



# THE CHULALONGKORN JOURNAL OF BUDDHIST STUDIES

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Volume 1 Number 2 ❖ July-December 2002

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PUBLISHED BY  
CENTER FOR BUDDHIST STUDIES  
Chulalongkorn University  
Bangkok, Thailand



## ADMINISTRATION OF THE THAI SAṄGHA: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Sunthorn Na-rangsi

From the time the Thai people established the kingdom of Sukhothai, the first Thai kingdom in Southeast Asia, around BE 1800 (CE 1250) most of the Thai people have upheld Buddhism as their main religion down to the present day. King Ramkhamhaeng, the third king of the Sukhothai Kingdom (reigned BE 1822–1843), invited senior Lankan monks (thera) to journey with their company from Nakhon Sri Thammarat to establish the Lankan order of Theravāda Buddhism in Sukhothai. The king appointed the Elder Mahāsāmī, the leader of the group, to the position of Supreme (ecclesiastical) Patriarch (*saṅgharāja*), with a rank higher than all other monks in the kingdom, and he supported Buddhism fully. This is why the kind of Buddhism that later became known as “Lankan Buddhism” enjoyed growth and stability in the Sukhothai kingdom. There was widespread study of the Buddha’s words (*Buddhavacana*) recorded in the Canon, which led to the arising of Thailand’s first great Buddhist scholar, King Lithai the Great, the fifth king of the Sukhothai kingdom and author of *Tebhūmikathā*, more commonly known as *Traiphum Phra Ruang*, the first research work in the history of the Thai people. For this he studied at least 30 primary and secondary texts (*pakarāṇa*) in the Pāli language.<sup>1</sup>

### Administration of the Saṅgha in the Sukhothai and Ayudhaya periods

In terms of administration, the Saṅgha in the time of Sukhothai was divided into two groups, the *gāmaṇvāsī* and the *araṇṇavāsī*. *Gāmaṇvāsī* were monks who lived in monasteries (*wat*) within the cities or in rural villages. The duties of

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<sup>1</sup> Mahāmakut Rājavidyālaya Education Council, *Buddhism in the Thai Kingdom* (Bangkok: Mahamakut Rajavidyalaya Press, 2515), p. 39.



these monks emphasized *ganthadhura*—study of the *Buddhavacana* and teaching the Dhamma to the people. *Araññavāsī* monks lived in forest monasteries. Their duties emphasized *vipassanādhura*, the practice of calm (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*) meditation for attaining the transcendence of suffering. Administration of the Saṅgha in each of the city (*gā mavāsī*) and forest (*araññavāsī*) wats was done by the abbot, just as it is now. All wats in the kingdom, regardless of whether they were *gā mavāsī* or *araññavāsī*, were also subject to the administration of the Supreme Patriarch (*saṅgharāja*) appointed by the king.

In the Ayudhaya kingdom, the second Thai kingdom of the Indo Chinese peninsula, administration of the Saṅgha still followed the Sukhothai system. Later it was slightly adapted from that, with the Saṅgha divided into three groups as follows:

1. The “right side” *gā mavāsī*: the *gā mavāsī* monks according to the Sukhothai model.
2. The “left side” *gā mavāsī*: the monks affiliated with a group that traveled to Lanka to receive re-ordination, and when they returned to Thailand established their own group of *gā mavāsī* monks.
3. *Araññavāsī*: the monks who lived in forest monasteries, or meditation monasteries according to the model handed down from the Sukhothai period.

### **Administration of the Saṅgha in the Ratanakosin period**

The Ratanakosin period began in BE 2325, the year in which Phra Bat Somdet Phra Phuttha Yot Fa Chula Lok Maha Rat ascended the throne as the first king of the Cakri dynasty.

During the Thonburi period, which lasted only 15 years, even though King Taksin the Great had applied himself to reforming the Buddhist religion after its period of decline following the loss of Ayudhaya to Burma, gradually bringing it back to the normalcy it enjoyed during the Ayudhayan kingdom, since his reign was so brief he was not able to do very much. The administration of the Saṅgha during the Thonburi period followed the model established in Ayudhaya. With the Ratanakosin period, Phra Bat Somdet Phra

Phuttha Yot Fa Chula Lok Maha Rat made an effort to continue the reformation process begun in Thonburi, in spite of having to engage in many battles to defend the country.

In the early Ratanakosin period the administration of the Saṅgha was no different from that of Ayudhaya and Thonburi. The Saṅgha was still divided into three groups, with only a change in terminology, the term “side” being dropped in favor of “sector,” as follows:

1. The “left side” *gāṃavāsī* became the “northern sector.”
2. The “right side” *gāṃavāsī* became the “southern sector.”
3. The *araññavāsī* remained as before.

For each of these “sectors” a high-ranking *thera* (elder) served as the head with the responsibility of overseeing the administration of all the wats and the monks under his jurisdiction. The Supreme Patriarch held the position of supreme head of all the monks in the kingdom. As for the king, not only was he the head of the kingdom, but he was also legally the highest administrator of the Saṅgha, having the power to appoint or dismiss the Supreme Patriarch as he saw fit. The king’s ecclesiastical power was clearly demonstrated when Phra Bat Somdet Phra Phuttha Yot Fa Chula Lok Maha Rat issued a ten-clause Saṅgha Decree in BE 2344 hoping to eliminate corrupt monks (*alajjī*), who transgressed the monks’ discipline (*vinaya*) and brought disgrace on the Saṅgha as a whole, by expelling them from the Order. Not long after the Saṅgha law was enacted, 128 corrupt monks and novices were expelled from the Order and sentenced to hard labor to atone for the evil deeds they had committed.<sup>2</sup>

During the Second Reign administration of the Saṅgha was the same as during the First Reign. By the Third Reign, Phra Bat Somdet Phra Nang Klao Chao Yu Hua brought together most of the royal and ordinary monasteries within the province of Bangkok (Krung Thep) as a separate group, known as the “Central Group” (*khana klang*). It was directly under the administration of

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<sup>2</sup> Department of Religious Affairs, *History of Buddhism during the 200 years of the Ratanakosin Era*, Part 1 (Bangkok: Religious Affairs Press, 2525), p. 93.

Krom Somdet Phra Paramānuchit Chinoros who at the time held the rank of Krom Mun Nuchit Chinoros, the Saṅgha Director of Wat Chetuphon. There were four main administrative groups in the Saṅgha as follows:

Northern group

Southern group

Central group

*Araññavāsī* group

During the Fourth Reign the administration of the Saṅgha was no different from that of the Third Reign. The Dhammayuttika Nikāya, a new order which had arisen during the Third Reign, while it was clearly separated as a new *nikāya* (order) during the Fourth Reign, was nevertheless still included in the Central group, and its administration was in no way separate from that of the rest of the Saṅgha.

#### **Administration of the Saṅgha by Royal Decree**

Phra Chula Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua, the Fifth Reign of the Ratanakosin era, decreed the Characteristics of Saṅgha Administration Act, Ratanakosin Era (RE) 121 (BE 2445). This Act was used for Saṅgha administration up until the reign of Somdet Phra Chao Yu Hua Maha Ananda Mahidol, when it was annulled by the government at that time in favor of the Saṅgha Act of BE 2484 on October 14, 2484.

However, from the time the Characteristics of Saṅgha Administration Act RE 121 and later Acts were implemented, Thailand became the Theravda Buddhist country with the most systematic Saṅgha administration in the world. In the announcement for the enactment of the Characteristics of Saṅgha Administration Act RE 121, there appears in the Royal Command the following words:

“And in the Buddhist realm, the administration of the Saṅgha sphere is of great importance, both in terms of the benefit of the religion and in terms of the benefit and prosperity of the Kingdom. If administration of the Saṅgha sphere is based on an orderly plan, the religion will be prosperous, long-lasting and inspire the people to have faith in the Buddha’s teachings, to practice correctly

and study more the good teachings with the monks. [The King] wishes to support and foster the Saṅgha sphere in maintaining their qualities firmly in the religion, so His Majesty graciously ordains to herewith issue this Act...."<sup>3</sup>

This Act contains eight sections comprising 45 clauses:

Section 1 has two clauses on the name and conditions for use of the Act.

Section 2, dealing with main groups (*gaṇa*), has two clauses. Clause 3 states that this Act does not affect orders (*nikāya*) of the Saṅgha and the head (*saṅghanāyaka*) of each order may continue to stipulate that order's acts and special doctrines as before. Clause 4 stipulates that the *Rachakhana Somdets* and assistant *Chao Khana* monks for all four groups are to be Elders (*mahāthera*), consulting on religious affairs and administration of the Saṅgha sphere in general, and states that these eight Elders are to meet for consultation in the Council of Elders (*Mahāthera samāgama*) with a quorum of five. The decisions of the Council of Elders are absolute and may not be appealed or disputed.

Section 3, dealing with wats, contains five clauses, dealing with the particulars of wats, the building of wats, and application for government recognition of *sīmā* boundaries.

Section 4, dealing with abbots, contains ten clauses. Clauses 10, 11, and 12 deal with the selection and appointment of abbots for royal monasteries (*aram luang*) and ordinary monasteries (*wat rat*) in Bangkok and the provincial cities. Clause 13 lays down the duties of an abbot. Clause 14 deals with the duties of renunciants (*pabbajita*) and householders living in wats. Clause 15 states that all monks and novices are to be registered at a wat. Clause 16 deals with the duties of householders living in wats. Clause 17 lays down the powers of the abbot, while Clauses 17 and 18 deal with appeals against an abbot's orders and administration of the wat.

Section 5, dealing with district groups, contains 10 clauses.

Section 6, dealing with provincial groups, contains 5 clauses.

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<sup>3</sup> Mahāmakut Rājavidyālaya, *History of Administration of the Thai Saṅgha* (Bangkok: Mahāmakut Rājavidyālaya Press, 2521), p. 14.



Section 7, dealing with regional groups, contains 5 clauses.

These three sections deal with the administration of the Saṅgha. They lay down a permanent system of administration with regional, provincial, and district heads, group heads and abbots for governing the Saṅgha in towns, districts and shires, in sequential order. They contain the particulars of selecting and appointing section heads in Bangkok districts and provincial towns, district heads, regional heads, and the duties and powers of these heads in detail down to the appointment of [lesser] ecclesiastical titles by them.

Section 8 deals with powers and contains six clauses. It lays down the duties of the head of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the local officials who help the section heads fulfill their duties according to the Act. They lay down the duties of monks and novices and the powers of the section heads, punishments, judgment of cases, appeals, exceptions and formulation of Acts.

The Characteristics of Saṅgha Administration Act of the Fifth Reign contains no clauses dealing with the position, powers and duties of the Supreme Patriarch because it was made at a time when no Supreme Patriarch had been appointed to replace Somdet Phra Saṅgharāja (Sa), who passed away in BE 2442. The administration of each of the sections of the Saṅgha was in the hands of the section head. The King, who was the supreme patron of the Saṅgha, himself governed the national Saṅgha body. Thus this Royal Decree lays down that section heads and assistant section heads form a Council of Elders to serve as the King's advisors on religious matters.

The Characteristics of Saṅgha Administration Act was amended and added to after the change of government in BE 2475, stipulating that the Royal Granting of *sīmā* boundaries was to be issued as an Act and recorded in the Government Gazette, and in BE 2477 it was amended once more at Clause 7, stating that ownership of land belonging to a wat or the Saṅgha cannot be transferred except by the power of the law.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 16.



## The Saṅgha Act of BE 2484

After the people's revolution and change of government to a democracy on June 24, BE 2475, Thailand used the Constitution as the highest body of law in the land. The Constitution stipulated that sovereign power comes from the Thai people. The monarch continued in his position as head of the country under the Constitution, exercising legislative power through the parliament, judicial power through the courts, and administrative power through the Cabinet. The democratic government, wishing to have the administration of the Saṅgha follow the model of national government, brought in the Saṅgha Act BE 2484 to replace the Characteristics of Saṅgha Administration Act RE 121, on 14 October, 2484, as stated in the government's announcement at the time:

“...This Saṅgha Act has been endorsed by the Saṅgha and has passed smoothly through Parliament. The importance of the Saṅgha Act is that it organizes the administration of the Saṅgha following the nation's system of government as far as could be done without infringing on the *Vinaya*....”<sup>5</sup>

The Saṅgha Act of BE 2484 contained 60 clauses. Four of these were general statements, one was for a specific instance, and the remaining 55 were divided into eight sections, as follows:

Section 1, The Supreme Patriarch, contained 6 clauses dealing with the appointment, the powers and duties of the Supreme Patriarch following the model of the Constitution—i.e., the Supreme Patriarch issued Saṅgha Directives (*saṅghāṇati*) on the advice of the Saṅgha Council (*saṅghasabhā*), governed the Saṅgha through the Saṅgha Cabinet [*Khana saṅghamontri*] and judged legal cases (*adhikaraṇa*) through the Vinaya Council—and with other persons acting for the Supreme Patriarch.

Section 2, The Saṅgha Council, contained 17 clauses dealing with the components of the Saṅgha Council, the members of the Saṅgha Council, the meeting of the Saṅgha Council, the issuance of Saṅgha Directives and the

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

broadcasting of information on meetings of the Council, committees of the Saṅgha Council, the Saṅgha Cabinet and committees appointed by the Saṅgha Cabinet.

Section 3, Saṅgha Cabinet, contained 10 clauses dealing with the composition of the Saṅgha Cabinet, making the Saṅgha Chief responsible for the administration of the Saṅgha, with the organization of administration for the Saṅgha into organs of administration, education, broadcasting, and public services, with a Saṅgha Minister responsible for each of those areas, just as the Prime Minister, the ministers of individual departments and the Cabinet govern the country. This section also dealt with the forms and procedures for regional administration of the Saṅgha according to the Saṅgha Directives, executive inspectors, the appointment and removal or transfer of preceptors (*upajjhāya*) and monks of executive positions, which were to be done according to the principles and methods outlined in the Saṅgha Directives.

Section 4, Wats, contained 8 clauses, dealing with kinds of wats. The building, inauguration, combination, transference, moving, and abandoning of wats was to be in accordance with the laws of the ministry. The Royal Conference of *sīmā* boundaries, the management of monastery grounds and land belonging to the wat, the administration of wats, the duties and powers of the abbot and the registration of monks and novices.

Section 5, Property of the Religion, contained 4 clauses dealing with the organization and care of central belongings of the religion and belongings of the wat.

Section 6, The Vinaya Council, contained 3 clauses, dealing with the examination and adjudication of legal cases by the Vinaya Council.

Section 7, Penalties, contained 4 clauses, stipulating the penalties according to the Act for people disobeying the Act in relation to spreading information about the convening of the Saṅgha Council and other meetings and any actions designed to make others think one is a *bhikkhu* [monk], calumny of Thai monks and dishonest stewards (*veyyāvaccakara*).

The essence of the Saṅgha Act BE 2484 was the change from a Saṅgha administration by a Council of Elders (*Mahāthera samāgama*) that had been in use ever since the Fifth Reign to a system of administration modeled on the parliamentary system used in national government, which was democratic. According to this Act, the Supreme Patriarch, who was the head of all the Saṅgha in the kingdom, and who was known as Sakalamahāsaṅghaparināyaka, did not govern the Saṅgha directly, because in the Act it is specified that he issues Saṅgha Directives (*saṅghāṇati*: laws, administration procedures) on the advice of the Saṅgha Council, governs the Saṅgha through the Saṅgha Cabinet, and judges legal cases through the Vinaya Council, which is similar to the political administration of the country in which the King held the position of head of the country, issuing Acts on the advice of Parliament, exercising his power of rule through the Cabinet, and exercising his judicial powers through the courts of justice. The essential components of Saṅgha administration according to the Saṅgha Act BE 2484 are as follows:

1. The Saṅgha Council (*saṅghasabhā*). It was composed of no more than 45 members with the qualifications of (1) status of *thera* from Dhamma level upwards; (2) a first-grade section leader; (3) first-grade Pāli scholar.<sup>6</sup>

2. The Saṅgha Cabinet. It was composed of one Saṅgha Head (*saṅghanāyaka*) and no more than 9 Saṅgha ministers, appointed by the Supreme Patriarch, who was the supreme head of the Saṅgha (*sakalamahāsaṅghaparināyaka*).

