



ปาฐกถา

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(BUDDHISM AND ADMINISTRATION)
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**“Buddhism
and Administration”**

a lecture delivered in Thai and
translated into English by
Professor Direck Jayanama
at the United States Information
Service Center

Phatanaphonse Road, Bangkok

on May 21st, 1956

Translation
"Buddhism and Administration"
a lecture delivered in Thai

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Venerable Bhikkhus, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to thank Dr. Leidecker, Cultural Affairs Consultant of USIS, in inviting me to talk to you tonight. As to the subject, he let me have my own choice but of course it should fall within the scope of the series of “Buddhist Thought and Civilization” which in the theme of USIS in presenting these lectures. However, Dr. Leidecker indicated to me that a topic such as “Buddhism and National Affairs or Administration” will be most welcome. I hesitated to accept this honour for I know fully well that my knowledge on this subject is scant indeed. I finally was prevailed to accept. How could you, being a Thai and

a Buddhist , refuse, when the Doctor and this Institution who are our friends and foreigners. have these good intention towards all of us ?

By choosing to talk to you on "Buddhism and Administration" as suggested, I think it is appropriate, because it shall serve as a continuation of the lecture given here last Monday by Princess Poon Diskul on "How Buddhism came to Thailand". However, since my subject is a very big subject which we can discuss for days, therefore I shall confine myself only to the essential. Anyhow, I ask all of you to bear with me for any shortcomings.

I now wish to give you the outline of my talk. I want to show you that since you now see how Buddhism came to Thailand, how then Buddhism had its stronghold over us, Thai? We must enquire further to what extent it had influenced the Administration, since it was men and women who are Buddhists that run the Administration. Thailand is really a Buddhist country, fifty years ago even an Englishman had written a book, with a very proper title "The Kingdom of the Yellow

Robe”

I wish also to make it clear to you about the word “ปกครอง” (Pokkrong) or “Administration” in English. The dictionary of the Ministry of Education defines the word to mean “คุ้มครอง” “รักษา” “ดูแล” “ควบคุม” (which means protection, preserve, supervise and control). However, to us, Thai, we understand it to mean management of affairs, either private affairs or public affairs.

In every organized society, there needs protection and administration, such as in a family there is father, mother, sons, daughters and other members of the family including servants. From families, there are parties or associations, all these need a head and his assistants for the purposes of administration.

Therefore we can conclude that the word “ปกครอง” (Pokkrong) may mean to conduct ourselves, or to govern a body, a party, or to administrate public affairs. However, what I am going to talk to you will be mainly about the inter-relations of Buddhism and the Administration of Public Affairs, since it will cover

also the conduct of ourselves as individuals.

As to the government and administration of Thailand, I think all of you know that according to our history we had set up a Thai State definitely at Sukhothai since the beginning of the thirteenth century of the Christian era. To be precise, we considered that Sukhothai was the first capital of Thailand in the year A. D. 1237.

H. R. H. the late Prince Damrong, our great historian and also a famous administrator, told us that during the Sukhothai period, we had a simple patriarchal form of monarchy, or Paternal Government, the King was father to his people.

All of you here must also have known about the stone inscriptions of Pho Khun Ram Kamhaeng of Sukhothai in the year A. D. 1293. Perhaps, nothing could illumine this early patriarchal nature of society than to quote the following passage from the inscription :

“My father’s name is Sri Indraditya. My mother’s name is Nang Suang. My elder brother’s name is Ban Muang. We are five

children born from the same mother; three sons and two daughters. Our eldest brother died when he was still young. When I grew up to nineteen years of age, Khun Samchon, the Ruler of Chot, came to attack Tak. My father went to fight Khun Samchon on the left. Khun Samchon drove in on the right. Khun Samchon approached. My father's men fled in disorder. I did not flee. I rode the Elephant Nekbol. I drove in before my father. I fought on elephant with with Khun Samchon. I drove Khun Samchon's elephant Masmuang to flight. Khun Samchon fled. So my father gave me the name of Ram Kambaeng (Ram, the Valiant) for I drove away Khun Samchon's elephant. During my father's lifetime I served my mother. If I obtained game or fish I used to bring it to my father. If I had any fruit, sour or sweet, savoury and tasteful, I used to bring to my father. If I hunted elephants and caught any I brought them to my father. If I went to attack a village or town and brought back elephants, boys, girls, silver or gold, I gave them to my father. When my father died

there remained to me only my elder brother. I continued to serve my elder brother as I had served my father. When My elder brother died, I inherited the entire Kingdom."

