

Chapter 5

Origins and Growth of Buddhadasa's Movement

From the very beginning, Buddhadasa and his younger brother, Dhammadasa worked consistently to establish a network of operation to disseminate his teachings, openly and independently of the Sangha and governmental organizations. The Dhammadana Foundation was set up to support the various activities such as Suan Mokkh, a library, a school, a press, and the journal, Buddhasasana. These activities reflected the two target levels of Buddhadasa's work for spreading Buddhism: schools and libraries were established for the rural level and the journal reached the urban level.

Buddhadasa is not just a monk who withdraws to practice dhamma at his remote forest hermitage of Suan Mokkh; he is a prolific author of articles and books. The journal, Buddhasasana, was the first medium through which he transmitted his ideas to other monks and lay people. This medium of communication is one forest monks do not generally use. Buddhadasa was not a conventional forest monk, but one who related to the outside world (see Chapter 2).

Origins and Objectives

Buddhadasa's movement began with his own family. Dhammadasa played a vital role in spreading Buddhadasa's ideas. It was around Dhamadasa that lay people, common rural villagers, originally gathered. Buddhadasa has also taught them the dhamma.

Dhammadasa was not a monk but highly interested in religious problems. He adopted the idea and methodology of spreading Buddhism in villages from an article by Dhammapala (see Chapter 3). He set up a library of dhamma books at his shop for lending out so that people would better understand Buddhism.

This was when Thailand was facing an economic depression after the First World War, and when some, especially the educated youth of the country, were beginning to turn away from religion. Four or five local people in Phumrieng sub-district were originally

interested in discussing Buddhist teachings particularly concerning the problems in purifying and reforming Buddhism. These men were young and were farmers, fishers, traders, and carpenterse and they compose the ordinary people in the community. They finally adopted Buddhadasa's ideas and set up a group called themselves Kana Dhammadana (Dhammadana Group) to persuade people of Phumrieng to be interested in the Buddhist teaching and correct practice, organize, plan meetings and informal gatherings. So far the group had been organized by like-minded people of the same social type. It marked the origin of the movement and became an important element in the establishment of Suan Mokkh and the Dhammadana Foundation.

The Dhammadana Group began their work seriously in 1932, the year that Buddhadasa returned home. Buddhadasa's mother supported the work and donated all her retirement money of 6,378 baht for the first fund in June 1932.¹ With this fund, the activities of Suan Mokkh and the Dhammadana Group including the journal, were able to function. His mother, moreover, opened her house for use as a public library, the Dhammadana Group discussions, chanting, conducting Buddhist rites, and sponsoring sermons for people on the regular Buddhist sabbath and the annual holy days. Since religious rites were conventionally held in a temple, it was unusual that they were done at home at that time. Here, 20-30 local people regularly took part. The family home was set up for holding informal ceremonies.

The Dhammadana Foundation (which means the gift of truth excels all other gifts) was formally established in July 1932 at Phumrieng sub-district, Chaiya District, Surat-Thani Province. It consisted of lay people and monks who wanted to be "true" Buddhists and be truly free from suffering, not just in name or tradition. The objectives were as follows:²

- (1) To participate in developing Buddhism by disclosing the truth of the dhamma-vinaya openly so that Buddhists will receive a sufficiently correct knowledge to obtain its real benefits.

1 The sum 6,378 baht in 1932 equals 9,567,000 baht in 1988, calculated by comparing with the price of gold.

2 Chit Pibalthan, *Chivit lae Ngan khong Buddhadasa* [Life and Work of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu], (Bangkok: Kaseambunakij, 1971), pp.161-170.

- (2) To revive the activity of contemplation (Vipassanadhura) and promote dhamma practice more widely, because the study of the scriptures without serious practice is wasteful.
- (3) The Dhammadana Group did not intend to separate or create a schism.

The Buddhadasa movement has continued to insist on the objectives mentioned above, during the half century of its existence. The original purpose of supporting the practice of monks gradually changed to producing dhamma publications and spreading the dhamma. The result has been a rapid expansion of the movement throughout the country. The purpose of the movement for spreading dhamma became more precise and easier to understand under Buddhadasa ideal of bringing back Sila-dhamma. In 1971, the year Buddhadasa reached the age of 65, he announced three new resolutions as objectives of the movement:³

- (1) To try to make everybody reach the heart of their religion, no matter what religion that person follows.
- (2) To create understanding among religions in order to live together in the world.
- (3) To join forces in leading the world away from materialism.

These resolutions maintain the earlier objectives but made them more precise and more concrete.

³ Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, *Tambun Looa Aayu* [Releasing Turtles on Birthday], (Bangkok: Dhammabucha 1982), pp. 138-139.

Development of the Movement

From the very earliest day Buddhadasa and Dhammadasa played greater roles in the community. Once the movement began to spread among local people, some traditional lay-leaders of some temples who also had important roles in Phumrieng were not pleased, and this led to competition and antagonism.⁴ However, in 1933 the work moved to another new level which stimulated the growth of their movement and religious revival in the future. The publication of the quarterly Buddhist journal, Buddhasasana, which was issued from a small rural village, became the starting point of the enormous study that Buddhadasa did in comparative religions, religious problems, philosophy, psychology, and society. I would like to say something about the content of the Buddhasasana because it is an effective means to describe the development of Buddhadasa's thinking.

The journal consisted of three sections, translations of the Tipitaka from Pali into Thai, promotion of dhamma practice, and miscellaneous items. The first two sections mainly offer articles and translations of a great number of the Suttas which Buddhadasa deems suitable for the present time. It involves Buddhist teachings in theoretical terms, accompanied by explanations of the doctrines that were seen as the main principles for practice. The third section provided news about Buddhist and non Buddhist religious reform movements and propagation in other countries, and criticisms of the Sangha and Buddhist circles in Thailand. Buddhadasa took the whole responsibility for the first two sections. The third he left to Dhammadasa to write. It should be noted that some of the latter were rather strong but were written with sensibility and responsibility. The regular contributors were Buddhadasa and Dhammadasa, both using different pen names. Buddhadasa used more than 10 pen names for

4 First, the lay leader of Wat Nua began to claim that there was a mad monk at Suan Mokkh. In the morning when Indapanno went for alms, Muslim children in the nearby village would run away, shouting to others that the mad monk was coming. They told one another that Indapanno was mad and had been detained to guard the abandoned temple and they had better look out. Such misunderstandings persisted for many months before dying down, see Pasanadhammo Bhikkhu, *Lau-wai Mua Wai-soantaya* [Recollection in the Twilight Years Vol.1-3] (Bangkok: Komolkeemthong Foundation, 1985), pp. 7-8.

writing from different perspectives.⁵ Dhammadaśa was also an editor and worked on every step of the publication himself until now.

During the first few years (1933-1938), the Buddhasasana was distributed for free. Its subscribers increased to more than 1,000 after ten years, most of whom were in Bangkok. From my survey of the Buddhasasana (1934-1985) I found that during two decades (1932-1952) the responses from the readers included compliments, suggestions, comments, criticism and reproaches. They were numerous because the interpretations of Buddhadaśa challenged the traditional conservative atmosphere of Thai Buddhism. From my survey of the section of the Tipitaka translation, Buddhadaśa chose to translate suttas that strongly attacked monks and laymen who adhered to superstitions or sought fame and fortune. Later, however, Buddhadaśa admitted that this method was not effective because monks and lay people had followed the traditional beliefs for so long that they had taken deep root. He could only inform them that certain practices mentioned in the Pali text differed from what they had been taught and were practicing. Apparently, these suttas had never before been translated and used in this way. Buddhadaśa himself wrote articles for the first twenty years. Later, however, most of his articles were taken from his sermons in various places and published serially. It can be said that at the beginning Buddhasasana was the spearhead of the movement and spread new explanations of Buddhist doctrines to small intellectual groups, both monk and laity.

In 1934, Buddhadaśa translated a series of texts from the Tipitaka, The Buddha's Life in His Own Words. It was a new thing and the translation was published in Buddhasasana.

5 The pen names that Buddhadaśa used for writing articles were as follows: Buddhadāśa, used for writing about dhamma directly. This pen name was never criticized. It received only compliments. Indapanno and Dhammayodha, used for translation of selected suttas which criticized the behavior of some groups of monks and laymen who deviated from the dhamma-vinaya. Both pen names received most of the critical letters. Some people were so angry that they wrote to the editor asking him to expel Indapanno. Nai Hetphon was used for the pretence of disputing Buddhism in various aspects and actually did not reflect the real feeling of the writer, Pariandek was for presenting opinions about various activities and movements of the Thai Sangha; Siriwayas wrote dhamma poems; Sanghasena fought for dhamma and rightness; Duralokaramacit introduced subjects concerning the world and dhamma. This pen-name was seldom used; I.P., was used for the translation of suttas in the Tipitaka; Khaphachao wrote funny stories for the readers; Chinnawat, was used for various critiques.

