

## **Chapter 8**

### **Conclusion**

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1906- ) was a product of his age. He referred to his time as the decline of Buddhism. His search for spiritual meaning and his reinterpretation of Buddhism could not have occurred isolated from socio-cultural environment of his time. However, his religious thought could have developed beyond the fabric of traditional Thai Buddhist teachings and practices. The motivation for his interpretation of Theravada doctrine seems to go far beyond the simple problem of communication. It is rather a problem of making Buddhism not only meaningful but also relevant to the modern world. At the same time Buddhadasa also sees his work as an attempt to return to pristine Buddhist teaching. Buddhadasa's teaching has spread for over 50 years and has become one of the most prominent religious movements in contemporary Thailand.

The Buddhadasa movement originated in 1932, the year in which Buddhadasa, an ordinary Thai monk of Chinese origin, left his traditional Pali studies in Bangkok and returned to his hometown of Chaiya, where he spent many years alone in the forest practicing meditation and studying the Tipitaka. After he returned to a normal monastic life, he became strongly committed to the interpretation and propagation of Buddhism. The way he has led his life reflects the merging of spiritual experience and everyday living, non withdrawal from society. His forest dwelling became known as Suan Mokkh (Garden of Liberation).

Suan Mokkh, the forest hermitage, where Buddhadasa and about 70 monks reside, illustrates not only Buddhadasa's ideals of propagating the pristine substance of Buddhism in a form which combines the traditional and the modern but also reflects Buddhadasa's attempt to revive the popularity of the forest monk tradition in Thailand. Unlike most Thai monasteries, Suan Mokkh has no elaborately decorated temple. The monks live in small, relatively isolated dwellings spread throughout a wooded hillside of over 150 acres, and lead their lives simply and close to nature. Their chapel (bot) is on the top of a hill with trees as pillars and a canopy of leafy branches as a roof. The focus of the hermitage, however, is a modern building which is called "spiritual theater." It is used as an audio-visual center where Buddhism is propagated through paintings, slides, and films. Unlike the average Thai monk who does not engage in physical labor beyond the maintenance of his own quarters, the monks of Suan Mokkh spend

part of everyday working: constructing new buildings, roads, and producing the teaching material.

Buddhadasa's movement began with a core of four or five local people in Chaiya who gathered to discuss Buddhist teaching, religious problems, and the revival of Buddhism. They adopted Buddhadasa's teaching and set up a group to spread it among inhabitants. The spread of Buddhadasa's teaching has several phases. In the first decade it was a teaching for local people, namely farmers, fishers, and traditional craftsmen. It was through a Buddhist journal, Buddhasasana (founded in 1933), which was issued by Buddhadasa's younger brother, Buddhadasa's religious ideas inspired a small group of intellectuals -both monks and laymen- in the capital. Subsequently, a group of Supreme Court officials and a high-ranking senior monk of Thammayutnikai visited him at Suan Mokkh. In 1940, Buddhadasa was first invited to give a sermon in Bangkok. His challenging lecture resulted in Buddhadasa being the first monk in this country to be accepted by both the democratic and socialist sections of the Thai intelligentsia. Since then Buddhadasa's movement has expanded among the urban well-educated middle strata, particularly in Bangkok where the process of modernization was advancing, and his ideas, disseminated through his many writings, provided the basis for an urban religious movement. It won the support from a large number of upper and middle segments of the urban middle strata. In this sense, the development of Buddhadasa's movement is connected with the process of urbanization.<sup>1</sup>

Through over a half century, therefore Buddhadasa's movement has undergone several striking changes in the course of its development. The most recent and paradoxical is its return to rural Thailand. This can be described as a new phase of social involvement characterized by the reinterpretation by his followers to meet the needs of the masses. Since the 1980s Buddhadasa's movement has began to permeate into rural areas.

We began this study by asking some simple but sweeping questions: (1) Why and

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1 For more details about the process of urbanization in Thailand see Korff, Rüdiger, *Bangkok: Urban System and Everyday Life*. (Saarbrücken: Fort Lauderdale, 1986). O'Connor, Richard A., *Urbanism and Religion: Community, Hierarchy and Sanctity in Urban Thai Buddhist Temples* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis Cornell University, 1978).

under what conditions did Buddhadasa's movement come about? (2) What type of movement is it? (3) What is the religious "essence" of the movement? (4) What is the nature of the movement? (5) Who are followers of Buddhadasa's movement? (6) Why do people join the movement? and Why does it appear to be most meaningful to the intellectuals? (7) What is the social impact of the movement? In this concluding chapter an attempt will be made to provide answers to the questions posed. These appear to be important questions that social scientists ask about any religious movement, and therefore no attempt has been made to provide answers to all possible questions on the Buddhadasa movement.