Here follows another passage, which must have been inscribed after the death of this great King.

"In the lifetime of Pho Ram Kamhaeng, this city of Sukhothai is prosperous. In the water there is fish, in the fields there is rice. The ruler does not levy a tax on the people who travel along the road together, leading their oxen on the way to trade and riding their horses on the way to sell. Whoever wants to trade in elephants, so trades. Whoever wants to trade in horses, so trades. Whoever wants to trade in silver and gold, so trades. If a commoner, a noble or a prince dies, let his ancestral home, his elephants, his family, his rice granaries, his servants, his ancestral plantations of arecanut and betel, devolve on his children. If commoners, nobles, or princes have a dispute (the King) makes a true investigation and then only does he decide the

matter for his subjects uprightly, without siding with him who steals or showing preference for him who conceals. On seeing the rice of others he has no covetous desire. On seeing the wealth of others he has no seething desire. Whoever comes on elephant to submit his cities to him, he affords help. If he lacks elephants and horses, men and women, silver and gold, he gives them to him, helping him to measure up to be a country. If he (the King) captures a fighting foe, he does not kill or beat him.

“At the gateway there is a bell hung up. If anyone of the public has a complaint or grievance of body or of mind to before the king he only has to sound the bell that is hung up. King Ram Kamhaeng, on hearing it, will call him up for an upright investigation.

“The people of this city of Sukhothai are charitably pious and devoted to almsgiving. King Ram Kamhaeng, the ruler of Sukhothai, as well as princes and princesses, gentlemen and ladies of the nobilities, and men and women all have faith in the Buddhist

religion.....”

It will thus be seen that the Thai King was a warrior, a dispenser of justice, an upholder of the Buddhist faith, a father to his people, full of gratitude and filial piety. All these was due to the influence of Buddhism, which happily continue to the present day.

Prince Damrong further told us that later on in the Ayudhaya period, the growth of foreign influence and the Khmer ideas of government were adopted on a large scale though not to the exclusion of purely Thai conceptions, the two in fact being fused to form a new system. The Khmer cult of the Devaraja, or Royal God, a highly specialized form of an earlier Indian conception of divine kingship, in which the King was to some extent identified with the Hindu Gods, Siva and Visnu. The Khmer theory of government was an Autocratic Government. This combination of these two theories profoundly affected the early Thai conception of the monarchy, finally the monarchy became absolute during the Ayudhaya and Bangkok period up to A. D.

1932. However, we Thai, know that it is only in theory, for every Thai King is a Buddhist, and very few Kings indeed had exercised their absolute power. Moreover, all our Kings on their Coronation Days had affirmed that they shall rule and reign with justice and that they shall be guided by the Ten Rules or the Thosaphit Rajadhamma which were observed by the Kings of Kapila during the Lord Buddha's time. They are :—

- (1) Dana — Almsgiving.
- (2) Sila — Observance of the commandments.
- (3) Parricchage — Liberality.
- (4) Ajjava — Justice.
- (5) Maddava — Kindliness.
- (6) Tapa — Destruction of Vice.
- (7) Akkhodha — Freedom from anger
- (8) Avihimsa — Tolerance.
- (9) Khanti — Patience.
- (10) Avirodhana — Freedom from enmity, or goodwill.

Apart from this, if you read the daily Time Table of the Kings, you will find that

nearly all of them gave alms to the monks, listening to the sermons, and presided from time to time in all Buddhist ceremonies. We can therefore again say that all these were due to the Buddhist influence.

In every country, for purpose of public administration there must be laws so as to enable the administrators and people to uphold and follow, else there will be disorder and chaos, because no one will know where he stands. The question is what are the sources of these laws. Jurists told us us that in every country the sources of laws are : (1) The Lawgiver himself, or (2) Customs, or (3) Religion, or (4) Equity, or (5) Opinion of jurists, or (6) Judgement of the Law Courts, or (7) International Treaties.

We see now that Religion is one of the sources of laws, and that the Lawgiver does not promulgate laws that are inconsistent with the Religion, on the contrary promulgates laws so as to comply with the principles of the national religion. Many of our laws were influenced by Buddhism but at the same time

embodied with the principle of Toleration which the Lord Buddha taught, that is every one is free to profess any religion or creed and to exercise the form of warship in accordance with his own beliefs. But before we discuss about the influence of Buddhism on our laws, let us first trace their history.