Later the articles were compiled and published as a highly successful book. The significance of this book lies on the emphasis of Buddha as a man and how he actually lived, thus providing Buddha's life as a realistic model for people in the twentieth century. The translation only recounted Buddha's life in his own words, not including any commentaries or the translator's explanation. Buddhadasa's style of translation was simple, enabling the readers both "clergy and laity" to understand. His book was accepted as a textbook by The Board of Education of the Mahamakut, a Thammayut Buddhist University. It was more popular than other translations of the Buddha's life, such as that by Wachirayan, the former royal Thammayut Supreme Patriarch (see Chapter 2).

Later Buddhadasa compiled and translated other teachings of the Buddha in His Own Words, publishing them as large texts dealing with no less than 2-3 main subjects. They were also popular and were reprinted in large quantities. He began this work in 1934 and finished it in the later years of his life (1984). This was one of his most challenging tasks, one which he took on with great care in order to return to original Buddhism.

In 1935, Dhammadana Foundation led by Dhammadasa moved from Phumrieng to Chaiya (six kilometers from Phumrieng), due to the change of main railway line. A library, a community club and a printing press were opened in the new location, and the various activities continued. Buddhadasa himself regularly walked to Phumrieng 4 times a month to give sermons at the new site of the Dhammadana Foundation. A number of local people joined the activities. On Buddhist holy days, hundreds of people participated.

In the following year (1936), the activity of Dhammadana Group was operating like a mission. The Buddhaganigama School (Buddhist community school) was established to teach the primary and secondary education curricula, with knowledge of Buddhism as a supplement. This was done following the model of Christian dissemination through an education system, which the missionaries from the West were doing in Thailand. Buddhadasa and Dhammadasa wished to implant a sufficient understanding of Buddhism in children and young people. They saw that it was the proper method to propagate Buddhism. In this school, unlike others, the teachers and pupils had to follow the five basic principles of being

good Buddhist.⁶ The school opened in 1936 with 54 pupils and the number increased to 500 ten years later.⁷ Most of the locally born officials more than 30 years old graduated from this school.⁸

There is evidence that Buddhadasa also thought of a plan to manage a university-level education which would have Buddhism taught just like other subjects so that students could learn the Dhamma thoroughly enough to apply to their way of life and the society.⁹ But the plan was not done because of financial problems.

Studying the scriptures and practicing simultaneously, helped Buddhadasa discover the profound and universal meanings of Buddhist doctrines. Thus the more unusual his interpretations seemed and the more he attracted people to the Buddhist teaching and practice. Moreover, another step was taken when Buddhadasa developed the scope of explaining Buddhist teaching through other religious doctrines such as Zen, Tao, Mahayana Buddhism, Christianity, as well as natural science in order to help explain some aspects of Theravada doctrine become more comprehensible. He also translated Lankavatara Sutta, a highly respect sutta of Mahayan from English into Thai and published in the journal Buddhadasa in 1937, later The Hui Neng Sutta and The Zen Teaching of Huang Po of Zen Buddhism were also translated.

It became apparent that interest in Buddhadasa's teaching was not confined to local people. Through Buddhasasana his teaching attracted small groups of urban intellectuals both monks and laymen in Bangkok. Interest among them appeared to be strong. In 1937, Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacariya (Charoen Nanavarathera) of Wat Thepsirin, who was a high-ranking

6 The five principles of the Buddhanigama School are as every teacher and pupils
 (1) must not take any addictive, substance.
 (2) must not gamble.
 (3) must save, spending only as necessary.
 (4) must be deligent in his work and duty.
 (5) must have a spiritual refuge and lead his life as a Buddhist with right understanding (Interview with Dhammadaasa, Chaiya, 1988).

7 Interview with Dhammadaasa at Chaiya, 1988.

8 Interview a retired officer, who had studied at Buddhanigama school, Chaiya, March 1988.

9 Ibid.

senior monk of Thammayutnikai and was then also Chairman of the Sangha Council privately visited Buddhadasa at his remote forest retreat of Suan Mokkh, after it had been in operation for 6 years.¹⁰

Moreover, articles in Buddhasasana also inspired a group of Supreme Court officials; Phraya Latphli Thamma-prakhan (a barrister-at-law trained in England), Phraya Phroratchasuphit (a judge of the Appeal Court)¹¹ and Sanya Thammasak,¹² (an official of the Ministry of Justice) to visit Suan Mokkh in 1938. They were the first group of distinguished laymen from Bangkok to study the dhamma at the remote hermitage of Suan Mokkh. They stayed in small huts and had to take care of all their needs. This group became a great financial supporter of Suan Mokkh's activities and publication.

The consequence of the two visits resulted in Buddhadasa's movement achieving the reputation of being exclusively concerned with socially prominent persons both monks and laymen. The role and status of these groups constituted an impressive and possibly, dramatic testimony to Buddhadasa's movement.

In 1940, Buddhadasa accepted an invitation from the Buddhist Association of Thailand to give a lecture in Bangkok. At this point Buddhadasa's movement took an important turning point in the process of its development. The lecture in Bangkok has had a profound consequence in the way Buddhadasa's movement not only survived but also come out even more widely propagated than before. It was also the first time Buddhadasa introduced himself to the people in the capital. His full-form dhamma lecture was titled "The Way of Reaching Buddha-Dhamma," and lasted two and a half hours. Buddhadasa explained a high level

10 Buddhadasa spoke of the visit of the Somdet as follows: "The visit surprised us, since no one expected such kindness and sympathy from a high-ranking monk. He risked his honor in visiting us who, at that time were charged by some groups of people as being eccentrics and perverts. (Pasanadhammo Bhikkhu, *Phap Chivit Paadseebpee Buddhadasa* [The Life Image of Buddhadasa at 80 years old] (Bangkok: Komolkeemthong Foundation, 1986), p. 72.

11 Phraya was the highest position of the Thai traditional official hierarchy.

12 Sanya Thammasak was a former President of Thammasat University, a former President of the Supreme Court, a former Prime Minister of Thailand (1973-1975). At present he is the President of the Privy Council.

interpretation of dhamma principles which he compared with their scientific counterparts. It was innovative and greatly enhanced public awareness at that time. Consequently, the lecture was published and reprinted several times.

In this dhamma lecture, Buddhadasa also began a new tradition for giving a sermon: he stood instead of sitting and holding the scripture in a traditional manner. He was the first monk at that time who came out of the temple to speak to the public in ordinary language.¹³ As a result, he was rebuked by the conservatives that it was against the vinaya that forbids a standing monk from talking to a sitting laity.

The first challenging lecture resulted in Buddhadasa being accepted and highly favored by intellectuals in the capital. He was then invited by various prestigious institutions in Bangkok such as Chulalongkorn University, Thammasat University, the ecclesiastical university, the Teachers Association, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Justice, various hospitals and temples to give sermons. He became the model of a modern lecturer monk, who gives sermons on up to date topics relevant to the current situation and problems.

Buddhadasa was the first monk to be accepted by the progressive democratic and socialist section of the Thai intelligensia. Kulab Saipradit, a famous socialist writer, wrote articles of support in his column. We can say that since 1940, Buddhadasa's movement began to expand among urban middle class, particularly in Bangkok and became an urban religious movement.

One of the lectures that shook the Thai Sangha most strongly and is still influential and controversial even today was "The Mountain on the Buddha- Dhamma Way" (1948), which advanced the view point that the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha (The Triple Gems) if adhered to with wrong understanding would become like the Himalayas mountain, obstructing the path to Nibbana. In this lecture, Buddhadasa was opposed by the radical conservative lay persons, who accused him of being hired by the communists to attack Buddhism. As a result, he had to have an audience with the Supreme Patriarch to explain the matter in detail.

13 Phongphit, Seri, *Religion in Changing Society*. (Hong Kong: ARENA, 1988) p. 9.

Another lecture that attracted thousands of people to attend, such as the "Questions and Answers" dialogue between Buddhadasa and M.R. Kukrit Pramoj, a famous democratic politician.¹⁴ In one of these dialogues, "Working with an Empty Mind", became very controversial. They were unable to agree on some important dhamma principles. Buddhadasa maintained that the world and dhamma is one and the same, nibbana can be attained through one's functioning in daily life, when one works with selflessness (without the sense of "I" and "mine"). Mindfulness and wisdom are actually the the key factors for success in all types of work. Kukrit argued that the world and dhamma have to be separated; one's duty cannot be to attain nibbana, as nibbana concerned only the monks or people who turn their back on the world. This argument reflects the understanding of Buddhism by high class Thais and differs little from the common people. Buddhism is seen in terms of two separated worlds: the world of the monk and of the laity.