3. Saṅgha administrative organizations, comprising:

a. Central administration, divided into four organizations:

(1) Organization for administration, with one Saṅgha minister and one deputy Saṅgha minister in charge.

(2) Organization for education, with one Saṅgha minister and one deputy Saṅgha minister in charge.

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<sup>6</sup> One who receives a Pāli grade between VII-IX in the classical Pāli studies. The 'first grade' denotes a set of the *highest grades-editor*.

(3) Organization for broadcasting, with one Saṅgha minister and one deputy Saṅgha minister in charge.

(4) Organization for public works, with one Saṅgha minister and one deputy Saṅgha minister in charge.

The deputy Saṅgha minister was optional, but in practice there were always deputy Saṅgha ministers in every organization.

b. Regional administration followed the stipulations of the Saṅgha Directives, administration divided into region (*phak*), province (*changwat*), district (*ampher*), shire (*tambol*) and wat. The administrators were the regional head, provincial head, district head, shire head and abbot, in that order. In addition there were section heads who were responsible for internal administration within their areas, and in each of the provinces there were provincial Saṅgha committees and district Saṅgha committees. On the regional level, each line of work was under the Saṅgha minister responsible. For example, administrative work was directly under the Saṅgha minister for administration, while educational work was directly under the Saṅgha minister for education.

The objectives of the government in drafting the Saṅgha Act of BE 2484 and abolishing the Characteristics of Saṅgha Administration Act of RE 121 (BE 2445) may be divided into two:

1. To change the administration of the Saṅgha to a democratic system, following the example of the national government.

2. To pave the way for a merging of the two main orders [*nikāya*] of the Thai Saṅgha which was divided into the *Mahānikāya* and *Dhammayuttika* orders.

As to the first objective, this can be gleaned from the government announcement of the time, a part of which reads:

“...This Saṅgha Act has been endorsed by the Saṅgha and has passed smoothly through the Parliament. The importance of the Saṅgha Act is that it



organizes the administration of the Saṅgha following the national system of government, as far as can be done without infringing on the Vinaya....”<sup>7</sup>

As for the second objective, it can be gleaned from a passage at the end of the same announcement, which reads:

“...What is admirable in this Act is that it paves the way for the carrying out of a major Rehearsal (*saṅgāyana*) of the Tipiṭaka, and when the Rehearsal has been completed ... to perhaps merge the Saṅgha *nikāya* into one. [Then] harmony and unity will arise for the Thai people, both in the political arena and in the religious one....”<sup>8</sup>

The second objective of this Saṅgha Act is an important one because in Clause 60, a special clause, there is a provision for a Rehearsal (*saṅgāyana*) of the Dhamma-Vinaya to be completed in no more than 8 years, at the completion of which the two orders of the Saṅgha, *Mahānikāya* and the *Dhammayuttika*, were to be merged.

However, events did not turn out as the government wished. Even though the government exerted some influence or power in recommending the merging of the two Thai Buddhist orders, asking, or even demanding, that *Mahānikāya* monks and *Dhammayuttika* monks live together at Wat Sri Mahādhātu, a wat newly built by the government with a *Dhammayuttika* abbot, their co-existence at that monastery was short-lived. Eventually the *Mahānikāya* monks withdrew, leaving only the *Dhammayuttika* monks, which is why Wat Sri Mahādhātu has been a *Dhammayuttika* monastery ever since.

There is a truth in regard to religion that still applies as much today as it ever did, and that is that there has never been a person or a power in this world capable of fusing two religions or two religious orders into one. Efforts to bring two religions together will lead to the creation of a new religion. Efforts to bring together two religious orders will result in the creation of a third order. The efforts of the Thai government at that time were inconsistent with

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

this truth. The result was a failure in the history of Thai Buddhism that is well worth studying.

The Saṅgha Act of BE 2484 led to many problems, which may be arranged as follows:

1. *The problem of the merging of the two nikāya.* The efforts to merge the two *nikāya*, *Dhammayuttika* and *Mahānikāya*, entailed, in BE 2486, the formulation of a *Saṅgāyanā* committee to conduct proceedings for a Rehearsal of the Dhamma-Vinaya which was to be completed in no more than 8 years. When that was completed there was to be a unification of the two orders, in accordance with the Saṅgha Act. However, it turned out that when the committee actually met, its members, coming from different orders, experienced many conflicts and found it impossible to harmonize and agree. The more they met the more conflict there was. Rather than coming together they moved further apart, so that both sides eventually became fed up with the meetings. Eventually there were no more meetings and the committee was virtually dissolved.

The reasons the *Saṅgāyanā* Committee could not fulfill the objectives of the Saṅgha Act of BE 2484 may be considered as follows:

1) Rehearsal of the Dhamma-Vinaya has already been well conducted by Theras of the past, so there was nothing of importance demanding further work or addition.

2) The reasons monks split into different orders are lack of uniformity in morality—having different levels of moral observance—and lack of uniformity in views—holding disparate views or ideas about the practice and the teachings. When there is lack of uniformity on both fronts it is impossible to reconcile two separated religious groups.

2. *Having the administration of the Saṅgha follow the model of worldly administration.* The Saṅgha Act stipulated that the administration of the Saṅgha was to be modeled on national administration, with its parliament and power divided into three sectors: legislative power, administrative power, and judicial power. The Supreme Patriarch, the supreme head of the Saṅgha, who had previously administered the Saṅgha directly through the Council of

Elders, was reduced to merely a figurehead of power, his power being dispersed to other organizations: the power to issue Saṅgha Directives (equaling the issuing of laws by the parliament) belonged to the Saṅgha Council; the power to administer belonged to the Saṅgha Cabinet; and the power to adjudicate legal cases belonged to the Vinaya Council. This kind of Saṅgha administration was not compatible with the precedents laid out in the Buddha's Dhamma-Vinaya, which conferred power on the Saṅgha (a meeting of four or more bhikkhus) as the authority in religious activities, and decreed that monks were to respect each other on the basis of seniority [i.e., duration of service in the monk's robes]. Since it was incompatible, all kinds of difficulties arose, as observed by one contemporary of the time:

...As the preliminary difficulties began to increase, the leaders of the Dhammayuttika order (all those who were members of the Saṅgha Council) submitted a letter to the Supreme Patriarch, to be submitted to Parliament, the gist of which was that from the implementation of the Saṅgha Act of BE 2484 till the time of the letter (5 July, 2490), a time of seven years, the writers of the letter, who were involved in administration of the Saṅgha, had observed that it had had a very detrimental effect on the religion. Specifically, the principle of administration through *vinaya* had been impaired, time and effort had been wasted, and wastage had increased to no benefit, because of many flaws in the Act. For example: 1. it conflicted with the Dhamma-Vinaya; 2. it conflicted with the Constitution which granted full freedom in the matter of religious beliefs; 3. it did not bring about the result stated in the law; 4. it did not accord with the Dhamma; 5. its wording was flawed; 6. it conflicted with the Saṅgha's methods of administration.<sup>9</sup>

3. *Having a Saṅgha Council*. Another important flaw of this Saṅgha Act which led to problems was the provision of having a Saṅgha Council. On the surface it appeared to be a good idea, but in actual fact it was not. Nationally there are many more *Mahānikāya* monks than *Dhammayuttika* monks. Thus the number of *Mahānikāya* members of the Saṅgha Council naturally had to

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

be greater than the number of *Dhammayuttika* monks. The practical outcome was that right from the very outset the *Dhammayuttika* monks were always the "opposition party" in the Saṅgha Council's issuing of Saṅgha Directives (as also in administration, the appointing of preceptors [*upajjhāya*] and in the Vinaya Council).<sup>10</sup>

The operation of the Saṅgha council was similar to the operation of the worldly parliament. Motions were presented, arguments given in favor and against, interjections arose and debates were given just as politicians do, and sometimes these were quite heated and more than what was appropriate for peaceful renunciants.

When the Saṅgha Council was first established, it was attended by members from both *nikāya*, but the meetings became less and less peaceful. Juniors were trying to get the better of seniors and arguments between the two orders became more and more aggressive, until eventually the monks from both sides who were more inclined to the Dhamma-Vinaya became fed up with the meetings, and no longer wished to go and become embroiled in arguments. Eventually only a minority of members continued to go to the meetings. Importantly, most of the senior elders ceased to participate. Thus the Saṅgha Directives that were issued were a result of the wishes of a minority group, who were mostly of the status of students and monks under the care of other monks.<sup>11</sup> In the Saṅgha society, the Buddha stipulated that monks respect each other on the basis of seniority, according to who was ordained first, not who was older in terms of age. Someone gone forth afterwards, even though he be older, must respect and salute a monk who went forth before him, even if that monk is young enough to be his son or grandson. The Buddha stated that monks should listen to the words of the elders, who were the Saṅgha fathers and Saṅgha leaders, and this would cause the Saṅgha to fare in prosperity and not to decline:

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.



As long as monks honor, respect and worship those who are Elders, *rattanñū* ("having many nights," i.e., experienced), who have long gone forth, who are the Saṅgha fathers and Saṅgha leaders, and take their words as being worthy of respect and belief, prosperity can definitely be expected, no decline.<sup>12</sup>

The implementation of Saṅgha administrative activities in the form of Saṅgha Directives by a Saṅgha Council in which junior monks were able to debate with senior Theras old enough to be their preceptors was against the fundamental tradition laid down by the Buddha, and this caused the senior Theras, heavily inclined toward the Dhamma-Vinaya, to become disaffected by, and no longer attend, the meetings of the Saṅgha Council. In later times the meetings of the Council tended to be attended by too few to make up a quorum. Again, it is not possible to issue just anything as a Saṅgha Directive, but only things that do not conflict with the Dhamma-Vinaya and which can be implemented in accordance with the Dhamma-Vinaya. Thus, throughout the 21 years in which the Saṅgha Act of BE 2484 was effective, the Saṅgha Council issued only ten Saṅgha Directives, covering only seven subjects.<sup>13</sup> Once the Saṅgha Directives defined by law were all issued the Saṅgha Council no longer had any work to do. In the end all that was left of the Saṅgha Council was the formalities of an opening ceremony and a closing ceremony.<sup>14</sup>

The announcement of the Saṅgha Act BE 2484, which the government of the time expected to bring about such harmony that the two *nikāya* of the country's monks would merge into one, turned out to have the opposite effect. The longer it was used the more disharmony arose in the country's Saṅgha. The Supreme Patriarch felt that if things were left to go on as they were without any kind of remedial action even more damage would be done to the religion, so he called a meeting of the senior Elders, those who were the important cogs in the administrative process of both *nikāya*, to consult on the

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<sup>12</sup> Syāmrattā Tipiṭaka, vol. 23, § 21, p. 22.

<sup>13</sup> Mahāmakut Rājavidyālaya Press, *History of Administration of the Thai Saṅgha*, Bangkok: Mahāmakut Rājavidyālaya Press, 2521, p. 22.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

matter at the Jewel Cottage in Wat Bovoranives, on 12 July, 2494, at which the following three points were agreed upon:

1. Central administration would still be conducted by the Saṅgha Council, but implementation of that administration would be carried out according to *nikāya*.

2. Regional administration was to be done according to *nikāya*.

3. Other particulars were to be consulted on later.

The government and the Saṅgha Cabinet passed a resolution upholding these points (Cabinet Resolution no. 11/2494, dated 21 September, 2494).<sup>15</sup>

Throughout the time the Saṅgha Act BE 2484 had been in effect there had been two Saṅgha ministers for each organization, one *Mahānikāya* Elder and one *Dhammayuttika* Elder. Thus, once these three new agreements had been adopted, the *Mahānikāya* Saṅgha Minister could only administer the *Mahānikāya* sector, while the *Dhammayuttika* Saṅgha Minister could likewise only administer the *Dhammayuttika* sector. The three points of agreement have been in use from that time till the present. Each province, for example, has two provincial heads, one *Mahānikāya* and one *Dhammayuttika*. Each of these provincial heads oversees the administration of monks and novices belonging to his respective order, and this has effectively caused the friction and conflict that arose during the Saṅgha Act of BE 2484 to disappear.

Since this Saṅgha Act was one that led to so many problems, the revolutionary government of Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat, with the endorsement and agreement of the Saṅgha, announced its annulment and the implementation of a new Saṅgha Act, BE 2505 in its place, on 25 December, BE 2505. The Saṅgha Act was announced in the government gazette, volume 79, Section 115, on 31 December BE 2505, effective from 1 January, 2506.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

## Administration of the Saṅgha at present

### a. *The Saṅgha Act BE 2505*

The Saṅgha Act BE 2505, announced to replace the annulled Saṅgha Act of BE 2484, contains 46 clauses, not including general passages and time-specific clauses. They are divided into eight sections:

Section 1, concerning the Supreme Patriarch, contains five clauses dealing with the appointment, powers and duties of the Supreme Patriarch, the naming of persons empowered to act on his behalf, and the termination of a Supreme Patriarch's office.

Section 2, concerning the Council of Elders, contains 8 clauses dealing with the quorum of the Council, appointment of secretary to the Council, termination of the position, and the powers and duties of the committee of the Council of Elders.

Section 3, concerning administration of the Saṅgha, contains 4 clauses dealing with the organization of Saṅgha administration, regional Saṅgha administration, appointment and revocation of preceptor-ship (*upajjhāya*) according to the standards and methods designated by the Council of Elders.

Section 4, concerning *niggaha-kamma* (censure) and defrocking, contains 7 clauses, dealing with monks deserving of *niggaha-kamma* when they transgress the Dhamma-Vinaya and definition of standards and procedures for imposing *niggaha-kamma* in different cases.

Section 5, concerning wats, contains 9 clauses, dealing with kinds of wat, the building, establishment, moving, and abandoning of wats, application for government recognition of *sīmā* boundaries, abbots and the appointment of deputy abbots.

Section 6, concerning belongings of the religion, contains 2 clauses dealing with the kinds of care and maintenance of belongings of the religion.

Section 7, concerning determining of punishments, contains 3 clauses dealing with punishments for those who refuse to comply when given *niggaha-kamma* and those who falsely accuse Saṅgha members.

Section 8, a miscellaneous section, contains 2 clauses, dealing with monks appointed to administrative positions within the Saṅgha and stewards (*veyyā-*

*vacakara*) as staff as defined by the Criminal Code and the administration of Saṅghas other than the Thai Saṅgha in conformity with the Ministry's laws.

b. *The gist of the Saṅgha Act BE 2505*

According to the Saṅgha Act BE 2505:

The King appoints the Supreme Patriarch (Clause 7).

The Supreme Patriarch holds the position of supreme head of the Saṅgha. He holds authority over the Saṅgha and issues the Supreme Patriarch's Decrees which do not conflict with or infringe on the laws, the Dhamma-Vinaya or the rulings of the Saṅgha Council (Clause 8). He holds the position of Chairman of the Council of Elders (Clause 9).

The Council of Elders is made up of the Supreme Patriarch, who automatically holds the position of Chairman of the Council, all ecclesiastical heads of the Somdet rank, who automatically hold the position of members of the Council, and other ecclesiastic heads appointed by the Supreme Patriarch, of which there are no less than 4 and no more than 8 (Clause 12). Members of the Council of Elders appointed by the Supreme Patriarch hold their positions for two years at a time and may be re-appointed (Clause 14).

The Director-General of the Department of Religious Affairs is the secretary to the Council of Elders and the Department of Religious Affairs performs the duty of office to the secretary of the Council of Elders (Clause 13).

The Council of Elders has the authority and the duty to govern the Saṅgha and keep it running smoothly. To this end it has the power to issue Decrees of the Saṅgha Council and regulations, lay down procedures or give commands, as long as they do not conflict with or infringe on the law and the Dhamma-Vinaya.

From the provisions given here, the Supreme Patriarch commands the Saṅgha and administers the Saṅgha via the Council of Elders, of which he himself is the chairman. It is administration of the whole sphere of Saṅgha from one central authority, a system which more easily creates harmony and unity than other forms of administration.



