life of people, making them forsake, evade or keep apart from society, and not be interested in social problems. He had a bad attitude towards them and was not at all satisfied with this phenomenon. Professor Cox felt that he must point out this terrible, diseased tendency. While trying to think of a way to do this, he decided he must get close to these Eastern religions, close to this process, to see it clearly and point out its bad points for public reviewal.

In Cambridge, the home of **Harvard** University, there were many residences of Eastern religions. He said that in Cambridge along an area of twenty blocks there were about 40-50 groups

altogether, a considerably large number. He, therefore, referred to the city of Cambridge as "Benares-on-the-Charles" and began by getting students together and observing them closely in these **groups**.<sup>10</sup> He observed their practices and took a look at their various systems of thought to see what-followed-what more clearly. He involved himself in studying and observing for an extended period of time, but felt that that was not enough. What he only "observed" was insufficient, he felt, he must also "participate" and become more involved to see them more clearly. He practiced concentration meditation (*samādhi*), danced, and did whatever the group was doing. Later, he saw that his participation was not enough, he must go to the very source. The large religious groups are located in various places. The Tibetan group, for example, has a branch in Boulder, Colorado, called the Naropa Institute. This is a major center of a group of Tibetan Lamaism; they have Buddhist studies up to the level of a master's degree. Professor Harvey Cox received an invitation to teach at the Naropa Institute, so he had an opportunity to go observe, study and practice very closely. He came to refer to Boulder, Colorado, as "Tibet-in-the-Rockies."

From his own long-term observations, participation, studies and practice, he finally came to an appreciation of these groups. His previous intention was to point out errors, but when he saw

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10. For this section, see: Harvey Cox. *Turning East*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977), 192 pp.

the value of these groups, he understood why the new generation in American society turned their interests toward the East. He came to see that they have their own value or beauty. So, he himself received results and still employs their practices regularly in his own life. He was not willing, however, to accept the whole line of thought of the new generation, but he saw how their embracing new religious ideas was a matter of great excitement. Some groups, he found, have the characteristics of a fashion or an obsession and may lead to misconceptions. Dr. Cox saw that Eastern religions (or these groups) can offer things of great benefit, but they must be applied to and integrated with American culture in an appropriate manner. If they are successful in this, the most substantial benefits will come about, but the important essence of this is he was willing to accept that they had something good to offer.

In the last decade, religionists, psychologists and sociologists interested in studies similar to Professor Cox's put together a seminar. It was an occasional inter-disciplinary meeting to analyze different reports. In summary, it became clear that the thinking of the East presents a challenge to American customs and will continue to be an important factor in cultural change. American culture is, therefore, at a phase of "cultural transformation." Professor Cox made observations to show the extent of the influence of these imported Eastern religions. If we measure this in terms of the Christian religion, the number of people

who practice the methods of concentration of these Eastern religions within their own groups is very high. He wrote that in the period of the last several years, *the practice of concentration meditation (samadhi) based on Eastern methods, has become a part of the daily routine of increasingly more and more Christian monks in ascetic monasteries or churches from Maine to New Mexico. Even ordained Roman Catholics have started to establish various sitting concentration practices as a part of their regular ceremonies of worship.* Even the secretariat at the Vatican has suggested that missionaries spreading Christianity modify and relate methods for the performance of concentration meditation found in Buddhism to Christianity. Currently, at the **Saeng-Tham** Seminary in Thailand many courses are offered about Buddhism, and there is one course in the practice of tranquillity meditation and insight meditation (*vipassanā*). In other words, *those who will be ordained as Roman Catholic priests in the future will have learned and studied insight meditation as well.*

The entrance of Eastern religions has had growing influence, especially among these groups of the new generation, and has had a significant effect on American society. This is also especially true in the emergence of an older group and a newer group. The older or "traditional" group may have the feeling of being in opposition, especially when parents see their own children escaping from home and going to live in these religious residences. In some instances, the people involved end up prosecuting each

other in court, and there are also those who train themselves and offer their professional services to retrieve these children. These people are referred to as "deprogrammers." I opened the dictionary and found that it does not yet contain this word; it is brand new. Deprogramming is a *means of excising thoughts and beliefs from the minds of young people who come to revere Eastern religions, in order to bring them back to American society.* For example, there was the case of one young woman who went to live with a Hari Krishna group. Her mother hired a deprogrammer to bring her back and she did, in fact, return. The young woman admitted that she had made a mistake and said that from now on she would return to society as before. But in the end, she became the trickster and as soon as she was freed, she returned to the Hari Krishna group again. And on top of this, she charged that her mother and the deprogrammer had kidnapped her. This case went to court, but the public prosecutor made a new case stating that the Hari Krishnas employ "mind control" similar to "brainwashing," thus it was wrong according to the Constitution. The case went to the highest court and they decided that the Hari Krishna do not use mind control. This type of case, this phenomenon in American society, shows that the entrance of Eastern religions into America has had an influence in Western society. Now many different words from the East have entered the **farang** "dictionary," mainly words like "Buddha, **Dharma** and **Sangha.**" These are words that are already used in American society. So

now if we were to use the word **Sangha** and an American does not know it, we can tell him he must go study it himself. In other words, he is a person who has not kept up with the times.

*Now we must continue to study the background of the state or condition of American society. Why do 'Young Americans,' therefore, "turn East?" And why does happiness and abundance in society lead to suicide and the use of addicting drugs?*

## Investigating the Background of America

Currently, many **sociologists** refer to this replete American society as a "Post-industrial Society." Even though there are some sociologists who do not agree, it seems to be just a disagreement about terminology. According to its conditions, one must admit that it is undergoing an age of important change. What is this Post-industrial Society like? It has the feature that I have already mentioned: the abundance of material goods. You can see this from another name used to refer to their society, "Consumer Society."

We must discuss the difference between "Post-industrial" and "Industrial" Society. So far, American society has been an Industrial Society. We know this already, but exactly how are they different? This is something worthy of study. Why do they refer to the present society as one that has surpassed industrialization? In this instance, we must look for another word that will enter into our analysis and bring us greater understanding. They say that this Post-industrial Society is in an age of "Post-scarcity." In other words, the phase of Industrial Society is still a period of fighting against scarcity. When I speak like this, my aim is to get you to see the background of American and all Western societies in order to elucidate the development of those societies in the past. That is to say, *in the past, Western society fought against scarcity in order to bring about increased abundance.*

*In the course of establishing or securing their existence in order to bring about abundance, or fighting to overcome scarcity, they became an Industrial Society creating an "Industrial Culture." This Industrial Culture played an important part in building the society to its present state of abundance.*

What are some of the aspects of this Industrial Culture? This is something that is well known. Many people speak of the "Protestant Ethic." This is an important point in the rise of Industrial Society or Industrial Culture. This Protestant Ethic believes that work and the fruits of success from work are the goal. People must understand their own personal drives and self-control, and not be willing to succumb to the flow of their own desires and cravings; they are not to seek pleasure, but rather be intent upon working as much as possible, and the fruits that are derived from that work are to be put aside for future investment. Making an effort not to use these fruits for convenience or pleasure is a feature of the Protestant Ethic. American Industrial Culture has built itself up this way, and here I am not referring to the present Consumer Society. In other words, *if we look at the real build up of progress of Western peoples, we must trace back to an America of about 40-50 years ago. We cannot look at the present; the present is merely an end result.* Also, there is a current state of confusion, of being all mixed up. The former foundation that comes from the Industrial Culture is still present. It is something which gives people the drive to work seriously,

but at the same time there has been the rise of Consumer Culture. Especially in American society, Industrial Culture had special traits focussed on competition which became more apparent in the period of time witnessing the rise of the "Success Culture." This brought about success, progress, and abundance, and this, in the end, led to the Consumer Society and the Post-industrial Society of today.

In summary, the Industrial Culture came about in the effort to overcome scarcity and attain post-scarcity; having overcome scarcity, the society attained a state of abundance.<sup>11</sup> Now a problem arises. They say that the following is the point which helps in understanding the present state of Western society: the goal of Industrial Society to overcome all scarcity. The ethic, or whatever else which came about, had this same goal, served as equipment for overcoming poverty and scarcity, and resulted in abundance. But when this goal was already achieved, that is to say a more complete state of abundance was already attained and the scarcity was overcome, all of this equipment lost its meaning. It was no longer clear as to how it must be used or put into practice, and to what further purpose it might

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11. Here, aside from the books I have already mentioned. see books which show the condition of Western society, such as Gurth Higgin, *Symptom of Tomon-ow*, (London: The Plume Press. 1973) 158 pp., and Richard N. Goodwin, *The American Condition*, (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1974) 407 pp.

serve. The new generation, therefore, was born into a Consumer Society and they did not see the value of the culture of the old society at all. The Protestant Ethic is an example of this; they throw it away, turn their backs on it, and feel that it has no meaning at all. This is one cause leading to the "crisis" referred to earlier.

This is not all; there are other causes entering into it. Their society has conflict and competition for the fruits of success, and when success has been reached and there is already ample material abundance, instead of feeling pleasurable and satisfied, another feeling arises. This abundance does not help them to have real pleasure and does not help to give life meaning in any way at all. It results in further disappointment. And even worse than this, when this abundance, which comes about from the competitive system, does not help people to have real pleasure (*sukha*), the competitive system of a Success Culture becomes something that is oppressive to life. This results in more pressure leading to further suffering (*dukkha*). *Altogether there are three causes entering into this: Industrial Culture has lost its value, meaning and purpose; Consumer Culture does not give satisfaction of wants and hopes; and Success Culture squeezes and oppresses existence. After being exposed to all three of these, the farang feel as if they cannot bear them anymore and are very disappointed. When this disappointment comes about, it makes them go to the opposite extreme; it makes them feel like they must criticize their own society. They turn*

*to look for spiritual values, and it just so happens that Eastern religions can fulfill their needs. Many of them, then, turn this way.* This is one way of explaining this.