Some lectures, such as "Buddha-Dhamma and the Spirit of Democracy", were attended by the Regent, Pridi Phanomyong, a prominent political elite, another of Buddhadasa's admirers. There was evidence that he invited Buddhadasa to meet him at his house three times.¹⁵ Although the contents of the conversations were not recorded, one topic was the Regent's consultation regarding setting up dhamma centers like Suan Mokkh in many places including Ayuthaya, his home town, and a plan for promoting a proper form of Buddhism. All these projects had to be cancelled, though, when Pridi faced political difficulties and had to leave the country (see Chapter 2).

Under the absolutist regime of Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat who initiated the first national economic development plan, Buddhist teaching was selectively reformed to suit Sarit's plans and programs. Some aspects of the teachings which opposed his actions were censored. For example, he opposed the teaching of santosa as being an impediment to national development (santosa means satisfaction with whatever is one's own). Buddhadasa was the only monk who insisted the concept of sandosa and argued that the "contentment"

14 M.R.Kukrit Pramoj was a former Prime Minister during 1976-1978.

15 Interview Phra Panyanandha Bhikkhu. Buddhadasa invited him to participate with the Regent on the second time.

means being pleased with whatever one owns or is doing. This kind of pleasure maintain one's will power and motivates one to do more. Achieving contentment in whatone has done serves reinforcement to work harder. The teaching of santosa, therefore, does not obstruct development but promotes it. On the one hand, whoever is not satisfied with what one has done, sooner or later one will certainly go insane. Moreover, he also criticized the government's slogan and development policy of "Work is Money and Money is Work, both leading to Happiness" as a two edged knife. To encourage people to worship money will eventually lead to corruption.¹⁶

After more than a decade of religious writing and propagation, many monks and lay people visited Suan Mokkh, necessitating a bigger site. Work on the new Suan Mokkh, with a forest area of 124 acres at Chaiya, began in 1943. It was a big forest park similar to one in the Buddha's time to stimulate monks to pay more attention to practice. Four or five huts were at first built in the woods; later the number grew to 25, and still later to more than 70 huts.¹⁷ The following year, in 1944, Buddhadasa moved to the new Suan Mokkh.

It is important to note that the expansion of Buddhadasa's movement is directly related to publication and dissemination of his teaching. Issues of Buddhasasana from 1933 to 1946, were rather limited due to the small numbers of readers.¹⁸ His press was a small hand machine; his budget was limited; and paper was very scarce, especially during World War II. After 1947, the number of his journals and books increased.¹⁹ This was partly because of his first famous lecture in Bangkok in 1940, which popularized his work. Furthermore, he was invited to give lectures at many educational institutions and government offices in Bangkok each year.

16 Pasannadhammo Bhikkhu: 1985, p. 292.

17 The hut was 2x3 meters (including a balcony) made of wood about, 1.5 meters above ground, with 3 windows. The huts are in the forest about 50 meters apart, with a small trail leading from one to another. Each hut is for one monk. The facility in the hut includes a kettle, an electric light, a mat, and a wooden pillow (from the author's observation).

18 Thai population after World War II was about 18 million. At present (1988) it is approximately 50 million.

19 From the survey of Louis Gabaude in 1988.

Suan Buddha-Dhamma was established in the Northern province of Chiang Mai by Cheun Sirorot, a progressive businessman, and began first to spread Buddhadasa's work in the North in 1948. In 1949, Buddhadasa was appointed by the Sangha to be the regional leader for dhamma propagation throughout the 14 provinces of the South. In 1950, he was invited by Phraya Amornrit Thamrong, the Royal Commissioner for the Southern Region to go on an official dhamma propagation tour to every district of the South in order to teach and train the local people, government officials, and students. He accepted many tours like this. Beginning in 1956, Buddhadasa was asked to lecture on dhamma during the annual training of prospective judges.

All of these activities made Buddhadasa more well known among monks and lay people in both Bangkok and many provinces. His lectures at Suan Mokkh and other places were also recorded and published by others. One of his followers, a pro-socialist scholar named Sa-ad Watcharaphai, set up the publishing house Suwichan in 1953 and began to print Buddhadasa's teachings regularly. This was the first time that his books were published by a publishing house. Production was modern with attractive book covers containing lists of Buddhadasa's books on the back. This attracted many more interested buyers. Buddhadasa's work has also been printed in Chiang Mai, where another local Buddhist journal, Chao Buddh, is published.

In 1957 Pun Chongprasert (a former culture attache) established Ongkarn Fuan-Fu Phra Buddhasasana (the Buddhist Revival Organization) and published hundreds of thousands of Buddhadasa's books both for sale and for free distribution to temples all over the country. Then, in 1962, Wirot Sirit (a young lawyer) started Kana Puaphea Chevit Anprasert (the Sublime Life Mission) and a publishing house, Dhammabucha, which has published more books by Buddhadasa than anyone else.²⁰ The Sublime Life Mission is a significant source for supporting groups of monks and lay people who spread Buddhadasa's teachings in various places, especially in terms of audiovisual aids and teaching media such as slides, tapes, and

20 Interview with Mr. Wirot Sirit, Bangkok, 1988. Wirot is an attorney who has benefitted spiritually from the teachings of Buddhadasa. He then devoted himself to spreading and publishing Buddhadasa's books. The book, Handbook For Mankind changed his life. He sees his life's work as spreading Buddhadasa's teaching for the benefit of others. When Sa-ad Watcharaphai had to stop his publication due to his health, Wirot continued the task, changing the name of the publishing house from Suwichan to Dhammabucha.

books. Later, other presses in Bangkok such as Prae-Phittaya, Khlang-Wittaya, Kasem-Bannakit, and Sukhaphap-Chai printed Buddhadasa's books as well, but their interests were only commercial.

Another important group established in Bangkok was the Suan Usom Foundation (1958). Its aim is to promote dhamma practice particularly among well-to-do, well educated women. Some of them were ex-officials in the Ministry of Education who have played an important role in introducing Buddhadasa's teachings into Thai academic circles. This group has worked a volunteer editorial team, including transcribing all Buddhadasa's teachings from tapes and then publishing them. It also played an important role in categorizing all of Buddhadasa's writings and published them in a permanent, hard-cover form called the Dhamma Proclamation Series.

Moreover, there were still other groups, associations and foundations, including various clubs in universities, schools, hospitals and other official offices, which published his articles and books for distribution within their own groups. There were also private publications of Buddhadasa's articles together with the teaching of many other monks for distribution at birthday parties, funeral ceremonies, and on other occasions. Buddhadasa's teachings are also broadcast on radio by his followers, both in Bangkok and other provinces. In 1978, Buddhadasa accepted an invitation by the national broadcasting authority to give sermons on a nation-wide radio broadcast every month which has continued up to the present.

A large quantity of publishing of Buddhadasa's teachings is a significant phenomena. There is perhaps no Buddhist monk in the history of Thai Buddhism whose teachings were tape-recorded and have been as widely published as Buddhadasa. It reflects partly Buddhadasa's followers want to know his ideas and further spread them, and partly because of the demand of the middle- class in big cities. It also implies that part of the middle class in Bangkok rather than merely passively accepting Buddhadasa's teachings, also began actively to reproduce and propagate them. Importantly, after 1962 the center of propagation moved from Chaiya to Bangkok. The financial backing of a large publication, it was explained, came from urban men. Spreading Buddhadasa's teaching became a chief characteristic of the

movement.

In the early period, Buddhadasa wrote the articles himself, composing them in a concise style. Later, however, when his talks were recorded and published his style became more verbose and repetitive. The more his works appeared in books, the more frequently he was invited to give sermons. The more his sermons were recorded, the more books were published and the less writing he did. Louis Gabaude reported in 1988 that since 1955 the number of Buddhadasa's books increased rapidly due to use of tape recorders.

