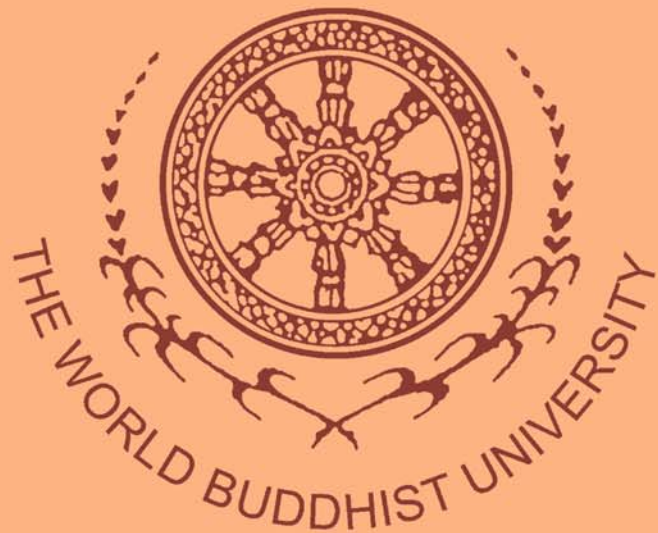


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The World Buddhist University Centre is located on the third floor of the World Fellowship of Buddhists Headquarters at 616 in Benjasiri Park, Sukhumvit 24 Rd., Bangkok 10110, Thailand.

Tel.: 66(0)2 258-0369-73 Fax: 66(0)2 258-0372

Website: [www.wb-university.org](http://www.wb-university.org)

E-mail: [wbucentre@wb-university.org](mailto:wbucentre@wb-university.org)

*Printed at: Printing House of Thammasat University*

*2 Prachan Road, Bangkok 10200*

*Tel.: (02) 224-7358-9 Fax: (02) 224-1350 Ext. 106*

## **Introduction**

This is the second and the last issue of the Journal of the World Buddhist University in this year. We are very pleased to have more articles sent to our Editorial Staff. We welcome all constructive articles on Buddhism and hope that our readers enjoy reading them.

His Majesty the King of Thailand is celebrating his 80th Birthday Anniversary with all Thai people in Thailand and around the world. The World Buddhist University (WBU) thus reports its activities organized in honour of the King in the column "In the News."

In this issue, you will find three interesting articles from an eminent Thai monk, a well-known Japanese scholar, and the editor of the Journal. With different approaches to Buddhist topics, the readers are invited on this pleasant journey through Buddhist knowledge.

The Year 2551/2008 is drawing near. We wish you all the best in the New Year. May the Triple Gems bless you and your family with Love and Peaceful Happiness always.

**Pataraporn Sirikanchana**  
**Editor**

## Asalaha Puja

Radio Interview with Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith,  
Abbot of Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakayaram, Thailand.

By *Phra Khru Baitika Dr. Barton Yanathiro* July 27, 2550

### Introduction

Welcome, listeners. I'm Phra Bart, Phra Khru Baitika Dr. Barton Yanathiro from the United States. Today I will be interviewing Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith, Abbot of Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakayaram, in Damnoen Saduak District of Rajburi Province. We will discuss Asalaha Puja, the major Buddhist holiday today—what it stands for and how to celebrate it.

First, I would like to introduce Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith for those who are not yet familiar with him. Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith is one of Thailand's most eminent Meditation Masters and Buddhist scholars. His mission is to revitalize Buddhism, placing equal emphasis on academic study and meditation practice. Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith is the Abbot of Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakayaram in the Damnoen Saduak District of Rajburi Province. He has studied, practiced, and taught Buddhist meditation since 1970. In 1986, he was ordained as a monk and given the name Sermchai Jayamanggalo. In 1998, he received the Royal Ecclesiastical Rank of Phra Bhavana Visutthikhun and in 2004 the rank of Phra Rajyanvisith. He has published over 35 books, 200 articles, two journals, and has recorded over 500 Dhamma lectures. He has also been awarded an honorary doctorate in Buddhist Administration from Mahachulalong komrajavidyalaya University.

He has led Wat Luang Phor Sodh to become a center of excellence in both Meditation Practice and Academic Studies. The temple trains over 10,000 participants annually in meditation, Dhamma, Pali and related areas. In 1999, the Sangha Body established Wat Luang Phor Sodh as Rajburi's second Provincial School of Pali Education, offering the full-range of Pali studies from Pali Grammar up through Pali Level 9, the Highest level. In 2001, the Sangha Body also approved establishing the temple as Rajburi's first Provincial Buddhist Meditation Institute, authorized to organize official meditation retreats for both monks and laity. In collaboration with the National Buddhist Office, the temple has trained over 1,000 senior Thai monks to be teachers of Vipassana meditation. And, as an Associated Institution of the World Buddhist University, the meditation institute is currently training a continual stream of international meditators in English with exceptional results.

In brief, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith has an extremely impressive record and we are particularly privileged to have him with us today. Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith, Venerable Sir, we bid you welcome !

**Question:** Well, sir, we are going to discuss Asalaha Puja, the major Buddhist holiday today. Can you begin by telling us what Asalaha Puja commemorates?

**Answer:** Good morning, everyone. Asalaha Puja commemorates the day on which Lord Buddha gave his first teaching—his first sermon—the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, 2,595 years ago. Like most Buddhist holidays, it follows

the lunar calendar, so the date varies from year to year. It occurs on the full moon day of the eighth lunar month of Asalha, which is always the day before entering the Buddhist Lent or the formal Rainy Season. This year, it is today, Sunday July 29th.

After Lord Buddha achieved enlightenment, he spent seven weeks dwelling in the area surrounding the Bo Tree, contemplating what to do with his newfound knowledge. Initially he was inclined not to teach, thinking that men were generally driven by lust and hate and so they were incapable of understanding such sublime knowledge. He realized that his insights were very deep and hard to comprehend, so he questioned whether anyone else could understand them if he were to teach. In his second week, while sitting under the Goat Herders' Banyan Tree, Brahma Sahampati visited Lord Buddha and told him what a calamity it would be for all mankind if Lord Buddha didn't teach, and told him that some people were, indeed, ready to hear and understand the Dhamma.

Ultimately, Lord Buddha concluded with his analogy of lotuses in a pond : Some people were like lotuses right at the surface ready to bloom—they could understand if given only a brief word. A second group were like lotuses near the surface. They could understand if given a more complete explanation and would bloom soon. A third group were like the lotuses still deep in the water. They would not bloom soon, but could still benefit from his teaching. Finally, the last group were like the lotuses stuck in the mud at the bottom of the pond. They were not destined to bloom—they were only food for the fish and turtles. He should not waste his time trying to teach this group.