According to the Council of Elders Regulations, Volume 4 (BE 2506) dealing with procedures for Saṅgha administration, all levels and sectors of Saṅgha administration are to have ecclesiastical heads of both Mahānikāya and Dhammayuttika affiliation governing the wats, monks and novices of each of those nikāya (Clause 4).

Procedures for central Saṅgha administration stipulate methods for ensuring order and harmony, methods for religious instruction and educational welfare, methods for spreading the Buddhist teachings, methods for implementing public services and public welfare concerning the Saṅgha and the religion, to be conducted according to the procedures of the Council of Elders (Clause 5). For the purpose of Saṅgha administration in all sectors and levels and in order to reduce the burden on the Council of Elders, ecclesiastical heads are to perform the duties of their respective nikāya in the following administrative sectors:

- (1) Central sector head carries out administrative duties for regions 1, 2, 3, 13, 14 and 15.
- (2) Northern sector head carries out administrative duties for regions 4, 5, 6 and 7.
- (3) Eastern sector head carries out administrative duties for regions 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12.
- (4) Southern sector head carries out administrative duties for regions 16, 17 and 18.
- (5) Dhammayuttika sector head carries out administrative duties for Dhammayuttika order in all regions.

The Supreme Patriarch appoints these sector heads and gives them their duties, to be in conformity with the motions of the Council of Elders (Clause 6).

According to the Saṅgha Act BE 2505 regional administration of the Saṅgha is divided into regions [*phak*], provinces [*changwat*], districts [*ampher*] and shires [*tambol*] (Clause 21). There are 18 Saṅgha regions, each made up of a number of provincial sectors according to the Council of Elders regulations 3 (BE 2505) and the addenda. The number of provincial, district, and shire

administrative sectors is to be in accordance with the national administration sectors for provinces, districts and shires, although special cases can be made through a ruling from the Council of Elders.

For regional administration of the Saṅgha, monks are to be appointed to administer in order thus: *chao khana phak* [regional ecclesiastical head], *chao khana changwat* [provincial ecclesiastical head], *chao khana ampher* [district ecclesiastical head] and *chao khana tambol* [shire ecclesiastical head]. If the Council of Elders sees fit, an assistant *chao khana* for province, *ampher* or *tambol* can be appointed (Clause 22). The appointment or revocation of the positions of preceptor, abbot, assistant abbot, other administrative positions of the Saṅgha and steward is to follow the principles and procedures defined by the regulations of the Council of Elders.

According to the Council of Elders Regulations Volume 4 (BE 2506), dealing with administrative procedures of the Saṅgha, the *chao khana phak* has the following powers and duties:

(1) To carry out administration of the Saṅgha so that it is in accordance with the Dhamma-Vinaya, law, regulations of the Council of Elders and rulings or procedures of the Council of Elders, decrees from the Council of Elders and Commands of the Supreme Patriarch.

(2) To control and see that order, virtue, religious study, educational welfare, propagation of Buddhist teachings, public services and public welfare fare smoothly.

(3) To examine the imposing of *niggaha-kamma*, and examine appeals, orders or judgments on the provincial level.

(4) To rightly redress obstacles of the provincial head.

(5) To control and command ecclesiastical heads, abbots and monks and novices within his jurisdiction or within his area of administration, and inspect and advise on performance of duties of those within his jurisdiction.

The provincial head has the same duties of administering the monks within the boundaries of his province as the regional head has for his region. In (1), it is added that he carries out the administration of the Saṅgha according to the directives of his superior. Point (3) reads that he examines the imposition of

*niggaha-kamma*, and any appeals, orders, or judgments of the district head. Point (4) states that he rightly redresses obstacles of the district head.

The district head has the same duties in administering the monks with his district as the provincial head and regional head. (3) He examines appeals, orders, or judgments of heads of shires. (4) He rightly redresses obstacles of the shire head.

The shire head has the same duties in administering the Saṅgha within his shire as the provincial head and regional head. (3) He examines appeals, orders, and judgments of abbots. (4) He rightfully redresses obstacles of abbots. (5) He controls and commands abbots and monks and novices.

In Clause 37 of the Saṅgha Act BE 2505, the Abbot has the following duties:

(1) To care for and maintain the wat, and organize the activities and possessions of the wat.

(2) To administer and see that the renunciants [*pabbajita*] and householders within or living in the wat practice according to the Dhamma-Vinaya, the laws of the Council of Elders, and the laws, regulations, procedures or directives of the Council of Elders.

(3) To take on the responsibility for the education, practice, and teaching of the Dhamma-Vinaya to renunciants and householders.

(4) To facilitate the cultivation of goodness (*kusala*).

In Clause 38, the Abbot has the following powers:

(1) To forbid any renunciant or householder who has not received permission from staying in the wat.

(2) To expel from the wat any renunciants or householders who do not obey the Abbot.

(3) To order renunciants or householders living within the wat to do work within the wat or to make a promise of good behavior or to make an apology when that renunciant or householder within the wat disobeys any orders of the Abbot which are in accordance with the Dhamma-Vinaya, the regulations or the Council of Elders, and the rules, procedures and directives of the Council of Elders.

In addition, there are Regulations of the Council of Elders Volume 5 (BE 2506) dealing with the appointment and dismissal of abbots, Volume 7 (BE 2506) dealing with the appointment and dismissal of preceptors, Volume 8 (BE 2506) dealing with the appointment and dismissal of stewards, Volume 9 (BE 2506) dealing with the imposing of *niggaha-kamma* on monks, and Volume 10 (BE 2513) dealing with the appointment of acting abbots and also the procedures and directives of the Council of Elders for the administration of the Saṅgha in accordance with the Dhamma-Vinaya and the laws.

It can be seen from the nature of Saṅgha administration according to the Saṅgha Act BE 2505 that the highest organ of administration is the Council of Elders, comprising the Supreme Patriarch as Chairman and a number of elders as members of the Council of Elders. The Saṅgha Directives, laws, procedures and motions on the administration of the Saṅgha issued or determined by the Council of Elders are put down in print in a letter of announcements of the Council of Elders, which is similar to the Government Gazette in worldly government, but the letter of announcements of the Council of Elders is not issued on a regular basis. If there are no announcements to be made there may be a long gap between such letters of announcements.

### **The future: how will future administration of the Saṅgha be?**

When we examine the form Saṅgha administration in Thailand has taken so far, from the past to the present, it may be said that administration by a Council of Elders may be the most suitable form of administration according to the Dhamma-Vinaya, in which the Buddha made the Saṅgha the highest authority in all religious activities and had the monks revere and obey the theas, the elders, who were of greater experience, the fathers and leaders of the Saṅgha, by stating that as long as the monks respected and obeyed the words of the elders prosperity and not decline would be assured for the Saṅgha.



However, while the administration of the Saṅgha via a Council of Elders is appropriate, the Saṅgha Act of BE 2505 now in use does have a number of weak points which require correction. These may be examined as follows:

1. *The Council of Elders is an organ on the level of policy making more than on the level of practical operation.*

One fact that needs to be considered and acknowledged is that the members of the Council of Elders are entirely Mahāthera aged 60 years and over. In a worldly government they would all have been retired and relieved of their duties on account of age. But according to the Saṅgha Act of BE 2505 they must continue to work even though many of the elders are almost 80 years of age, or even more. Some of them are even 90 years old. All these elders are certainly endowed with much wisdom and experience—as we would say in Buddhism, they are *rattaññū*: they have passed many nights. In ordinary terms they have much experience because they have been ordained many years and seen a lot in their time. They are elders of the status of *garuṭṭhāniyapuggala*: people who should be revered and believed as Saṅgha fathers and Saṅgha leaders according to the Buddhist custom.

However, considered in terms of the natural facts of human beings, people of such an age are classed as elderly people. They are old. It is appropriate to have these great theras as members of the Council of Elders, the highest administrative body according to Thai system of Saṅgha administration, but the work these elders have to do should be purely in a policy making, advisory, and judiciary capacity at the highest level, not work on the level of practical operation requiring examination and seeking out suitable ways or methods to carry out the administration of the Saṅgha, as it is at present. Work on the operational level should be the responsibility of subsidiary organizations which can use their manpower and time to finish the work of examining and sifting through before submitting matters to the Council of Elders for their approval as the final stage in the process. But according to the Saṅgha Act BE 2505 there are no such subsidiary organs. The Council of Elders must examine and adjudicate every matter brought before it, from

minor matters to national concerns. Thus it may be valid to call the Saṅgha Act BE 2505 “an Act for torturing old people.”

2. *There is no initiation of new work or projects for keeping propagational organs and methods in step with changing times.*

The administration of the Saṅgha on the highest level, which is the Council of Elders, and on the lower levels, divided into sectors [*hon*], regions [*phak*], provinces [*changwat*], districts [*ampher*] and shires [*tambol*], is still the same today as it was 30 years ago. While there has not been any regression, there has not been any progress. Thus it is merely preserving an established tradition of administration. But if we consider the changing times and the age of globalization, the unmoving administration of the Saṅgha which has initiated no new projects or developed in different areas, has caused operations, be they of administration, education, propagation or public services, to become obsolete and old fashioned.

3. *There are no secondary organs below the Council of Elders to take long-term responsibility for various activities of the religion.*

As already stated, the elders who form the members of the Council of Elders, while learned, experienced and worthy of reverence and faith, are nevertheless aged. Some of them are so aged they can hardly get up and walk. They are not of an age in which they can do the heavy work of administering many complicated religious matters which require a great deal of physical and intellectual expenditure. In terms of their age, if we were to compare it with a fire, it would be a fire that has passed the stage of brilliance and is in the process of dying and turning to ashes and charcoal. Thus it is not realistic to expect those elders to consistently work efficiently, speedily, and energetically, to come up with new projects and ideas, as we would expect from those still of working age, and such expectation conflicts with the teaching on the *sappurisa-dhamma*.

For these reasons, the work of administering the religion in its various areas, such as administration, education, propagation, and public services, which require continuous and applied work, and may require new ideas and projects in order to benefit Buddhism, the Thai society and worldly beings as a

whole, should be the responsibility of a secondary organ, run by elders possessed of learning and experience and who are still of working age. Their operation should be in the form of a committee. The Council of Elders should only have the responsibility of defining and controlling policy, being available for consultation or advice to the secondary organ, and passing motions adopting, rejecting or giving final judgment on the matters proposed to them by the secondary organ. If it is possible to do this, prosperity and growth for Buddhism, and progress in Buddhist activities, can be certainly expected.

### **Suggestions**

In order to reduce the burden on the Council of Elders and to bring about a stable growth of Buddhism in this global age, four secondary organs should be established, as follows:

#### *1. Office of the committee for Saṅgha administration*

This office will have the responsibility of taking the policies of Saṅgha administration determined by the Council of Elders and putting them into real, effective practice. In addition, the central committee of the office will also have the duty of drafting regulations necessary for the peace, order and prosperity of the Saṅgha sphere and submitting them to the Council of Elders for approval. Once the Council of Elders has considered and approved a proposal, [the office] ensures that it is practiced everywhere in accordance with the regulations. When administrative problems arise special subcommittees may be established to study or examine them and find solutions on a case-to-case basis, and to see that Acts for Saṅgha administration are enforced throughout the country speedily and fairly for all parties concerned.

#### *2. Office of the committee for Saṅgha education*

This will perform the function of drafting policies and plans for the education of monks and novices in every aspect and on every level, to be submitted to the Council of Elders for their examination and approval. When proposals have been approved, [the office] puts them into practice and sees them through to successful completion.

The education of the Saṅgha, divided into *nak tham* (Dhamma) and Pāli studies and with presiding Dhamma chiefs and Pāli chiefs, as used at present, should be brought together as part of the work of the office of the committee of Saṅgha education, who will undertake to improve the curriculum and education methods and assess results in ways that are appropriate for the Saṅgha in the global age by, for example, establishing colleges for Pāli studies, both central and regional, and organizing a system of specialized studies for which those who complete them can receive appropriate diplomas or degrees.

However, exactly what work will be under the direction of the office of the committee for Saṅgha education is something to be decided by the committee responsible for amending the Saṅgha Act after careful and thorough examination.

### *3. Office of the committee for Saṅgha propagation*

This office will take on responsibility for the propagation of Buddhism, both within Thailand and in other countries, determining policies and forming plans of operation for propagation in keeping with the times, improving the methods used to present the Buddha's teachings to target groups of specific age and social status. If necessary, the office may establish an institute for training monks and novices so that they gain the knowledge and ability needed for teaching, and so rejuvenate the institute for training "Dhamma ambassadors," which at present exists only in name, so that the spread of Buddhism in other countries is more efficient and suitable, rather than just leaving the task to whoever wants to do it, or each party acting independently, as is done at present.

### *4. Office of the committee for Saṅgha public services*

This office will perform the task of determining policies and forming work plans in regard to public services within the Saṅgha throughout the kingdom, such as policies concerning the building of wats, the establishment of "Saṅgha residences" (*samnak song*), the building of religious places (*sasana sathan*), the encouragement of youth education by granting Saṅgha property for the building of schools, helping with funds for constructing school buildings, building shire public health offices, establishing training centers and child care

centers and other kinds of social welfare work that do not conflict with the proper conduct of a renunciant.

Regarding the form of these four offices operating below the Council of Elders, they should be established along the lines of offices of the civil service like the Bureau for Industrial Production Standards, the Office of Food and Drug Administration, Office of the Consumer Protection Agency. The offices must be centrally located to easily coordinate with the Council of Elders and the Religious Affairs Department. Apart from the main offices there may also be branch offices on both the regional and provincial levels. For the operation of the offices there must be regular officials working on a full-time basis, stopping only on observance days, Sundays and on the various public holidays held by the civil service.

The officials running these offices will be working on the following capacities:

1. Secretary-general
2. One to three deputy secretary-generals
3. Department supervisor
4. Department head
5. Section or group head

Other personnel will be required, such as computer operators, typists, clerks, messengers, drivers, caretakers, etc.

The work of the offices will be in the form of a committee just like the offices of the civil service, which comprise a committee with the secretary-general of the office acting as secretary, with for example, a committee for Saṅgha administration, a committee for Saṅgha education, a committee for Saṅgha propagation, and so on. Lower down will be the special subcommittees of which the secretary-general or deputy secretary-general may or may not be a member, and these special committees can be made up of as many people as required.

In summary, the administration of the Saṅgha in the form of a Council of Elders is a suitable way of administering the Saṅgha, but expecting the Council of Elders to examine and pass judgment on every matter big and small



is highly unsuitable. Thus there should be an amendment to the Saṅgha Act BE 2505 for the four secondary organs to the Council of Elders stated here. Not only will this be reducing the burden on the Council of Elders, but it will also be putting the policies into steady practice, allowing the various activities of Buddhism to progress in step with the age void of communications frontiers we call the age of globalization.

[Translated from the Thai version by *Bruce Evans*]

# THE APPLICATION OF BUDDHIST ETHICS TO THAI SOCIETY

*Preecha Changkhwanyuen*

**I**n this approach to applying Buddhist ethics to Thai society, I would like to divide social problems into four main kinds: problems of the social system; problems of the political system; problems of the economic system; and problems of the educational system. The discussion will center on approaches to be taken. As for the actual logistics of whether it can be done, how it can be done, and how far it can be done, these are matters that sociologists, political scientists, economists and educationists would be far better equipped to see than the author, and in actually putting these ideas into practice more detailed data and more earnest study will be required. The author does not guarantee that this approach is truly right and good, but he does assert that these are indeed his beliefs, and that they seem to be good at this time.

The four problems under discussion will stress different areas of conflict that have arisen in society: the discussion of problems of the social system will deal with the conflict between materialism and spiritualism; the discussion of problems of the political system will deal with the conflict between democracy and communism; the discussion of problems of the economic system will deal with the conflict between solving economic problems at the system and solving them at the individual; the discussion of problems of the education system will deal with whether or not the use of the philosophy of pragmatism in Thailand conflicts with Buddhism. In all four problems, I will show what course of action would be appropriate for Thailand in the light of Buddhist ethics.