Publishing the unedited sermons, makes for less satisfactory books, especially since Buddhadasa does not have time to check what has been transcribed. Pun, an editor and publisher, has edited Buddhadasa's sermons giving them provocative titles. He has played a major role in propagating Buddhadasa's ideas among monks and common people in provinces. Without Pun's contributions, Buddhadasa's teaching might have interested a much smaller group of people. For example, his lecture for the prospective judges in 1956 were summarized by Pun published under the title, Handbook For Mankind which became more popular than the full lecture published by Suwichan.²¹

Later Pun not only summarized Buddhadasa's sermons but gave them a more severe critical edge, attacking monks who did not follow the dhamma-vinaya. Through Pun's work Buddhadasa's teachings became more comprehensible, so ordinary people could understand even the concept of Nibbana. But this sensationalism also caused to make Buddhadasa's teaching more aggressive than was really the case, and easier to misunderstand. It is possible that Buddhadasa decided to publish the Dhamma Proclamation Series in 1972 without summarization to avoid such a problem.

After 1966 Buddhadasa stopped accepting invitations to give lectures outside Suan Mokkh due to his health. However, many sermons were given on special occasions or for

21 From our survey, we found that Handbook For Mankind is one of the three books that people know best from their first encounter. These three books are: Handbook For Mankind, The Foolery, Everyday Language and Dhamma Language. The first two books are the ones Pun summarized from Buddhadasa's works.

different groups that ask for training such as students ordained during summer vacation, teachers, doctors, officials from many different offices, people in general, and foreigners.²² Each sermon and training session was tape-recorded. Many of them have not still been published. Many new books continue to be published. Buddhadasa still continues to teach.

Expansion of the Movement

During the first ten years, the expansion of the movement was rather limited. Although several social and religious activities of the Dhammadana Foundation at the community level were expanded, the ideas of Buddhadasa which were spread by the Buddhasasana attracted only a small number of the highly educated monks and laymen in the capital. Their interest in Buddhism was intellectual; they were unhappy with the traditional teachings and wanted to believe in Buddhism from a new perspective. As intellectuals well known in Thai society, their prestige and fame have caused Buddhadasa's teachings to spread effectively within their circles.

Since 1940s, Buddhadasa's works were published and have been rapidly disseminated for reasons already mentioned. It seems that the expansion of the Buddhadasa's movement is inseparable from the spread of his teachings. Those who adopted his interpretation were the ones who supported and then further spread them in various forms in accordance with their concepts, abilities, and methods without, being subject to anybody's plans, policies, or strategic purposes. The motivation for spreading Buddhadasa's teachings arises from their understanding of Buddhism as interpreted by Buddhadasa. They turned to religion in realization of its value to life, and the need to let others know what they know. Participants of the movement followed Buddhadasa based on their need for personal religious understanding and not because of a demand to become a part of the movement. The sense of dedication and devotion is strong in individual followers.

22 From my observation at Suan Mokkh, within one month (March 1988), there were 13 groups of students, teachers, doctors and people who visited Suan Mokkh and asked for sermon and dhamma practice for 3 days to 2 weeks. The people of these groups were about 5-30 persons. Apart from these, there were about 10 group tours, including children coming to visit Suan Mokkh just for 2-3 hours, most of them wanted to see the Spiritual Theater.

A few of the monks and laity who spread the works of Buddhadasa's had never met him or visited Suan Mokkh. Those involved decided what and how much they would do. They are in various professions and introduce the teachings to others in their own groups. They set up their own form with their own identity or talent and at their own expense. Each follower in the movement embodies in themselves a "movement" because they disseminate Buddhadasa's teaching in the way that each individual response causes a tangible impact in society. Each one in the movement use his own style in sharing the message with others. There was no form required by Suan Mokkh. With a similar background, it is easier to communicate, and the teachings are expanded in a wider scope effectively. Certainly, simplification of Buddhadasa's teaching has been worked out to suit various groups of people. Communication techniques and indirect propagation are used. As a result there are several forms in promoting Buddhadasa's teaching, for example students spread the teachings to their friends through cartoons and short true-to-life poems and by organizing ordination programs during summer vacation.

Some of them gathered in commonly organized groups, developed independent forms of reaching a large number of people. Many groups worked quietly and did not make themselves known, thus having fewer obstacles in their work than some other movements. Organizations, Foundations, and about 50-70 groups and clubs that were established after the Dhammadana Foundation such as Suan Buddha-dhamma (1947) or Sublime Life Mission (1962), originated from the ideas and needs of lay people who adopted Buddhadasa's teachings. They consisted mostly of young people from various professions, working independently, using their own funds, and expanding their works following their own ideas and methods. There were no specific practices or symbols that distinguished Buddhadasa's followers from others. The form at these sub-levels responded to the needs of the people and the localities and became one of the most significant factor for the expansion of the movement.

Buddhadasa's movement had unofficially expanded at many levels and in numerous forms. Quite often the message spread to the person's family, relatives, and friends. Expansion of the movement was multi directional: from monks to laymen and laymen to monks, from

teachers to students and students to teachers, from parents to children and children to parents, from friends to friends, from persons to group or institutions and vice versa. Interest in Buddhadasa's teachings was often sparked by his books. Significantly, laymen who become interested in his teachings have played an important role in the propagation of his ideas. They have actively undertaken to spread the message through activities that range from the establishment of the monastic center, private library, publication of books, student ordination program to face to face talks. Our interviews with his followers illustrate quite clearly many of the characteristics of the way in which his teaching have gained a growing following. We choose four examples from the interviews as representations to show the varied forms of propagating Buddhadasa's teaching which in turn reflects the different backgrounds and personalities of the movement followers, namely a businessman, a student, a housewife, and an ex-shaman.

The first example is Mr. Chuen Sirorot, a well-to-do businessman in Chiang Mai who came to know Buddhadasa's work from a book his brother in Bangkok sent him The Way of Reaching Buddha-Dhamma and Methods of Dhamma Practice.²³ The explanation of dhamma was something he had never heard of before. He read it over 30 times. Once he understood it, he decided to work for sasana (religion or Buddhism) as did the Dhammadana Foundation in Chaiya. He established Suan Buddha-Dhamma, a forest monastic centre in 1947 on an area of 53 acres, and invited Buddhadasa's monk-followers to reside. A press house, a library, and a public hall were set up. Buddhadasa's teachings and a Buddhist journal were published. He has supported spreading the dhamma in the north in all forms for forty years. He said "there is no work better than opening people's minds and giving them spiritual illumination."²⁴

The second example is Mr. Nikhom Chetcharoenrak, an ex-student of Thammasat University. He is the first person who organized A Student Ordination Project during the

23 Interview with Mr. Chuen Sirorot, a well-to-do businessman in Chiang Mai, September 1988. Chuen at present is 93 years old He was the first to introduce the teachings and works of Buddhadasa's to Chiang Mai and the North. He was a progressive intellectual in his youth and a pioneer in establishing the Teacher's College of Chiang Mai.

24 Ibid.,

summer session of the Thammasat University.²⁵ He learnt about the works of Buddhadasa when he was a student, from a small book a friend lent to him. It was a strange explanation of dhamma but it was comprehensible. He visited Suan Mokkh in 1970. At Suan Mokkh he experienced peace and first realized the importance of Buddhism to his life. Back from Suan Mokkh he tried to spread Buddhism among the students in Thammasat University. Discussions and seminars on Buddhism were held presided by the famous monks. A project to ordain students during the summer vacation was organized and 35 students enlisted in the first group to practice dhamma at Suan Mokkh for 45 days. It was also supported by the President of Thammasat University, Sanya Dhammasak (one of Buddhadasa's followers). The project was continued until now.

Perhaps one of the most ambitious examples of a response to Buddhadasa's teaching is Mrs. Sali Chairisin, a housewife whose Buddhist understanding and practice had focused mainly on making merit, attending sermons and performing Buddhist rituals and precepts.²⁶ She came to know Buddhadasa's books from a monk in 1976, but did not understand them until two years later. She said "Buddhadasa explains the dhamma differently from others in a way that I had never heard".²⁷ Once she had grasped the concept of everyday language and dhamma language she understood and turned her own house into a library because it is in an area that faces many temples. There are many books and tapes on the dhamma, which are mostly authored by Buddhadasa and Pannananda Bhikkhu.²⁸ Many monks, novices, and neighbors use it. She also encouraged her five sons (all of them are officers) to be ordained and trained at Suan Mokkh. She said "Buddhism is beneficial for every life."²⁹

25 From interview of Mr. Nikhom Jetcharaonrat, at Suan Mokkh, Chaiya, May 1987. Nikhom at present, 39 years old, is a regional bank legal consultant. He first studied the work of Buddhadasa in 1970 at age 23. He was the originator of the Students Summer Ordination Program of Thammasat University.

26 An interview with Mrs. Sali Chairisin at Suan Mokkh, Chaiya, June 1988. Sali now 57 years old, is a housewife. She finished four years of elementary education, and was first interested in the works of Buddhadasa's in 1967.