Anyway, the characteristics of the Consumer Society in America still exist (are still habitual). Consumerism has two sides: The traditional consumer is one who obtains and consumes "possessions" such as **useable** items and properties that they own. In the past, therefore, there was competition in society concerning the comparison of other's possessions with one's own. The questions went like this: "Do you have this or not?" — "I already have it," or "Do you own it yet?" But now society has changed; by turning towards the East, for example, they are searching for new values or searching for a way out, a way to solve the psychological and spiritual problems of life. All of this has brought about a new way of consuming, and that is the consumption of "experience." This consumption of experience is a new characteristic of American society which has caused great changes in the younger generation. From the old question of "Do you have this or not?" the new question has become "Have you tried this yet?" This exists in Consumer Society as well, but in the past, people consumed only material goods and that is why they asked if you had something or not. Now they consume experience. If anything new, strange or unusual comes along, they ask whether or not you have tried it yet. *Young Americans, therefore, do not compete to see who has beautiful*

or modern clothes, a new car, or whatever may show *materialistic abundance*. Even the children of the rich wear patched pants and will drive an old car; even if it is beautiful or new, they try to make it look old in order to show that they have had a lot of experience [are "old hands"]. *They search and hunt for experience.*

These are the features of American society that should be considered. I think that I do not have the time to speak at length, so believe that this is a cultural crisis, a spiritual confusion of Industrial Culture that Western society is presently experiencing. Some go as far as to say that traditional culture is presently breaking up, disintegrating. The new generation is presently looking to the East, while the traditional folks try to preserve their own society. There is a conflict; they are willing to admit that *cultural change in America is inevitable, and they are presently trying to adjust themselves to this.*

At the same time that there is a willingness to respect the things of the East, there exists another group of opponents. They look at the East with a feeling of partial dislike and contempt. One group is willing to accept and see the East as a guru, guru meaning teacher (Thai, *khrū*); India refers to this as guru. The Buddhist word for this is *kalyāṇamitta* (good, virtuous friend). When the group holding the bad opinion comes to study, they are willing to accept parts of the teachings and practices, like Professor Cox who was willing to accept the good parts, but some people feel very strongly about the bad parts. Let me give you

an example of a person who holds the very opposite opinion from Professor Cox. His name is Mr. Arthur Koestler and he has written a book entitled *The Lotus and the Robot*. The lotus stands for Eastern society, a society that is well-integrated with nature, and the robot represents a society that has progressed with industry. He wrote this story and finally was of the opinion that when Western society has a crisis it corners itself and searches for an answer by turning to look towards the East. Koestler feels the West is able to take the good and beautiful things, put them to beneficial use and adapt itself. From this he paints a picture of the East which is partially contemptuous. He borrows a phrase and says that "As pupils we were not bad, but hopeless as **teachers**."<sup>12</sup> In other words, *the farang are good students, capable of taking knowledge from the East, modifying it, making it their own and putting it to beneficial use to make their society more "enriched," abundant, replete, and progressive. But he says he is not able to succeed in teaching Eastern society. Eastern society does not know how to adjust itself; does not know how to accept the good things that the West has to offer, and does not know how to maintain and put their own valuable cultural aspects and traditions to good use. Sometimes he speaks strongly saying that even the things that they have*

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12. Arthur Koestler, *The Lotus and the Robot*, (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1961) 276 pp. Other books express a similar attitude, such as Charles Corwin. *East to Eden?* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972) 190 pp.

*are kept for other people to use.* This is something we must note, which in one sense may be regarded as looking down upon the East. Let's let it pass for now. This is my speech about American society.

## **The Background of Problems in Thai Society**

Next I would like to return to a discussion of Thai society, because on the one hand, we must consider the path we intend to walk, and on the other, we must know what the path we have already taken is like. In this analysis of change in Thai society, I must say again that the time we have is not sufficient and that scholars have done a good deal of research in this area. Both Thai and **farang**, especially the **farang**, have published large volumes on this, including texts, like the book I mentioned in the last section, *Modernization Without Development*. To keep this short, I will not go into such books any further and I will let you read them on your own. Many people have read them already and have found them to be of great benefit because they contain opinions, points of view, and the results of research with data and various lines of thought which could be beneficial for the future development of the country and the solution of its problems, but I still have a few misgivings. One must be careful with such works for there are some mistakes, especially with receiving mistaken data. Let me give an example from the book *Modernization Without Development*. There is one part which talks about Buddhism. The writer says that Buddhism lacks an "absolute standard" and he cites an example that if a monk cannot eat his noon meal in time, even if it is already past the time for this meal, if he has someone else help by saying that it is not yet

noon, the monk can still go ahead and eat, or something to this effect — this is one example. Or the writer says that there is a rule prohibiting monks from eating meat, but if one puts meat in the monk's alms bowl, then the monk can eat it, because the regulations say that if things are put into the bowl, they must be eaten. Actually, this is not true at all. These mistaken pieces of data result in an incorrect analysis as well. There are points that we must be careful about and, therefore, the examples he raises do not demonstrate that Buddhism lacks an absolute standard. It turns out that the Thais have not come to a basic understanding of themselves. It comes to look that way, because the people who give the data are Thai and so it is the Thais themselves who also give out incorrect information; that is to say, we do not understand, do not really know about ourselves to the extent that we should.

While we do not have much time to discuss Thai society, I want to raise one point, just a short example. For the last one hundred years, or century, we believe we have been implementing the development of the country following the ways of Western civilization. Before we modernized the country in the way mentioned above, our society had a shape or form of its own. We might say that society was sufficiently one and the same with an important existing institution: *rāṣṭra-sāsana-kṣatriya*; *rāṣṭra* refers to the citizenry, *sāsana* to Buddhism (or religion) and *kṣatriya* to the King. Later, when we had received the Western

model of progress, we travelled together on this course for a period of about 20 years, after that, there was a parting of ways. The state and the citizenry, in other words the country and the general population, had **turned** to the West and rushed straightaway in that direction, but the temples came to close themselves off and live within their own walls in an attempt to maintain the old system. Please allow me to insert a little something that I have noticed: *maintaining the old system, without maintaining antiques*. They did not maintain antiques, in other words they did not preserve works of art and ancient art forms, which is a current problem, but they tried to maintain the old system.

When this separation had already occurred, the country, as well as the citizenry and the religion, had a supporting relationship, but it was a superficial type of support, as in ritual activities, for example. They were lacking in understanding of each other and were not truly helping each other. When a certain period of time had passed, they began to be incapable of understanding each other in conversation; they were as strangers. When one group spoke about the other group, the other group could not relate to what was being said at all, such as, when the villagers spoke of the problems of villagers, the monks felt that it was somebody else's problems and had nothing to do with them. When the temples spoke of their problems, the supporters ["folks," or patrons of the temple (Thai, *yāt yōm*)] would feel like it is somebody else's problems; it is a problem of the temple,

not their problem, which is characteristically different from ancient times when the country's problems affected everyone.

I want to talk about just one problematic phenomenon, which is a helpful example for seeing the present condition of Thai society. Prior to these times, the temple used to be the center of the community, and it was the center of education for the people, as you are well aware. After that, the government began to accept the Western system of education. One feature of the new system of education was that it was offered to the masses, and everyone was to have equal opportunity in education. Later, when the government had offered this mass education for a sufficient period of time, it appeared that the government was not able to successfully achieve that goal. People still did not have equal opportunity in education. This opportunity depended on geography (living in an urban, rural, city or upcountry setting) and economic standing (being descendants of a poor family or rich family). People of good economic standing or in a good geographical position could enter the government education system and be able to attain higher degrees, but those who did not have that chance were not able to move into the government system; they entered the monastic system, an older system following discarded traditions, which is not really counted as education for the masses. There are people waiting for this opportunity, who go to live in the temple, ordain as novices or monks and have a small chance for achievement. They study higher and

higher, gradually moving their residence inwards until finally they come to live in Bangkok. Finally, one result does come about: It results in the temples in Bangkok becoming a community of upcountry people in the middle of the city. All of you go ahead and make an attempt to study about this. Go out to various temples in Bangkok and ask some simple questions if you will, **but exclude** the new monks from your inquiry first. The monks who have just ordained for three months are Bangkok people. Exclude the monks who have ordained for three months and you will be left almost entirely with monks from the upcountry; this is one kind of upcountry community in the middle of the city.

On the other hand, because development is not balanced between the city and the country, this has caused upcountry people to come into the city to look for work. Over a long period of time it appears that there has become a second type of upcountry community in the middle of the city and that is the slum, or **tightly-**packed community.

This can be summarized as follows: *Because struggle caused searches for opportunity in Thai society, there arose two groups of **upcountry** communities in Bangkok. These people seek opportunities in education resulting in the temples in **Bangkok** becoming **the first** type of upcountry community in the middle of the city; and those in search of economic opportunities have brought about the second type of upcountry community in the middle of the city, and that **is***

*the slum. We can say that, in Bangkok, temples are the upcountry communities of education, and the slums are the upcountry communities of economics. In Bangkok, there are 399 temples altogether.* At the present time, counting all the people living in temples, including monks, novices and children (school children who come to stay at the temple are a similar case; they come from the upcountry, but they study in the government system), there are more than 32,000 people. As for the slums, or those **tightly**-packed communities in Bangkok, there are about four hundred of them, but they have several hundred thousand people living in them. Most of the members of the temple community are people in their student years; whereas, the members of the slum community are people with families and may be of any age. We do not have time here to consider this at length, so I just want to suggest that you take note of this as something you might want to think about and consider further. While we do not seem to be capable of solving this social problem right now, between these two kinds of communities in the middle of the city, which one do you prefer, and how are you going to respond to them? Let's pass this by just for the moment.

I feel that the research comparing Thai society and American society is quite important, because we must see if our American style of development really follows them or not, and try to understand where it is leading. As far as whether we should follow them or not, and what failures they have had that we should

avoid, we must also ask how we can choose only the good parts. This is a question that should interest us all.

Let's reflect back upon the goals and motivations of Western civilization of about one hundred years ago, in the last century during the reign of **Rama V**, during the time when we were adapting our country to make it modern. The things that will indicate our society's motives and consciousness at that time are the side-effects from the pressure of colonialism. The progress of the West came along with colonialism. This was the pressure, and this was the factor which forced us to quickly develop ourselves in order to progress as they have, in order to protect ourselves and take care of our nation so we would not fall and become a colony. We can see very clearly that at that time we had this goal which became a powerful part of our consciousness. From this goal and central consciousness which was the axis of development, there was also a system of education which reveals this consciousness. When we proceeded with the government education system, we started to have courses in education which could initially be put to use in the adaptation and modernization of the country.

Let's take the example of Chulalongkorn University which, having been granted complete status by word and law, became the first university in Thailand. In the past, before it became a university, it was a school for government officials. It changed from being a school for royal pages only on January 1, 1911

(B.E. **2453**) and had eight courses of study: Government, Law, Diplomacy, Craftsmanship, Medicine, Agriculture, Commerce and Education. You can see that these courses are related to the development of the country, or we could call them professional subjects. Later, it was established as the first university on March **26, 1917** (B.E. **2459**), having four faculties: Medicine, Government Administration, Engineering and Language and Science. Later, Public Administration split into two faculties, Law and Political Science, and a faculty of Architecture was added. All that remained were courses used for the development and modernization of the country, to keep up with **farang** society. Notice that for the maintenance of our country, at first we did not start with subjects like Religion and Philosophy. As far as we know, secular universities in Thailand, like Chula, have only started to teach Religion and Philosophy within about the last **15-20** years. Even to the present day, there has been no establishment of what **farang** call the "Divinity School" or the "Theological School." In other words, the study of Religion and Philosophy do not yet have the status of a faculty like universities in the West. because we focus on the professional subjects to adapt and modernize the country. Please allow me to move on.