Having decided to teach, he reflected on whom he should teach first. He first thought of his own former teachers —Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta—but perceived with his psychic powers that they had both passed on to the Formless Brahman Heaven. So, he decided to teach the Five Hermits or *pancavaggiya* who had been his own followers until he had given up extreme self-torture for the middle path. He did this after a celestial being showed him in meditation that a lyre string, when overly stretched, is brittle and liable to break. And, that a lyre string when too loose doesn't make any sound. Only the middle path, tuned just right, succeeds in producing beautiful music. So, he took some food, and seeing this, the Five Hermits thought he was giving up, and then left him.

With his psychic powers, he saw that they were now dwelling in the Isipatana Deer Park near Benares. As he approached them on foot, the Hermits agreed not to welcome him with respect, but he told them that he had achieved enlightenment and asked them to reflect that he had never said this before. This eased their skepticism sufficiently for them to listen to his teaching.

**Question:** What did he teach?

**Answer:** He began by teaching the middle path and the danger of the two extremes of over indulgence on the one hand and self-torture on the other hand. But, his major teaching was about the Four Noble Truths that were his ultimate discovery in enlightenment:

First, the **Truth of Suffering:** the Noble Truth that all world beings are suffering. Most simply, birth inevitably leads to old age, sickness and death. But, Lord Buddha saw further that death regularly leads to rebirth in an endless chain of continuous suffering. Even the Brahmins who reach the highest heavens ultimately die and return to suffering in the lower planes.

Second, the **Truth of the Cause of Suffering** — that suffering is immediately due to craving or over-desire and ultimately based on ignorance. Living in this world is like being in a dark room where we cannot see anything. Or, it is like a chicken inside the egg who never sees the outside. Ignorance means no knowledge of the past — you don't know where you have been before becoming a human being — right? Me too. Because of this ignorance — no knowledge of the past, no knowledge of the future, and no knowledge of the past and the future, no knowledge of Dependent Origination, no knowledge of the Four Noble Truths, this causes world beings mis-thought, mis-view, mis-conception and then mis-conduct such as violating the five precepts or engaging in *abayamuk* (going bar hopping at night) -- another kind of bad conduct. This is the way to disaster – giving free reign to sexual feelings and intoxication, or addiction to gambling. All of these will result in suffering either in this life or in the future -- sooner or later, more or less. But, if we meditate to see the past and future as he did, we can see as Lord Buddha saw before.

Third, the **Truth of the existence of a state with no suffering**, because the cause of suffering has been eliminated - the supreme peace and happiness of Nirvana. If you reach that state of mind, you will experience it. But most world beings will never meditate, never touch that level, never experience it.

And, Fourth the **Noble Eightfold Path** leading to the cessation of Suffering — specific guidelines on how to live. They are Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. These are often summarized as the three trainings: *sila* or morality, *samadhi* or concentration, and vipassana leading to right wisdom or *panna*.

**Question:** What was the result of this teaching?

**Answer:** The immediate result was that Kondana, the leader of the Five Hermits, gained the Dhamma Eye — that is, he transcended to the first level of Noble Disciple, Stream Enterer or *Sodabana* — the last leg of the journey to enlightenment. From then on, he was known as Anna Kondanna or the Kondanna who sees. He had been the youngest of the 108 Brahmans who foretold the future of Prince Siddhattha as a baby. He was the only one to predict firmly that Prince Siddhattha would definitely become a Buddha. When Prince Siddhattha left the palace to become a recluse, Kondanna organized the sons of four other Brahmans to follow him, because the other Brahmans had all passed away. Now Kondanna was the first to gain transcendence and asked Lord Buddha to ordain him. This completed the Triple-Gem — the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. This is what makes Asalaha Puja one of the Four Major Holy Days of Buddhism.

**Question:** You say that the most important aspect of Asalaha Puja Day is that it completed the Triple Gem. This is an important term that we hear often, but it is a bit confusing. Can you explain it for us?

**Answer:** The three gems of Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha lie at the heart of Buddhism. As Lord Buddha was passing on to Nirvana, he did not appoint any human successor, but rather said that from now on the Dhamma and the Sangha would be the

teachers. This is the importance of the Triple Gem. We learn Dhamma and we learn it from the monks who collectively constitute the Sangha which is the third component of the Triple Gem, initiated on Asalha Puja Day.

**Question:** What happened following that first day?

**Answer:** Although the four younger hermits did not immediately transcend, they were impressed by the transcendence of their leader. Lord Buddha arranged to teach each one of the four hermits personally over the next four days. Each day, three would go on the alms round and get food for all six of them (including Lord Buddha) while he taught one of them individually. The result was that after five days, all five had transcended to the Stream Enterer or *Sodabana* level of Noble Disciple.

**Question:** How did they all eventually achieve enlightenment?

**Answer:** On the sixth day, Lord Buddha gave his second sermon — the *Anattalakkhana Sutta* or the Sermon on Non-Self. Upon listening to this sermon, all five achieved the complete enlightenment of the highest *Arahant* Noble Disciple.

In this sermon, Lord Buddha compared and contrasted “True Self” with “Non-Self.” This is a very important point, since many Buddhist scholars mistakenly say that Lord Buddha never spoke of True Self. In teaching about *rupa* or form, which means body, Lord Buddha said this is not your true body because you cannot say to this body, “Body, don’t grow old, don’t get sick, don’t die.” If this were your true body, it would not grow old, would not get sick and would not die. This is a description of what happens in Nirvana. He repeated the same teaching for each of the other four Aggregates or *Khanda* which are feelings - *vedana*, perception - *sanna*, thought - *sañ khara*, and consciousness - *vinnana*).

**Question:** It sounds like there are various steps along the way to enlightenment. Can you explain further?

**Answer:** Yes, there are four steps along the final path to enlightenment. These are referred to as the Four Noble Disciples or *ariyapuggala* who are guaranteed of eventual enlightenment. Progress is measured by readication of the 10 final spiritual fetters or *sanyojana* — the most deeply imbedded defilements which are the last to go. The 10 spiritual fetters are divided into five gross lower fetters, which are wrong idea regarding self, doubt, clinging to false rituals, lustful desire, and irritation, and five higher fetters related to meditation which are delight in subtle forms, delight in formless meditation, pride, distracting thoughts, and ignorance.

The first Noble Disciple is the Stream Enterer or *Sodabana* who has eradicated the first three of the ten fetters. He is able to realize the Four Noble Truths somewhat, but not completely. The second Noble Disciple is the Once Returner or *Sakadagami* who only needs to come back to the human realm one more time. He has also minimized fetters four and five which are desire and irritation — opposite sides of the same coin. The third Noble Disciple is the Non-Returner or *Anagami* who has eradicated all five of the lower fetters. He never needs to return to the human realm, but will live all remaining

lifetimes in the Pure Land of Heaven, that is *Suthawasa* Heaven, until he eventually achieves full enlightenment. Finally, the Fourth Noble Disciple is the Arahant or Saint, who has eradicated all ten of the fetters and achieved full enlightenment. These are the detailed steps, but some may achieve full enlightenment right away through perfect meditation.

**Question:** Thank you very much. Now, let me turn to the more immediate and practical concerns of our listeners. What exactly should a Buddhist do to celebrate Asalaha Puja Day?