27 Interview with Mrs. Sali at Suan Mokkh, Chaiya, 1988.

28 Panyananda Bhikkhu, the abbot of Wat Chonprathan in Nonthaburi, near Bangkok, who promote Buddhadasa's teaching and has long held Buddhadasa in great respect as "elder brother."

29 Ibid.

It is worth noting, however, that Buddhadasa's lay followers have had to overcome considerable obstacles in their efforts to spread Buddhadasa's teachings among monks. This may not be surprising in view of the monks' interest in the preservation of orthodox Buddhist teachings. An example is Mr. Ta Chaiwong, the first person who introduced Buddhadasa's teachings to the people of Chiang Rai.³⁰ He used to be a famous shaman and gave up after reading Buddhadasa's book, Handbook for Mankind in 1954. The book changed his attitude towards Buddhism and he has distributed copies of the book to others. During the Buddhist Lent and on Buddhist Sabbath days, he stayed at temples to talk and to spread the Dhamma to lay people who spent the night there to perform Buddhist rituals. Each Sabbath day he changed to another temple. He went to every temple in every district in Chiang Rai, over 100 temples (about 8 temples annually in all) and paid all the expenses. He reprinted Buddhadasa's teachings in pamphlet form and distributed them for free. Ta also volunteered to demolish spirit houses; for those who wanted to do it but dared not do it themselves.

Certainly, there were a lot of obstacles to his work because the monks and lay people in Chiang Rai had never heard an explanation of Buddhism like that of Buddhadasa's. The head monks in some districts charged that he was a communist inciting the villagers. In 1979, Ta organized the Dhamma Mobilizing conference in Chiang Rai. It appeared that no well-educated monk in Chiang Rai accepted his invitation to help as resource persons even to take part in the opening ceremony. No town temples permitted him to use their places. He decided to use an abandoned area in a tobacco curing factory; inviting 30 monks from the Northeast and the South who spread the dhamma in Buddhadasa's way to teach people. He also distributed leaflets inviting the people of Chiang Rai to partice dhamma.

The first Dhamma Mobilizing Conference (3 days) was successful beyond his expectations. There were more than a thousand monks and lay people participating. In the following year, the conference was held in a temple because an abbot who attended the first one saw that this was a useful project. The fourth conference, the senior monks in the

30 From an interview with Mr. Ta Chaiwong at Wat Dong Nong Pet, Muang District, Chiang Rai Province, August 1988. Ta now is 74 years old. He has never been ordained, and has attended a primary school for 4 years. He first knew of Buddhadasa's works when he was 40 years old. He was the first to spread Buddhadasa's teachings to Chiang Rai.

province cooperated and acted as the resource persons themselves. He has organized this project every year until now.

Following is an observation on the expansion of Buddhadasa's teachings by Pun Chongprasert who was the most important one in promoting Buddhadasa's teaching. He said that:³¹

"I have published many important teachings in Buddhism and distributed them to the people for more than 15 years. I would like to note that all the senior monks have never shown any interest in or supported dissemination of the truth. However, Buddhadasa's teachings among the intellectuals spread all over Thailand because of their intrinsic value; whoever has read them and satisfied with them tell their continues."

The expansion of Buddhadasa's movement without any core or central organization may be seen as a weak point of the movement. However, it may also be the strength of the movement because there can be no "enemy."³² Instead of establishing a modern organization, having the same regulations and practices for a group of different people, Buddhadasa chose to spread the dhamma in an unofficial or formless manner, by which the teachings were passed on to people of different groups in society. Buddhadasa himself, although he acquired a high rank in the Sangha hierarchy, seemed not to get involved in the administrative organization. While he is officially abbot of the royal monastery of Wat Phabaramadhatu in Chaiya, he has never in fact taken up that position, preferring to remain at Suan Mokkh. To the questions about the organizing of his work, he said "I would not think of organizing a working system because I was not sure of my ability in this matter."³³ Most likely however, Buddhadasa did not trust any system, even the system of Sangha administration. Rather he

31 Pun Chongprasert, *A Shortcut Method of Practicing Dhamma*. Samut Prakan: the Organization for the Reform of Buddhism, unknown dated, back cover.

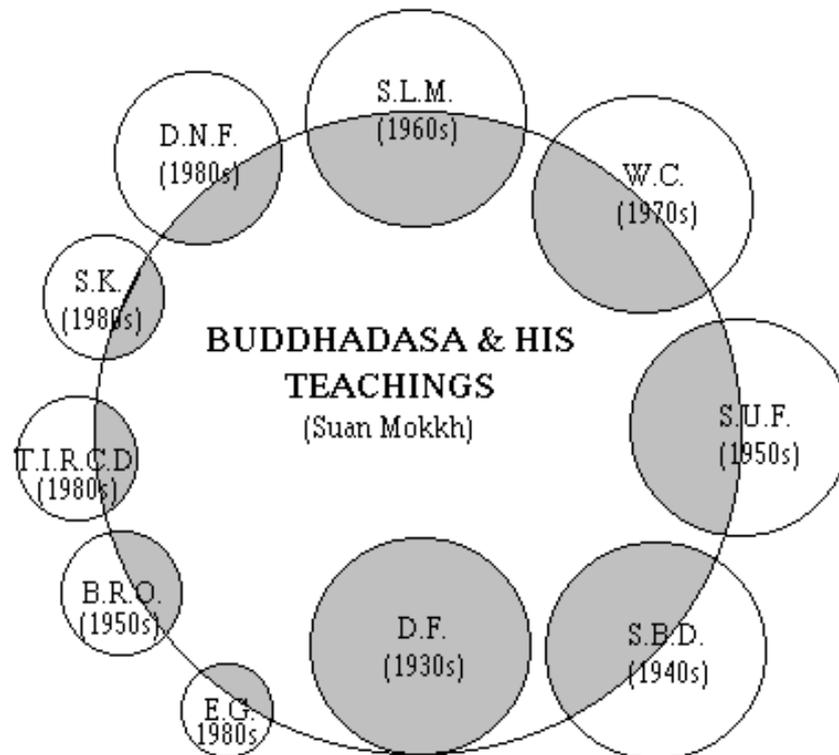
32 There is an evidence showing that Buddhadasa thought of establishing a large organization for propagation of the dhamma but did not carry on. Buddhadasa was once asked by a senior monk to outline an effective means of spreading Buddhism. The outline he proposed in 1953 actually was a big, modernly-administrated organization for propagation of the dhamma. It is a pity that it was not implemented.

33 Pasannadhammo Bhikkhu, *Lau-wai Mua Wai-soantaya* [Recollection in the Twilight Years Vol.1-3] (Bangkok: Komolkeemthong Foundation, 1985), p. 365.

trusted the inner quality of individuals. Although a system allows orderly work, Buddhadasa saw its weak point as being the base of attachment or a way to protect bad individuals. Moreover, the universal characteristic of Buddhadasa's interpretations of Buddhism provide the opportunity for his followers to apply the teaching to suit people in various conditions with an increasingly fluid type of organization in which many special purpose sub-groups formed and disbanded.

Though Buddhadasa's movement was characterized as a loosely organized movement, however in its simplest form, perhaps, the structure of the movement may be thought of as a series of concentric circles extending outward from the leader to number of groups and individuals. Following this is a chart to illustrate a simple form of the diffusion of Buddhadasa's movement.

Figure 1 : An example of a chart of working groups/organizations within Buddhadasa's movement



DF	the Dhammadana Foundation, Chaiya, 1930s
SK	Suan Kaew, Nonthaburi, 1980s
WC	Wat Chonprathan, Nonthaburi, 1970s
EG	Etappajayata Group, Saraburi, 1980s.
SBD	Suan Bhaddha-Dhamma, Chiang Mai, 1940s.
SUF	the Suan Usom Foundation, Bangkok, 1950s.
BRO	the Buddhist Revival Organization, Samut Prakarn, 1950s
SLM	the Sublime Life Mission, Bangkok, 1960s
DNF	the Dhamma Naat Foundation, Chiang Mai, 1980s.
TIRCD	Thai Inter-religious Commission of Development, Bangkok, 1980s.

----- Broken lines signify the non-formalized links of groups with Buddhadasa.

Shaded areas [Size indicates extents of relationship] signify the overlap of Buddhadasa's teachings with the basic beliefs of the groups. This also shows closer ties with Suan Mokkh and Buddhadasa. For example: D.F. has a complete overlap with Buddhadasa and Suan Mokkh because it is the group which directly works for the propagation and dissemination of Buddhadasa's teachings under the leadership of Buddhadasa's brother.