### **(1) Under what conditions did Buddhadasa's movement come about?**

Social conditions and the origins of the movement Earhart's analysis of the formative aspects of religious movements in Japan suggests that there are three interrelated factors which combine to produce an atmosphere in which religious movements can be born and nourished: (1) the fossilization of the early religious traditions, (2) severe socio-economic hardships which help to provoke "social crisis", and (3) the personal innovation of religious leaders.

Buddhadasa's movement appears to support Earhart's thesis. However, I argue that "social crisis" must be interpreted differently in Thailand than in Japan. Instead of severe socio-economic hardship it seems to be rapid social change and the confusion about cultural identity which is responsible for the crisis. Moreover, I found that the degree to which society was differentiated or secularization also played an important role as a social factor in the rise of Buddhadasa's movement. In addition, Buddhadasa as the leader of the movement is not some kind of semidivine founder or charismatic leader mostly found in religious movements in Japan. He is rather a "Guru" or "Master" who rediscovered a vital religious element from the previous tradition and wants to transmit his comprehension to others.

The Buddhadasa movement emerged in a period after King Chulalongkorn's reform of the country in the early part of the twentieth century. During this period (1910s to 1930s), there was high tension between modern and traditional values. The triumph of democratic

ideas parallels with the widespread of nationalism, the expansion of mass education and the bureaucratic state, a growing body of middle class, and various political conflicts and economic crisis caused rapid social change (see Chapter 2). There was considerable confusion about the sudden change of the position of the monarchy as a symbol of national unity in 1932.

Changes also occurred in the religious sector. Educational and social functions of traditional Buddhism were replaced by other social institutions. The Sangha lost their intellectual leadership to the modern sector of Thai society. Traditional Buddhism moved from the public domain to the private sphere of life, particularly in Bangkok. The weakening of traditional religion from within, especially the conservative religious views of the Sangha, the strong centralization of its administration, and the maintaining of the traditional monastic educational system, resulted in its inability to speak to contemporary concerns. Established Buddhism had become fossilized. The time was ripe for some form of renewal from outside of the existing organized religious structure.

The search for stability and new identity, and even the demand for religious reinterpretation, were expressed. Yet at the same time people initially experienced this liberal political atmosphere and found opportunities to awaken a sense of individual self-awareness (see Chapter 2 and Landon: 1968, Chapter 6). Buddhadasa's reinterpretation of Buddhist doctrine contains new images and meanings of the existential dimension of human life in contemporary society. The movement can be seen as part of this process of socio-cultural change as well as a part of the "response" to the current crisis of religio-cultural identity, rather than simply as a "product" of social crisis within Thai society.

## **(2) What type of movement is it?**

Bellah's investigation of the problem of tradition and change in terms of the relationship between religion and modernization in Asia suggests varieties of the cultural response to modernization. The most viable one is reformism which is defined as a movement that reinterprets a particular religious tradition to show not only that it is compatible with

modernization but also that the tradition vigorously demands at least important aspects of modernity (see Chapter 1). This form of response is most significant because it provides the potential impetus to modernization.

Bellah characterizes reformism by the following traits: a return to the early teaching and text, a rejection of most of the intervening tradition, and an interpretation of the pristine teaching as advocating social reform and national regeneration. Reformism is basically a reinterpretation of the religious symbol system in the light of a new existential situation.

Central to the Buddhadasa movement is Buddhadasa's reinterpretation of the Pali Canon, the heart of Theravada doctrine. It is thus possible to separate what he considers "true" Buddhism from popular beliefs in order to provide an innovation that modernity implies. He teaches that original Buddhism is essentially in accord with modern science. This stance allows him to reject many aspects of traditional Buddhist teaching and practice, including all commentaries and subcommentaries. In this respect Buddhadasa's interpretation represents an aspect of "demythologization" in the Weberian sense. He also requires to return to the substantive "essence" of the tradition through interpreting Theravada doctrine and transformation of its form.

Buddhadasa also arrives at a more holistic interpretation of Buddhism from the perspective of everyday life which provides new meaning and identity to the ordinary people. Buddhism is interpreted as a way of life rather than a "teaching." The ultimate goal of Buddhism is not something inaccessible, but a goal to be realized in this life. The direction is aimed more towards the laity than monks. It follows the shift of ideas and values of people rather than offers standards of doctrine or moral purity. Important enough, his use of ordinary words to explain the high-level of Buddhist teaching partly reflects his aim to teach the general public.