**Answer:** The unique aspect of Asalaha Puja is that it comes at the beginning of the rainy season or Buddhist Lent. Initially, the monks didn't have any cloth to wear while bathing. One day Lord Buddha's greatest lay-woman follower Maha Upasika Visakha was coming to bring offerings and came upon the monks all showering naked in the rain. She was distressed and asked Lord Buddha for permission to donate rains cloths for the monks. He agreed and gave the monks permission to accept such gifts. So, it has become a custom for Thai Buddhists to offer rains cloths at the beginning of the rains. These gifts are often combined with other personal necessities such as tooth brushes, soap, and towels which will serve the monks throughout the rainy season.

The laity should, of course, also bring food offerings as they would normally and listen to Dhamma teachings and practice meditation. Another traditional gift is lighting. This can be either traditional lighting — candles — or modern lighting — light bulbs. The teachings on Asalaha Puja Day are often concerned with the Four Noble Truths and the monks often chant the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta. Many wats also organize a Wientien, walking mindfully three times around key Buddha statues to show respect. Buddhists may take eight precepts for the duration of the holy day and night, being careful to refrain from bad conduct, to do good and to work on purifying their minds. In fact, these teachings of Lord Buddha, observing at least five precepts, should always be practiced in order to receive good results throughout life.

**Question:** What are the Five Precepts that one should observe, and how important are they?

**Answer:** The Five Precepts are (1) Avoid killing living beings, (2) Avoid theft, (3) Avoid adultery or sexual relations outside marriage, (4) Avoid false or nasty speech and (5) Avoid intoxicants.

Lord Buddha taught these five precepts based on his enlightened knowledge of the natural laws of life and rebirth. Violation of any of these precepts yields harmful results both in this lifetime and in future rebirth. For example, violation of the first precept on killing results in **physical disaster** such as sickness, a short life span or becoming lame through such events as accidents or natural phenomena like fire, disease, or lightning.

Violation of the second precept on theft results in **property disaster** such as having property destroyed through natural events like fire, flood, robbery, or being seized by the government.

Violation of the third precept on adultery can result in a **broken home** or loss of reputation and position, or even disease such as HIV and life threatening situations due to jealousy.

Violation of the fourth precept on false or nasty speech can lead to **discredit** with no one believing your word, even when you are blatantly falsely accused.

Violation of the fifth precept on intoxicants yields to disaster to both **physical and mental health**, such as weakness of the body, alcoholism, high blood pressure, and working disability. No one will rely on you.

In addition, there are unhappy states or hells for rebirth related to each of these precept violations. For example, those committing adultery may be reborn as dogs or as hungry ghosts covered with body sores.

**Question:** Finally, you have mentioned the importance of meditation. Can you give us a brief introduction to how to meditate?

**Answer:** Sit in a regular meditation posture, crosslegged as seen in some Buddha images, with the right leg resting upon the left. The right hand rests on the left, palms turned upwards, with the right index finger just touching the left thumb. The body is upright and the mind is fully alert. Take a deep breath and relax the body until you feel comfortable. Close your eyelids lightly, do not press them.

In basic samatha vipassana practice, we use two aids: the repetitive word (*parikamma-bhavana*) and the object of visualization (*parikamma-nimitta*). The repetitive word is “*samma arahang*” and the object of visualization is a bright, clear luminous sphere. Using these aids, we draw the mind inward to the center of the body. Such concentration allows the mind components of vision, memory, thought and awareness to come together into oneness.

Begin by visualizing a bright sphere at the centre of the body, just two finger widths above the navel or belly button. This is the mind’s permanent resting place. Whenever a person or any other creature is born, dies, sleeps or awakens, the Dhamma Sphere which governs the body arises from this position. The Dhamma Sphere is composed of the Vision Sphere, the Memory Sphere, the Thought Sphere, and the Awareness Sphere.

Keep the bright sphere resting at the centre of the body. Mentally recite the words *samma arahang* continuously to keep the sphere still and make it become brighter and clearer. Focus your mind at the bright center of the sphere, and at the bright center of each successive sphere that emerges. Pay no attention to any external sensation. Do not force the mind too strongly. Do not use the physical eyes to focus on the vision. Always focus on the center of each new sphere which emerges. Rest the mind there.

Eventually, a bright clear sphere will arise. This is the Dhamma Sphere. Do not be overjoyed. Keep your mind calm in equanimity. Hold the mind still, and stop repeating *Samma Arahang*. Just concentrate at the center of the Dhamma sphere. This is your own nucleus which gives rise to this body and this mind. This is the beginning of the path. Deeper levels of meditation are achieved in the same way — always stopping still at the center of the center. You have already learned the essence of the technique. Now let us slowly come out of meditation and share our merit with all beings everywhere throughout

the universe. May all beings be happy. May all beings be free from suffering. May all beings be free from enmity.

**Barton:** Thank you very much, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. You have taught us a lot and opened new doors.

**Phra Raj:** You are welcome. May Lord Buddha be with all of you.

## What Religion Are We to Rely on?

*Rev. Kodo Matsunami*

Looking back over the last century, it was a time of historically unprecedented turmoil. This is shown by the example of two world wars, in which so many innocents were embroiled, experiencing ghastly horrors. The U.S.-Soviet Cold War ended but there was little time for enjoying the peace. Soon afterwards confrontations between the Western and Arab countries flared up, and war began in places like Afghanistan, as is common knowledge.

In the 9.11 terrorist attacks on the U.S. by Islamic extremists 2,996 people lost their lives. Its pride hurt, the U.S. invaded the terrorist stronghold of Afghanistan, and then eliminated the government of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Afterward, based on a UN Security Council resolution, military units from several countries including Japan were stationed in Iraq for the stated purpose of promoting democracy and maintaining security there. Expending 275 million dollars daily, the U.S. lost 3,700 personnel, while an estimated 35,000 Iraqis lost their lives in 2006 (as of the end of August 2007).

Even wild animals rarely kill members of their own species. Man, standing at the apex of the primate family, kills untold numbers of innocents in the name of a War on Terrorism without feeling any remorse. When the interests of nations, peoples, religions, or individuals clash, there is never any compromise even if killing is the result. This is because of exclusivism and self-righteousness, which arise when people believe they alone are right and others are unilaterally wrong.

Most conflict in recent years has been the work of extremist supporters of monotheistic religions, who treat people that do not share their views as enemies and try to eliminate them so as to promote their own beliefs. In the background of the monotheistic religions is a shared belief among the descendants of Abraham — the Jews, Christians, and Muslims — that they are God's people. All three of these religions see the Old Testament of the Bible as equally important. It teaches:

So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God created he him; male and  
female created he them. And God blessed them,  
and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply,  
and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have  
dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the  
fowl of the air, and over every living thing that  
moveth upon the earth.