Though, it may be seen from the chart that the above groups and organizations were formed under Buddhadasa's movement they, however originate and develop rather independently. All of its leaders both monks and laymen repeat that their establishments are not branches of Suan Mokkh. The relation between Suan Mokkh and those organizations, groups and temples that spread the teachings of Buddhadasa is not that of a centralized network, but independent units working for the the same ideal. The relationships among them are personal. Some have worked in rural areas. They meet from time to time in small forums, organized by themselves. But systematic or formal cooperation does not happen. Mutual assistance follows this personal relationship. Exchange and reflection of experiences keep these groups abreast of the situation. However, there are some long-term cooperative activities among some groups, particularly after these groups have expanded, taken significant role, and have more personnel.

Significantly, cooperation between monk and lay organizations are very noticeable.³⁴ Groups like that at Wat Chonpathan where Pannananda Bhikkhu, a junior colleague of Buddhadasa is the abbot, the Sublime Life Mission, the Sila-Dhamma Teacher Club and Suan Usom Foundation work together with other groups including the Sangha and some government offices such as the Ministry of Education. For example, official nation wide training of moral education teachers has been organized regularly for more than 10 years (1977-1989) through the cooperation of the Sublime Life Mission, the Sila-Dhamma Teacher Club, Wat Cholapathan, and the Ministry of Education. A project in the preparation of curriculum for teaching Buddhism guides in primary and secondary schools by the Ministry of Education was done with Suan Usom Foundation and the Sublime Life Mission.

The relation between Buddhadasa and his followers, both monks and the laity, is a traditional one. There is no personal relationship. This is the frame of common relationship between an old monk and his followers in Thai society. Certainly, there are communications and visits between them, mostly they see Buddhadasa on some special occasions, or once a year on his birthday. Actual consultations with Buddhadasa are apparently rare.³⁵ The relation between them and Buddhadasa surpasses one of person to person; it is one between person and ideal. One monk-follower said that "Buddhadasa and he himself may not think alike, but he respects him for having the same ideals as he does."³⁶ Buddhadasa himself also insisted

34 Examples of co-operation between monks and lay organizations:

(1) Close co-sponsorship and cooperation between Dhamma Sathan of Chulalongkorn University and Wat Pha-laad and that between the Buddhasil Club of Chiang Mai University and Wat Pha-laad.

(2) Consultation service for development projects between Phra Banyat Anutaro of Wat Pa-Thammada, Bua-Yai District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province and Phrakru Thawondhammawat of Wat Kusanuan, Kong district, Nakhon Ratchasima Province.

(3) The Inter-Religious Commission for Development supports the Project for Rural Development by monks in the Northeast.

(4) The co-operation between the Sublime Life Mission, monks, the Club of Sila-Dhamma Teachers of Thailand, and the Ministry of Education in training morality teachers nation-wide for more than 10 years.

35 From interviewing 10 monk followers of Buddhadasa who work in different provinces, it was found that none has ever consulted with Buddhadasa about their work. They go to Suan Mokkh mainly for a visit.

36 Interview with Phra Visuth Visuddhicari, a follower of Buddhadasa's, Santi Maitri Monk Retreat, Surat Thani, June 16, 1987.

that:³⁷

"Suan Mokkh has neither branches nor followers because I have never treated anybody as a follower, everybody is their own teacher, and attainment of dhamma or enlightenment cannot be taught."

However, although some groups are growing and cooperating more and more, it does not mean that all of them are centrally linked. There are many monks and lay persons who are still working independently. It should be noted that there is no separation between the groups and the movement. Expansion of the groups is also an expansion of the movement; work of the group is also work of the movement. They accept the same common core, namely Buddhadasa's teaching. Many followers note that the most striking characteristic of Buddhadasa's movement is its free style.³⁸ But, what should be carefully noted is the need to unite Buddhadasa's followers. An obvious move occurred on the 80th birthday of Buddhadasa when many followers spoke of more cooperation with each another. Thus the appearance of Buddhadasa's movement may change after Buddhadasa passes away.

Since the 1980s Buddhadasa's movement has developed to another stage. There are some phenomena indicating that Buddhadasa's teachings have permeated into the rural areas. Many Buddhadasa's monk-followers working in the countryside villages try to modify and to give new meanings to traditional religious activities and rituals. Slides, shadow movies, etc., are used in training the youth and older people.³⁹ No doubt, Buddhadasa's teachings were reinterpreted and there is more concern with ethical conduct than with the profound aspects of teaching. The importance of such ethics is its intensive relevance to the daily life and the general social circumstances.

Some young monks improve their method of giving sermons. For example, Phra Phayom Kalyano of Wat Suan-Kaew, Nonthaburi, one of Buddhadasa's followers introduced

37 Interview with Buddhadasa at Suan Mokkh, Chaiya, June 1987.

38 Interview with seven monks at Suan Mokkh, Chaiya, 1988.

39 For example, training the youth and general people by slides, shadow movies, pictures at Wat Dong Nong Ped, Chiang Rai and the Meditation Center of Wat Thung Sawang, Ban Phai District, Khon Kaen Province.

a very "modern" way of talking about dhamma in a language understandable and accessible to the youth and men of the modern day.⁴⁰ The dhamma recorded cassettes of this young monk became as popular as pop music. They are available in department stores with the total sale numbering hundreds of thousands. His outdoor sermons attracted the public and teenagers more than a music concert. They are so popular that his sermon recorded-cassettes are listened to on local buses and tour buses, teenagers listen to them with their portable sound stereos. It promoted listening to dhamma not only among teenagers but also teachers, students, middle-class and lower-class people without precedence. In 1981, he was invited to preach more than 200 times, mostly to teachers and students.⁴¹ Phra Phayom explained that Buddhadasa's teachings were excellent, but not accessible to most people so his aim was to transmit this message in another "language". Buddhadasa said that he himself had been preaching the dhamma for more than 50 years but still he never gained the acceptance of teenagers the way Phra Phayom did (1980-1990).

From our interview, we found that a number of monks who adopted Buddhadasa's teachings returned to their home villages or hometowns to develop and spread the teachings under various projects such as promoting agriculture and improving irrigation, conservation and reforestation projects, training the youth by ordaining them as novices during summer, rice and buffalo banks, opposing alcohol and smoking, therapy for drug addicts, vocational training for women, setting day care centers for pre-school children, and school lunch programs. All these activities for improving life and welfare of the people seem part of an attempt to bring sila-tham (morality) back to the society.

A monk helping to develop the village in the Northeast said that "Most of the monks who work for development of the communities in this region accept and propagate

40 Phra Phayom Kalyano was born into a farmer's family in 1950 in Nonthaburi, near Bangkok. After finishing primary school (4 years), he worked in the fields and constructions. At the age of 20, he was ordained at his village temple and intended to be a monk only for three months. But when he first read Buddhadasa's books he decided to study nak tham (Dhamma Study) for three years. Then he went to stay at Suan Mokkh for seven years (1973-1980). He left and renovated Wat Suan Kaew, an abandoned temple in Nonthaburi into a forest garden like Suan Mokkh and became a popular preacher (See Sumeth Atsawapiriyawong, Phanniti Khongthet, *Phra Payom Kalyano*, Bangkok: unknown publisher, 1986).

41 Ibid., p.24.

Buddhadasa's teachings either directly or indirectly. Nothing deserves undertaking more than training people so that they have an understanding of spiritual life and can improve their standard of living."⁴² Although these monks are often opposed by high-ranking traditional, conservative monks in rural areas, they do not think this is a problem. Phra Banyat Anutalo a monk who has engaged with community development project in the Northeast for more than 15 years said "We do not expect any high ecclesiastical position and title, but only want to continue with the ideal of bringing sila-tham back to the people and society. There is something worth fighting for."⁴³

In my opinion though, Buddhadasa's teaching contains a dynamic and flexible character which could be transmitted from individual to individual or to some larger collectively. But without monk-followers who simplify Buddhadasa's message to suit rural people, Buddhadasa's teaching can only be comprehended and appreciated by the literate people. The development of the movement among the masses would be then unthinkable.

Suan Mokkh as a Centre of Ideology

Suan Mokkh (Garden of Liberation) grew out of the inspiration of Buddhadasa. His intention was to stimulate monks who had already studied the Pali scripture to further think of living in the forest to

42 Interview with Phra Khamphet Cakravaro, a monk who works and distributes Buddhadasa's teaching in the Northeast in September, 1988.