The above can be summarized as follows: *Initially, the clearly prominent factor was that we had a social consciousness. We arrived at this consciousness when we had to solve the country's problems, when we had to progress in step with the West so we could*

*maintain our own country. But I feel it is very regrettable that this consciousness existed within a limited circle and did not have the chance to spread to all of the masses before it faded.* Consciousness, in trying to solve our problems, or in making our country keep up with the West, faded, but the thing we call national development had to continue on. This is the development which has been deemed the serious development for the country, but at the same time, if you look at another side, there may be others who, later, say pessimistically that it is imitation more than development; that is to say, it is only receiving and bringing in and not self-development (which results in modernization without development). But the thing worthy of attention is, when we lack social consciousness, what strong inducement is left for the development of the country? I would like you to notice that that consciousness remains within a limited circle and is already fading. What remains is only the need to eat up and consume progress or new excitement of the Western type. I think that Thai society, in the period of time that has just gone by, has been like this. When we accepted the Western system, we accepted it with only a feeling of need, a need for progress, luxury, comfort and convenience. There was no real social consciousness about-solving problems. Even if we spoke of problems, we did not touch upon the consciousness already mentioned. Actually, we can say that *when consciousness for solving the country's problems has already faded, the strong motive*

*for development will also be gone — entirely gone. All that will be left is the motivation and desire to eat up and consume excitement, extravagance and luxury which we call progress. There is only the desire to accept and imitate.*

Anyway, in what I have said so far I do not mean that consciousness for solving problems, for the goal of making the country progress equal to the **farang**, to struggle against them or stand up to them, is good enough, satisfactory or appropriate for developing our country in the future. I would like for you to see that, at least at the beginning, we used to have the consciousness which might have been a good starting point or suitable for the conditions confronting us at that time. We should not have sat back and let it go away.

If solving problems and developing the country is going to come to good results, *we must be united in spirit and thought.* At the present time, we may have a common spirit, or at least some people may say that we have a common spirit; this common spirit, however, cannot instigate action and bring about real results if people are not united in thought. In other words, we must have a common opinion and understanding related to problems and important principles of development.

## **Looking Towards America, Turning Back to View Thailand**

If we compare ourselves with Western society, then we must ask how they built up an Industrial Society. They had a clear and conscious goal: they would solve the problem of scarcity, bring about a state of abundance in their society, and along with that consciousness, they had an ethic of diligence in work, dedication, and frugality for accumulation. They did not think excessively about pleasure, comfort or entertainment, and were willing to give up or abstain from pleasure and only aim for successful results from their work. When they had already received the fruits of successful work, they accumulated this and held on to it as an investment.

*I would like you to notice that **during** the time the West was building up their civilization, progress came about for themselves, and they built it up by themselves. They **successfully** solved problems as **they** arose. **They, therefore,** received **successful** results equal to what they had established. These **successful** results, or the progress that they desired, were not yet available and could not be **found** anywhere else. But **Thai** society is currently **just** the opposite; we are able to consume the fruits we want which we ourselves have not yet built up or created. We are able to receive the progress of the West, receive ready-made goods which they have **manufactured**, and put them to use right away without **having** to manufacture them **ourselves**.*

If, therefore, our society does not have the consciousness for solving problems, then all of the things we have taken from the West as exemplary including the Industrial Society, cannot work for us. We can only become counterfeit Industrial or "Quasi-industrial," we cannot be a real Industrial Society because we do not have the foundation for creating one; we do not have the elements of an Industrial Society; we especially do not have the Industrial Culture which I have already mentioned.

If we were to create a true Industrial Society, we must look at the America of about 40-50 years ago, not right now, because currently they are a society which has already passed through the Industrial period (Post-industrial Society) or they are now a Consumer Society. If we now take this from them, we are only at a disadvantage: *American society, even if they have changed to become a Consumer Society or have already passed through the period of Industrialism, the foundation that they have established from previous Industrialization — the old habits of diligence, working hard, discipline, perseverance and frugality — these habits have descended from the past and are still being passed on. They are, therefore, a Consumer Society and a manufacturing society rolled into one. But if our society accepts this now, we will have only one trait, and that is a Consumer Society; we will not be a manufacturing society. This is something we must beware of:*

By not having passed through the stage of being an Industrial Society of manufacturers, Thai society has, accordingly, skipped

steps in becoming a Consumer Society. While never having been manufacturers before, we became consumers, and just as we have the ready-made goods that others have manufactured, we also take out loans to consume. We remain hopeful and accepting, taking from them until we are all caught up. If we go on like this, what is going to happen? You can think on this yourself.

Now, speaking of the Industrial society becomes tantamount to speaking about capitalism, because the creation of the *American Industrial Society* can be found in the story of capitalism, but here we are not going to judge capitalism as being either good or bad, or judge which economic system is best. Taking only capitalism in its present forms, we can find good types and bad types. If this is already the case, then Thailand will have a kind of poor capitalism, a capitalism of very low quality, and we will not be a real Industrial Society either.

At any rate, let's consider another step: Even if we accept Industrial Culture and build ourselves up to be an Industrial Society, this will not be very good, because Industrial Culture led *American* society towards some big problems, which I already spoke of earlier. This is a lesson for us and we should find a way to side-step these problems. Currently, American Society and Thai society have many problems, but the problems are varied and different. I would like to pose a question: How do problems differ between American and Thai society? *Thailand's problems have the prominent feature that Thai people would like to consume,*

*but they cannot consume in the way in which they like.* Perhaps these words are a bit too strong, but please allow me to bring them to your attention. Please consider whether this is true or false, emphasizing that this is a society that wants to consume, but cannot consume according to its desires. Thai society, therefore, has certain characteristic problems related to its lack of responsibility, such as neglect, fighting, lack of order, slovenly behavior, if anything happens to others or the community the response is indifference, if the water and air become polluted no one cares. There continues to be conflict, competition and tug-of-war among people, attacking and killing for advantage, and there continues to be **increasingly** more accidents. *And as for American society, it is a society that is able to consume but whose desire is not satisfied.* That is, they already consume, but this does not meet their expectations; or just the same, the mind craves, thinking that when it has what it wants it will be happy, sated, but when it gets what it wants, it is not like that, disappointment follows. Now, what are the characteristics of this problem? People like this will have symptoms of depression, confusion, boredom, and will become irritated with their ancestors and put the blame on them, saying "We have encountered **all** of this because of them. Our parents taught us to create and seek out these things." Here, the signs take various psychological forms: a rejection of society, a discarding of culture and customs, a search for spiritual experience, peace or something that will put a stop to

confusion, drug addiction, suicide, psychological disorders, and even killing and murder rooted in strange psychological causes, instead of coming from anger or fighting related to competition for goods. For instance, last year there was an assassination attempt on President Reagan's life. The person who tried to kill him is named John W. Hinckley. He succeeded in shooting Reagan and seriously injuring him. He was arrested and investigated and it appeared that he attempted the murder to make a woman he loved see that he was truly brave. Just because of this, he was going to kill the President. And there was another case before that, one person who called himself "Son of Sam" travelled about killing women. He used a gun to **kill** blond-haired women in different places, making New York and New Jersey society fearful and uneasy for more than a year before he was apprehended. After he was caught, an investigation was carried out and he said that a dog near his house told him to commit the murders. This is an aspect of American society worthy of some consideration.

Here, I will suggest some statistical comparisons between Thailand and America which may clear up some of the things I have said so far. A moment ago I said that *in American society, more people commit suicide than murder*. Now I will compare this with Thailand: *In Thailand, it is just the opposite; more people murder each other than commit suicide*. Refer to the statistics above which said that in the year 1977 (B.E. 2520), **28,681 American**

people committed suicide and there were **19,966** murders. In other words, there were almost **10,000** fewer murders than suicides. Now in the year **1978** (B.E. **2521**), in Thailand there were **12,283** murders, but the Thai population is **4.6** times smaller than America. If Thailand had the same population as America, there would have been **56,500** murders. So if America had about **19,000** murders, then adjusting for the difference in population size, Thailand would have about **56,000** murders. I have not yet found any statistics on suicide in Thailand, but I am quite sure that the figures are low.

Now I would like you to look at the statistics on accidents in Thailand for the year **1979** (B.E. **2522**): In this year, **16,000** people died, the highest number ever; **12,000** people died from heart disease, and **9,000** deaths could be attributed to cancer. Take a look at the closeness of these figures; the number of those who died from cancer and those who died from heart disease are not that different, **9,000** and **12,000** people, only differing by about 3,000. But those who died from accidents number many more than those who died from heart disease by more than **4,000** people. These are the highest figures. Turning to look at America — and these are proportional statistics now — a moment ago I said that **342** American people per one-hundred thousand died from heart disease, the figures from heart disease being the highest. Cancer accounted for only **186** per one-hundred thousand, almost half. And lastly, figures from accidents of all kinds,

including automobile accidents, amounted to only 47 people per one-hundred thousand. In other words, *in America, accidents accounted for fewer deaths than heart disease, by about seven times. At the same time, in Thailand accidents accounted for the most deaths, more than any other cause. From the above references, irresponsibility, careless disregard, and a lack of discipline are clearly evident.*

## A Lesson From America

To summarize, our country or society must certainly develop; we must develop, because our society has many problems that must be solved. But at the same time, we should consider if *developing to the point of having the same problems as American society* is something to *wish* for at all. Should we *develop from being* a society that likes to kill, only to become a society *of people* that likes to kill themselves? *Is it good or not to develop from* being a society with many physical ailments only to become a society with many psychological disorders? I say we should avoid both of these. Let me put this in real Thai terms: We should not lag behind like the **upcountry** areas, but we should not progress in the degenerating fashion of Bangkok. How can we do this? Aside from this, there is one more thing: American people, of the type mentioned earlier, have said they are willing to accept that they themselves are living in a time of cultural transformation — some things must be discarded. So, if we are to develop our society, is it appropriate to develop for the purpose of accepting the things that they are in the process of throwing away? I will let this question pass for now.