*(Gen. 1: 27, 28)*

This can be read as a God-given belief in man's complete domination over the other animals and the plants. The Jews, Christians, and Muslims had no alternative to living in difficult environmental conditions. In order to emerge victorious in the struggle to survive, they felt it was necessary to strengthen their own positions through a covenant with an absolute God. The loser in such a struggle for survival would be subjected to the winner's persecution, so a grudging and unyielding way of thinking was fostered. The

Old Testament contains many passages demonstrating an exclusionary and self-righteous belief in a chosen people, including:

Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee?  
And am not I grieved with those that rise up  
against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred:  
I count them mine enemies.

*(Pss. 139: 21, 22)*

In the New Testament, we read:

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the  
world, and preach the gospel to every creature.  
He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;  
but he that believeth not shall be damned.

*(Mark 16: 15, 16)*

Such comments in a sacred text may become the logical foundation for some extremist forms of monotheism.

Of course, Christianity, which derives from the folk religion of a chosen people based on the Old Testament, and which emphasizes the existence of Jesus Christ as the Son of God who bears the burden of renewing the sins of all humanity, underlines not only the judgment of God but his love that seeks the salvation of all people, as revealed in such passages as “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Mark 2: 31). However, among the believers of that religion there are those who conflate the absoluteness of an unseen God with their own opinions as a believer in that God.

Monotheism, which is based on a male principle of an absolute God as the father, magnified the self in more modern times almost as if it were to take the place of God. The saying of René Descartes, “I think, therefore I am,” suggests that we should doubt everything that is uncertain until ultimately all that is left is that which we are sure of: the consciousness of the thinking self. Everything else is treated as objects external to the self. This is, in other words, the notion of dividing the world into a dualism of mind and materiality. This dualism of spirit and matter encouraged the development of a universally applied rationalism, and this rationalism caused the rapid development of science and technology, which in turn ushered in the economic and military dominance of the West.

Monotheism produced Imperialism and Communism, which controlled people worldwide until the 20th century through a monopoly on military, economic, and political power. It is true that the development of science and technology, based on monotheism, has made the physical lives of people more efficient, enjoyable, and enriched. We are surrounded by the benefits of that development. On the other hand, however, it has also led to such problems as the destruction of the environment and the depletion of resources, and through an emphasis on the primacy of the economy an exacerbation of such issues as a contempt for life, the decay of morality, and the disparity in wealth distribution. By substituting a human self for an absolute God, humanity may come to harbor the illusion

that they are able to control the world and all the living things in it leaving their desires unabated.

Humanity seeks to identify itself with spiritual or material objects, such as God or the Buddha, or at times with wealth and property. Our search for peace of mind never ceases. Nevertheless, the image we create for ourselves of God or the Buddha is the product of our own minds. It is nothing other than an ideology or metaphor produced from within the consciousness of individual people. The true God or Buddha is beyond human consciousness, and is perhaps within the very workings of nature.

However, the followers of monotheistic religions in particular have a history of separating the material (the visible world) from the spiritual (the invisible world) based on the dualistic view of matter and mind that distinguishes the absolute existence of God from the relative existence of man. They take the words of the creator God given through their prophets as a fundamental truth applying universally to all, and believe that they along with all others must follow those teachings as a given. In other words, the concept of God born from the human brain is distorted into becoming what is believed to be the actual actions of God. A person following such a God is then called good, and a person who does not is evil. The division between their and other's rightness or wrongness thus arises. People are free to believe so, and this is worthy of respect. However, when such monotheistic beliefs go too far they become intolerant of others, then exclusivism and self-righteousness arise causing much suffering as people become embroiled or suffer injury in absurd wars.

To use a recent example, U.S. President Bush criticized Saddam Hussein's Iraq and Iran as belonging to an axis of evil while Islamic extremist terrorist groups have come to regard the U.S. and those who support the U.S. as enemies and target them for terrorist attacks. In Afghanistan, Korean Christians were abducted and murdered by Islamic extremists. Animosity among monotheists is unending, including antagonism between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Muslims, and antagonism among Pakistani Muslim groups (of course, there is ethnic, economical, or cultural strife among polytheists as well). For them, even if a temporary compromise or concession is made, as long as they firmly hold to self-serving concepts such as good and evil, the self and others, or friend and foe, a true reconciliation will be impossible. Even if one side manages to be victorious, the losing side will remain bitter. That bitterness will become the source of a future conflict. In human conflict, one side can never be absolutely good and the other evil.

People in the world hope to live happily and in peace. Nevertheless, the truth is that we give full rein to our superficial knowledge born of the ego as we continue struggling each other with the mutual intention of eliminating each other. This is utter foolishness. Due to recent major advances in electronics and information systems, even more people today are becoming brainwashed by rationalism and with "economy-first" beliefs. People force others aside in their rush to improve their knowledge, wealth, and power. As a result, divisions between people arise and we lose contact with our own humanity. We lose touch with the natural world as well, and cannot escape from living our lives in daily fear and doubt.

It is a great delight that, regretting the dangerous and seemingly unsolvable world situation, the religious leaders of the world have begun to think about the need for mutual

understanding and compromise. However, as long as those involved believe in the superiority of their own religions and ignore the positions of others, this will be unlikely to produce a true compromise.

Eastern polytheistic monism that integrates matter and mind is being reevaluated as a means to transcend monotheistic dualism. Polytheism is a kind of animism that believes everything in the universe contains divinity or a spirit. A fundamental characteristic of polytheism is the idea that humanity is a part of the eternal life that is the existence of the natural world, which is reborn cyclically and repeatedly. It is a faith based on the maternal principle, and was seen even in the West in such ancient religions as those of the Romans, Greeks, Germans, and Celts. However, Christianity, a monotheistic religion based on the male principle, infiltrated the Roman Empire and used its power to make polytheism a system of thought of the past.

Actually, polytheistic features can be seen in religions around the world. Examples include the worship of Mary and the saints in Catholicism, the worship of saints in Islam, Indian Hinduism, or in Japanese esoteric Buddhism or Shintoism.

The Japanese scholar of religion Soho Machida discussed the features of monotheism and its counterpart, polytheism in the following manner:

1. The world is not governed by a single principle, it moves according to indeterminate factors.
2. The male and female principles are not opposed, they are complementary.
3. The sacred is not an abstraction, it exists in the visible world.
4. Truth does not rely on metaphysical concepts, it is concrete and clear.
5. Regardless of the death of the individual organism, eternal life continues.
6. Real worth lies not in consciousness focused on the individual, but in impersonal unconsciousness.
7. There is no absolute good and evil. Ethics are always situational.
8. No one has the right to condemn another.
9. All things are organically integrated, not independent of each other.
10. The physical and the spiritual are indivisible.

*(Jinrui wa shukyo ni kateruka  
[Can humanity transcend religion?])*

Of course, there are defects in polytheistic thought, and it is wrong to believe in it blindly and only emphasize the benefits. For example, polytheism lacks the purity and fastidiousness of monotheism, in which followers obey imperatives of an absolute God as given by the prophets. Rather, polytheism has a tendency to accept everything, so is not thoroughgoing and easily becomes decadent. In that sense it is difficult for monotheists to understand polytheists, who may seem uncivilized to them.