According to our legal history, the main body of our ancient laws came originally from the Hindu laws of Manu, from the Pali of the Buddhists. Naturally new laws were promulgated from time to time by the Kings, and the orders and other sayings of the Kings with regard to petitions presented to them recorded and principles of laws were deduced from them. There had been a mass revision between A. D. 1448-1488, during the reign of King Baromtrailokanath. In A. D. 1767 when Ayudhaya was sacked by the Burmese, practically all the legal literature were lost. Therefore in A. D. 1804 King Rama I, the founder of the present Chakri Dynasty, appointed a commission which finally restored the legislation that had been in force in the Ayudhaya

period. However, in the beginning of the twentieth century, the plan to provide the country with a complete set of codified civil and criminal laws was decided upon. Belgian, British, Japanese and French lawyers were engaged as advisers. Between A. D. 1897 and A. D. 1936, the Penal Code and the Civil and Commercial Code has been promulgated. All these codes were drafted with the greatest care adhering to necessary customs, principle of Buddhism, but at the same time they constituted a definite progress from which the country will benefit in internal administration, and Foreign Powers on their subjects in their relation with Thailand. The drafters, composed of distinguished Thai jurists and those foreign experts, frequently referred to the French Code, the English laws, the Swiss, Japanese and German Codes, and the Italian, Belgian, the Netherlands and American Laws. They have always give preference to the most practical solution, and to the best adapted modern requirements, without being sheer imitators.

The next question is what is the culture of our people, how far have we been influenced by the Lord's Teachings? This is important, because the successful operation of these laws depends upon the people. To answer this question, we must study our way of life during this last 400-500 years. I have read books on our way of life. Apart from this my elders used to recount to me the daily activities of our people. I myself have the experience, for my parents had once sent me to stay with a chief of a district (Kamnan) in Ayudhaya for a week, when I was about nine or ten years old. I saw exactly what had been told to happen during our fathers' time. From birth till death, their lives centred round the monasteries. Those of us who live in Bangkok may not realize this. In our social system, all over the country, the village is the unit. Most of these villages had a Buddhist monastery, which served their spiritual needs as well as the people's education. Their daily activities are closely connected with the monastery. In fact, we are able to say that those

monasteries have a stronghold on our people. Every morning in the rural or urban areas, even in Bangkok itself, one of the commonest sight is the procession of priests, and the devoted people present them with food. We see more people offering food on every Buddhist holy day, or on festive occasions. There are sermons where all people in the village or district gather together. A few days before the Buddhist Lent begins, most young men who had reached majority will enter the priesthood for at last three months. All ceremonies, such as birth, marriage, house warming, death, which concern our daily lives, had to depend on the monks. All these confirmed again that Buddhism played an important part in moulding and forming culture and characteristics of the Thai people irrespective of ages, sex, occupations. Of course, in every community where there are many people, there must be people who in spite of all those good influences, are bad, and sinful. Fortunately, everywhere virtuous people are in the majority.

All of you are well versed in the principles of Buddhism, which are very logic, truthful and up-to-date. It has never been contested even by scientists. Moreover, they are democratic; this can be witnessed by the rules laid down by the Lord Buddha that in all matters concerning discipline of the Order, let the majority of the monks decide. Those decisions are based only on the Constitution of the Church and the discipline of the order. The ordination of the Bhikkhus is also democratic; before the Bhikkhus-to-be is admitted, consent of all the monks assembled is required. All may join the Order, provided he is qualified and sincerely wishes to lead the monastic life. There is neither caste nor colour barrier, and many Westerners are living today in Buddhist monasteries. It is the same in the Kathina ceremony, the presiding monk before accepting the gift had to get the consent of the monks assembled there. If you read the Declaration of Human Rights you shall see that practically all its principles are in harmony with the Buddhist principles. I am therefore confident

that our religious culture is still a living force on us and will be forever lasting together with our country provided we continue to take refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, helping the Church within our possible means, and following sincerely the Lord's Teachings. Then Buddhism will remain our national religion for ever. There are some Buddhists who although know very well the Buddhist principles "By oneself evil is done, by oneself one suffers. by oneself evil is left undone, by oneself one is purified". they still have the misconception that (1) they can pray and they will be delivered of the suffering which they had prayed for, and (2) they can commit any sin, but they can minimise or obliterate them by doing merits at the same time, such as offering food, etc., to the monks or going to the monastery and listening to the sermons, or making merits.