## **1. Problems of the social system**

Almost all problems in Thai society have arisen from the growth of science, because that has led to the use of technology. Because they feel more comfortable initially, people give value to material things and the knowledge

that enables them to build or use more material things, and they readily adopt western branches of learning which exclusively aid material development. These branches of learning are science and social science, both of which arose at a time when the West had no interest in values and had an inflated idea of the worth of science. Thailand's total acceptance of this culture caused it to experience a number of harmful results. The idea that happiness results from having many material objects to serve the desires of the senses has caused us to hold that wealth is good because it allows one to get the things one wants. Since wealth is a good thing, we must try to get rich any way we can. Good and evil are of no interest to materialists. Thus, no matter how wrong the method may be, as long as the country's laws cannot punish it, and it leads to wealth, it is good. Rich people are honored and afforded status, and honest but poor people, or people who have the chance to get rich through certain means but do not do so because those means are dishonest, are labeled "stupid" and not praised. Dishonest practices in various circles and the creation of partisan groups has arisen. Those who do not have the chance [to get rich] because they do not have a group of their own struggle along any way they can, and eventually those who lack any other kind of knowledge or ability become criminals—not because of any threat of starvation, but because of a desire to live like the rich and have material wealth. So criminals do not commit crimes in order to stay alive, but to obtain material pleasures. Sensual temptations, such as night spots, have opened in profusion. Advertising calls on people to lose themselves in these things, all with the government's blessing and approval. The government's campaign to encourage the people to be thrifty has no chances of success, because we know that even in ancient times, without the lure of advertising and without such overt worldly pleasures, people in every country struggled just the same for this kind of happiness and poured their money into such things, causing family and social problems. These days we have advertising to urge people on, fanning their defilements. Moreover, there is no support of dedicated research into ethical teachings. Research is all focused on material things. How can we blame the people for not being thrifty when the state allows an environment so unsupportive to

thrift to continue? This article does not intend to discuss the matter in detail, but simply to point out in brief what major social problems have arisen and what Buddhism has to say about them.

I see that there are two main problems in society: the problem of people and resources, and the problem of people and people. In sociology these problems are further analyzed into, for example, problems with the environment, places of decline, urban societies, rural societies, the family system, classes, health, education, social change, law, language and subsidiary problems such as suicide, minority groups, and homeless children. These problems arise because of an inability to address the two major problems, as I will now analyze and shown in brief.

### **1.1. People and resources**

All people throughout the ages who desire worldly happiness will need two things: wealth and power. When they are poor or deprived they seek enough to live on. Once they have enough to live on they store up for the future. Once they have stored up enough for themselves they store up for their children, grandchildren and relatives, and they must store up a great deal. In order to store up a great deal and protect what they have stored they need power, so they must also store up power. To have power they must have the support of other people, which means they must store up more wealth for their servants and retinues. Those with great wealth have large retinues and much honor because these things are what are extolled in their own societies, but they also incur a lot of expenditure, which means they have to continue amassing endlessly. Power gained can be preserved by riches, it is true, but then there may be others who have also amassed riches and power. This leads to status-grabbing and power-displays. In times when the human population was still small, and the territories of the various countries did not yet extend over the whole of the earth, these two problems were not particularly difficult: those who were troubled by lack of resources could go and look for them, constantly shifting their places of subsistence; those who were troubled by their lack of power could move to other places. Nowadays, however, all countries have

large populations, and all the land is titled. Countries no longer want people from other countries. People within these countries have limited areas for subsistence and cannot move so easily, so they must solve their problems within the limitations of those situations. Thus the problem of people and resources has become more important and now affects all people in society in three main ways: population size, population quality, and availability and use of resources.

1.1.1. *The problem of population size*

People have desires for all kinds of necessities and other things. When the number of people increases by one, those things must also increase at least enough for the livelihood of that one person. And since people do not live simply for one or two days but for many decades, the things required to support the life of a person increase to a staggering amount. People are born every minute. 20–30 years ago there were little more than 10 million people in Thailand. Surrounding our houses were gardens and fields. Rice and fish were in plentiful supply and prices were cheap. While people's incomes were not as high as they are today, people lived better than they do now. The people born 20–30 years ago are mostly still alive, and will still be alive for perhaps another 20–30 years. By that time deprivation will be much greater than it is now because the population will have increased more than it did in the last 20–30 years. If the population continues to increase at this rate, science is powerless to help.

Population growth has led to a great number of subsequent problems. If people are immersed in sensual pleasure, the population is going to continue to increase. If one man married ten women, he could have ten children in the first year. If every man had a great number of wives like this, in one year ten men could father a hundred children; i.e., the population would increase ten-fold. The Buddha taught that people should not get lost in sensual desires. If one is incapable of cutting them off completely then one should at least abide by the third precept, which allows only one wife. Thus at most a person would normally be capable of having only one child or less a year. This precept can thus be used to effectively decrease the rate of population growth. In the



Buddha's time such efficient means of contraception as are used these days were not available. If contraception is used in conjunction with the third precept the rate of population growth will decrease even further, thus reducing the troubles arising from over-population. Large populations are of no use whatsoever in the present situation other than to provide the manpower for increased killing and bloodshed. As for making a living, greater numbers of people do not mean more hands to help with the work as it did in the past, because places or positions of work no longer increase with the population. Population growth will only increase the amount and intensity of contention over the means of making a living. Apart from food, people must also use the rest of the four supports (*paccaya*), which are (1) health—they must produce medicine, medical equipment, doctors, nurses, and other medical staff, and hospitals and other medical materials; (2) they must find places to live, leading to the problems of urban expansion as a result of greater demands for habitations. With the expansion of the towns there comes traffic, waste disposal, and communications systems, requiring great expenditure in their building and design and in the training of personnel to build and design them. A complex system of education must be established, greater numbers of texts, and more schools and universities built. Then there are problems of education, such as curricula, teaching methods and equipment, and standards of education. When the economy is weak disparities arise between the urban centers and rural areas, leading to migration to the cities, which in turn leads to the problems of slums, crime, homeless children, juvenile delinquents, the unemployed, and beggars, for example. Urban expansion, both in dwellings and for livelihood, leads to the problem of polluted and poisoned environments. Cramped living creates the need for places of relaxation, and then there are other problems too numerous to mention. The most important problem for society thus lies in the size of the population, and the objective of Buddhism is to have the population increase as little as possible. When population growth is small problems are few, can be easily corrected and corrected in time. Buddhism does not forbid birth prevention. It does not, for example, forbid masturbation/autonomous satisfaction of desires, except for

monks, but Buddhism does forbid the taking of life once conceived, as in abortion. The merits and demerits of this could be discussed at length, but here I only wish to point out that Buddhism does not forbid contraception, because the third precept virtually supports it. That Buddhism does not forbid [sexual activity] outright is not because it takes sexual activity to be a good thing, but because it recognizes that unenlightened beings cannot desist from it. Buddhism supports contraception, but not killing.

#### 1.1.2 *The problem of population quality*

Thailand is now similar to other countries: it recognizes that the large population has become an almost insurmountable problem that will cause people to live in such difficulty and distress that they will find no happiness but have to devote their whole lives to working all day for a wage that is scarcely enough to live on. People tend to think that people of good quality will help solve the problem, and will be better able to make the country prosperous than a great number of people of inferior quality. Nowadays in Thailand the word "good quality" tends to mean proficiency in pure science, social science, and technology. Proficiency in the humanities is not widely accepted as a kind of good quality because it is felt that such knowledge cannot be used to solve society's problems of material shortages. While there is talk of "character training" it is merely a training for people to express themselves as society wants them to, not a true training of the mind in virtue. Thus we have a great deal of people who are good at talking, whose mouths and minds are not in agreement. As for education, which seeks to train people to be clever at attaching to the physical as scientists do and studies ethics only in name, the objective is not really to earnestly train people as does Buddhism or a training of mindfulness and wisdom. In tertiary education, in particular, it can be said that there is no teaching of conduct at all. Tertiary education aims specifically at vocational learning and tries as much as possible to dispense with subjects that do not conform with its branches of learning. Thus we produce engineers, architects, lawyers, accountants, economists, administrators, scientists, doctors and chemists who are mere professionals, who make a living solely through the subject they have studied, and who have very

limited knowledge of, and are incapable of understanding, the importance of other branches of learning. They see only the importance of their own field of knowledge, and so become narrow-minded. Once they become narrow minded, they exalt themselves and disparage others, looking down on other branches of learning even though they do not know them, or know them only as much as a student of primary school. These are the people we call “quality persons” in present day Thai society.

When these persons of good quality, according to the state’s view, exalt themselves, disparage others and look down on each other—even those who also have tertiary education—one can rest assured that they will look down on people with less education than themselves. Thus these “persons of good quality” are not capable of solving the problems of the people because, firstly, solving those problems requires knowledge from many different fields. With narrow knowledge they cannot perceive what field of knowledge is required to solve the problems, and inter-disciplinary cooperation is unlikely. Secondly, their disparaging view of the people blinds them to the importance of their problems. Thus the people have no one to turn to and easily fall prey to other parties.

Buddhism does not oppose building one’s vocational abilities because it is necessary for people living in society, but it also does not hold it to be the most important thing in life. That which is of real value is the quality of being a good human being. Regardless of one’s profession, all branches of learning can be used in good or evil ways. How knowledge is used depends on what kind of person is using it. A good person will use it in good ways, while a bad person will use it in bad ways. Thus if there is no training to make people good, we will have engineers, architects, scientists, lawyers who are out for their own interests. Most human beings are naturally inclined to favor sensual happiness. If they are not sufficiently trained they will commit dishonest actions to get the money to find it, but if they hold goodness to be a thing of value and are trained well before going out to make a living, there will be good personnel of true benefit to society.

### 1.1.3 *The amount of resources and their use*

The amount of resources in the world is limited, and most resources take a long time and very complex processes to form. Thus resources arise slower than they are used. The faster the population grows the faster resources are depleted. Apart from the factor of population growth, resources are also depleted through wasteful consumption, by using resources for things that are not necessary. People in urban societies use more resources than those who live in rural communities; industrial societies use more resources than agricultural societies. Some resources, such as oil, are used and only replenished with great difficulty or at too great expense. Some, such as agricultural products, can be replenished quickly. The number of people is now increasing rapidly and these people do not know how to make economical use of resources. Thus in the space of a few centuries we have used up a great deal of the world's resources, and are now beginning to realize that certain resources, such as oil, which was once in plentiful supply, will soon be used up—not only on necessities, but largely on wasteful goods. Resources have been used to wage wars and produce weapons of destruction. So scientific advancement has not helped to increase the amount of resources for human beings as fast as human beings have used them. If human beings led their lives according to Buddhist teachings, scientific advancement would help them without leading to the threat of resource depletion or future deprivation.

Since we cannot solve this problem by increasing resources, we must try to solve it by slowing population growth as much as possible in order to balance use of resources and the population. According to Buddhism, apart from not allowing the population to increase quickly, it is also necessary to train people to have simpler lives so that their use of resources is reduced, to be diligent in working to increase production where possible and to use only as much of those resources that are difficult or impossible to replace as is necessary for survival. The Buddhist principle for living thus teaches thrifty use of resources. Two fundamental qualities to be brought to mind when using resources are mindfulness (*sati*) and wisdom (*paññā*). That is, there must be circumspection in the use of resources so that the harmful effects such as

pollution and destructive climactic changes do not arise. Resources must be used with real understanding so that they are used economically, that is, in as little quantities as possible for the desired result. Till now in Thai society we have used resources without either mindfulness or wisdom, aiming only to use them: felling trees, for instance, until the forests are destroyed and the rain does not fall, or when it does fall it floods and turns the soil brackish, as in northeast Thailand. Without forest, the rain washes off the topsoil, eventually leading to saline soil. There is no circumspection because people do not think of the harmful effects, do not consider the long term results, and do not realize that destroying the forest is tantamount to destroying the country and the people of the entire nation. This kind of destruction has arisen because greed completely blocks off wisdom so that people fail to see the value of the forest. This is only one example, but there are countless other examples of the use of resources without circumspection or understanding, the details of which can be obtained from government and private organizations. Thus it is clear that in terms of lifestyle and use of resources, Thailand, while a Buddhist country, has failed to practice according to Buddhist principles.

### 1.2 People and people

Historically speaking, we cannot know why it is that people have come to live together. Historical, anthropological, and philosophical theories have been put forward on this point, but no conclusion has yet been found. While Buddhism does deal with this idea in the *Aggañña Sutta*, it does not set out to deal with the subject as such, but only discusses the reasons people come together to form nations in order to explain how the division of people into castes must be based on the Dhamma, and that the ruler must be endowed with a particularly generous amount of virtues, not just great power or wealth.

The forming of communities has led to various problems. One question that leads to many more is that of how to live together. The different answers to this question have led to different family, economic, and government systems, which in turn are what define the different institutions that arise within those



systems. These institutions can either benefit or harm the individual in terms of income, health, justice, character or learning.

Nowadays a great number of people believe that the various problems that have arisen in society are a result of our inability to answer the question of how to live together: that is, we have not yet found the proper system, and once we have found that system we will be able to live together in peace and harmony. This kind of belief arises from the scientific hypothesis that people are entirely under the influence of the environment. But we can see that in actual fact people are capable of thinking contrary to what other people teach them, even though no one has taught them that contrary idea. Human experience does not entail education alone. Experiences in nature can cause people to interpret things differently from what their teachers taught them. If people were not capable of thinking anything other than what they had cognized and seen and had no creative thinking of their own, then there could be no innovation, because innovation is a kind of creative thinking. The ability to create is not one and the same as experience, even though it does rely on experience. Since this is so, regardless of the system used, there will always be those who agree with it and those who disagree. Those who disagree will think, speak or act in ways that oppose the system as much as they can. Thus there is no way that we can find such a perfect system. Using a system to change people is a kind of enforcement. If forced on the overall level, people will act differently on the minor details. If people were forced to practice the same on the level of particulars, we would have to lay down a rule of practice for every eventuality. But the number of different eventualities is countless, and so the rules to be laid down would have to be countless. If rules were laid down on such a level people would not be happy, because they would have to follow the orders of society from the day they were born till the day they died, and such a complete system of enforcement could not be changed. It would depend on maximum use of force, and in that case a ruler could easily do as he wished against the wishes of his subjects.

In looking for the perfect system, we should hold systems to be simply tools of administration, something that can be changed. We should not allow the

system to have such power over the people. People should be allowed the chance to agree with or oppose the system, because rulers are simply unenlightened beings (*puthujjana*), they have defilements and can be ignorant in certain areas. Allowing rulers to have a lot of power is giving them the chance to follow defilements or ignorance, which is tantamount to allowing bad or ignorant people to rule. We can see that rulers tend to commit wrongdoings and evil deeds regardless, whether they be in democracies, in which the people have a lot of freedom to criticize them, or in communist countries, in which the people can criticize them only within the framework allowed by that system. Thus, the less criticism is allowed, or the more power given to the ruler, the more opportunity there is for a ruler to commit wrongdoings and conceal evil deeds. The harmful results fall on the people.

If systems are a tool, then they are meant to facilitate the achievement of our aims. Tools do not have minds of their own, they follow the orders of whoever uses them. Whether they achieve results or not, and whether their results are good or bad, depends on whoever uses them. If the user is good the system is used in a good way; if the user is bad the system is used in a bad way. The various values that a system helps to produce are defined by people. Thus, if we could create good people without having to use a system, the system would have no meaning. In fact it is possible to create good people in this way, as can be seen from the fact that some people do not break laws and do good actions even without being forced to do so by the law. Laws or regulations should be used merely as tools for preventing people who are not yet good enough from committing bad actions and protecting those who do good from being molested by the bad. As for training people to be good, that should be the duty of education. Education should not only teach people not to break the law, but also train them to be better than what the laws tell them to be. If this is so, social problems must also be solved at the individual, not just on the level of the system: if people are not good, regardless of the system they are in they will find always a way to do bad actions, and if we were to change the system because it still allows evil actions, then we would be changing it forever. We tend to follow the idea of the social scientists, who

mainly study systems, that people exploit each other because the system is not good. True, a bad system can give the opportunity for people to exploit each other, but good people will not do bad, even when there is a chance to do it, as when a man finds money on the road, picks it up and announces its loss so that the owner can come and collect it, even though he could have kept the money for himself and no one would have known the difference. If we look at the matter truthfully we will see that people exploit each other less on account of the system than on account of their own premeditated efforts to do so and to seek ways within the system to do their exploitation. I am not saying that systems are not necessary, but I do believe that we should not overestimate their value or their harm, nor over-evaluate the human factor, either for good or bad. We should not think that only when forced by a system can human beings do good, or that all people can do good entirely without the use of systems. Buddhism accepts both the natural human propensity to do good and to be trained into good people, and also the importance of the system as a necessary tool for people living together. This can be seen from the Vinaya of the monks, which is the form for administering the Saṅgha, even though it does not take the institutionalized or legal form that administration of the Saṅgha in the present time does. Buddhism's analysis of social problems is such that it sticks to the facts. It is a middle way which allows it to take into consideration the ideas of both extremes, unlike the extreme schools, each of which cannot accept the ideas of the other side, or sees only its faults, leading to violent confrontation even before there has been a clear consideration of who is in the wrong.