Western scholars of religion have theorized that monotheism arose from polytheism, or in other words that polytheism is the precursor of monotheism. Recently, however, the theory that they both arose under the influence of different environmental and geopolitical factors. The severe natural environment of the desert gave birth to monotheistic thought, while rich forests nurtured polytheism. People need something to rely upon to lead a satisfying life. What monotheists sought to rely on was an unseen God as the father in heaven rather than the harshness of the natural world before their eyes.

The polytheists sought an integration with nature as the mother who provides abundant blessings.

The scholar of religions Mircea Eliade believed that all phenomena in the world repeat an “eternal return.” Including people, all living things are part of the cycle of birth from the union of the male and female, death, and rebirth endlessly. The world is founded on both the male principle and the female principle. Monotheism, based on the male principle, and polytheism, based on the female principle, complement each other.

The Japanese brain specialist Tadanobu Tsunoda observes that “Humans have a right brain (the right cerebral hemisphere) and a left brain (the left cerebral hemisphere). Left brain functions are intellectual and are more analytical, while the right brain excels in language-grasping perceptions, intuitions, and memory. It displays unique strengths in roughly and generally grasping rather than a detailed analytical capacity regarding such functions as recognizing external appearances or silhouettes, tactile sensations, a grasp of spatial orientation, or distinguishing among faces” (*Nihonjin no No* [Japanese brain]).

Formerly, the left brain was known as the superior brain, and the right brain as the inferior brain. The idea behind this was the folk belief that men, who have a more developed left brain (rationality) are superior, and women with a developed right brain (emotions) are inferior. This belief was related to the contempt for women.

The cranial nerves cross in the vicinity of the neck, and the left cranial nerve then connects to the right hand and the right cranial nerve to the left hand. When playing the violin, for example, both right and left hands are in use. The right hand controlled by the left brain holds the bow which makes the sounds while the left fingers controlled by the right brain varies the timbre. Neither the right hand (left brain) nor the left hand (right brain) can be said to be inferior or superior. They each have their unique roles, and through their cooperation lovely music comes into being.

Man can achieve a balanced way of life through the complementary nature of the right and left brains. In the same way, monotheism with its intellectual dualism strongly influenced by the male principle and polytheism with its emotional monism strongly influenced by the female principle have complementary roles and mutually indispensable qualities.

The Japanese psychologist Hayao Kawai wrote:

The maternal has the capacity of encompassing all things into the whole, while the paternal has the capacity to separate and disconnect all things. The predominance of the paternal in Europe gave humanity the ability to divorce the self from other phenomena and observe them objectively, which developed into natural science. The unique culture of the West in recent times based on natural science has come to dominate the world. ... Rather than an emphasis on the maternal, it is more appropriate to say that Japan has developed with a balanced combination of the maternal

and the paternal.”

**(Chukukozo Nihon no shinso  
[An empty structure, the depth of Japan])**

We must realize that there is a limit to how far we can rely on monotheism based on the male principle.

Recently, bioethics that discusses a coexistence with nature that transcends race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, or gender has been advocated. The word bioethics is derived from the word *bio* meaning life, which comes from the Greek *bios*, or a limited and individual organism. In other words, bioethics is an ethical debate concerning the individual organism. However in Greek there is also the word *zō*, which means unrestricted life, and which emphasizes not only isolated individuals but also the underlying solidarity and sociality that interconnects isolated individuals. The mythologist Karl Kerényi wrote:

If I may employ an image for the relationship between them, which was formulated by language and not by philosophy, *zō* is the thread upon which every individual *bios* is strung like a bead, and which, in contrast to *bios*, can be conceived of only as *endless*.

**(Dionysos: Archetypal Image of  
Indestructible Life)**

As bioethics has made clear, the DNA which forms the genes that comprise our bodies itself is no different the DNA of other animals or plants. The only thing that distinguishes us from other organisms is the base sequencing of the DNA. DNA is comprised of four bases: adenine (A), thymine (T), guanine (G), and cytosine (C). Combining in pairs of A-T and G-C, a double helix is formed.

This paired bonding is also observable in a wide range of pairs found from the natural world to the culture and civilization created by mankind. Some examples of such pairs include the ideas of existence and nonexistence, light and shade, heaven and earth, mind and matter, body and spirit, life and death, as well as up and down, east and west, north and south, right and left, right brain and left brain, male and female, and self and other. All of these are pairs, and without one half of the pair the other half cannot exist.

It is accordingly a fact that if competition and confrontation among religions, states, and businesses, or winners and losers and bullying at the personal level expand out of control and chaotically, the fates of the losers and winners will all be intertwined.

Today, the United States, believing in monotheistic Christianity, rules the world in the role of the world’s policeman. In the name of righteousness it is in opposition with nations believing in another form of monotheism, Islam. It is perhaps attempting to gain hegemony over the world. What made this possible is the great economic and military power America has achieved, enabled by its highly developed technologies and powerful oil capitals. However, American influence seems to be gradually eroding. In recent years the EU, China, Russia, and India have begun to compete with each other in attaining hegemony.

What happens when such nations are in conflict with each other in an attempt to make the world homogeneous on their own terms, or in the pursuit of economic development for purely selfish goals? According to a study by the World Institute for Development Economics Research of the United Nations University, wealthy adults numbering two percent of the world's population monopolize approximately 50 percent of the world's personal assets. Not only does such a situation broaden the gap between the rich and poor, but also accelerates the destruction of traditional culture.

The resources of the world we live on are limited. However, human desires are without limit. We attempt to keep riches for our own exclusive use even if others have to be sacrificed. Thus confrontation constantly arises between those that have and those that have not, and we fight over our limited resources. We need to consider how best to equitably distribute these resources, which are the common property of mankind, and live together harmoniously.

Not only all humanity, but all life shares the same DNA. However, once we let our desires run wild we come under the yoke of the selfish unconsciousness. We attempt to exclude those that are different from us. People whose actions are dictated by the unconscious come into conflict over issues on the conscious level, such as monotheism, polytheism, or atheism. Our foolishly harming each other over such issues is utterly meaningless. The molecular biologist Tasuku Honjo says, "Along with the passions and desires for food and sex, hatred is also a gene (genetic information) acquired in the process of evolution for the purpose of survival (the process of natural selection among living things). It is a part of our DNA-determined fate that cannot be eradicated."

In the fourth or fifth centuries of the common era, a Buddhist philosopher living in Gandhara named Vasubandhu was familiar with this concept. In the Yogachara theory Vasubandhu created, within the unconscious level of the human mind there is intentionality toward either good (the constructive) or evil (the destructive), with 11 good mental states but 30 — three times the number of good — evil mental states. People of religion or philosophers have sought tirelessly for a way to remove the evil self and selfishness that have plagued mankind. They have created many different theories and methods, resulting in the many religions, schools, and sects.