I shall discuss about praying. it is excellent if by praying we mean we will take refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, feeling grateful to all those who are our

benefactors, extending love and kindness to all, and purifying our heart. But if we behave against the Dhamma, we will not achieve our purpose by praying. I beg to quote again the Dhammapada 25/37 "..... The pure and the impure stand or fall by themselves, for none can purify another." and the traditional Teaching of the Buddha as rendered into verse by Sir Edwin Arnold in the "Light of Asia" (Book the Eight)

"Pray not! the Darkness will not brighten. Ask Nought from the silence for it cannot speak.

Vex not upon mournful mind in the pious pains. Ah! Brothers, Sisters, seek.

Nought from the helpless Gods by gift and hymn, Nor bribe with blood, nor feed with fruits and cakes,

Within yourselves deliverance must be sought, Each man his prison makes."

This is perfectly true. If we are hungry, and we do not partake any meal, but kneel down and pray, we will starve to death. If everyone is convinced that by praying he can

get what he wants, then the world will be in chaos. I can commit any crime, and then pray, if this succeeds we need no prisons at all, since every prisoner will pray, and surely they must have prayed, and still we have prisons.

The next misconception is, we can minimise or obliterate our sins by making some kind of merits, I beg to quote: "Whatsoever a man doth reap, that has he also sown." and from the Dhammapada (127) "Not in the sky, not in the midst of the sea, nor anywhere else on earth is there a spot where a man may be freed from (the consequences of) an evil deed." Thus is ever man the moulder of his "life to come" and master of his destiny. Yes, if we sincerely repent our sins, and try to do merits, it will bring many good results, but it does not mean that you can completely do away with the sins committed.

We now come to the influence of Buddhism over our laws. I have recount to you the sources of our laws. However, our various Constitutions always provided that the King

must be a Buddhist and Upholder of religions, which means not only Buddhism, but all religions professed in this country. This is also through the Lord's Teachings., that we should be liberal minded. All of you know already this influence extended to the Penal, Civil and Commercial Laws. The most important one is the Law on the Organization of the Church. In this law, the Church is supreme in its administration within the Buddhist area. (Buddhachakr).

However, we must bear in mind that laws are a little bit better than useless, if the men who exercise or observe them are bad men. Therefore, I think men are more important than the laws.

Speaking of men, Prince Damrong had remarked that among our many national characteristics, we Thai have three great ones, that is why we are able to keep our independence since the last 700 years. They are (1) Love of National Independence, (2) Toleration, and (3) Power of Assimilation. Concerning love of independence, I think it

is not necessary for me to talk about, for had it not been for this love we should not be free today. As for Toleration, this is clearly a direct influence of Buddhism. Buddhism is very tolerant in principle and practice. We appeal not to the sword but to intellectual and moral suasion. We have never in our history gone to war because of religious difference, nor closed our doors against foreigners as had happened in some neighbouring countries. Our Constitution protects every man of every religion and every creed on the same equal footing with a Buddhist. Moreover, we had helped those who profess other religions in this country. All foreigners who has visited this country had testified to this fact. As to the power of assimilation, Prince Damrong remarked that this power led us in eatlier days to adopt those features of Indian and Khmer culture that we found best suited to our needs.

Whatever cults and beliefs are adopted by the Thai, they are readily modified to suit their temperament and surroundings. When we embraced Hinduism, we adapted it as a sub-

ordinate to the former. We adapt and do not adopt. One striking example is our everyday wish. When we wish one another, we say, may this good, meritorious deed, or may the virtue of the Triple Gems, or may everything sacred in this universe, confer on you happiness, prosperity and reward you with all you desire. In the first place, we invoke the good deeds, that means we are following the Lord's teachings : Do good receive good. In the second place, we invoke the virtue of the Triple Gems, that is the Buddha-Sangha, because we take refuge in them, and lastly because we embraced the Bhramin cult, and because the Lord Buddha never forbid us to worship any other object so long as we do not violate his Teachings.

Venerable Bhikkhus, ladies and gentlemen,
 From what I have discussed, you can see now that Buddhism so profoundly affected Thai society that it is impossible to separate them. We had inherited the best Religion from our ancestors, and this inheritance will be everlasting if every one of us help to cherish them

by strictly following the Dhamma together with the Four Bhrama Vihar, Loving Kindness (Metta), Compassion (Karuna), Sympathetic Joy (Mudita) and Equanimity (Uppekha),

Thank you!

พิมพ์ที่โรงพิมพ์มหามกุฏราชวิทยาลัย

หน้าวัดบวรนิเวศวิหาร

ถนนพระสุเมรุ อัมรินทร์พระนคร

นายพินิจ ชูสำราญ ผู้พิมพ์โฆษณา

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