Living together in society means people have to work in areas which relate to society in different ways. These differences are an important cause of contention because people tend to believe they are always fair to others but receive only injustice in exchange. This is clinging to the self, taking the self as all important, and so seeing only one's own goodness. When differences arise, there follows a jostling for the position one believes one should obtain—as can be seen from the people in the present time disliking the word “class” and favoring the word “equality” so much that they scarcely consider the sense

in which the words are being used. They do not consider, for instance, whether the equality spoken of is really equality, or whether the oppression spoken of is really oppression. Suppose we were not to use the word “class” at all: there are other words that could be used instead, and these words are not felt to have such a negative flavor as “class,” and are sometimes even felt to be very normal—words such as “employer,” “employee,” “head,” “staff,” “officer,” “subordinate,” “leader,” “follower,” “mental work,” “physical work.” Thus it can be said that the words “class” and “equality” are “colored words” in that they incite us to see in positive or negative ways without considering according to reason and the facts. We are conditioned to see the word “class” as an evil, and when the word is used to qualify something we tend to see it negatively. The communists look on the capitalist economic system as oppression of the working classes by capitalist classes. The liberalists look on the communists as placing power in the hands of the government, which means the leaders and members of the communist party, to compel the ordinary people into working like slaves and deceiving them into thinking that they are doing it for the country and their own happiness.

If we consider this point according to the Buddhist teachings we will see that differences between people are a fact of nature that must be accepted. Be it in terms of physical appearance, intelligence, personality, character—people are different. Since this is so, people will have different abilities and talents, so they must be apportioned duties in accordance with those talents and abilities. However, regardless of the duties they perform there must be the moral principle of not looking down on others or using power unrighteously. All duties, regardless of how broad an area of responsibility they cover, have equal dignity because they all rely on each other, like a machine: in order to do its job properly, every single nut is important. What needs to be considered and corrected in the systems is how to allow people the opportunity to do the job that fits their talents and abilities.

The Buddhist social theory is functionalist in nature: the relationship between people is through their duties. Status and roles are defined by duty. Good people in the social sense are people who perform their duties properly

and successfully; bad people are people who do not do their duties. But the Buddhist social objective is to be good both as a human being and through having performed one's duty, not either one or the other. The social duties described in the Buddhist teachings are duties suitable for the society of India in the Buddha's time. In modern society these may need some adaptation. For example, the "duty of a wife" in the present time, in which women work just the same as men, cannot be defined as doing all the housework as it was in the Buddha's time, as this would be unfair to women. The Buddha was teaching Indian people, so he based his teachings on Indian society. In a different society the teachings need to be adapted, but this must be done on the basis of reason and fairness. The social system is something that we have created ourselves. If anything in it is not appropriate we can change it. The Buddha held individual people to be changeable entities; how much more changeable is society, which is made up of different groups of people. The Buddha did not believe that all people in the world should mold their societies to how he taught, but he wanted to give examples of what different duties and principles people of different status in society should have. When the positions of people in society increase, or society changes, the people in that society must know how to select the teachings and adapt them to fit those positions and that society.

## **2. Problems of the political system**

In the past Thailand was governed by absolute monarchies, but since the monarchs abided for the most part by the ten kingly qualities and by laws which were fair to the people, the people had much freedom. This I have deduced from a study of the laws used during the Sukhothai and Ayudhaya kingdoms. In this article I will not present the arguments concerned, because this is not my objective, but merely state my hypothesis. Later, even though Thailand had democratic governments, the majority of the people were still loyal to the king. Thus Thailand has both a monarchy and an elected democratic government, as in England. Thai people understand and accept wholeheartedly the institution of the monarchy. They do not have any

suspensions or reservations about it. The elected democratic government, on the other hand, is new for Thais, and the people in general still do not understand it or see its value. The government has to try to create this understanding through education. We have obtained the democratic system together with a scientific education system, but we teach about democracy less than other subjects. Thus most of the Thai people do not really understand democracy, but we do see the virtues of the scientific education system, of the technological advancement, industry, and economy of liberalism, and so have become increasingly infatuated with material development. We tend to invest, sell and seek profits more and have tried to make our society more Western and live like Westerners. We have even tried to make our mannerisms and culture more Western, taking this to be a sign of progress. We think that this progress is a result of democracy. In fact we do not yet understand democracy in the sense of giving intellectual freedom and freedom in the exchange of ideas. Thus the liberal democracy that has taken root and developed in Thailand is one in which only liberalism has grown, but not the democratic aspect. That is to say, we demand to do what we wish, be it beneficial or harmful, but of rational thinking and the exchange of ideas there is very little. Thus it can be said that we have brought in democracy only in form or basic structure, but we have not trained people to have the real democratic spirit. Moreover, we train people to fall for material progress and allow the freedom to destroy even the comfort of the majority and the economy of the whole country by, for example, allowing people to extravagantly import a great deal of overseas goods and allowing the proliferation of night spots—instilling in the people the habit of frequenting such places—and putting activities that indirectly create trouble for the people, such as banking, pawn shops, and insurance, into the hands of private enterprise. The government gives these freedoms, it is true, but there is only a small sector of the people that really benefits from them, and if that benefit is to be maximized there must be exploitation of various forms. The result is that one group of people is given the freedom to deceive or cause trouble for another. While it is not the government's objective, such a policy opens the opportunity for it, and this is a



weakness, creating a material disparity that the communists can attack and volunteer to correct. The communists call it a class problem, and propose a democratic socialism to correct the rich having more freedom than the poor. Extravagance may be reduced, but so are freedoms in other areas, and the power of the state is so great that the people have very little freedom to express their own views. The people's standard of living does not improve because the state uses the fruits of their labor to produce weapons and support communists in other countries. Thailand is a liberal democracy, with the faults already stated, so there are some who want to change it to a communist democracy. If they succeed, they will have to take on the burden of invading other countries as do other communist nations.

Allowing one group of people to have more freedom than others, to exploit them and have better opportunities in areas such as livelihood, medical care, education and security, is not good government. As for allowing so little freedom that the state decides for the people on almost every matter is not the people's well-being.

All democracies, be they liberal or communist, are materialist democracies which aim to use science to maximize production. But increasing production is one kind of destruction of resources, so it should not be taken as the objective but rather simply a method for providing people with enough to live on. In this regard all people should adhere to the principle of thrift so that all can obtain a sufficiency. Production requires the use of natural resources, which are common property. Thus the majority of the fruits of production should fall to the common lot. Liberalism allows certain people to take these resources, which are common property, and sell them for their own profit. The state obtains taxes, but that does not compensate for the loss of the country's resources. In the communist system, even though the state itself organizes most of the production, the fruits of production do not fall to the people who produced them, but partly to the members of the communist party and partly to the cause of invading other countries, so once again the people do not receive the fruits of production in proportion to their labor.

Buddhism is a democracy, but not a materialist democracy. It is a spiritual democracy, the objective of which is peace of mind and a simple life without the need to work so hard. This kind of life entails a different point of view on freedom, equality, law, the use of resources and technology, as I will now explain.

## 2.1 Freedom

In terms of the transcendent (*lokuttara*) dhamma, freedom is a state in which the mind has completely transcended all mental defilements. This is real freedom in which there is no attachment to or enslavement by anything. Freedom in mundane terms, which is the freedom under discussion here, is a feeling of freedom, freedom that still contains defilements. Freedom as it is generally understood—freedom to do as one wants and freedom to escape from doing what one does not want to do or being treated in a way one does not want to be treated—is in fact craving (*taṇhā*) or wanting. We want to have what we like and do not want to have what we do not like. The Buddhist view is that the answering of desires is how people find their happiness, but [the search for] this happiness knows no end, thus we must always be struggling. The more we want the more we feel ourselves lacking. Once we have obtained what we want, we want more of it, and better, and all the better if we can get all of it. Once we have obtained one thing in great quantity, we want something else. We always feel ourselves to be lacking something or other. This is being enslaved by one's own desires, working to serve our desires. Desire becomes our boss and we are unable to think or do anything freely. The ability to say or do what we want to say or do is merely a temporary kind of happiness. Having constant desires for this and that, we demand the freedom to do this and that, so we constantly seem to be without freedom because we are constantly feeling ourselves to be lacking something. Thus, if we have only few wants and wishes, there will be little distress of seeking what we lack. It is like being in a room: if we do not feel like leaving it, even if the door is locked we don't feel like struggling to get out, and we do not feel ourselves

to be imprisoned. In this sense, those who have few wishes will have greater freedom than those who have many.

Freedom must have limitations. In most societies people do not have the freedom to break the law. That is, laws are taken to be the standard of goodness. Breaking the law is taken to be evil and people do not have the freedom to do evil. Most evils in society arise from sensual craving, the desire for sights, tastes, smells, sounds, and physical sensations. Buddhism teaches having only few desires for these things, thereby cutting off a cause of evil actions. The state should greatly reduce freedom in regard to sights, tastes, smells, sounds and physical sensations, and not allow such a proliferation of those things as there is nowadays, because people should not have the freedom to involve themselves with what is a cause for evil actions.

## 2.2 Law

Laws are in the form of proscriptions: forbidding speech or action that the state deems to be evils. It is held that when a person refrains from the things prohibited by the government he will be good, but in fact the laws do not teach us what to do in order to be good people. People who have never been seen to break the law may not be good people, but simply people who have never been found to be legally wrong. Laws use force to keep people within a desired boundary. Thus people who follow the law are not necessarily good people, but simply people who act good out of fear: if they had the chance to get around the law they might do it. Thus laws merely cause people to be afraid to do evil too openly or in too extreme forms. The law tends to take no interest in evils that are not extreme or do not manifest immediate results, such as drinking alcohol, philandering, and lying.

That people in the present time infringe on the law only a little is not because they know the laws or agree with them. The tenet of lawyers that ignorance of the law is no excuse is tantamount to postulating that everyone knows the law. This postulation is merely an assumption, it is not a given, and it is assumed this way so that the laws can be effective, otherwise there would be many people maintaining they "didn't know." But the fact is that the only

people who know the laws in Thailand at present are those who study law and those whose duty involves using the law. Most people do not know the laws. While the postulation has a practical use it is false. That most people do not break the law even though they do not know the laws is because they have been trained to do good through moral principles handed down from generation to generation in our society. Thus the duty of the laws is to fortify morality, because morality does not have much power to inflict punishments, and people can easily transgress it. But if people accepted morality they would be good without having to be forced. Laws, on the other hand, have the power to punish, but not to encourage people to do good of their own accord. Thus the state should not abandon morality because law cannot replace it. If the state encourages people to be moral, then it would not be necessary to resort the law so much because the proscriptions and prescriptions of morality are stricter than laws. People who can already follow moral teachings would find no difficulty abiding by the laws.

### **2.3 Equality**

According to the Buddhist view we must accept the fact that people cannot be equal, no matter what perspective we consider. In terms of government, for example, the rulers and the ruled must hold different status, and government is a social necessity. Thus there must be inequality in terms of government. In economic terms, since different people have different levels of intelligence and industriousness, it would be unfair to force them all to have the same level of income. On the other hand, it would not be fair to have those with small incomes pay as much taxes as those with large incomes. In terms of virtues, if criminals were honored as much as honest people, heroes or religious people, good and evil would have the same value. There can be equality among people on two fronts: they are equal in the sense that they are equally protected by the law, and they are equal in that they are creatures of the same kind. In regard to this latter kind of equality, when considered according to the principles of biology, we find that while people may come within the same biological group, they are not physically equal. Thus in this sense it means basically that

they are the same in that they are equally human beings. The Buddha did not see the value of human beings lying in their physical body or appearance, but in their conduct. Thus we come back to the original idea that people who behave as criminals should not be treated the same as honest people, even though they are people just the same. If we were to interpret the value of human beings in a looser sense we would have to say that as people they should be treated the same on the basic level: i.e., there should at least be a standard by which people are not treated as animals or inanimate objects. People should not be sold as commodities, for example. However, such an interpretation shows that people are equal on the most basic level, but not on higher levels.

The same applies in terms of legal equality: it is only a theoretical equality because not all people know the law. Those who know the laws better are better protected by them, and the rich have a better chance of benefiting from the law. But these practical flaws can be more easily corrected than [the flaws of] other kinds of equality, because the state can help to maintain justice by offering free legal representation for the poor, or by providing basic legal education to the people. While it is difficult to put into practice it is still a possibility. However, equality on this level is not sufficient reason to state that only when people are equal in all respects will there be justice.

The Buddha held that people were definitely different—not different in terms of birth, status or education, but in terms of conduct. Thus, respect for a person should be based on that person's conduct. This status in terms of conduct is more valuable than knowledge, ability or wealth, so we should not evaluate people in terms of their wealth. In fact Buddhism holds conduct to be more valuable than wealth, position, and praise, but in society these are the symbols of status. For people who are not attached to these things they are simply symbols given to them by others. The Buddhist method is to honor via "*anumodanā*:" appreciating the goodness of a person's conduct. Considered in this light, we see that Buddhist society seeks to honor good people, to show that good and bad actions are of different value, and to honor people in terms of the good actions they do. But it does not honor them with things of

economic value, such as wealth and money, or of social value, such as power and position. Things of economic value should be awarded people who are industrious in making a living, while things of social value should be awarded those who govern peacefully. But regardless of whether we consider in terms of conduct, economy or society, people should not be equal, because such an equality would be unjust. Likewise, judging people solely on the basis of one of these considerations, such as on economic or social terms, and rewarding all kinds of actions with wealth or with social position, are also unjust. We should consider what kind of goodness the action is and reward it appropriately. For example, a soldier who fights bravely should be rewarded with a medal for bravery, not a raise in salary. A teacher's academic position should not be used to evaluate a salary. Wages should be such that they are a provision for making a living, and increased according to the number of years a person fills a position and works honestly: i.e., considering how honestly one has fulfilled his/her duty, taking number of years in the position as the general standard. Social position will be controlled and not allowed to differ greatly via wages determined by the state, while talents and abilities are taken as points of honor. Those with other professions must pay taxes at a rate at which they have not so much left over that they lead extravagant lives, so that the door is not opened to the appearance of too many extravagant commodities. If we consider in this light we see that inequality will not lead to so much disparity that exploitation arises. But if people cannot live in such a way because they have become accustomed to sensual extravagance, then at least we should gradually reduce the extravagances one by one and so eventually live as Buddhists. Such a life would be one in which we could be happy, but so far we have not had the chance to experience it.

#### **2.4 Science and technology**

Scientific and technological advancements have enabled people to live much more comfortably. Scientific and technological knowledge is natural truth, not good or evil in itself. Whether it gives good or bad results depends on the people who use it. These kinds of knowledge have been used to provide



benefit to human beings and to destroy them. Knowledge has sometimes been used in destructive ways as a result of ignorance, as in using pesticides or taking medicine without full knowledge of its qualities, but more dangerous is the use of science to make weapons capable of destroying people and the environment in great numbers. Moreover, scientific knowledge is a knowledge of material things. It can be used to transform natural resources into forms that satisfy human desires, but human desires have no end. Thus the more capable we are of transforming natural resources the more we greedily consume those resources, with the result that they will soon be gone.