From the point of view of consciousness, it then becomes pointless to discuss the superiority or inferiority of monotheism and polytheism. The important issue is how to eliminate the evil nature that lies in the unconscious mind. The major world religions already have within them ideas that are in accord with the common basis shared by the universe and all mankind, ideas which transcend the confrontations and differences in ideology that are the mental constructions of the conscious mind. The following are some examples of such ideas.

**Judaism:**

All trees communicate with one another.  
All trees converse with all living beings. It  
happened that a man tore up his orchard, when  
wind came and wounded him.

*(Midrash B'reishis Rabbah, Kabbalah)*

**Christianity:**

Being is God. ... God and being are the same — or God has being from another and thus himself is not God.

*(Collection of Eckhart Works)*

**Islam:**

People are ultimately unified with God.

*(“Fana” in Sufism)*

**Buddhism:**

To study Buddhism is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be Enlightened by all things. To be Enlightened by all things is to drop off our own body and mind, and to drop off the bodies and minds of others.

*(Shobo-genzo [Eye treasury of the true Dharma] of Dogen)*

**Daoism:**

The Way is so vast that when you use it, something is always left. How deep it is! It seems to be the ancestor of the myriad things.

*(Daode-jing [Book of the way and its power] of Laozi)*

**Hinduism:**

You are that.

*(Chandogya Upanishad)*

The French philosopher Blaise Pascal hinted in his work, *Traité du triangle arithmétique* (Treatise on the arithmetic triangle), that the individual is a member of a family, society, and nation, but is at the same time a member of the universe and nature.

Consecutive values in a certain order do not increase if random sizes of a lower order are added. In like manner, a line does not increase due to a point, a surface does not increase due to a line, and a solid does not increase due to a surface. In other words, to explain this with numbers as is appropriate for a discussion on arithmetic, the root is not calculated into the square, the square into the cube, or the cube into the biquadrate. Thus, lower order quantities may be discarded as concerns higher order quantities.

This text explains the importance of how, beginning from the self (a point), everything is contained within nature (the solid). Transpersonal Psychology, which became popular in the West starting in the 1960s, also treats as important a “cosmic spirit” that transcends the barriers of the self and merges with nature. The leader of that movement, Kenneth Earl Wilber Jr. observed the following.

In unity consciousness, in no-boundary awareness, the sense of self expands to totally include everything once thought to be not-self. One’s sense of identity shifts to the entire universe, to all worlds, high or low, manifest or unmanifest, sacred or profane. And obviously this cannot occur as long as the primary boundary, which separates the self from the universe, is mistaken as real. But once the primary boundary is understood to be illusory, one’s sense of self envelops the All-there is then no longer anything outside of oneself, and so nowhere to draw any sort of boundary. Thus, if we can at all begin to see through the primary boundary, the sense of unity consciousness will not be far from us.

***(No Boundary: Eastern and Western Approaches to Personal Growth)***

However, as long as we are human we will never be able to negate or leave behind the self. The self is not intrinsically evil. Taking the self as a fixed entity and clinging to it is evil. Everything in the world, including all of us, is in a process of change, and nothing can be made stationary or taken as one’s own. In Buddhism, this is described by the phrase, “all activities are impermanent and all phenomena are lacking in a self.” The German philosopher Martin Heidegger wrote, “The meaning of the being of *Dasein* is temporality.” He discusses this as constant rebirth within nature without any fixation on an established notion of the self.

The founder of Buddhism, Shakyamuni, observed how people discriminate against others for their own egotistical purposes and cause harm to each other. He taught, “All tremble at violence; all fear death. Putting oneself in the place of another, one should not kill nor cause another to kill” (*Dhammapada*, 129).

For instance, the snow that falls on the peak of lovely Mount Fuji and the snow that falls in the streets of Kyoto are the same water once they melt, just as people are all born from the same single life. This teaches us that in order to live out the only life given to us, we must abandon pointless strife and live together in peace.

According to recent studies, the left planum temporale of the brain, which is an indicator for digital data processing capability, is larger than the right in chimpanzees, and is also larger than in humans. It might be the case that chimpanzees have a greater aptitude for digital brain functions than humans. If so, then the basis for believing that man is at the apex of all the animals may be weakened. We should abandon our

arrogance and consider how to coexist in mutual prosperity humbly with other living things.

We are no longer able to give up the benefits of rationalism, science, and technology and return to the lives of inconvenience and discomfort we experienced in the past. Neither can we allow our egos to run rampant with greed, fighting and killing each other and leading the entire human race to extinction. The French author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry wrote, “Love does not consist in gazing at each other, but in looking outward together in the same direction” ( *Terre des hommes* [(Wind, sand, and stars)]). Without trying to integrate the existing religions and philosophies of the world, without trying to blend them, disperse them, or dilute them, with no distinctions made between monotheism, polytheism, and atheism, we must abide in the cosmic spirit and coexist, sharing our common fate on this small planet.

Zeami, the man who perfected Japanese Noh, wrote in his work *Kakyo* [The flower mirror] that the self (the actor) and the other (the audience) should not be in opposition. Both should have the feeling of mutual consideration he describes as, “the watcher should always be the watched.”

We each need to realize our place in the whole, respect each other as members of the same family, help each other, console each other, and not pursue our own goals in life to the exclusion of others. It is necessary that we lead our lives truly aware of the meaning of the life we have received.

## **Democracy in the Light of Buddhadasa\***

By Pataraporn Sirikanchana

Many people always take it for granted that democracy is the best political system today. Moreover, it is believed to be suitable for all societies and to promote human dignity. The credibility of democracy is due to many causes as follows:-

1. Democracy is a product of the so-called civilized Western World which is so ideologically and technologically prosperous that it becomes the symbol of universal development.
2. Democracy is believed to provide us with boundless right and freedom of the people who are owners of a country since democracy means the sovereignty of the people.
3. Amid the rivalry between democracy and some other political systems such as tyranny, absolute monarchy, and socialism, democracy is viewed as a hero who exists to save the world. The delusion of democracy encourages us to sacrifice our lives for it throughout the world history.

As time passes by, we may ponder the real value of democracy. Buddhadasa-bhikkhu (B.E. 2449/1906-2536/1993), an eminent Thai monk and one of the World Great Personalities made an interesting criticism of it as follows:

Nowadays, we make use of only the political system which yields benefits. It can be called the sovereignty of benefits. However, we feel ashamed to admit that we prefer all gains. We, therefore, call such political system democracy which we also define as anything of the people, by the people, and for the people. The problem of democracy exists in the ideology of the people. If the people are materialists, their benefits will be material. If they are dharmists<sup>1</sup> (virtuous), their benefits will then be dhammic.

The essence of democracy depends on the qualities of the people. If the people are righteous and learned, they will creatively use their ruling power and be able to establish their own peaceful community. On the other hand, if they are selfish materialists and consumerists, their society will turn chaotic.

Generally, education is believed to be the primary factor of democracy. This is only half truth. Formal education as managed in schools and universities in Thailand today does not provide moral training for students. It emphasizes especially rote learning

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\*Buddhadasa (B.E. 2449/1906-2536/1993) was the former abbot and the founder of Suan Mokkha, a famous hermitage in Southern Thailand. He was honoured by UNESCO as one of the World Great Personalities in B.E. 2549/2006.