Next, another issue relates to the aim of real education. If we look at this from a bad angle, we could say that *the aim of education which we have been striving for in our country has not yet been successfully achieved* (which is related to the background of

our society as well); *that is, we have not built up a social consciousness which can be used for solving problems or being creative, and is intent upon knowledge and trying to we wisdom in a true way.*

I may look at this in an overly bad light, but this state of affairs is still widespread. Firstly, we **all** accept that many of those who enter various courses of study, even at the university level (or especially at the university level), do not go to study with intentions of gaining knowledge in a particular area. So why do they come to study? This is another question, but we already know this quite well; it requires no answer. So, it's already this way. Let it go for now. Let's hope, however, that they may establish that desire for knowledge when they go to study, but it appears that even up until they have graduated, there are precious few people who have a real desire for knowledge and have the consciousness to search for wisdom later. When they have already graduated and found work, it is likely that the search for wisdom will stop and die out. Here, Western society has a bit of an advantage. Western society still has some of these traits, and as for the social consciousness of that society, it is changing, confronting the serious problems that I have already mentioned. But in terms of an interest in knowledge and this search for wisdom, we must accept the fact that they still have a great deal of interest in this. We try to make our students use the library, but they do not really try to do research or gather data very diligently. They do not really carry out their studies motivated

by an interest in knowledge as they should. The interest in knowledge, the search for wisdom, is still more prevalent in Western society. Nevertheless, we must look at their background as well. In this way, I feel that their society has an advantage.

**In building up a consciousness to the point of establishing that interest in knowledge, that search for wisdom, there must be a certain historical development to help this along. The things that assist this are things which come into contact with something else and put pressure on it.** ■ believe that this is important. The amount of impact or pressure is a tool helping to bring about, this consciousness, including a love of knowledge. *What kinds of contact and pressures has Western society had? The first point relates to the impact of culture:* Fighting and engaging in commerce with far-away nations put them on the alert, led them to adjust themselves to a constant state of readiness. This has been handed down within a wide and varied sphere and has motivated them to learn with urgency.

Some people may argue that the Thai have engaged in quite a few battles, killings and wars. And one might answer that indeed we have, but these have been confined to a limited sphere; and we have actually changed things and adjusted ourselves to a certain degree, but only within that limited sphere. Thais have fought for several hundred years with Burma, but still mill around only within those confines. But Western **society** has had widespread contact with other parts of the world from very early times. They

suffered attacks from the Romans, made war against the Muslims during the Crusades, and were invaded by Genghis Khan. Later, Western society went out to seek colonies and this was related to their coming into widespread contact with others. This kind of pressure resulted in them being on constant alert; they could not be inattentive.

At the beginning of modern times, we Thai were subject to quite a few pressures which were visible when we first started to develop the country. As I said a moment ago, about a century ago there was an impact and pressure to such a degree that it brought about a consciousness for solving problems, but this was only temporary. After this, when the pressures had gone away — they actually were there — that impact and pressure became concealed. It was hidden and quiet, not making us aware of ourselves. Not being aware of ourselves, we fell into a state of inattentiveness, gradually becoming **engrossed** in accepting and **consuming** progress, excitement, and convenience without any consciousness arising — only the invitation to be inattentive, just waiting to take the bait, that's all.

*The second point is the direct pressure on the intellect:* In the West there were pressures on the intellect, such **as** in the European Middle Ages, religion brought about a great deal of pressure to the point of establishing a court called the "Inquisition" — I would like to translate this **as** the court which investigated belief — that is to say, if anyone said anything against the religious

canon, that person must be called before the court. If that person was not willing to change their way of thinking or their beliefs, they may be burned alive, for example. This is something which caused a great deal of intellectual pressure. This pressure brought about a struggle. The greater the pressure, the greater the search for wisdom and intelligence. Searching for wisdom and an interest in knowledge became part of the habits acquired from that long period of time. As for Thailand, we Thai have had pressures as well, but pressure takes the form of power. There has not been intellectual pressure, and religion does not get involved either. In the Buddhism that has come to us, if anyone believes anything odd or strange, we are indifferent, uninterested and tolerant; no one makes a big deal out of it — a person may hold strange beliefs for a while and then stop, because no one is interested. This is one thing we should take note of, but saying this does not mean that I advocate people pressuring each other, still one must see the background of this.

*Science is another type of pressure:* Science progressed from the impact and pressure **just** mentioned for the purpose of competing with the power and pressures within religion. But after science itself came into being, it pressured people into understanding the use of the intellect, because science makes us unwilling to place our hope in various sacred things. If we place our hopes in sacred things, such as imploring the gods, we place responsibility on the gods. Then when we lay our responsibilities on the gods,

we also put our hopes in the gods, thinking they will help us solve our problems — we lie around and wait. But now, if we are unwilling to depend upon the gods, science comes along and tells us it is unwilling to place its hopes and dependence on these things and that it is all right for us to think that way. We then inquire into the solution of problems through reason. Sometimes, we ourselves do not arrive at a solution; our descendants think further; our own children still cannot solve the problems, and so the great-grandchildren are left with solving the problems of the world. Intellectual progress occurs in this way. In Thai society at the present time, we should be concerned about this. The hopes and dependencies based upon sacred objects, the supplication and entreaty of the gods are widespread. Is this in **accordance** with Buddhist principles or not? This is a question we should ask.

*When people who depend on sacred objects or external things finally come to accept science and technology, they become dull-witted scientists and technologists.* Science and technology then become sacred things animating (as if supernaturally) their infatuation and hopes. But if we have scientific thought, and when science says something, we are not willing to believe it, but we are willing to listen, study and make use of it mindfully, keeping pace with it, knowing that there are many things which science still does not know much about, then many things we once held as true later become false. We should realize the advantages and **dis-**

advantages so we are always ready to find a way out of this.

Buddhism does not deny the existence of gods. We do not say that there is no such thing, rather, Buddhism holds that they are fellow beings in the world; they are our friends throughout the cycle of birth and death, just like all the other creatures for which we should have loving-kindness (*mettā*) and treat with care, with whom we should live together with happiness (*sukha*) and peace. But they are not something one should implore or have hopes about and depend upon, because humans are creatures who can train themselves. Buddhism feels this way: Human beings must practice or develop their own mindfulness and wisdom, try to think and solve their own problems successfully. People who have already trained themselves in the Buddhist way are believed to be most excellent. Even the god Brahma must have respect, bow down and place palms together for this type of person. And as for people in general, if they want to get involved with the gods, they should be supportive of each other, respecting them as if they were their relatives, elders or a friend with good intentions. Good gods are just like good friends or people who have dhamma; when they know people are upset, they come to their assistance according to the goodness of that person. This is the **realm** of a good relationship between gods and human beings. If at any time the gods wait only for the material goods of worship, and when they have received these offerings they help those people regardless of whether they are good or not, we can say

that at that time society will experience only degeneration; the world will be full of confusion and disorder. In short, *the Buddha allowed for a friendly relationship with the gods and Brahma — a close relationship with kindness for one another — but he did not allow imploring the gods. This is an important principle in Buddhism.* If one practices mistakenly, then this also goes against the Three Gems (Buddha, Dhamma, **Sangha**), because these Three Gems were not held up by the Buddha for entreaty by others. The Buddha, however, asked that people practice **according** to certain principles. When one thinks of the Three Gems, he asked that they solve their problems by following the Four Noble Truths. Those problems, and their solution according to these holy truths, are: There is suffering; problems arise; study the problems and continue looking for their cause; set a goal and practice according to the methods of eliminating suffering (*dukkha*).

The last kind of pressure is a very common phenomenon, but it should be included here to give a complete picture, and this is the pressure from nature that surrounds us. The most progressive, leading Western nations usually have tragic natural disasters which provide a constant pressure. A simple example of this is the cold weather, cold to such a degree that any person exposed to it for too long would certainly die, and this cold air comes around regularly in an annual cycle. Every year before the cold season, people go out and stock up on food for the winter, and they must prepare their home so it can withstand the cold.

All of this must be swiftly carried out before the arrival of the cold; it must be done in time and cannot be postponed. This kind of pressure stimulates energetic and hasty work, makes a person seek solutions to problems quickly and use his head to find methods which get very good, fast results. This is an important cause of progress. Even if a person believes in the powers of god and waits imploring god for help, that person may pass away before assistance arrives. One must believe in the saying "The Lord helps those who help **themselves**."<sup>13</sup> As for the countries in which the weather does not become oppressive to the point of threatening them with the possibility of death, and where food can be found easily, if people want to do something, it can be postponed any time and it is not necessary to think about much at all. If there is a lack of other pressures and there are no natural conditions to help push them, then there is a great chance of them becoming inert people, or worse than that, slovenly as well.

**Farang** culture put pressure on individuals to take a great deal of responsibility for themselves to the point of going to extremes in requesting personal rights; for example, whatever happens, people tend to "sue." If This intend only to request personal rights without establishing responsibility, this will be easy, but society will be the worst for it every time.

There are other kinds of cultural pressures, such as living as every man for himself, or the competitive system. All of

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13. Words of Sydney, a Christian of the 16th or 17th century.

this is a means of pressing people to move ahead quickly. Under these conditions, one cannot afford to live inattentively. But these factors have good and bad results, and we must understand very well the difference between the two — please allow me to skip over this for now.

As soon as we exist with happiness and comfort we tend to become inattentive people. It seems that there must be some pressure motivating us so that we will not become this way. When we are attentive, we are full of energy, moving around quickly. Creative thought, speech and action lead to accomplishing certain tasks. Lord Buddha, therefore, taught attentiveness as an important principle of the dhamma, covering most other points — like the footprint of an elephant — when attentive of all things, the other points of the dhamma all follow. But if a person is basically inattentive, then the other parts of the dhamma existing in the canon will all fall dead, with no one interested in putting them into practice. Sometimes even if the fruits of dhamma are realized, and you feel comfortable and free from suffering, you may become casual and not think about solving problems or making progress anymore. The intelligent leader, therefore, creates some pressure to wake people up a bit, in order to motivate people to attentiveness. In the Buddhist **Sangha**, there was one important principle, *respect for attentiveness in order to solve the following problem: What can be done so that happiness and comfort do not make a person fall into inattentiveness and hamper the solution*

of certain problems? *It is **very difficult** for common people to resist this tendency. Anyone who can motivate himself and arouse an awakening in himself to the point of attentiveness — even **if there** is no external cause applying the pressure — then that **person** is a true practitioner of dhamma.*

This means that now we must **find** a way to build up a social **consciousness** for solving problems by having a profound **understanding** and an interest in a social goal. (And if this is to really do any good you must also have an interest in a goal for your own life.) **There** must be a continuing interest in knowledge, in trying to **solve** problems **successfully** through wisdom. *The way to do this is: 1) Amuse attentiveness; 2) **Establish** desires which have regard for dhamma.* What is desire which has regard for dhamma? This is what I will discuss from now on.