Scientific and technological knowledge bring happiness, but there is no way human beings will be satisfied with the happiness they receive. Thus the search for happiness through scientific knowledge alone cannot make human beings happy. For people to be happy they must know "enough," how to be contented with a simple life. If human beings had such simple desires, then the scientific knowledge already available to human beings would be enough to provide them with almost perfect happiness. Thus the state should implement policies by which the people live simply, and use scientific and technological knowledge as a means of providing the people with physical comforts so that they do not have to endure unduly heavy labor and have sufficient leisure time to reflect on religion and find peace of mind. If the state does not constrain the people to simple lifestyles, they will be forced to work hard for extravagant lives and will stray further from religion.

In summary, a society governed by a Buddhist spiritual democracy would be one that has a very simple way of life. People would perform their duties with an understanding of the importance of living together, not hoping for excessive material rewards. They would be materially comfortable as a result of scientific and technological know-how and would adhere firmly to the principles of Buddhism and always strive to conduct themselves well. The state would have the duty of seeing to internal concord and defense so that the country could proceed according to those policies. The state's laws would have to support such a way of life. Activities or dealings that leaned toward the bad according to Buddhist principles should, where possible, be controlled,

and where it is not possible to control them then ways must be sought to reduce them and encourage the people to see their fault. The state would have the duty not just to govern, but to govern people to be good, because only goodness can make people really happy.

### **3. Problems of the economic system**

When the people in a society are poor the economic system is of utmost importance, because that is what will help relieve poverty. Nowadays the population has increased, resources have dwindled, the cost of living has risen and people feel poorer. They have to work hard but their income is barely enough to live on. This is a situation that people do not desire, and they hope for an economic system that will solve the problem. When there were less people and more resources the capitalist system was compatible with people's characters because it gave everyone the opportunity to get rich if they had the intelligence and industry. The people of the Western world, who adopted this system first, having reduced their own resources, went out seeking colonies from which they could extract resources. But nowadays the situation has changed. No matter how industrious or intelligent people may be it is difficult to become rich. The ones who can get rich are those who have already built up their capital from the past. There are only few rich families and most people are poor and have to use their labor in exchange for their day to day subsistence. As the number of people increases it is even becoming difficult to find work, so we have unemployment. Some people have to make a living dishonestly. Since the capitalist system has these problems, there have been attempts to introduce different systems, such as the social democrats and communists, in order to solve economic problems, seeking ways to distribute income so that the disparity between the rich and the poor is not too extreme.

If we accept the truth that the population of the world is large and resources are getting less all the time, we cannot increase production without destroying these resources. The various systems we use to solve the problem can only do so temporarily, and their use of resources is not only for consumption. For example, in communist countries, the state itself is the capitalist, but instead of

distributing production to all of the population, so that the people can live in comfort, the state engages in war, and war, be it in the cause of justice or whatever, always requires the use of massive amounts of capital. Thus the communist method is not a solution of problems in order to bring about the well-being of the people, but more a reorganization of the economy so that the state has enough money to go to war. When the population becomes large and resources dwindle we cannot increase resources to cater for the population. Thus the solution lies not only in the economic system. No economic system can solve this problem if we do not reduce the population and encourage the people to live less extravagantly, thereby reducing the rate of consumption of resources two degrees. If the state implements such a policy it is possible to resolve economic problems, but we must not measure richness or poverty in terms of the amount of material possessions people have.

Buddhism solves economic problems by reducing the rate of population growth by using, for instance, the third precept reducing extravagance by not allowing people to become deluded by sights, tastes, smells, sounds, and physical sensations and leading a simple life, understanding the necessities of life to be the four supports of food, shelter, clothing and medicines. Apart from a simple way of life, Buddhism also teaches people to be industrious, patient, and frugal. There is no way that people who led their lives in this way could be poor, because richness or poverty is a feeling. If we are always wanting something or other then we always feel that we lack something: if we do not want anything we feel that we have enough. Thus if we want only a little, our feeling of lack will be small; i.e., we do not feel poor. The greedier people are the poorer they feel, but people who are not greedy, even though they do not have much money, do not feel troubled, they do not feel themselves to be poor.

The economic duty of the state is not to increase the national income. If the rich are very rich and the poor are very poor, the national average income may be high. [The state] must rather find ways to ensure that all people have enough, and give praise to those who are industrious and honest, not those who are wealthy. The economic system is a method for controlling economic

activity so that exploitation of labor does not arise. Industrious people must have the chance to work, and the more work they do the higher is their wage. The state must ensure economic fairness and not use an economic system that looks after the interests of the rich while the people suffer, concerning themselves, for example, more with the interests of merchants than with the interests of producers, or more with insurance companies or pawn shops than with how the people are suffering as a result of the activities of these businesses. However, the state should not take for themselves so much of the sweat and labor of industrious people who strive to establish themselves that those people become poor. Industrious people should have a better position than those who are lazy, but they should not be so rich that there is too much disparity. Economic fairness must not be economic sameness, but must adjust in proportion to ability and industry. The state has the responsibility of giving all people the chance to use their intelligence and industry. In this sense the system will act as a way for reaching the objective, which is economic reward in accordance with one's abilities.

#### **4. Problems with the education system**

Education in Thailand has been heavily influenced by the philosophy of pragmatism. This may be because Thai educationists have received their educations in the United States, a country that by and large favors that philosophy. Thus we have adopted the educational principle that education is life. This principle aims to have the student solve his or her own problems by giving students real life problems to solve so that they develop an ability to solve problems for themselves in the future. Thus education and life cannot be separated. For this reason, in the practical implementation of this principle things that cannot be used to solve problems in everyday life should not be studied. The curriculum must be constantly modernized, and since society is always changing and problems are also changing, the solution of problems cannot be achieved through ideas or values from another society or time. The implementation of these broad principles has led to a progressive interpretation, a radical kind of interpretation which is not in line with the

philosophy of pragmatism. The progressives interpret the educational principles of pragmatism as meaning that all the old values or solutions must be thrown out and students must search for new values on their own. True, this approach encourages people to search for new and innovative ways of thinking, but not studying the old means they have to waste time thinking up for themselves what has already been thought of by others, and to not see the defects and attributes of the old ideas. Moreover, in order to choose only those parts of the original [curriculum] that can be used to solve problems in the present, whoever does the choosing must have a good knowledge of that original curriculum in order to know what parts are to be chosen. [They say to] throw out the old or choose only those parts of it that can be used to solve problems in the present, but in practice it is not possible to choose from the old. Thus we see many cases of people nowadays who are said to have new ideas when in fact they are repeating the old ideas, unbeknownst to both the thinkers themselves and those receiving their ideas. If these thinkers really do have good ideas, it is a shame to see them wasting their time reformulating the old ones.

It is not necessary to interpret pragmatism in education in the progressive way, which is unreasonably radical, and overall the philosophy of pragmatism does not hold to such ideas, since pragmatism is only a philosophical method. That is to say, it can accept any system of philosophy that can be put into practice. Even religions, if they can be used to solve problems, are acceptable to pragmatism and recognized as valid ways to solve problems. The ideas of the progressives which interpret pragmatism in a completely uncompromising way, together with scientific education, have caused the progressives to go on to the radical interpretation that pragmatism only accepts scientific truths, and thus it is necessary to give up all spiritual ideas as they are old, outdated and unscientific. This kind of idea is not real pragmatism. Pragmatists are compromisers and they are broadminded in accepting ideas. Regardless of the system, cooperation can take place if both sides open up to each other's ideas and criticisms. This kind of openness has caused pragmatism to be sympathetic to and encourage democracy, and being democratic is considered

to be one of the important objectives of education. That pragmatism accepts all philosophies that can be used to solve problems shows that pragmatism has no objection to the study of religion or the "old knowledge," but encourages study on a broad basis, except that it emphasizes that education will be most useful to life when it studies the problems that concern life; that is, to study the old things in a practical way. Whatever is only a little connected to problems, while it may be in the texts, need not be given emphasis. This does not mean that we should not preserve such knowledge, because we can never be sure that we will not need it some time in the future. Pragmatism is a philosophy that loves learning, loves learned action, loves cooperation and understanding. It does not have the characteristic of radicalism the progressives try to give to it, with their extreme interpretation, and in fact seems to venture on eclecticism, which chooses and collects the best parts of other philosophies.

Looking at these two interpretations of pragmatism we see that the progressive interpretation does not encourage people to have true knowledge, but instead causes them to be narrow minded, which is not the characteristic of a scholar and a democrat. The latter kind of interpretation would seem to be more in keeping with the objectives of pragmatism and more useful to education. If pragmatism is interpreted in this way, it would not conflict at all with the philosophy of Buddhism, because the Buddhist philosophy also accepts the application of knowledge for solving life's problems, with the difference that Buddhism teaches about human happiness and suffering rather than material things. However, when knowledge of material things helps people in society to have happiness, Buddhism does not say that such knowledge is not worth studying, only that it should not be taken as the only important thing, because if people become deluded by material things it will be suffering they receive rather than happiness.

The search for knowledge through the use of one's own rational reflection is the important principle clearly outlined in the *Kesaputta* or *Kālāma Sutta*. Listening to the ideas of others, seeking conclusions through reason, which are characteristics of democracy, were things that the Buddha taught in his time. The difference between his teaching and pragmatism is that pragmatism



proposes methods for using knowledge, but does not propose knowledge itself, because the pragmatists held knowledge to be obtained from other sources, such as the sciences. Buddhism also teaches the knowledge that is to be put into practice. Thus, if we were to propose a Buddhist principle of education instead of a pragmatist one, we would obtain people who could be said to be real scholars or sages—not just people with professional knowledge, but good people. Being a good person has an important bearing on the use of knowledge. We can see that nowadays many learned people use their knowledge to further their own personal interests, use their cleverness to destroy others in order to obtain wealth, rank, and honor, and use their intelligence to get around laws that are harmful to their interests and seek ways to use them for their own benefit. If this is the case the more clever people are the more danger they represent to the country if there is not goodness to constrain them. When people are clever, it doesn't matter what laws there are, if they want to get around them they will. It is not possible to create a law that no one can break, but we can create people who do not intend to get around the laws and use suitable laws for the justice and benefit of the country. In creating such people goodness is an important factor for deciding whether a person has learning or not. If people have only knowledge but not good conduct they should not be called learned. However the state must define clearly what this good conduct is. In Thai society there are no better standards than the teachings of Buddhism for defining which teachings are to be included in the curriculum among the teachings dealing with worldly conduct and the teachings which learned members of the society should practice. If [a student] is faulty in these his grades for conduct should be reduced. These grades must be taken to be important factors in deciding whether a student completes his studies or not. If grades for conduct are heavily cut he should not be allowed to graduate, because people who will use their knowledge for the benefit of the country must be good people, not bad people.

The next problem is that at present many of the teachers we have are bad people: there are teachers who are dishonest, who sexually molest their students, who get drunk and go on rampages, and who have many other kinds

of bad conduct. The reason for this is that nowadays we accept teachers without considering their conduct. This causes the students to see the teachers as no better than themselves, and so be emboldened to do all kinds of evil with the teacher unable to say anything, or if he does the students pay no attention. Teachers are powerless to punish students. The state for its part is not interested in really controlling the conduct of teachers and students. If teachers are this way, giving them the power to cut students' grades on grounds of conduct will be an opening for evil-minded teachers to commit even more wrongs, like putting a weapon in the hands of a bandit. Thus the teachers must be of good, flawless conduct. Teachers who have flaws in their conduct must be heavily punished and removed from their positions. But in doing this, the state must clearly stipulate guidelines for the teachers' conduct.

Buddhism believes that teachers must be examples, they must have kind and compassionate hearts and have a true wish for the students' welfare. When teachers are like this they will be like second parents to the students, people worthy of reverence (*pūjanīyapuggala*). Teachers nowadays who commit misdeeds want their students to keep treating them like *pūjanīyapuggala* even though they have not abandoned their evil ways. But the students cannot revere them. Therefore the state must be strict in finding good teachers from the outset, not afraid to lose teachers who commit misconduct and becoming short of teachers. The state should take it that no teachers at all is better than having bad teachers, so that the children will not be ruined by bad teaching or examples. The chances of children becoming bad on their own accounts is still less than becoming bad because of bad teachers. In supporting bad teachers, the state is intentionally creating bad people within the state.

It can be seen that the principles of education stated here are compatible, both in terms of the objective of creating good people with learning in society, and the curriculum which emphasizes both academic knowledge and goodness together. The important person is the teacher, who is the example of a person who is good, learned, and of good conduct. These principles can be realized when the members of government have an understanding of the matter and earnestly support them, seeing the future of the country as more important than

their own self [interests]. If people receive an education in which they obtain both knowledge and goodness, society will not be confused.

The encouragement of not only formal education, i.e., the official education of the state, but also informal education, is important. The state must control the environment so as not to oppose the virtues taught in formal education, not just teaching students to see the fault of the vices (*apāyamukha*) but encouraging the proliferation of night spots all over the place. The mass media must also play a role in education, not just in entertainment. Media personnel must accept some responsibility in imparting knowledge correctly by, for example, not presenting news that is not unconfirmed, or at least knowing the Thai language well enough that they do not use it wrongly as we so often see today, otherwise they will be contradicting the education policy. The mass media reach great numbers of people. Spreading something that is wrong to the majority of people is tantamount to obstructing education. If the government sees the mistakes appearing in the mass media as trifling this is tantamount to allowing [the media] to destroy the quality of the people and damage the country. If we cannot use the mass media for education, at least we should not allow it to be used in a way that obstructs the development of education. These thoughts on education based on Buddhist ideas may seem stricter than what is practiced at present, but that is because the current practice is too lax and negligent. Education according to the ideas proposed here is not an education that is too strict, but it is an education that is earnest, because the education of the country is not just a game.

The application of Buddhist philosophy in Thai society as described here is the personal views of the writer, who wishes to point out an approach for how the application of Buddhist philosophy to Thai society might actually take place. Whether it can be applied in other ways or not, and how it can be implemented, are matters that interested persons may take up for further study and research. The writer has only suggested an approach, but hopes that it will be of use to the study of those attempting to apply Buddhist philosophy to Thai society in the future.

[Translated from the Thai version by *Bruce Evans*]

## BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVES ON HEALTH AND HEALING\*

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### Abstract

**T**his study was begun because of the recognition of the problems in health systems we are presently facing. Those health problems are not only due to the deficiency in scientific and administrative knowledge, but are also the result of the limitation of the paradigm that we currently use to generate the knowledge and the ways to solve health as well as other global problems. The objective of this study is to find an alternative paradigm for understanding health issues by investigating the Buddhist canons. The Thai Tipiṭaka on CD-ROM was used as the basic database for gathering Buddhist principles and perspectives on health and healing. Buddhism looks at all existences in term of integrated factors depending on processes of inter-dependent causal relationships governed by the Three Characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*) or the Dependent Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). This premise deeply guides the disciples' perceptions and living styles. The broadest meaning of disease in Buddhism involves all kinds of human sufferings, while health is the state of being completely free from all suffering. Health quality is a collective product of previous actions starting from past lives and ending at your last second. While suitable care is given to a patient, he/she should realize the nature of this so fragile, no-self life. These principles will lead patients and their relatives to have less suffering and anxiety. It will be, moreover, a basic belief of a health system that concerns more with the spiritual aspect of life.

**Keywords:** Buddhist, Buddhism, health, healing, illness, sickness, paradigm.

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\* This article is a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Medical and Health Social Science), Faculty of Graduate Studies, Mahidol University, and a research grant from Health Systems Research Institute, Thailand.

## Introduction

Recently, health problems have become one of the most serious issues of humankind. Health expenditure and new chronic, as well as infectious, diseases are increasing every year. Furthermore, the basic health problems such as diarrhea or malnutrition are still the most important causes of human death. Although a number of new strategies such as a primary health care and the universal coverage have been developed and applied to solve problems, the outcomes are still questionable. Most of the poor cannot get those basic health services. The needs for more health facilities and services seem to be unlimited projects. These facts imply that health problems are not technical matters that can be solved by scientific knowledge or administrative strategies. Capra (1982: xvii) pointed out that the health problem is only one facet of the crisis of our perceptions which are based on scientific reality. Although scientific reality has become the major belief system in Thai society that determines our current perception, Buddhist reality, which is deeply infused into Thai culture, has an important impact on the perception as well. An investigation of Buddhist principles and perspectives on health and healing offers an alternative perception for understanding health and illness that may lead to other approaches for managing or solving health problems.