<sup>1</sup> Buddhadasa-bhikkhu, *The Ultimate Dharma* (Parama dharma) (Bangkok: Songrun Printing Press, B.E. 2526/1983), p. 104. (in Thai)

and self-centredness. Buddhadasa calls this type of education the “tail-less” education. Buddhadasa uses the metaphor “to recover a dog’s tail, or to reconnect a dog’s tail” as a reference to the Thai formal education nowadays in which moral lessons are neglected and dismissed from the curriculum. He explains that education without morality is like a dog whose tail is cut off and tries to deceive others that a dog without a tail is more beautiful than the one with it. Buddhadasa tries to correct this misunderstanding by pointing out that a dog must have a tail, that, similarly, education must include moral lessons, and that education without morality is useless or even harmful to a society.<sup>2</sup>

Real education should lessen one’s selfishness. Without real education, Thai democracy thus encourages politicians’ selfishness. Political parties and members in the Parliament mainly work for their own benefits, not for the benefits of the people. The fight between some political parties is commented by Buddhadasa as follows:

The opposing party always tries to  
destroy the governmental party so that it will  
be able to become the government itself.  
Both parties keep fighting with each other  
because of their own selfishness. We thus can  
never find the “divine” party in the Parliament.<sup>3</sup>

Here, the “divine” political party is the one without selfishness and which is willing to sacrifice itself for others’ well-being. In other words, the “divine” political party is the one with the ideology of the Bodhisattva, e.g., loving kindness and compassion toward others.

Since selfishness is inherent in all human nature, democracy which is the “sovereignty of the people” is certainly not the ideal political system for us; Buddhadasa then suggests a better type of political system as follows:

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

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<sup>2</sup> Buddhadasa-bhikkhu, “Khoo Cheevit (Mate of life)”, *Thamma-banyai Toh Hang Sunak* (The dhammic lecture to recover a dog’s tail) (Bangkok: Dhamma-dana Press, 1982), pp. 36-37. (in Thai)

<sup>3</sup> Buddhadasa-bhikkhu, *Dharma and Politics* (Bangkok: Dhamma-dana Press, B.E. 2522/1979), p. 226. (in Thai).

the contentment of the entire community.<sup>4</sup>

Buddhadasa praises the political system which promotes working according to one's duty as assigned by the Dharma (the Law of Nature). Speaking of the Caste System in Hinduism which governs Hindu society on the basis of its members' duties, Buddhadasa thus asserts that the kings or those in the Kshatriya Caste are appropriate to be rulers. While all democratic supporters condemn the Caste System for destroying the right and freedom of the people, Buddhadasa advocates it for encouraging all social members to fulfill their own duties.<sup>5</sup>

Buddhadasa prefers monarchy to democracy. He explains that it is easier to find a righteous king than a group of righteous people. He adds that a righteous king who is a dictator is better than a liberal democrat.

There were edicts about Asoka's work which reveal a socialist system of government of an exclusively dictatorial type. He purified the *sangha* by wiping out the heretics, and he insisted on right behavior on the part of all classes of people. Asoka was not a tyrant, however. He was a gentle person who acted for the good of the whole society. He constructed wells and assembly halls, and had various kinds of fruit trees planted for the benefit of all. He was "dictatorial" in the sense that if his subjects did not do these public works as commanded, they were punished.<sup>6</sup>

Buddhadasa suggests us to reconsider the word "dictator" since it is not bad in itself. Even the Buddha, in a sense, is a dictator, as Buddhadasa maintains in the following passage:

The Buddha developed a socialist system with a "dictatorial" method. Unlike liberal democracy's inability to act in an expeditious and timely manner, this dhammic dictatorial socialism is able to act immediately to accomplish what needs to be done. This approach is illustrated by the many rules in the *vinaya* against procrastination, postponement and evasion. Similarly, the ancient legal system was

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<sup>4</sup> Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, *Dhammic Socialism*, trans. Donald K. Swearer (Bangkok: Suksit Siam, B.E. 2529/1986), p. 89.

<sup>5</sup> Buddhadasa-bhikkhu, *the Ultimate Dharma*, p. 110.

<sup>6</sup> Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, *Dhammic Socialism*, p. 92

socialistic. There was no way that someone could take advantage of another, and its method was “dictatorial” in the sense that it cut through confusion and got things done.<sup>7</sup>

The good part of dictatorship is its restraining and forcing people to be in line. While ordinary people are filled with defilements, dictatorship of a ruler helps keep them in good order. However, dictatorship can render most benefits to the world when it becomes dictatorial dhammic socialism. In other words, according to Buddhadasa, the best political system in the world is the system which allows people to work for the best of their society under the dictatorship of the dharma (morality or righteousness).

The last point I want to make and one especially important for the future is that small countries like our own should adhere to a system of “dictatorial dhammic socialism” or otherwise it will be difficult to survive. An illusory democracy cannot survive. Liberal democracy has too many flaws. socialism is preferable, but it must be a socialism based on *dhamma*. Such dhammic socialism is by its very nature “dictatorial” in the sense I have been discussing today. In particular, small countries like Thailand should have democracy in the form of a dictatorial dhammic socialism.<sup>8</sup>

Thailand today is a democratic country. Most of Thai people who are Buddhists need to examine their own political system. In the light of Buddhadasa, democracy is the worst system because “it encourages people to live only for their own sake through their defilements and their freedom. Other systems tend to be restricted by certain ruling power. Democracy, on the other hand, is totally free.”<sup>9</sup>

The flaws of democracy can be removed through moral cultivation of all people. Each social member should learn to be less selfish and be more altruistic. Especially, democracy will become a successful political system of the entire world whenever the government and the politicians work with the hearts of Bodhisattva as well as the people who accomplish their duty for duty’s sake.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>9</sup> Buddhadasa-bhikkhu, *Dhamma and Politics*, p. 289.

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## **Abstracts of Academic Papers in Buddhist Studies**

### **1. The Journal of the Royal Institute of Thailand. Vol. 32 No. 2 (April - June 2007)**

#### ***Abstract: “The Stimulation of Emotions for Ethical Benefits” Pataraporn Sirikanchana***

*Associate Fellow of the Moral and Political Sciences,  
The Royal Institute, Thailand*

Philosophers in ethics often judge a person’s behavior as stemming either from using reasons or emotions. In religion, behaviors resulting from emotions are deemed bad and inferior to those resulting from intelligence. In some cases, the meaning of “emotion” and “feeling” overlaps. Therefore, people often mention them together as “emotion and feeling”. Even in theory and according to religious principles it can be seen that the use of emotions may lead to the decline of individuals and society. However, in living one’s life the stimulation of emotions is a strategy mostly employed to achieve the desired political, religious, and social goals. There rises a question whether the act of permitting emotions to play an unlimited role in the way individuals and society lead their lives is dangerous to sustainable development of virtue Thai society should pay careful consideration in using emotions as a tool for building up **Abstracts of Academic Papers in Buddhist Studies** a moral awareness. Intelligence or reason should be used to control emotion in order to truly attain individual and common benefits.