Allow me to enter into the very last topic of this talk and that is using dhamma to solve the problems of education in Thai society. In as much as I have said so far, we must understand and see that *to solve the problems of education or to solve social problems, I **principally** believe that we must get at the foundation of bang Thai and we must stay current in our knowledge of **farang** thought, way of life, and society; both of these must be done for us to be successful. We should keep track of American life and society because we presently take American society as a model — we walk in their footsteps — and when we follow them, we must understand the true condition of their society and know what*

successes and failures they have had to see what kind of lessons we might learn. I say that we must get to the foundation of being Thai because we must understand our own make-up and the place in which we live. Just as we see international styles of clothing — mainly from the West — and adapt them to our own country, such as, we design and institute **the *phrarāchathān*** shirt, believing that it is clothing suitable for Thai people, but only after we have given the matter careful consideration.<sup>14</sup>

Getting to this foundation of being Thai, including establishing *what things we might have to offer to the world civilization*, is one question. To repeat, does Thai society or Thai culture — or to give it a grander name, Thai civilization — that has come before us have anything to offer that would be meaningful in the context of the world civilization, or that we could offer to the global society? Or to use English, what kind of "contribution" could we make to the world civilization? It might be something to help all people or a contribution that other people in the world are already willing to accept, or that we are confident we can offer to the world — this is one side of it. *Another side is that we must be intelligent enough to know how to select the best things they*

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14. The *phrarāchathān* shirt is similar to shirts of Indian design, with a "Nehru-type" collar open at the neck. It was designed and instituted in 1983, during the office of Prime Minister Prem, as a shirt appropriate for everyday government dress, and the long-sleeve version (usually of silk) was even deemed appropriate for formal occasions—trans.

*have to supplement our culture.* So this means that our understanding of them must keep pace with their life, society, and thought in order for us to make the right choices. What we discover to be the foundation of ourselves and perceive as something we can offer the world civilization, will bring about a proper kind of confidence and pride in ourselves.

Now I mentioned the point that *Thai people lack a great deal of pride and confidence in themselves* and this condition is normally evident in our infatuation with and acceptance of American or Western things. But when anyone criticizes Thai society or the Thai nation, mentioning various weaknesses or flaws, we usually become angry and fired up right away, yelling back at them furiously. This display of emotion shows that we do not have a feeling of pride or confidence in ourselves. People who are confident with themselves, or have something good within themselves, will not be quick to anger. If they have confidence in themselves, they will be capable of speaking without shouting angrily, without immediately snapping back at the other person. This state of getting all fired up when someone else makes a criticism, while at the same time habitually following after others, shows a lack of confidence in ourselves. We, therefore, must build up this pride and confidence. Please allow me to move on.

## **Bringing Buddhism to Bear on the Solution of Thai Problems**

Next I will take Buddhist principles and apply them to the solution of some problems of education in Thai society. *The Buddhist teachings, or Buddha-dhamma, have an overriding principle. The solution of problems or the development of human beings must be accomplished from two angles simultaneously. These two are: 1) From the external to the internal, which is called vinaya; 2) From the internal to the external, which is called dhamma.* Buddhism has these two major principles called dhamma and vinaya, together they are the original name of Buddhism which is referred to as **Dhamma-vinaya**. We often forget this principle and if we see only the dhamma, we can say that this kind of Buddhism will solve only the internal problems, but will not be concerned with the external. Actually the Buddha taught that both must be woven together and linked. What is vinaya? Vinaya does not have the narrow meaning that we usually understand in Thai as *winaï*, that is the order of life and the social system which was established in accordance with dhamma, **using dhamma** as its foundation." What is dhamma? *Dhamma* is the true principles,

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15. Ordinarily, vinaya refers to the basket of teachings dealing primarily with moral discipline and rules of conduct for monks; this basket of teachings is usually referred to as the Vinaya-pitaka. Phra Rajavaramuni attributes at least eleven meanings to the word "dhamma." In this text, however,

correct and excellent, that we recommend everyone study and use in training themselves — this is the main principle. After this, I will only speak about the aspects of dhamma, **just** mentioning some important parts of it.

The first part that I will mention deals with an argument about a problem of development that is often attributed to Buddhism — I think it is time we go beyond this, because if we do not, we cannot solve the problems before us, and we cannot proceed. It is the problem of wants and desires. Just a moment ago, I said that *in solving the problems of Thai society, part of the job is to promote desire which has a high regard for dhamma*. In the recent past that we are aware of, there were two groups of people: One group said that in developing the country and society we must create desires in people, such as desire for wealth and riches, desire for luxurious things to use, desire for rank and position, and then they will do their work quickly and the country will develop successfully — this is one approach. Another group says that desire is craving (*taṇhā*) and Buddhism teaches us to sever craving and extinguish desire. Buddhists, therefore, must be people who do not desire anything. When they begin to have the characteristics of people who desire nothing, then

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dhamma most often refers to: 1) the Buddhist teachings; 2) truth; 3) virtue or virtuous action; 4) a state or condition; and 5) phenomena. Because of its wide range of meanings, it has only been capitalized when referred to as a part of the Three Gems (Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha) — trans.

accordingly, good Buddhists start to become very lifeless, inactive and lethargic. Now, how are these correct? This is something we must be **concerned** about. Here, both groups are wrong. Why? The **first** method will bring about a kind of misleading development, a development headed in the wrong direction which the **farang** call "false development" or "misdirected development," or it may create the condition of being "modern but not developed," as I mentioned before, or it may just as likely lead to a condition of being "modern but disasterous." The **first** type of development will bring us to this state by promoting desire and the second group, who says that you cannot desire anything or you will not be Buddhist, perpetuates a misunderstanding of the Buddha-dhamma. Before we can go on, we must come to an understanding about this first.

What is the point of view of the **Buddha-dhamma** on desire? From the point of view of the Buddha-dhamma, the problem does not reside in whether a person desires or does not desire, rather, the problem resides in what kinds of desires are good, which desires are mistaken, and which are correct. This is where the problem lies. Please just understand that in the Buddha-dhamma, the Buddha divided desire into two types:

- 1) A desire to consume and lavish things upon yourself;
- 2) A desire for knowledge and action which is correct and excellent.

The first type of desire he called *taṇhā* – a *desire which raises*

*problems for development*, such as deceitfulness, laziness and delusion, and looking for personal gains by taking short-cuts. These are desires which must be carefully watched over so the direction of these tendencies may be altered and turned into something positive and useful. Please think for yourself about what I just said. Even Western civilization — when it was an Industrial Society and building itself up some 40-50 years ago — was curbing its **taṇhā** and desires, that is to say, it was teaching people to hold back on their desires for the time being and not follow their own immediate personal wishes to seek happiness, and they, with this ethic, built their society to be progressive and replete.

The second type of desire is called *chanda* — a desire which is necessary for solving all types of problems. Called by its full name, it is known as **dhamma-chanda**.<sup>16</sup> This dhamma-chanda is something which we must come to understand further as we go along. If we translate it very simply, it can mean desire in **dhamma**

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16. The virtue of *chanda* is prominent in Phra **Rajavaramuni's** work. It is one element of the *iddhipāda* (path of accomplishment, basis for success), which number four in all: 1) *chanda*-will, aspiration, resolve; 2) *viriya*-energy, effort, exertion; 3) *citta*-thoughtfulness, active thought; 4) *vīmaṃsā*-investigation, examination, reasoning, testing. See: Phra **Rajavaramuni** (Prayudh Payutto). *Dictionary of Buddhism, Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University*, 1984 (B.E. 2527), pp. 186-7 (Item # 205 under the "Groups of Four") — trans.

or with regard for dhamma. What does dhamma mean? In one sense, dhamma translates as truth. What is truth? Truth is something that we ought to know. The things we associate with truth are the things we must know. Chanda, in this sense is, therefore, related to truth; thus we can translate the desire for knowledge or an interest in knowledge as a desire to know the truth. The word chanda, in this first sense, is the desire to know, an interest in knowledge.

Dhamma, in the second sense, translates as correctness, excellence. What are correctness and excellence? They are the things we ought to practice or make happen. Chanda, in this sense, can be translated as the desire or will to do; in other words, wanting to do excellent things, wanting to act correctly in order to bring these good and beautiful things into being.

To summarize, chanda can be translated as the desire for knowledge, an interest in knowledge and wanting to do, or taking an interest in doing what is correct and excellent. I believe that chanda *is the axis of development*, it is the thing which education must instill, and then we will not have the problem of desiring or not desiring, and we can stop talking about it altogether. This is very important. We must make a distinction between a desire that is **taṇhā** and a desire that is dhamma-chanda. Let me raise an example about establishing order and discipline: If a person has **taṇhā**, or desire based on **taṇhā**, order and discipline cannot be successfully established. On the contrary, increased disorder

and a lack of discipline (*winai*) will come about. *In this society which lacks order and discipline, that lack can be attributed to taṇhā. If you want this society to have order and discipline, you have to have chanda.* You can see that people who have **taṇhā** only partake of benefits for themselves. A system based on **taṇhā** is a system of gain, a system in which you grab things for yourself and make yourself comfortable. In a society like this, even typing paper does not have a standard. Please examine even this tiny little phenomenon: these pieces of letter-size typing paper are not the same size. If you buy some from one store, they might be a bit short, when bought from another, a bit too long, or too narrow or wide. We know that often sellers look for a way to gain more, so they cut the paper a bit short or narrow in order to increase the yield of sheets; this, in turn, will increase their profits and benefits. In seeking profit and benefit like this, with overpowering greed and craving, there is a lack of order and discipline. The paper, therefore, lacks a standard.

If these paper merchants had a strong sense of chanda, a love for correctness, excellence and truth — even if they wanted to receive benefits — *if they had a strong sense of chanda, if their desire for the good and an interest in dhamma were powerful, they would win out and taṇhā would not be successful in overpowering them.* They **could** cut paper **according** to a standard of measurement and desire for discipline and be able to exist just fine. Only people who love real correctness and excellence will win over self-seeking

desires or comfort and convenience. *Seeking comfort and convenience for yourself is taṇhā. Love of truth, correctness and excellence is chanda.* We must establish chanda as a force stronger than **taṇhā**. We are willing to accept that each and everybody has **taṇhā**. If chanda does not become the stronger force for common people, we cannot succeed in correcting anything. We should not be deluded into talking about getting rid of **taṇhā**, but we must bring another kind of desire to bear on problems in order to solve them. A correct desire can be applied to curb the misguided ones. I have noticed this in America (however, I may not have seen the whole picture) and I believe that their **letter-size paper** is 8.5" × 11", and anywhere you go — it does not matter if you buy thin paper, such as onion skin, or a heavier bond — it is all perfectly even. This may demonstrate that their **society** has a strong sense of **dhamma-chanda**, or at least currently has the foundation for dhamma-chanda.