43 Interview with Phra Banyat Anutalo, Wat Pa Thammada, Nakhon Ratchasima, 1988.

practice dhamma earnestly and to live closely to nature as monks did during the time of the Buddha. The journal Buddhasasana, announced since its earliest day that Suan Mokkh has no teacher but is only a place for all of those who are interested in practicing dhamma and in searching for their own salvation.⁴⁴ Monks who practice differently can also live together. Besides vinaya (the monastic discipline), the principles they hold in common are "plain living and high thinking."⁴⁵

The forest hermitage, Suan Mokkh where Buddhadasa and about 70 monks reside, is located semi-isolated from modern urban life (about five kilometers south of Chaiya district). It illustrates not only Buddhadasa's ideals of propagating the pristine substance of Buddhism in a form which combines the traditional and modern, but also reflects Buddhadasa's attempt to revive the popularity of forest monk tradition in Thailand. Unlike most Thai monasteries, Suan Mokkh has no elaborately decorated temple. Its chapel (booth), where the Sangha performs rites including ordination ceremony, is on the top of a hill with trees as pillars and a canopy of leafy branches as a roof. The vihara (hall) is a semi-circular rock platform under the shade of trees. It is used for preaching, conferences, and welcoming quests. Buddhadasa believes that one must harmonize with nature in order to realize dhamma. Thus Suan Mokkh is preserved with forests, streams, rocks and wildlife so that those who come into contact with it can learn from nature which can help them in understanding what is called "dhamma". Here people, animals, and trees live together harmoniously. Buddhadasa teaches the dhamma on a rock under the shade of a tree; monks and lay people sit on the sand-ground while squirrels are noisily chasing one another in the trees and chickens are scratching the ground looking for food. In the audio tape recording of Buddhadasa's preaching, there are frequently sounds of cocks crowing, and dogs barking in the background. This is another example of life at Suan Mokkh.

44 The rule for accepting a monk who wants to live in Suan Mokkh is that he must have finished the third level of the Dhamma Study (nak tham _k). However, Buddhadasa later found that there were many monks who had not taken the Dhamma Study but were earnest in practicing dhamma. In such cases, Buddhadasa will specially consider accepting them (Interview with Dhammadasa, Chaiya, 1988).

45 Interview with Phra Pho Jantasaro, the deputy abbot of Suan Mokkh, Chaiya, 1988.

The focus of the hermitage, however, is a modern building which is called "spiritual theater." It is the large, two-storey auditorium where Buddhist teaching is propagated through slides, films, and more than 900 paintings of religious puzzle pictures from Theravada and Mahayana traditions as well as other religions, appear on the inner side of the walls. All around outside walls of the theater are reliefs illustrating the life history of Buddha. These were reproduced from photographs of the ancient Indian Buddhist sculptures at Sanchi, Bharhut, Amaravati, and Buddhakaya.⁴⁶ This was Buddhadasa's attempt to make a study of Buddhism to be enjoyable. Those who come to study dhamma or just visit Suan Mokkh for a short period can understand the dhamma easily through such media. In some senses, it is a part of conservation of the traditional dhamma teaching method, that is, Buddhism was taught to ordinary people through pictures because in the past the majority of people were illiterate.

It seems that various things within Suan Mokkh was made an object for dhamma teaching where the path to attain the ultimate goal of Buddhism are expressed in many forms such as the Nalike Pond: a big pond having a small island with a coconut tree at its center. It is explained that nibbana lies within the vicious circle of life (samsara) and that extinction of suffering is to be done amidst suffering. Buddhadasa built it according to the message of a local lullaby, as a memorial to the moral standards and wisdom of past generations who understood dhamma profoundly that they could express "nibbana" through a children's lullaby.

Another prominent statue is Avalokitesvara Bodhisatva which was not made as an idol to worship in response to superstitious beliefs, rather it was made an object for reflection on the dhamma virtues of the Bodhisatva, namely purity, wisdom, friendliness, and tolerance (suddhi, panna, metta, khanti). One of the most important place is Sala Dhammaghosana, a one-storey building which has all of Buddhadasa's books, tapes etc. Here too is where Buddhadasa will be buried among his works which will be proof of his immortality. Moreover, there is a house of plasterwork where dhamma dolls, coin banks, stickers, and balloons are made for giving children who visit Suan Mokkh and promise to be "good". Also

⁴⁶ Santikaro Bhikkhu, *Life and Work of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu*. (Bangkok: Foundation for Children, dated unknown), p. 17.

here are thousands of packs of cigarettes, liquor bottles, opium pipes, cards, and other different types of gambling equipment in a large heap. They used to belong to those who now have been converted and have given them up. There are no donation boxes and no rites concerning sacred things because they were considered by Buddhadasa as disturbed things.⁴⁷

Monks at Suan Mokkh lead a simple life according to dhamma-vinaya. They live in small, relatively isolated dwellings spread throughout a wooded hillside of over 150 acres, going out to receive the morning alms, eating once a day from their alms bowls, bathing in a stream, chanting, and devoting their time to meditation practice as well as physical work such as construction, sculpture, drawing, producing teaching materials, training children, giving lectures to people who visit Suan Mokkh and other works.⁴⁸ They are encouraged to encounter everything carefully and scrutinize it in all regards, no matter what they are doing: working, eating, seeing, listening, socializing, and not even resting is without its duty. All are regarded as learning and practicing dhamma, so that one can know everything as it is and can be mindful in all steps of life until they realize the truth. However, that does not mean that the monks seclude themselves and do not contact each other. On the contrary, they work together, helping the sick among them, and giving encouragement for dhamma practice or work.

At Suan Mokkh there are no classrooms, everybody studies alone. Buddhadasa preaches for everybody. He has no time to teach anybody privately as in other temples. He regards that living, working are in themselves an education; it is learning from reality. This is the true knowledge, the knowledge that lead to right understanding (*samma-dhitthi*) and right conduct (*samma-kammanta*). The "path" of enlightenment is not apart from a routine daily life. To study Buddhism one must learn from life and everyday work because dhamma is the reality of life. Buddhadasa emphasizes that dhamma and life can never be separated, since

47 At Suan Mokkh there are no donation boxes. People who visit Suan Mokkh and want to donate, they can do so with Buddhadasa or his assistants. Every donator will receive the book of Buddhadasa.

48 At Suan Mokkh, there is a "Labor Day" for every seven days. Monks will labor together in digging ditches, constructing roads, building construction, etc.

they are one.⁴⁹ Working is dhamma practice if the work is purposefully done well, it will be accompanied with a level of orders, mindfulness, and wisdom.⁵⁰ Ritual, chanting, and meditation all took second place to the primary obligations. The essence of Buddhism cannot be learnt through reading, listening, or speculating, but only through actions and from actions. Buddhadasa maintains that in life and work there exist all kinds of dhamma.

It appears that Buddhadasa regards independence, self-responsibility, and self-training as the most significant bases of learning, practicing and development of intelligence and ability so that the latter two can be their teachers or refuge. Enlightenment is a matter of people who have trained themselves well. Obedience and conformity are not required by Buddhadasa. Each monk has to responsible for himself, solve his own problems; there is no predetermined set of solutions. They are independent in setting regulations for himself and in developing themselves according to his own personality and readiness. One's personality and potentiality are considered by Buddhadasa as what can be improved, corrected, and developed endlessly. The answer to the questions on life and religion are found within an individual's ability. However, conservation of the Sangha tradition and preservation of one own's credit as a monk are always emphasized.

Places devoted to dhamma practice in order to track the arahants' footsteps (perfected man) like Suan Mokkh have few regulations. "Buddhadasa wants everybody to live independently without such words as "rules" and there are no list of rules with its fairly precise prescriptions of norms of behavior or punishments at Suan Mokkh" said his followers.⁵¹ Certainly, there are some problems. Most of them, however, said that they were pleased to live in such a way.⁵² Pha Maha Jamrat Sukawaro, a monk who take part in producing

49 Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, *Thamma-banyaai Ladap Mahawittayalai* [Dhamma Lectures of Students Vol.1.] (Chaiya: Dhammadana Foundation, 1983), p. 249.

50 According to Buddhadasa in life and work there are happiness and suffering, rightness and wrongness, gain and loss, losing and winning etc. All these teach people the truth of life (anicca, dukkha, anatta or impermanent, suffering and emptiness) and how to obtain peacefulness.

51 Interview Phra Varasak Varadhammo at Suan Mokkh, March 1988.

52 Interview with seven monks at Suan Mokkh, Chaiya, 1988.

dhamma teaching materials at Suan Mokkh and has stayed there for five years said that:⁵³

At Suan Mokkh both monks and novices do all kind of hard work, even the lowest. We work without anybody thanking us, for working is self training for perseverance, sacrifice and elimination of selfishness. We work without wanting to demand our rights, only have the right to do our duty as human beings. Working without demanding a right creates excess results for others.