## Methodology

This work is a result of documentary research based on the Tipiṭaka, the three divisions of the Buddhist holy cannon, and some other important Buddhist textbooks. A summarized book, *Tipiṭaka for lay people* (Suchiv Poonyanuparp, 1996), was used as a general guideline for understanding the structure and important content of the Tipiṭaka. Two versions of a Thai language Tipiṭaka on CD-ROM: the Dhammadāna version and the Mahāchulalongkornrājavidyālaya Alumni version were used as basic databases. Although both of them originated from the same official Thai version, Siam State, it is helpful for cross checking the results of searching. Many Thai words related to health and illness such as disease, healing, drug, etc., were used as keywords for gathering information.

*Buddhadhamma* (Phra Dhammapiṭaka (P.A. Payutto), 2000) and *Medicine in Buddhism* (Phra Dhammapiṭaka (P.A. Payutto), 1999) are the other

two important textbooks used here. They are very necessary for the interpretation of the Buddhist canon. All of the collected information was thoroughly studied, interpreted, classified and grouped to present here as Buddhist principles and perspectives on health and healing. Nevertheless, the Buddha's words quoted here are traced back to English versions translated from the Pāli canon by many foreigners. Although there are some differences in meanings of those translations, English version is easier for the reader to get further information of each topic.

### **Important Principles of Buddhism**

Buddhism was brought from India into Southeast Asia around the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century, CE. During the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, CE, Theravāda Buddhism from Ceylon (Sri Lanka) was selected to be the only religion of the first Thai kingdom, Sukhothai (Thida Saraya, 2002: 149-150; Srisakra Vallibhotama, 2001: 43). After that, Buddhist principles were integrated into local belief systems and then became the Thai worldview that shaped both cultural ways of life and the core of thought in Thai beliefs and political systems (Thida Saraya, 2002; Keyes, 1989; Chai Podhisita, 1985: 25-53). The impact of Buddhist basic beliefs has been gradually replaced by scientific beliefs and consumerism beginning a century ago, but the limitations of scientific applications turn many organizations toward investigating Buddhism as another point of view and an alternative method for problem solving.

#### *The World and Existences*

For Buddhism, a religion that denies the existence of one God or other creators, the world and all existences are believed to have originated from many causes that are governed by the natural law. There is no primary cause or a basic component that works as a determinant causing something or an event to happen. Each cause or determinant relates to others while all are interdependent. The results of those inter-related create a variety of effects. The world, in Buddhism, is not perceived as a material entity or a planet that we have to discover its origin or its components. Buddhism is more concerned with the world as a sense-object and mind-object which are observed or recognized by humans through the six sense-organs or



bases: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. The boundary of the world or all existences is concluded in the realm of consciousness that comes from the twelve bases (*āyatana*). Existences, in Buddhism, perceive as far beyond the material world (the existence) to include the immaterial spheres that cannot be detected by normal sense-organs and scientific tools. The Buddha mentioned about many other beings or places such as *Deva* (diety), *Yakkha* (demon), *Peta* (hungry ghost), heaven, Niraya Hell, downfall, etc. in many suttas in the Tipiṭaka. For example he stated: "Monks, in the whole world, with the world of Devas, of Maras, of Brahmas... of devas and humankind, a Tathāgata is conqueror, unconquered, all-seeing, omnipotent. Therefore is he called 'Tathāgata'." (A.II. 23 in Woodward, 1995: 25).

Buddhism looks at all existences in term of integrated factors. There is no real self or essence in or out of them. When all of the elements composing one's being are divided and separated, no self remains even in parts that consist of the combination of other smaller parts. Therefore, when Buddhism says that something exists it must be understood that it exists in terms of combinations of various elements (Phra Prayudh Payutto, 1995: 53). One basic principle that is used to explain life as a compound existence is the Five Aggregates (*pañcakkhandā*). According to this principle, all of life is made up of the five groups (*khandhas*): *rūpa* or material form; *vedanā*, feeling; *saññā*, perception; *saṅkhāra*, volitional impulse; and *viññāṇa*, consciousness. There is no the owner or the director of the *khandhas*, either within them or outside of them. A person's existence depends upon processes of inter-dependent, causal relationships under the natural law: the Three Characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*) or the Dependent Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) (P.A. Payutto, 1994: 19-20).

### *Nature of Life*

Life under the principle of the Three Characteristics maintains itself in a condition of *aniccatā*—impermanent and unstable; *anattatā*—containing no intrinsic self; and *dukkhatā*—constantly oppressed by arising and cessation, and primed to cause suffering whenever there is association based on ignorance. Because of the mistaken clinging to one or other

features of natural processes of inter-dependent causes as being the self, we want this 'self' to proceed in some desired way. When things do not conform with desires, the resulting stress causes frustration and subsequently more intense clinging. These mistaken ideas are embedded in the mind, from where they direct our behavior, shape our personality, and influence the fortunes of our lives, both overtly and covertly. In general, they are the cause of suffering for all unenlightened beings. (*ibid.*: 19-20).

Another Buddhist concept that explains human life is Kamma. It is one part of the natural law that refers to the working of intention, or the process of mental proliferation and its consequences. In essence, this is summarized in the words, 'good deeds bring good results, bad deeds bring bad results' (Bhikkhu P. A. Payutto, 1993: 1-2). According to Buddhism, intention is the agent or prompting force in all human creations and destructions, therefore it is the actual essence of kamma, as is given in the Buddha's words, "Bhikkhus! Intention, I say, is kamma. Having willed, we create kamma, through body, speech and mind." (A.III. 415, in *ibid.*: 6). In the Buddhist view of kamma, when there is kamma there are immediate results. Even just one little thought, although not particularly important, is nevertheless not void of consequence. Since Buddhism does not believe in any power that transcends nature or can be attributed to luck or fate (Phra Prayudh Payutto, 1995: 149), nothing comes true by praying, but by intentional activities. Thus, we ourselves should have intentions to do the best things right now. The Buddha stressed that: "Purity and impurity are personal responsibilities. No one else can make you pure." (Dh. 165 in Bhikkhu P. A. Payutto, 1993: 103)

### *Human Destination*

In the Buddhist view, human life is so short and it is easy to get sick or die. We should practice hard and do everything to develop ourselves to live with wisdom. A life of wisdom can be looked at from two perspectives. Inwardly, it is characterized by serenity, cheerfulness, awareness, and freedom. Experiencing an agreeable sensation, the mind is not intoxicated or deluded by it. When deprived of comforts, the mind is firm, unshaken and untroubled. Happiness and suffering are no longer invested into external objects. The outer level is characterized by fluency,

efficiency, flexibility and freedom from cumbersome complexes and delusions (P. A. Payutto, 1994: 23). This stage of pure freedom includes not only the process for bringing about the cessation of all sufferings, but also the state of cessation itself.

This stage can be obtained by the complete elimination of defilements such as *avijjā*—being ignorant of the truth, seeing things as self; *taṇhā*—wanting this imagined self to attain various things or states; and *upādāna*—clinging and attachment to these mistaken ideas and all that they imply. The Middle Path or the Noble Eightfold Path or *magga* is only one way leading people to reach this goal—ending of all suffering. Eight components of the Path are not eight different ways, but related factors of one path. In the course of practicing of these aspects of the Path, the knowledge, understanding, and the beliefs established along the way, as essential assets of the Path, will gradually evolve and grow through dependence on this mental training. Finally, wisdom will increase to the point of understanding all things according to their true nature. This will lead to the attainment of enlightenment (Phra Prayudh Payutto, 1995: 193, 195). The person who practices can reach this human destination, *nibbāna* or *nirvāna*, within this life.

### **Buddhism and Health**

These important principles of nature work as a frame of thinking and acting for the one who understands and accepts the basic beliefs. This perception of reality will shape the meanings and the ways of understanding health and illness for that person. These principles also deeply determine the methods of investigating causes and the ways of eliminating symptoms of those afflictions as well as offering the methods for maintaining health. In short, these basic principles could shape a specific health belief and health system for a community. In this part, we will present Buddhist perspectives on health and illness in relation to some important points such as the meaning of health and diseases, their causes, or the methods of caring and curing.

#### *Meaning of Health*

The meaning of health is a very significant issue showing impacts of Buddhist principles on health perceptions and activities. The under-

standing about 'What is health?' or 'What is illness?' affects all areas of health. It operates as a norm for determining health status which leads to other health criteria. Some examples are: What kinds of symptoms should be called disease?; When can someone be called a patient?; When will they turn back to be normal?; or Who is healthy? The meaning of health, moreover, relates to the ways of managing health including the ways to investigate causes of illness, the ways to care for patients, or the ways to promote health. Because of the outstanding principles in Buddhism, the meanings of health and illness are very clear and quite different from those of the bio-medical understanding today where scientific principles dominate.

The meaning of health and disease in Buddhism can be divided into two related areas. "Monks, there are these two diseases. What two? Disease of body and disease of mind." (A.II. 143 in Woodward, 1995: 146). The former links to a conventional truth (*sammatisacca*) which is similar to today meaning while the latter associates with the ultimate Truth (*lokut-taradhamma*).

The disease of the mind or mental disease is very important issue in Buddhism. Lord Buddha said:

"Monks, there are to be seen beings who can admit freedom from suffering from bodily disease for one year, for two years, for three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years: who can admit freedom from bodily disease for even a hundred years. But, monks, those beings are hard to find in the world who can admit freedom from mental disease even for one moment, save only those in whom the *āsavas* [defilements] are destroyed." (A.II. 143 in *ibid.*: 146).

The broadest meaning of mental disease in this quotation involves all kinds of sufferings (Phra Dhammapīṭaka (P. A. Payutto), 1999: 110). Except for the perfected one, the *arahant*, all beings including human and non-human, a baby or adult, a healthy person or a patient, a monk or a layman, have one or more diseases. Many pleasurable sensations are also interpreted as diseases if they contain some of the defilements. For the other mental side, health in its highest meaning is the state of completely free from all suffering that is *nibbāna* (*ibid.*: 126). Lord Buddha said in the *Māgaṇḍiya Sutta* that: "This is that health, this is that *nibbāna*" (M.I 511 in Horner, 1989: 190) or "Health is the highest gain, *nibbāna* the

highest bliss; And of ways, the Eightfold leads to deathlessness, to security.” (M.I 510 in *ibid.*: 189) It does not mean that the *arahants* are free from all physical diseases or do not have any pain, but all of those ailments cannot disturb his/her mind or cannot be any more causes of their suffering.

For the bodily diseases, Buddhist principles are closer to today’s meaning of health and diseases which embrace both physical and mental health. However, in Buddha’s time, the way of explaining health and the criteria for grouping diseases depended upon the knowledge and the beliefs about health in those days in Northern India. Since the boundaries of the world and all existences are far beyond the material world, the scope of health in Buddhism is wider than physical and mental aspects and includes the state of perfect mind. Physical ailments or death are only one part of our diseases or sufferings. While this perspective of health expands our concept of destination of life to living with wisdom, it grounds the important status of health problems in its suitable place. This insight opens our perceptions that there are more important issues to do with the body than to keep our comfortableness and to extend the end of this life. This Buddhist position on health problems gives us more choices to care for our lives and leaves more room for internal development as well.

### *Causes of Diseases*

The Buddha explained the cause of diseases (*dukkhasamudaya*) in different ways according to the goal of his explanations. ‘Defilements’ is a common term that refers to the basic cause of all diseases in both physical and mental meanings. Defilements, however, do not exist as basic entities that generate our suffering and wait for elimination. In the principle of Dependent Origination, causes of suffering are divided into three components: ignorance (*avijjā*), craving (*taṇhā*), and clinging (*upādāna*), while in the Four Noble Truths these causes are indicated as ‘the three roots of evil’ composed of greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) (Phra Prayudh Payutto, 1995: 72-73; 109). The Buddha said that clinging in one’s self or one’s suppositions were also the cause of suffering. He said:

“A supposition, -monk, is an ill, a supposition is an imposthume, a supposition is a barb. Monk, when he has gone beyond all suppositions the

sage is said to be at peace. But, monk, a sage who is at peace is not born, does not age, is not agitated, does not envy." (M.III 246 in Horner, 1990: 293)

Although the process of eliminating defilements could not directly cure the physical diseases, it will not increase both physical and mental pain or sufferings. For that reason, the one who is in the process of eliminating defilements will have less suffering from illness than the one who is not. The correct understanding of the nature of life will guide that person to proper health practices leading to neither self-indulgence nor self-mortification.

For the other more physical understanding of health, effects of microorganisms, chemical agents, the degeneration of organs, and other environmental or psychological factors, are only material or detectable causes of diseases. From a Buddhist view, causes of diseases are not only these detectable etiologies, but also karmas and other undetectable beings. Non-human beings such as a demon (*yakkha*) and ghosts are also the causes of illness. In this case, Lord Buddha allowed the monks who had ailments caused by ghosts to eat raw flesh and to drink raw blood as medicine (Vin.IV in Horner, 1982: 274; D.III 195 in T.W. and Davids, 1991: 189).

The intention of actions (*cetanā*) is kamma in Buddhism (Bhikkhu P. A. Payutto, 1993: 6). When there is kamma there are immediately results. However, it does not mean that one intentional action brings only one result or one result is caused by one previous action. In fact, one action brings multiple results and one result is caused by multiple actions (Phra Dhammapitaka (P. A. Payutto, 2001: 193). A disease is the results of collective kamma, but it is impossible for normal people to know all of those causes. An example of the Buddha's words that showed relationship between kamma and disease is:

"Brahman youth, here some woman or man is by nature harmful to creatures with his hand or with a clod of earth or with a stick or with a sword. Because of that deeds, accomplished thus, firmly held thus, he, at the breaking up the body after dying arises in the sorrowful ways, the bad born, the Downfall, Niraya Hell. But if, at the breaking up of the body after dying he does not arise in... Niraya Hell but comes to human status, then wherever he is born (in a new existences) he has many illness. This course



is conducive to many illness, brahman youth, that is to say being by nature harmful to creatures with his hand... or with sword." (M.III 204 in Horner, 1990: 250)

Good health, under Buddhist principles, is a result of previous good actions starting from last second, last year, or from the last life. Nevertheless, kamma law is only one section of the natural law. Thus, health or disease is governed by the natural law as well. This understanding turns the responsibilities of health back to each individual. In this respect, the role of health professionals will be smaller. It reminds us to realize that scientific knowledge and methodology is not the single route leading to the solutions of all health problems. Neither modern nor alternative medicines are perceived as the best or only technologies for eliminating diseases. Their position is as one among various elements that can support the healing process. Preventive medicine could be a part of the same principle and activities of the Noble Eight-fold Path practice. This explanation is also beneficial when answering questions that have no good answers from a scientific reasoning such as 'Why does the disease happen to me?' or 'Why this time?' etc.

### *The Attitude to Disease*

Although health is a preferable condition for every life, for Buddhism, afflictions as well as death, are seen as very common events of human beings. They are normal events for every being that originates from multi-related factors processed and determined by the natural law, the Three Characteristics or the Dependent Origination. While everyone has his/her duty to maintain health, one should keep in mind that both this body and mind are not existent as a separate self. It is impossible to run away from ailments or death, but we can create suitable causes that lead to the state of more perfect life by practicing the Eightfold Path that relate closely to the previous meaning of health. The Buddha always informed his disciples that this life is so fragile and short. He told them that it was helpful to regularly contemplate on this fact. In his words:

For what good reason should man or woman, layfolk or monk, often contemplate on the fact that they are 'sure to become sick and cannot avoid it'? Beings while healthy take pride in their good health; and infatuated by that pride of health they lead an evil life in deeds, words, and thoughts. But

in him who often contemplates on the fact (of the certainty of illness), the pride in being healthy will either vanish entirely or will be weakened. For that good reason, the fact (of sickness) should be often contemplated. (A.V 57 in Nyanaponika Thera, 1975: 12)

Illness is not a suitable condition for the Dhamma practices. Lord Buddha said that birth, aging, sickness, and death are the four unavoidable dangers of humanity. He tried to support ill monks to encourage rapid recovery. There are many topics in Buddhist disciplines that support the ill monk to live an easier life such as the Buddha allowed monks who were ill to behave differently: "Monks, you should not enter a village with your sandals on. Whoever should (so) enter it, there is an offence of wrongdoing... I allow, monks, a monk if he is ill to enter a village with his sandals on." (Vin.IV in Horner, 1982: 260)

Diseases, in Buddhism, are not perceived only in a bad way. Although those uncomfortable symptoms are unwanted conditions, it does not imply that they are useless. Everyone can gain an advantage from an ailment if he/she realizes its nature. The diseases remind us that this body is so fragile and impermanent. Naturally, life tends to decay and break down all the time, and contains a lot of waste and diseases. Awareness of these realities can reduce the degree of desire and attachment in our body. In addition, it alerts us to try harder and practice faster moving ourselves closer to the destination, *nibbāna*.