Here is another example: In developing the countryside, it is not necessary to speak only of the villagers, take a good look at the people who go out to do the development work first. The developers enter the countryside with two kinds of desire: The first kind is typical for most people. Their **taṇhā** wants to reap benefits, such as their monthly salary — which is often quite substantial. Later, the second kind of desire, chanda, may take over; they may have the desire to help villagers live well with happiness, free from poverty, and would like to make their dwelling peaceful and safe from disease. If only the first

kind of desire, **taṇhā**, exists, the worker will certainly not be able to accomplish the work of development and will be more likely to increase the problems of deceitfulness. But due to successfully controlling **taṇhā** and doing work with desires based on chanda, the development work will succeed. Or take Bangkok for instance, if we are to solve the problem of pedestrians not crossing the street at the crosswalks, if we let them go on according to **taṇhā**, doing whatever is convenient and comfortable for themselves, then we will not solve this problem. If we cannot encourage or build up chanda, then a solution will not be found; both the pedestrians and the traffic police will conspire — both directly and indirectly — ignore the problem, and the solution will remain out of reach.

Taṇhā asks: "What can I gain?" But chanda asks: "What **can** I do?" If chanda were to ask "What **can** I gain?", this would mean what good results will come from our work, not what personal benefits **can** be gained. At the present time, a widespread system of **taṇhā** is causing problems all over. If we are to solve these problems and really develop society, we must quickly bring about a system of chanda and not foolishly ask "What **can** I get?" We should ask "What can I do?" or "What **must** I do?"

*When you already have chanda — a desire for and interest in knowledge, and a desire to do things right — you will seek out wisdom in order to know truth; you will discover what correct and excellent things need to be done. These are interconnected things. When students*

*search for wisdom, the teacher can be a good, supportive friend (kalyanamitta), a person who helps to point the way, always giving information, suggestions and ideas. The teacher thus trains the students in critical reflection and helps them to become people who know how to think and develop wisdom. This is the process of a Buddhist education. If education can successfully establish this, then the goal of our education will be fulfilled.*

Let me just say a little bit more about chanda. Research has been done on the problems of development in Thailand. Some researchers say that the average Thai person is content, and they may be the very same people who, having done further research, say that Thai people have a value of consumption (that is to say, they have a lot of **taṇhā**), but do not like to manufacture anything. I feel this is contradictory. *If Thai people were content, they would not have a strong value of consumption, and if Thai people have a value of consumption, they cannot be content.* This is contradictory. It shows that we have not come to the end of this, it is still a problem. If we cannot pass beyond this point, what else can we accomplish? We cannot proceed to anything else. We are stuck, therefore, on a very fundamental problem. We say that Thai people are content, yet we say that Thai people have a value of consumption; these do not go together.

Let's leave this issue alone and cease fighting about it anymore. How can we stop? We can stop by **realizing** that this contentedness is actually never complete in itself, it is a virtue

which can be put into practice with other virtues. We cannot use contentedness alone to make this decision. *If people are ignorantly and aimlessly contented what result will follow? Taṇhā may follow and then people become happily lazy.* This is a floating kind of contentedness which leaves on opening for taṇhā to enter in, for becoming lazy and happy, like some of the villagers in our country (actually, many of them) who claim that they do not want anything, but if they have some money, they sit in a circle and drink liquor or gamble, passing the days like this; and when the money runs out, that is when they think about working to get more money again. In this case, contentedness comes along with taṇhā. They have one sort of happiness, but are confined by suffering more and more each day. Now, if we take this contentedness and mix it with chanda, what will be the result? *If you take contentedness and mix it with chanda, you will become a hard-working, dedicated person.* In other words, you will not be selfish about anything at all because you are not aiming to receive personal benefits. You do your work thoroughly and dedicate your time because you aim to know the truth or aim to do excellent things successfully. **The most important work that we can succeed in doing, or the really great work with the greatest value, can usually be attributed to a person who has chanda, especially chanda that is accompanied by contentedness.** I say that the problem of contentedness should, therefore, come to an end.

Please let me make one small insertion here: In the process

of progress in the West — of **about** 40-50 years ago — their people looked as if they had enough chanda to reach their goal, to solve the problems of their lives and society (related to the values of religion) and had a great deal of contentedness as well. Thus, they progressed successfully. But the thing that has become a problem in these confusing times is they missed the point that the goals they had set were too short-sighted and narrow. Even if they were able to solve the problems of scarcity and build an abundance of material goods, when the goal was accomplished, they began to drift aimlessly. Chanda lost its hold, the future lost its meaning, and so they started searching for new things. Moreover, the **goal** of material abundance became bait for the trap of **taṇhā**, then problems from **tanhā** followed to the point of creating the current problems and confusion. This is just a suggestion for something to think about further.

## The Characteristics of an Educated Person

And finally, I would like to relate this last section about the characteristics of an educated person. I believe this to be important, because as we proceed with education, we must establish a goal as to what kind of traits an educated person should have. Looking at this in terms of Buddhism, the Buddha said that educated people are people who are already well advanced, or we can use the modern word, already "developed." In Buddhist terms, this means having achieved *bhāvanā* which means training or making progress towards attaining the Buddhist goal.

*According to Buddhist principles, people who are already developed are those who can help solve problems and develop society along with developing themselves; that is, developing yourself goes right along with other kinds of development. These kinds of people have four characteristics — monks use the Pāli word bhāvita: 1) bhāvita-kāya, 2) bhāvita-sīla, 3) bhāvita-citta, and 4) bhāvita-paññā. Translated very simply bhāvita-kāya — means having made bodily or physical progress and development; bhāvita-sīla — means having morality and discipline which is advanced and developed; bhāvita-citta — means having a heart-mind which is developed and has made progress; bhāvita-paññā — means having developed wisdom and intelligence.*

As I mention these principles, I see that they are in line with the thinking of at least one group of educators. These educators have established the aim of education as having four kinds of

"growth" or progress, or call them "development" if you like:

1) "Physical growth" — progress and growth of the body or physical being (similar to **bhāvita-kāya**).

2) "Social growth" — progress and growth of the social aspects of life (similar to **bhāvita-sīla**).

3) "Emotional growth" — progress and growth of moods and emotions (corresponding to **bhāvita-citta** which means having a heart-mind that has been developed).

4) "Intellectual growth" — progress and growth of wisdom and intelligence (similar to **bhāvita-paññā**).

In other words, at least these words are close enough, but the actual meaning might not be exactly the same. I would like to take this opportunity to explain the meaning in the Buddhist sense:

1. **Bhāvita-kaya** — as I said, means to have made bodily or physical progress and development. According to Western thought, this focusses on having a strong physique and good health, dealing mainly with physical education. But according to Buddhism, a developed body has a different meaning. I will suggest one sense. According to Buddhism, making physical progress broadly translates as *relating to the conditions or environment surrounding the body in a good way, or in a way that is beneficial. This is what bodily progress means.*

What does developing a relationship with the surrounding conditions entail in terms of physical existence? In one respect,

this means we can have either a faulty relationship or a proper relationship with the surrounding environment. What is a faulty relationship like? This means doing harm to life, destroying the quality of life, for example. The proper way is to perform beneficial acts which add to the quality of life. Let me use the example of food. Why do we eat food? Buddhism suggests that we eat in two ways: 1) We eat for the delusions of gastronomic pleasure, to show status, "chic-ness," and luxuriousness. This is one kind of improper relationship; 2) We eat for good physical health, well-being and to enable us to perform the duties demanded by our job well, which, in turn, can assist the progress of the more excellent aspects of our lives. This is the proper relationship. In a word, we can call this a relationship with all things which seeks the real value of those things — just the opposite of seeking out their false values.

One of the aspects of a false or improper relationship is eating food solely for the purpose of gastronomic pleasure. showing status and so on, in order to show off all these things. It is a false value responding to **taṇhā** and a kind of desire which only serves to nourish yourself. On the other hand, we can eat with an awareness of the following: with knowledge of how beneficial the food is, how much should be eaten in order to help the body function well, perform one's work properly, have good health, well-being, and not feel excessively stuffed to the point that the food becomes a poison. **According** to Buddhism, the

real values in eating are this way. This is one aspect which shows whether or not a person has made physical progress. This goes for our relationship with all things we buy, even including any “**technology**” we may employ.<sup>17</sup> *As for an improper relationship, the prominent value system usually turns out to be one based on consumption.* That is to say, it is a value system which requires possessing only for consumption and the nourishment of desire, or to show yourself off and to put others down. *Another aspect of this is the values that are employed in the development of life.* As for these, if we were to have a radio, or the villagers were to have one, what kind of desire could be aroused through this medium? If we just stimulate the desire to listen to various entertaining broadcasts for fun and enjoyment, and make it convenient to play the national lottery, I believe we are stimulating desires in response to **taṇhā**. But if we present other kinds of broadcasts, such as news about national and world happenings, we **will** have more knowledge about the world and about how dhamma can be put to use in improving ourselves and the place in which we live to keep as suggestions, teachings, for our children. This has real intellectual value for life; it is a type of relationship in which we can develop ourselves. This is an example of a physical relationship with all things.

Before I continue, please allow me to insert something I have noticed and feel is very important. *At the present time, mass*

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17. The Thai word for technology has been borrowed from English—trans.

*communication, or the current economic system, is able to promote false values for use in building up false “demands,” false needs through the use of advertisements, for example.* These false demands are abundant at the present time. They are deceptive, unnecessary needs, which have no value at all, and usually do harm to life. The present society or system looks as if it is trying to stimulate these kinds of needs and make people have more and more new wants. When these wants have been instilled, people will seek out and shop for those things, and this even includes wanting false values which will stir up more trouble and make many more problems for society. The principles of physical development can aid in the solution of these problems.

**2. Bhavita-sila** — *means to have developed ethics or, in more modern terms, to have developed social conduct*, compared to the **farang** who say that it is growth in social relationships. What does sila (Thai, *sin*; Pali, *sila*) mean? Sila has to do with ethics and behavior, relationships with others, and honesty in action, words and **livelihood**. These can be viewed from two angles: 1) In a personal sense, this relates to practice and training leading to excellent behavior, conduct, and honesty in speech and livelihood, which is the foundation for peace of mind and can lead to concentration (*samādhi*) of the mind, or become the foundation for further mental training and practice; 2) In a social sense, this can be divided into two or — if you wish to get even more detailed — three levels. *Stated in negative terms, this means not doing*

things at the expense of others; or put in positive terms, this means cooperating, working together, offering your services and acting in a beneficial manner, which monks call *veyyavacca*. You probably have heard of these before as in *veyyāvaccakara* and *veyyāvaccamaya-kusala*: The first term refers to a person who renders good service or acts in the service of the *wat* or temple, such as a lay bursar; and the second refers to the merit that is earned through these acts. The Buddha established this as one part of morality, morality in positive sense. If we wish to get more detailed, another level can be inserted between these two, a level of balance and equilibrium, and that is order and ethics. The development of *sīla* means establishing ethics and excellent behavior, honesty in speech, and an excellent relationship with society. It also means abstaining from taking advantage of others, coming to the assistance of others, and training yourself in a proper livelihood.