**Key words:** emotion, reason, intelligence, virtue

### **2. The Journal of the Royal Institute of Thailand. Vol. 30 No. 2 (April - June 2005)**

#### ***Abstract: “Influence of Buddhism in Historical Thai Art” Lertsiri Bovernkitti***

*Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Burapha University,  
Chonburi, Thailand*

There is a historical relationship between Buddhism and indigenous Thai art; Buddhism has had an immense influence on Thai art and culture. The emergence of Thai art reflects the integration of Buddhist components into cultural, political and societal Thai systems, and mostly in the way that Buddhism has been represented from generation to generation and in the way people have shown devotion; Buddhist components such as Buddha images, Buddhist monks, and Buddhist activities (e.g., festivals and ceremonies) have been acknowledged as significant components of Thai culture. The influence of Buddhism on Thai art and culture has been systematic and direct from the beginning of

the Sukhothai Kingdom at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Subsequently, the indigenous art forms and styles engaged in the representation of Buddhism were integrated into the Thai cultural mainstream during the early Rattanakosin era, creating aesthetic art forms, which have been classified into “classical Thai art”, such as mural painting, sculpture and *Chang-sip-moo*, and “folk art”. Such influence of Buddhism on historical Thai art is relevant in the context of scrutinizing the relationship between Buddhism and Thai art.

This communication is aimed at pointing out the long-standing role of Buddhism in the development of Thai art in the past, especially the integration of the Buddhist context, which has led to the creation and the birth of indigenous Thai arts with the styles of “classical Thai art” and “folk art”, both of which are genuinely Thai. It is tenable that the study of historical Thai art with regard to the influence of Buddhism would lead to understanding of the development of current contemporary Thai art.

**Key words:** Buddhism, historical Thai art, classical Thai art, folk art

**3. Sukeeyamanont, Patomrat. “Adinna dana in Thai Thought and Thai Way of Life.” Ph.D. dissertation. Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand, 2005.**

*Adinnadana* means an immoral action against another person’s property. The concept of *adinnadana* in Thai society derives from the teachings of Theravada Buddhism and from Thai laws. Both are principally the same because they concentrate on the negative intention of an actor. *Adinnadana* continues to happen in the Thai way of life because of two groups of factors: internal and external factors. The former are the three roots of bad actions: greed, anger, and delusion. The latter are improper family care, the lack of opportunity in life, the lack of good discipline, and the lack of enough good models in society. The best way to solve the problem is by examining its roots and solving it from internal and external factors in the right way. The changes in Thai society and modern technology have caused new types of *adinnadana* behavior which everyone in Thai society will have to co-operate in solving.

## **IN THE NEWS**

### **WBU Organizes Buddhist Seminar in Honour of King Bhumibol on the occasion of his 80th Birthday Anniversary**

On the auspicious occasion the 80th birthday anniversary of His Majesty King Bhumibol of Thailand, the World Buddhist University Foundation in conjunction with Thailand's Department of Religious Affairs and Rajabhat Ubonrachatanee University organized an International Buddhist Seminar to honour the devout Buddhist monarch on July 27, B.E. 2550 (2007) in Ubonrachatanee, Thailand.

The all-day seminar with the topic: "The Value of Buddhism to Thai Life today" was held at the Arts and Cultural Center auditorium of Rajabhat Ubonrachatanee University.

Assoc. Prof. Noranit Setabutr, the WBU Rector, officially opened the seminar, and Dr. Phra Maha Cheun Chotiyano, the abbot of Wat Buddhavihara Nanachat, Michigan, USA, started the Dhamma talk in English on the topic "The Value of Buddhism to Thai Life Today" which was followed by a lecture on the topic "General Outlook of Buddhism in Thailand" by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Pataraporn Sirikanchana, the WBU Deputy Rector.

After lunch break, in the afternoon, the seminar resumed with a panel discussion by well known Thai Buddhist scholars on the topic "Understanding Buddhism through local Arts and Culture". Participating in the discussion were Prof. Tawat Punnotog, Assoc. Prof. Somchai Nilarti, Mr. Amnuay Vorapongsatorn and Asst. Prof. Suban Chandarabutr, with Asst. Prof. Dr. Tavivat Puntarigavivat as the moderator. More than three hundred people attended the seminar.

### **Several Hundreds Attend WBU Spiritual Practice To Honour The Queen of Thailand**

On August 11, B.E. 2550 (2007) the World Buddhist University Foundation and Thailand's Department of Religious Affairs organized a spiritual practice event at Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakayaram, Ratchaburi, Thailand.

The all-day Dhamma event was to honour Queen Sirikit of Thailand, on the auspicious occasion of Her Majesty birthday on August 12.

Nearly 800 people, both lay people and Bhikkhus attended the spiritual practice event, conducted by Phra Rajyanvisith, the abbot of Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakayaram. The Monastery is an affiliated member of WBU and well-known for teaching one of the leading Buddhist meditation methods in Thailand.

## About the Writers

**Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith** is the Abbot of Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakayaram in the Damnoen Saduak District of Ratchaburi Province. He has studied, practiced, and taught Buddhist meditation since B.E. 2513/1970. He ordained as a monk in B.E. 2529/1986 and received the Royal Ecclesiastical Rank of Phra Rajyanvisith in B.E. 2547/2004. He has published over 35 books, 200 articles, two journals, and has recorded over 500 Dhamma lectures and been awarded an honorary doctorate in Buddhist Administration from Mahachulalongkorn-rajavidyalaya University. In B.E. 2544/2001, his temple became the first Provincial Buddhist Meditation Institute in Ratchaburi. As an Associated Institution of the World Buddhist University, his Meditation Institute is currently training a continual stream of international meditators in English with exceptional results.

**Reverend Kodo Matsunami** is the head priest at Jodo Buddhist temple Kinryu-ji in the city of Tochigi, Japan. He is also a councilor of the World Buddhist University in Bangkok, Thailand, and is the International Committee Chairperson of the Japan Buddhist Federation. In B.E. 2542/1999, he was awarded a Medal with Blue Ribbon. Graduated with M.A. Degree from Harvard University. He has published many books both in Japanese and in English such as *Introducing Buddhism* (B.E. 2519/1976) and *International Handbook of Funeral Customs* (B.E. 2541/1998).

**Associate Professor Pataraporn Sirikanchana** is a long-time professor in Philosophy and Religious Studies at Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand. Having received a Harvard - Yenching scholarship and graduated with Ph.D. Degree in Religious Studies from the University of Pennsylvania, U.S.A., she has worked continuously in the academic realm. She has many articles and books published both in Thai and in English. At present, she is also an Associate Fellow of the Royal Institute of Thailand, a member of the Board of the National Research Council of Thailand, Deputy Rector of the World Buddhist University, and Honorary Deputy Secretary-General of the World Fellowship of Buddhists.