The afflictions also strengthen Buddhist principles by confirming that these principles are relevant to nature and applicable to everyone. They are not for Buddhists only. The patients who learn these principles thoroughly will realize that all diseases are the result of kamma and are under natural law. They will have less suffering and anxiety when they become ill. When the well-trained patients face mild or serious afflictions they will calmly accept that result of kamma, and know that they have authority to determine their future health status today by performing the right ways of living. They will not overlook their responsibilities to care for themselves by getting healthy. That is a useful condition for the effective practice of the Noble Eightfold Path.

From this point of view, it appears that a dreadful image of diseases is not a self contained reality, but it may partly be a product of modern society where scientific and consumerism-based concepts become

important and powerful ways of thought. These two concepts emphasize the material part of human and give higher value to our consumption. Whatever disturbs the joyful consumption, is a very serious issue especially for in death that completely shuts down all consumption. Unlimited needs of health and higher health expenditure are also increased by a dreadful image of diseases and scientific and consumerism ways of thinking.

### *Health Care and Prevention*

The Noble Eightfold Path, in its broader meaning, is a way to prevent all diseases. By practicing the Middle Path, basic causes of mind diseases such as ignorance, craving, clinging, etc. are gradually diminished. That means we recover from our diseases little by little and will reach complete health one day. The Buddha, moreover, stressed two more important components: wise consideration and the association with the virtuous that will smoothly help his/her progression in the developing process. Because of the very close relationship between mind and body, although this method focuses on the recover from internal sufferings or mind diseases, it benefits the physical body as well. To live in harmony with nature and with less attachment will lead to a calm mind. That is an important factor for a healthy life.

For physical health, Buddhism encourages its followers to take care for their bodies in a proper way. They must not promote health by any methods those are against the Noble Eightfold Path and should harmonize what they do with the law of nature. The Buddha never allowed his followers to kill any beings to protect or promote their lives. The reasons for establishing some rules for monks were based on health objectives. Some examples are: the Buddha allowed monks to make windows in the dwelling-place because if there were no-windows it was bad for the eyes and nasty smelling (Vin.V in Horner, 1988: 207); he allowed monks to leave the resident place, during the rains, without an offence when they were short of food or medicine (Vin.IV in Horner, 1982: 198).

Sometimes, Lord Buddha recommended that the monks do some activities that were good for health. For instance, monks could, in general,

eat more than one meal before noon, but the Buddha recommended that monks should have only one meal, in the *Kitāgiri Sutta*:

“I monks, do not eat a meal at night. Not eat a meal at night, I, monks, am aware of good health and of being without illness and of buoyancy and strength and living in comfort. Come, do you too, monks, not eat a meal at night.” (M.I 473 in Horner, 1989: 146-147)

In another place, the Buddha talked about the usefulness of chewing tooth-wood:

“Now at that time monks did not chew tooth-wood; their mouth came to smell nasty. They told this matter to the Lord. He said: “Monks, there are these five disadvantages in not chewing tooth-wood: it is bad for the eyes, the mouth becomes nasty smelling, the channels of test are not purified, phlegm and mucus get on food, one’s food is not enjoyed... “Monks, a long piece of tooth-wood should not be chewed. Whoever should chew one, there is an offence of wrong-doing. I allow, monks, a piece of tooth-wood to be eight finger breadths (in length) at the most... four finger breadths (in length) at the least. (Vin.V in Horner, 1988: 192)

Everyday activities of monks are also good for health such as waking up in the early morning and walking for a long distance to receive food-offerings, walking up and down for meditation, or sweeping the monastery yard. In addition, many rules of the monks are related to the sanitation of dwelling-places (Vin.V in Horner, 1988: 204-216) and toilets (*ibid.*: 196-197) supporting good health and good environment. Although, these disciplines were created specifically for bhikkhus, they are applicable for lay persons who want to live in simple ways. These disciplines imply that Buddhism is concerned about health issues and tries to support proper methods to promote health.

### *Ways to Care for Patients*

To eliminate all diseases of mind that are found in everybody is the goal of Buddhism. All activities or situations that support everyone’s practice or continuously develop his/her life in line with the Noble Eightfold Path should be created and maintained. Although afflictions are common events, a healthy physical body and fewer ailments are a preferable circumstance for practitioners. Thus, Buddhism supports all techniques that are good for health unless they brake the Noble Eightfold Path.

The methods to cure or reduce sufferings, in Buddhism, are not only medicines and other physical treatments, but also Dhamma and mind practice. The Seven Factors of Enlightenment or the Seven Limbs of Wisdom (*Bojjhaṅga*) is one Dhamma that is used to get rid of severe ailments. A serious physical illness of Lord Buddha, of the venerable Kassapa the Great, and of the venerable Moggallana the Great were eliminated after hearing through chanting the explanation of the Seven Factors of Enlightenment (S.V. 78-80 in Woodward, 1994: 66-68). The *Atanata* word-rune is another verse used for preventing sickness or danger from non-human beings (such as demons) especially for one who lives alone in a cave or forest (D.III 195 in T.W. and Davids, 1991: 189). The Strong Effort of the Will is another Dhamma that the Buddha used to eliminate his dire sickness late of his life (D.II 99 in T.W. and Davids, 1989: 106). One more Dhamma for curing disease is the Ten Contemplations (*saññā 10*) which Lord Buddha let the venerable Ānanda explain to Bhikkhu Girimānanda who was ill. After listening to the Ten Contemplations, the afflictions were immediately cured (A.V. 109 in Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, 1972: 1). The efficacy of these methods of curing depends upon many factors especially the condition or state of the mind of patients. There is no general application for all situations.

For the physical treatments, there are many rules that benefit the sick monks as well as the ones who care for them. Most of the violations of rules have exceptions for ill monks who cannot properly perform as those rules indicated. For example, monks must not live separately from his three robes, even for one night, but there is an exception for the ill. The Buddha said, "I allow you, monks, to give a monk who is ill the agreement (to be regarded) as not away, separated from the three robes..." (Vin.II, ii in Horner, 1982: 15). Some other examples: "I allow, monks, one who is ill (to use) an unshaped scrubber." (Vin.V in Horner, 1988: 143); "I allow you, monks, on account of a disease, to examine a mark on the face in a mirror or in a water-bowl." (Vin.V in Horner, 1988: 145); "Now at that time a certain monk came to be ill. While he was eating he was not able to hold a bowl in his hand. They told this matter to the Lord. He said: "I allow, monks, a stand." (Vin.V in Horner, 1988: 171); or "Monks, a walking staff with string on it should not be carried. Whoever should

carry one, there is an offence of wrong-doing... I allow you, monks, to give an ill monk the agreement as to a walking staff and string.” (Vin.V in Horner, 1988: 183); “Now at that time a certain monks come to have a sore on his head; he was not able to shave the hair of his head with a razor... I allow you, monks, to cut off the hair of the head with scissors in the case of illness.” (Vin.V in Horner, 1988: 186).

Furthermore, the seventy-five rules for training (*sekhiya*) were set for monks to have well-mannered looks. If monks disobey these rules, these are offences of wrong-doing. However, there is no offence if that monk is ill or mad or in a few other situations. Examples of these rules are: monks should wear orderly robes; should not make a loud noise or laugh loudly in a house; should not sit with bending the body or the arms or place the arms akimbo on one side or both in a house. These rules include the suitable ways of accepting and eating alms-food such as: should not inattentively or disrespectfully accept or eat alms-food; should not eat too much curry; should not look at others’ bowls; should not put whole hand into the mouth while eating; should not eat smacking the lips or make a hissing sound; or should not lick the finger or the bowl. (Vin.III 185-206 in Horner, 1983: 120-152)

For ill monks, the Buddha allowed many medicines and healing techniques used in that period of time in Northern India. He recommended five kinds of food could be used as general medicines for ill monks and allowed some methods for keeping them. These medicines are ghee, fresh butter, oil, honey, and molasses. These medicines may be stored for at most seven days. Otherwise there is an offence of expiation involving forfeiture (Vin.II, in Horner, 1982: 131). Monks were allowed to accept these five medicines and to make use of them both at the right time and also at the wrong time (after noon, 12.00) (Vin.IV in Horner, 1982: 270). The Buddha also elaborated on some details of each medicine such as “ghee is called ghee from cows or ghee from she-goats, or ghee from buffaloes; ghee from those whose meat is suitable... Oil means: sesamum oil, oil of mustard seeds, oil containing honey, oil of castor-oil plant, oil from tallow.” (Vin.II, in Horner, 1982: 132) He also limited the over usage by declaring that: “Whatever are sumptuous foods, that is to say, ghee, fresh butter, oil, honey, molasses, fish, meat, milk, curds—whatever monk



who is not ill, having asked for sumptuous foods such as these for himself, should eat them, there is an offence of expiation.” (Vin.II, in Horner, 1982: 342)

In addition, the Buddha did not allow monks to ask for medicine that is not to be used as medicine, and did not allow them to ask for one medicine that may be used as a different medicine. This is an offence of expiation. (Vin.II in Horner, 1982: 372)

For specific diseases, Lord Buddha allowed many kind of medicines, or tools that fit for each disease such as medicines for eye disease, for headache, for an affliction of wind, for rheumatism in the limbs and joints, for a snake bite, for constipation, for jaundice, etc. Some special techniques of therapies were also allowed for reducing the pain or suffering of each symptom such as sweating in the sauna with all kinds of herbs; letting blood by cupping with a horn; treatment with a lancet; and a fumigation (Vin.IV in Horner, 1982: 274-281). Many drugs are used in different dosage forms including paste or ointment, powder, astringent water, strong (alcoholic) drink in a decoction (of oil), a concoction (of dung), prepared and unprepared broth, meat broth, etc. (Vin.IV in Horner, 1982: 274-281)

To care for a patient, the Buddha indicated that a preceptor has a responsibility to tend the one who shares a cell, and a teacher has a responsibility to tend his pupils. While the one who shares a cell or his pupils should take care their teacher or preceptor at the same time. The Buddha announced that a senior monk who is not competent to tend or to get another to tend his pupil (or one who shares a cell) who is ill, must not be a preceptor (Vin.IV in Horner, 1982: 83). Lord Buddha also gave the guideline for caring for patients such as the ways that the preceptor should take care of his ill monk or novice:

“If the one who shares a cell becomes ill [his preceptor should]: having got up early, he should give tooth-wood, he should give water for rinsing the mouth, he should make ready a seat. If there is conje, having washed a vessel, conje should be placed near him. When he has drunk the conje, having given him water, having received the vessel, having lowered it, having washed it properly without rubbing it, it should be put away. When

the one who shares a cell has get up, the seat should be removed. If that place is soiled, that place should be swept..."(Vin.V in Horner, 1988: 318)

If there is nobody to tend the patients, the Buddha pointed that it was a responsibility of the Order or every monk to care for that ill monk, in his words:

"Monks, you have not a mother, you have not a father who might tend you. If you, monks, do not tend one another, then who is there who will tend you? Whoever, monks, would tend me, he should tend the sick...

If he has a preceptor he should be tended for life by the preceptor, who should wait for his discovery. If he has a teacher he should be tended for life by the teacher, who should wait for his discovery. If he has one who shares a dwelling-place... If he has a pupil... If he has a fellow-preceptor... If he has a fellow-teacher he should be tended for life by the fellow-preceptor, who should wait for his discovery. If he has neither a preceptor nor a teacher nor one who shares a dwelling-place nor a pupil nor a fellow-preceptor nor a fellow-teacher, he should be tended by the Order. If it should not tend him, there is an offence of wrong-doing." (Vin.IV in Horner, 1982: 432)

The one who cares for an ill monk is an important person in Buddhist views. Some rules are not an offence to the monk who is a caregiver. The Buddha allowed that monks could stay in the army for more than three days if there is something to be done for one who is ill (Vin.II, in Horner, 1982: 377-378). He allowed monks who had to stay in one place during the rains (3 months) but who went to take care or to visit a monk, a nun, a probationer, a novice, a woman novice or their parents, even if not sent for by invitations, to stay for at most seven days (Vin.IV in Horner, 1982: 189, 195). Moreover, after an ill monk passed away the Buddha indicated that the Order should give the three robes and the bowl of the dead monk to the monk who previously tended the dying monk (Vin.IV in Horner, 1982: 434).

### *Preparing for Death*

Although dying in Buddhism is realized as a normal event of human existence, it is one of the dangers that blocks the process of mind development. It is a very important situation to help or support the one who is dying by helping them develop their mind. The condition of the mind during the death process is a powerful factor determining the state of

the next existence. Thus, Lord Buddha and other competent disciples were usually invited to teach or talk to severely ill patients. After asking about the symptoms and feelings, the Buddha and those disciples always examined the patients' understanding of the Truth and then they either re-corrected it if some points were not correct or confirmed those that were right understandings. For example, the words of venerable Cunda talking to the venerable Channa:

"When this had been said, the venerable Cunda the Great spoke thus to the venerable Channa: "Wherefore, revered Channa, this teaching of the Lord should always be attained to: 'For him who clings there is wavering; for him who clings not there is no wavering; if there is no wavering there is impassability; if there is impassability there is no yearning; if there is no yearning, there is no coming and going; if there is no coming and going, there is no 'here' itself nor 'yonder' nor 'in between the two.' This is itself the end of anguish." (M.III 266 in Horner, 1990:317-318)

The faithful Anāthapiṇḍika, after listening to the Dhamma from the venerable Sārīputta and the venerable Ānanda, passed away and become a young deva (M.III 263 in Horner, 1990: 315). Although this ritual can support the mind of the dying, its power depends on the patients' kamma as well. Thus, everyone should not be careless with his/her life because it is so fragile and impermanent. In the Buddhist view, all social and individual activities should support the process of the Middle Path including the methods of caring for patient until he/she reaches the end of life.

## Conclusions

Buddhist perspectives started from the premise that all beings exist in terms of integrated factors and are governed by natural law, the Three Characteristics or the Dependent Origination. The ultimate destination of Buddhists is *nibbāna*, a state of perfect health while is free from all suffering. The meaning of diseases, therefore, involve not only physical or psychological diseases, but also all kinds of human sufferings especially mental suffering. Health status is a collective product of kamma for each individual. We should maintain our bodies to provide more suitable conditions for practicing the Noble Eightfold Path. However, every situation including good health, poor health, or death, in the Buddhist

view, is recognized as valuable opportunities to develop our mind for the ultimate destination. These perceptions are quite different from those of scientific medicine that focus directly on the physical health and the destination is to keep the person breathing.

These Buddhist principles form fundamental belief system for its faithful followers that shape their perceptions and guide their living styles. This understanding about nature of all existences will lead patients to take more responsibility for their health as well as having less misery or anxiety when they get sick or die. Under Buddhist principles, neither scientific nor alternative therapies are refused unless they block or disrupt the way to the Buddhist destination. Although Buddhism is the national religion of Thailand, its principles today are contaminated with other local beliefs and global knowledge. Re-implementing these basic principles and demonstrating Buddhist living styles in society may be one of the most effective and suitable ways to solve or reduce health problems in Thailand.

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*The Chulalongkorn Journal of Buddhist Studies* is an academic journal devoted to the academic study of Buddhism. It is published biannually by the *Chulalongkorn Center for Buddhist Studies*, Boromrajakumari Building, Floor 13, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok 10330, Thailand.

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Price: 40.00 Baht