Phra Maha Pratheep, one of the most advocated monk in propagating Buddhadasa's teaching at Wat Chonpathan recounted that Buddhadasa always told monks who worked together at Suan Mokkh that "For the work you are doing, no matter how hard it is or how exhausted you become I will not give you anything in return, not even a word of thanks. It is not only myself who is "Buddhadasa" (servant of the Buddha) but all of you too."⁵⁴

Those who really want an advice from Buddhadasa can have one whenever they meet him. His advice, however, is always given based on the principles of dhamma and broad theoretical aspects rather than going to the root of the problem. Two lay-followers who are medical doctors and come to practice dhamma at Suan Mokkn said that "Buddhadasa wants people who practice dhamma do not question but study, train themselves, observe, and watch the occurrence such as thoughts, feelings, desires, and the influence of the outside environment on their minds. They have to think of solving problems and overcoming obstacles which are in a sense the best teachers and the best tests for intelligence."⁵⁵ Following are examples of the people whose thoughts and ideals were influenced by Suan Mokkh.

First is a monk who plays an important role in spreading the dhamma in the South. He said that after having traditionally been ordained for three months he prepared to disrobe.

53 Interview of Pha Maha Jamrat Sukawaro, at Suan Mokkh, 1988. He is 29 years old and has been ordained for 8 years in the Northeast. He finished elementary school for 4 years. After finished the third level of the Dhamma Study he went to Suan Mokkh to practice dhamma.

54 Interview of Phra Maha Pratheep Uttamapanno at Wat Chonprathan, Nonthaburi Province, August 1988.

55 Interview of Ms.Kanneka Benjapong and Ms.Sermstrup Damrongrat, both are dortors at Saraburi Province, Suan Mokkh 1987.

Before the time of disrobing he arranged the books in his temple to set up a library and found Buddhadasa's book Handbook For Mankind. It has many interesting thought-provoking things in it. He went to Suan Mokkh thinking to stay for only seven days before disrobing. He experienced the natural atmosphere at Suan Mokkh, the simplicity of monk's way of living, Buddhadasa's preaching, and working hard with other monks. He read more of Buddhadasa's books especially The Buddha's History in His Own Words which impressed him the most. Finally, he decided not to disrobe and stayed at Suan Mokkh for seven years (1972-1979). He said that:⁵⁶

Suan Mokkh provides freedom for everybody in learning, correcting oneself, self-training, and self-development according to one's own readiness and method. There are no rules other than the vinaya. There is no coercion and no punishment. My thinking and my mind have changed a lot since the first year. My ideal of loving others and devoting myself to Buddhism started here and roots deeper and deeper into my conciouness. I left Suan Mokkh to start my own temple and to work according to my own thoughts. Buddhadasa and myself do not think alike but we have the same goal and ideal.

A second example is a monk who has played a significant role in rural development of the Northeastern Thailand. He was interested in occultism. After having been ordained at the age of 21, he studied nak tham (Dhamma Study) and occultism. He first read Buddhadasa's books Handbook For Mankind and Stupidity which reminded him of his own deeds and the goal of ordination. The Treasure in The Buddha's Words is the book that caused him to abandon occultism and went to Suan Mokkh in 1965. The simple life of the monks who live at Suan Mokkh and their dedication, Buddhadasa's teaching and his joining in work with other monks, all these strongly affected him. He joined all kinds of work with them, breaking and grinding rocks with a hand-tools, digging the ground, bending iron rods, and constructing buildings, etc. He then came to realize that work is life, and working is practicing the dhamma. It is the spirit of developments. He said that:⁵⁷

56 Interview with Phra Visuth Visuddhicari, Satimaitree Temple, Surat Thani, on June 16, 1987. Phra Visut is 46 years old. He finished high school, has played a significant role in propagating Buddhadasa's teachings among the youth, students, and government officials through summer ordination of novices and ordination of Buddhist nans. Annually this temple holds no less than 3-5 big training programs.

57 Interview with Phra Banyat Anuttaro of the Wat Pa Thammada Bua Yai District, Nakhon Ratchasima, July 1987. He is 52 years old having, finished the fourth grade of primary education.

The love of work is the spirit I acquired from Suan Mokkh. I lived there for five years, then I left to develop my own village in 1970. Nobody, besides Buddhadasa, stay at Suan Mokkh for too many years. Everybody leaves with a new spirit and ready for new initiatives. If you ask how I came to have the ideal of working for rural development, you can write down that it came from Suan Mokkh.

From our observation, the general routine of monks at Suan Mokkh is the traditional routine of monks in many temples in Thailand. It should be noted that not all of the monks at Suan Mokkh join these programs. Some of them eat where they work and chant in their own kutis.

- 4:30 a.m. Performing morning chanting together.
- 6:00 a.m. Going on alms rounds (on returning every monk will leave the food at the dining hall, then take a bath and rest before eating).
- 8:00 a.m. Eating together at the dining hall (once a day). Every monk sits in accord with their seniority, which is by the number of the years ordained. Pots of rice and food are passed on a trolley in front of each monk. A monk will put as much rice and food in his alms bowl as he will eat for that meal. Then the pot of food will be passed on without a return.
- 9:30 a.m. After the monks' eat and clean alms bowls, a senior monk sometimes talk to younger monks, asking them to live and follow the dhamma-vinaya (when Buddhadasa was still healthy he would take this time to preach, give advice on practicing dhamma, talk to other monks, and exchange ideas with them).
- 10:30 a.m. Taking a rest as desired (but no sleeping). Some monks read, work or seclude themselves.
- 16:30 p.m. Light work such as cleaning huts or walking paths before bathing.
- 17:00 p.m. Gathering together at the preaching house for 17:30 p.m. Evening

He plays a significant role in stimulating the monks of the new generation in the Northeast to be interested in developing their own communities. Current rural development are buffalo bank, rice bank, reforestation project, day care centers.

chanting. (When Buddhadasa was still healthy, there would be preaching everyday at this time, especially during the Buddhist Lent).

At present, arranging a forest garden like Suan Mokkh has become a model for providing lodging for monks who want to lead their lives like that during the Buddha's time. This arrangement seems to be appropriate for the present is appropriate for socio-economic condition as well. There are many monks who are attempting to modify their own temples into a form of a natural forest monastic centre like that in the Buddha's time.

For the lay people living at Suan Mokkh emphasis is placed on simplicity and not too much convenience. There is still a permanent separation between monks and lay people at Suan Mokkh. However, it can be noted that there are many activities in which they cooperate closely; and even Buddhadasa himself joins in.⁵⁸ Suan Mokkh has also been receiving more groups of people wanting to study dhamma or coming for a temporary visit every year. There are guest houses which can accommodate more than 1,000 lay people (men and women have to stay separately). Also, hundreds of newly ordained monks are trained every year. Foreigners from more than 20 countries come here to study dhamma. A ten day basic meditation course is arranged for them at the beginning of every month, and over 150 of them are trained annually. In 1983, the break-down of Suan Mokkh visitors were as follows:⁵⁹

Table 1 Suan Mokkh Visitors for 1983

Visitors	Amount (people)
Daytime visitors	116,044
Visitors staying overnight	15,159
(classified into:)	
general people	7,099
schoolchildren	4,255
monks and novices	1,641
students	1,397

58 For example those activities in which monks and laity have joined together are canal dredging and road building. Especially, construction work at Suan Mokkh over the past 20 years has been accomplished through the voluntary labors of the monks and the laity (both men and women).

59 Pasannashammo Bhikkhu, 1985, p. 193.

teachers/universities/instructors	617
foreigners	150

Table 2 shows the exchange of dhamma recorded tapes at Suan Mokkh from 1982 to 1988. A distinction is made between exchanges by laymen and monks.⁶⁰

Table 2 Exchange of recorded tapes at Suan Mokkh 1982-1988

Years	Numbers of recorded tapes		Total amount
	Laymen	Monks	
1982	3,429	4,676	8,105
1983	8,367	3,789	12,156
1984	11,852	7,025	18,877
1985	12,583	6,470	19,053
1986	15,256	8,637	23,893
1987	15,544	9,484	25,028
1988	16,760	10,157	26,917

Source: List of books of dhamma recorded tapes at Suan Mokkh

⁶⁰ Every preaching or dhamma lecture by Buddhadasa is recorded on a big reel of tape. After that it is transferred onto one hour cassettes which are categorized by the topic. Each topic is made for those who are interested, for example, those who can read slowly or are illiterate and those who do not have time to read. The principle for those who exchange tapes is that they have to bring blank tapes to exchange with recorded tapes (there are no tapes for sale). At Suan Mokkh Buddhadasa does not allow any business transaction, even the sale of his own books.