3. *Bhāvita-citta* — is what *farang* call "emotional growth" — or progressively growing in terms of mood and emotion. Put as briefly as possible, according to Buddhism this means *training the mind to be of good quality, to have good capabilities and good health*. To be of good quality is to be composed of good virtue, such as having loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), tolerance (*khanti*), conscience and moral shame (*hiri-ottappa*), for example. This also means having the good capabilities which the Buddha called a mind which is ready for work

— a mind which can persevere, be attentive, and concentrate, which is strong, firm yet nimble, and effective. Lastly, it means having a healthy mind — a mind which is happy, clear, fresh, lively and bright. I believe this point to be extremely important. Buddhism believes that *happiness is the core of proper conduct (cariya-dhamma)*. In order for education to be successful, its task must be to bring about the happiness (*sukha*) of all people. If people do not have happiness, they will become a problem for themselves and create problems for others. These people who create problems for society are already suffering (*dukkha*); they, in turn, take their suffering out on others. If they were already happy, and knew the way to happiness; they would not spread their sorrow around. This would solve a lot of social problems, but saying this means that we must build a way for them to know and understand both the basic kinds of happiness and the higher kinds of happiness of the mind.

4. This final section deals with **bhāvita-paññā** — which the **farang** refer to as "intellectual growth." But the Buddha said it is *training in wisdom and intelligence to the point of knowing and understanding, and seeing all things in the light of truth or according to the way they actually are*. This kind of knowledge or insight into all things has several levels. The initial level is the process of knowing and thinking purely in accordance with undistorted truth, not subject to mental defilements (*kilesa*), such as greed for personal gain, anger, or hatred which may overwhelm

the mind. Here, the mind does not become biased, but instead thinks clearly, correctly, according to the truth. Buddhism believes that you must train the intellect in a way which makes this thought process not subject to mental defilements, such as greed (*lobha*), ill-will (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*), which can overwhelm you. This training will make you think in an unbiased manner by using proper attention and critical reflection. Another important characteristic involves employing an intellect which is free from the power of **defilements**. Here, wisdom and intelligence means careful consideration and investigation, in other words, careful consideration according to as much of the truth as you understand at that time. This freedom does not tend towards defilements, nor does it conceal them. And when the intellect understands what truth is all about — what is good and bad, what is correct and false — it can do things according to what wisdom tells it. This is called freedom of the intellect. This is not to say that even if wisdom tells us that this is not the truth, is a false way, but I will reap benefits from it, so I go ahead and do it anyway; or if wisdom tells us that this is the truth, but it gets in the way of my personal gain, or I do not like people who talk that way, so I will not do it; if this is the case, then we can say that there is no freedom of intellect and the mind is not yet developed.

Let me talk about a problem of democracy for a moment, because *the intellect which is free from the power of defilements is the core of democratic development*. I believe that if we are not

successful in developing wisdom and intelligence in this way, we will not be successful in developing democracy. How will human society be able to live in peace and harmony? One way is to depend on the collective power of people, establish laws, and if anyone acts against these, he will be punished. According to this way, if one person single-handedly wields power, there is likely to be chaos and the system will be in a great deal of confusion. This method of using power states, "Make a mistake and you will be punished." The second way also uses power, but it uses it in a hidden or mysterious fashion. This power employs belief and indoctrination, such as belief in ghosts, spirits, gods and sacred objects, or believing that trees have a tree spirit, for example. In this case, the people are afraid to cut down the forest, so they take special care of the trees. Both of these ways use fear. The first uses fear of collective society, and the second, fear of hidden or mysterious power.

For a progressive or developed society, both of these ways are incorrect. A third method must be employed, and this is the way of wisdom, or the way of using intelligence. This third method, the way of wisdom, careful consideration and investigation in accordance with dhamma, is especially necessary for Buddhism or democracy. People who have already studied, are already educated, and know what is correct, what is false, good and bad, also know what destruction and bad results will follow if we cut down the forests. But the problem will be whether or

not this wisdom and careful consideration of theirs is free from the power of defilements. Even *if they already know, are educated and fully understand that cutting wood will destroy the forests and punish all of us collectively, due to their desire for gain, they do not act according to what wisdom tells them; instead, they follow the power of desire. If this is the case, the development of democracy will not succeed, because people do not have freedom of intellect.* When the intellect is not free from the powers of desire, then social problems continue to arise. If this is the way things are, then I would like to ask a question: If it is between a society that cares for its forests by asking people to believe in mysterious tree spirits, for example, and fears the wrath of gods which will break your neck if you touch certain trees, so the trees thereby remain standing and the forests are cared for, or a society in which people have education, but no freedom of intellect, in which people already know, yet they do not act according to their knowledge, and go ahead and cut the forest anyway, then what kind of society do you want? Is this kind of education any better than plain foolishness or not? Which one is better than the other? For instance, people drive down a main thoroughfare and when they get to a dangerous curve and see a spirit house they will be afraid, slow down, and honk their horn in respect for the spirit residing there. But if there is no spirit house there — even if it is a dangerous curve and there is a sign telling people to slow down — they have enough sense to know **that** speeding is not right, but they still

are unwilling to slow down. They race on and then suddenly — smash! So, which is better, having an intellect which is not free or believing in mysterious beings and fearing gods? This problem already exists. In developing a democratic society, we must have this freedom of intellect, and establish a society of people who can practice according to this wisdom. When a person acts according to his knowledge of what is good and bad, what is and is not to be practiced, this wisdom can be referred to as an intellect which is free. Buddhism requires this kind of intellect. *If we cannot develop people to the point of having freedom of intellect, there is no way that the development of democracy will succeed.*

According to the principles of Buddhism, the advancement or development of this wisdom is believed to have special importance, because *wisdom is the determining factor in getting at the meaning and the goal of Buddhism.*<sup>18</sup> The goal of Buddhism relates to freedom. In modern terms, this means liberation, or to make it completely compatible with modern expression, call it letting go or a state of letting go. *People who wish to be free must have an intellect which is free or, in order to be liberated, there must be a liberation of intellect.*

The liberation of the intellect can be divided into three levels, two of which I have already mentioned: The first level is the process of knowledge and thought which is free, pure, impartial.

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18. Here, Phra Rajavaramuni mentions that part of the text which follows was added later to make his lecture clearer and more complete — trans.

not subject to distortion, and not concealing any defilements, such as greed and selfishness, vindictiveness, or harboring anger and hatefulness, for example. It is seeing according to the truth. The second level is using an intellect which is free. When the intellect knows what **truth**, correctness and excellence are all about, then that person acts according to the knowledge supplied by the intellect and is no longer subject to the powers and influences of defilements. The third and highest level is the intellect which has passed beyond mistaken ideas about life and the world, is completely free from ignorance (*avijjā*), and understands the world of conditioned things (*saṅkhāra*) as it really is — uncertain, impermanent and subject to pressures from various conflicting causes. The condition of permanence cannot remain; it is not the self which anyone can cling to or possess; very briefly, all things are impermanent (*anicca*), subject to suffering (*dukkha*) and without self (*anattā*). Knowing the truth, the heart-mind is free, no longer clinging or attaching, nor creating defilements and suffering which will overpower it any further.

As for common people in general, and in a social sense, the freedom of intellect — as in the second level — *involves acting according to what truth, excellence and wisdom tell you. This is an especially important point and the success or failure of education and development can be measured against this. Just like the example of cutting down the forest that I mentioned before, we have three ways to protect and correct society: One, by using the power of people to instill the fear*

*of punishment; secondly, using the power of sacred objects to make people afraid of the wrath of spirits, ghosts and gods; and thirdly, using careful consideration and investigation, and acting with an intellect which understands the truth and understands the difference between good, evil and correctness.* With the first way, the way of collective power, people will try to evade it, requiring the establishment of a confusing, troublesome and complicated system to account for everyone, which results in fewer accomplishments. Often the people who cut the trees conspire with those who enforce the law, committing further dishonesty and more harm. As for the second way, if people still believe in it, you may get effective results, but when people no longer hold those beliefs, it loses its meaning. And for the third way, if the intellect is not free, there is nothing at all to be gained; and even worse, the intellect turns to be a **tool** of **tanhā**, seeking more and more gain and benefit. It appears that the methods of using the power of people, **as well as** putting trust in the wisdom or intelligence of those people who do not yet have freedom of intellect will likely become harmful and unproductive, unable to surpass the way of belief in and fear of the invisible. At any rate, the second way — belief in sacred objects — is losing its effectiveness because the current, modern generation has declared these beliefs foolish and has tried to teach villagers to stop believing in them. *The current age may become the most inefficient age, and if it is really this way, then it may be considered the worst or most harmful age as well.*

I would like to insert one more thing about belief in sacred objects. In the doctrines of various religions which believe in a god as the maker, creator or mysterious power, rules, prohibitions, and disciplinary constraints — along with threats to violators of these rules — are established stating that a person will be punished with extreme severity if he or she breaks them. People who believe this, put their hopes in this power of creation and merely practice according to these prohibitions and constraints. It is unnecessary for them to think for themselves. *Even with the kind of ancient Buddhism which was mixed up with magical practices and Brahmanical ritual, this was not the case. When a teacher gave a talisman or sacred object to a disciple, or anyone else for that matter, it was given with careful consideration, the behavior of that person was examined first; and when it was given, it was accompanied by certain commandments and points for practice:* For example, you cannot do this or that, or do not insult others' parents or be the initiator of harm to others. If these practices were not heeded, those sacred objects would not take care of that person, would lose their efficacy, or harm would soon come to the people who had received them. *In this way, moral conduct of a certain kind was maintained* But in real Buddhism, the Buddha set down principles of ethics according to cause and effect. He asked that practitioners understand the applications of wisdom, consider and decide their way of practice for themselves. When a person has chanda, holds the dhamma in high regard, has **conscience** and moral shame,

then ethics (*sīla-dhamma*), concentration (*samādhi-dhamma*), wisdom (*paññā-dhamma*), purity and liberation (*visuddhi-vimutti-dhamma*) can be maintained. But at the present time, it is uncertain what will happen if we do not make an effort to practice rational thought and wise consideration following the principles of reliance on dhamma (*dbamma-adhipateyya*) and let ourselves fall into the widespread worship of sacred objects and mysterious powers which has been increasing without bounds, without the limitations of ethics, to the extent that a person with money can "hire" sacred objects to take care of him. If this is the case, it is frightening that modern Buddhists might become the most degenerate of all times.

Anyway, according to Buddhist principles, and in this age of *developing democracy*, we need *the* third method — *careful consideration* and investigation with *freedom* of intellect. If we can achieve this, humans will experience liberation and help to *make* life and society progress *beneficially*, resulting in the greatest happiness and *fewest* pitfalls for all. When a *person* has a *liberated* intellect, all the various laws of society will be established with regard for *dbamma*. People will not feel that the laws or system of rules is a means of limiting or cutting *off their freedom*, or is a means of pressuring the population, but rather, people will feel it *is* a commonly accepted standard for living well with *others* and *bringing* the highest benefits to everyone in society.

The problem is how can you free your intellect, making it

something good? it tells you what is true, correct and excellent, and what is false, erroneous and harmful, but the intellect is not free. in other words, people do not follow what wisdom tells them because they are still susceptible to desire or **taṇhā** which overpowers them; wisdom and intelligence clear the way, guiding **taṇhā** to the opening through which it can begin to see the value of performing more and more beneficial acts for the good of all. *The method which will help the intellect be free involves taking an opposing power and using it to defeat taṇhā; and that opposing power is chanda* (dhamma-chanda). Most people currently understand full well the causes and effects, the right and wrong, of cutting down the forests, but the reason they continue to do this is that they are overpowered by **taṇhā**, seeing only the personal benefits and gains to be made. Other people who understand do not make a heart-felt effort to protect and care for the trees. if we were able to arouse them to see the value of the forest and the real penalties for cutting it down, to the extent that they might come to love the forest, care for nature and want to have surrounding conditions which are beautiful and natural, they would stop cutting without being concerned about their salary and personal rewards. if chanda is aroused among villagers in general, they will make collective efforts to protect and care for the forest areas. They may even work together to prevent outsiders from coming in and doing damage to the trees. We can see that this chanda progresses along with the intellect which understands

values, good results, and losses. The development of chanda goes along with the development of wisdom and intelligence; it resides in the same process. In another respect, *the correct development of wisdom and intelligence must be accompanied by the development of chanda.* Thought and careful consideration which incorporate wisdom to understand values, good results and losses are given the special name *yonisomanasikāra* (wise consideration or critical reflection); this depends upon applying knowledge to careful consideration, not on how much a person has studied, as people usually believe.

*Chanda, therefore, helps the intellect achieve freedom. Even if tanhā has not yet been done away with, when chanda is highly developed it will be kept in its place. Chanda will not allow tanhā to do damage, and in many cases it will be held in check as a force aiding chanda to accomplish more beneficial work. So if the intellect is to be developed to the point of freedom and liberation, then chanda must be developed as well. This is the fundamental task at which education must succeed.*

To summarize, according to the principles of Buddhism, there are four characteristics of the educated or developed person: physical, moral, emotional and intellectual development. When all of these have been developed, then an education in accordance with Buddhism has reached fruition. People who are developed and educated in this manner will make up a community called *ariya-saṅgha* which in common language means a society of truly

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civilized people. Lord Buddha established the order of monks (*bhikkhu-sangha*), which we call *sammuti-sangha*, as the leaders in the successful establishment of this *ariya-sangha*, but so far, it is not clear how successful they have been.

If anyone found anything of benefit in the lecture I have just delivered, I am thankful. On this auspicious day, let's be thankful for these activities that were set up by the teachers and students, including the giving of alms to the monks. May you **all** be blessed. I wish you happiness and good fortune by referring to the Three Gems (Buddha, Dhamma, **Sangha**).

**Phra Rajavaramuni**  
(Prayudh Payutto)

Passed *prayōk* 9, the highest level of **Pāli** studies (while still a *novice/sāmaṇera*),

Higher Certificate in Education (Thai, *khrū phiset mathayom*),  
Bachelor Degree in Buddhist Studies (at the top of his class),  
Honorary Doctorate from **Mahachulalongkorn** Buddhist University,  
Honorary Doctorate in Philosophy, Thammasat University,  
[Honorary Doctorate in Education, Silapakorn University,]  
Former Deputy Secretary-General of Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist  
University.

## LIFE

### BIRTH:

Born on Thursday, 12 January, 1939 (B.E. **2481**),\* on the 7th day of the waning moon, the **10th** month [the second lunar month, yi] of the year of the Tiger, at Talat Siprachan, Siprachan District, Suphanburi Province, the son of Samran and Chunki Aryankura [Arayangkim].

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\*Since the birth of Phra Rajavaramuni, the Thai calendar underwent a change. April used to be the first month of the year, but later was changed to agree with the Western calendar year. Simply subtracting 543 years from the Thai Buddhist Era (B.E.), will, therefore, not yield the proper date.

## EARLY EDUCATION:

**1944 (2487)**, entered **Khruchaliew** Kindergarten, Talat Siphachan;

**1945 (2488) - 1947 (2490)**, entered primary school at **Chaisi-pracharat** public school;

**1948 (2491) - 1950 (2493)**, entered secondary school at Wat Pathumkhongkha Secondary School, Samphanthawong District, Phranakhon Province, receiving a scholarship from the Ministry of Education.

## ORDINATION:

Ordained at Wat Ban Krang, Siphachan District, Suphanburi Province, **10 May 1951 (2494)**, with Phrakhrū **Medhidhammasara** [Methithammasan], the abbot of Wat Ban Krang, as preceptor (*upajjhāya*).

## MONASTIC SCHOOL EDUCATION:

**1951 (2494)**, at Samnak Wat Ban Krang, which had Phrakhrū Medhidhammasara [**Mēthīthammasān**] as abbot;

**1952 (2495)**, Samnak Wat Prasatthong, which had Phra Wikrommuni as abbot;

**1953 (2496)**, moved to stay at Wat Phra **Phirain**, Bangkok, which had Phra Rajasilasobhita as abbot.

## TRADITIONAL BUDDHIST STUDIES:

**1951 (2494) - 1953 (2496)**, passed the exams for the three grades of Buddhist Dhamma Studies (Thai, *naktham*);

1955 (2498) - 1961 (2504), passed the *parien Pāli* exams from level 3 to 9.

GENERAL EDUCATION:

1962 (2505), passed the exams for a Bachelor Degree in Buddhist Studies (at the top of his class);

1963 (2506), passed an open exam for a Higher Certificate in Education.

HONORARY DEGREES:

1982 (2525), received an honorary doctorate in Buddhist Studies from Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University;

1986 (2529), received an honorary doctorate in Philosophy from Thammasat University [as well as an honorary doctorate in Education from Silapakorn University].

HIGHER ORDINATION (*upasampadā*):

Received higher ordination under the sponsorship of King **Bhumibol Adulyadej** as a *nāklūang* on the 24th of July 1961 (2504), the 12th day of the waxing moon, the 8th lunar month, at the *uposatha* hall, Wat Phra **Siratanasasadaram** (Wat Phra Kaew—the "Temple of the Emerald Buddha"), with the Supreme Patriarch Somdet Phra **Ariyavamsagatanyana** [**Ariyawong-sākotayān**] (Kittisobhana Mahathera [Kittishphon **Mahā-thēra**]) from Wat Benchamabophit as preceptor, and with Phra **Dhammagunabhorn** [**Thammakhunāphōn**] (currently, Somdet Phra **Buddhaghosacarya** [**Phutthakhōsāchān**]) from

Wat Samphraya as the (First) Ordination-Teacher (*kamma-vācācariya*) and Phra Devamedhi [**Thēpmēthi**] (later, Phra Dhammachedi) from Wat Thongnopphakhun as the (Second) Ordination Teacher (*anusāvanācariya*).

#### TITLES:

1969 (**2512**), received the royal title "Phra Srivissuddhimoli";  
 1973 (2516), received the higher royal title of "Phra **Rajavaramuni**."

#### DUTIES AND WORK:

1962 (2505) - 1963 (**2506**), served as full-time instructor at the **Pāli** Pre-university school, Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University;

1974 (2507) - 1974 (**2517**), received the position of Assistant to the Secretary-General, and later became Deputy **Secretary-General** of Mahachula. During the time that he performed his duties at Mahachula, he contributed to the progress of the University both in terms of administrative and academic improvements, especially in developing curriculum and teaching methods to be more systematic; he improved and established regulations for grading and credits, and, furthermore, he improved the Buddhist Sunday School, making it suitable for Thai society and still widely accepted today.

On the 16th of November 1972 (**2515**), he received the position of abbot of Wat Phra **Phirain**. During the time

that he was abbot there, he altered and improved the activities at Wat Phra **Phirain** in every respect, including management of the temple's accounts, and education for monks, novices and temple residents. When everything had been put in proper order, he handed in his letter of resignation from his position as abbot in **1976 (2519)**.

He also worked to spread Buddhism through lecturing and observing Buddhist activities in other countries. From **1967 to 1968 (2510-11)**, he went to Laos, **Sri Lanka**, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan; and in **1972 (2515)** he was asked to lecture at the University of Pennsylvania, in **1976 (2519)** Swarthmore College, and in **1981 (2524)** Harvard University, as well as many other places. Furthermore, he became an advisor of Wat **Vajiradhammapadip**, a Thai temple in New York City, and Wat Dhammaram in Chicago. Currently, even though his health is not very good, he still must perform important religious duties: He was appointed by the Supreme Patriarch of the Thai **Sangha** to head the committee reviewing the second of the three "baskets" of the Buddhist canon, the *sutta-piṭaka*. This assembly of monks is checking and revising (Thai, *chamra*, literally "cleansing") the Buddhist teachings, the established **Tipitaka**, at Wat Mahadhatu in Bangkok. Phra **Rajavaramuni** is also a distinguished member of the committee on education of the **Sangha**.

Translated from *Buddhacakra* [Phutthačhak], September 1986, 40:9, pp. 9-12. I have omitted the extensive second section of Phra Rajavaramuni's biography which includes a partial bibliography of his "Works." The short biography in this magazine contains a few errors concerning important dates, such as the one mentioned above. These have been clarified with Phra Rajavaramuni. We have also discussed preferred spellings of names and I have followed his suggestion of keeping monk's **names/titles** in **Pāli**, or close to the **Pāli** (in Thailand there is often a mixture of Thai, **Pāli** and/or Sanskrit) and I have often maintained a romanized version of Thai in brackets. An additional honorary degree, which was bestowed after this article appeared, has been added by the translator.

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"If something happens in American society, it seems that people in (Thai) society are thrilled to accept it. As we follow along, we should study them in order to know what the current state of American society is like and to know what their trends are for the future..."

To summarize, our country must develop; we must develop because our society has many problems that must be solved. But at the same time, we should consider if *developing to the point of having the same problems as American society is something to wish for at all...* How can we do this?...American people have said they are willing to accept that they are living in a time of 'cultural transformation' --some things must be discarded. So if we are to develop our society, is it appropriate to develop for the purpose of accepting the things that they are in the process of throwing away?...Before we can go on, we must come to an understanding about this first."