On these grounds Buddhadasa offers a particular response of Thai Buddhism to modernity. He illustrates Bellah's notion of religion standing in "creative tension" within its culture and society. Buddhadasa's movement fits well into Bellah's category of reformism. It

is a reformist movement.

### (3) What is the religious "essence" of the Buddhadasa movement ?

"Rationalization" is the term used by Weber to identify a characteristic of certain religious doctrines, particularly Calvinism.<sup>2</sup> In *The Sociology of Religion*, Weber describes a prophet or religious innovation as the agent of the process of breakthrough to a higher, in the sense of more rationalized and systematized, cultural order which in turn has implications for the society in which it becomes institutionalized. He points out the conditions which produced religious rationalization, people who carried it out, and the direction it took.<sup>3</sup> To rationalize is to reorder one's religious belief in a new and more coherent way to be more in line with what one knows and experiences in this life.<sup>4</sup>

The characteristic of Buddhadasa's teaching represents such a reordering (see Buddhadasa's interpretation of Work, Nibbana, and Kamma in Chapter 4). It is necessary to add that there are other aspects of Buddhadasa's teaching which can be adequately grasped by viewing them in the light of what Weber described "early Buddhism", and equally important in their direct and indirect influence on shaping the attitudes and inspirations of his followers. That is, a form of teaching consistent with the ideals of nibbana (a doctrine of detachment), devaluation of ceremonialism and use of the ordinary language suited the culture of its urban clients; the movement has a loosely organized structure and find itself at home among urban "bourgeois" benefactors.<sup>5</sup> In these sense, as Tambiah has observed, modern Buddhism appears as a reincarnation of Weber's ancient Buddhism.<sup>6</sup>

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2       Rationality, according to Weber, meant a systematization of means or norm in relation to an end or goal. In his study of the Protestant ethic, he pointed out a relatively high degree of rationality in the teaching of the Protestant reformers. Such ethic systems erode the mysteriousness of religion itself, see Weber, Max, *The Sociology of Religion*. trans. by Ephraim Fischhoff. (Boston: Beacon 1963), p.489

3       Parsons's discussion in his introduction to Weber in *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon, 1963), pp. XXXII-XXXIII.

4       Ibid.

5       Tambiah, S.J. "Buddhism and This-worldly Activity" *Modern Asian Studies*, VII, 1973, pp. 4-6.

6       Ibid., p. 8.

#### **(4) What is the nature of the Buddhadasa movement?**

Buddhadasa's movement generated and developed within the Thai Sangha. Though it strongly criticized traditional Buddhism, it has never rejected the authority of the Sangha. The movement also shows little interest in bringing about structural change within the Sangha, neither in building up an effective organization nor a special system for itself. The dominant feature of the movement lies in Buddhadasa's interpretation of the Pali Canon; and emphasizes attaining the heart of Buddhism rather than rely on the different appearance and details of monastic discipline and practice. Our interviews suggest that the expansion of Buddhadasa's movement derives from Buddhadasa's teachings. There is perhaps no Buddhist monk in the history of Thai Buddhism whose teachings have been published as widely as Buddhadasa. All of his sermons and lectures were tape-recorded and published by his followers. The great volume of Buddhadasa's published teachings is significant. It reflects partly that his followers wanted to know his ideas and further to propagate them, and partly the increasing demand of urban middle strata.

The characteristic of Buddhadasa's teaching is perhaps best expressed by describing it as a theological view of man's nature or a system of *sila tham* (morality) and a social order. Moreover, it is important to note that although we aspire to relate Buddhadasa's interpretative ideas to the social situations which give them birth, the ideas have a life of their own life. That is, for a half century of change and development Buddhadasa's teachings are much less likely to be modified by changing social circumstances. And this enables the teachings to be considered as an independent variable, modifying the behavior of individuals in new social situation.

Another striking characteristic of Buddhadasa's movement is its organization. As I have already discussed, standards of doctrine and attempts to enforce moral purity have largely been devalued by Buddhadasa (see Chapter 5). All followers have to be responsible for themselves. This trend seems likely to continue, with an increasingly fluid type of organization in which many special purpose sub-groups form and disband. The movement has

proved to be a relatively loosely knit association, so informal in its organization that many of its followers were led to believe that it has no "organization" and that it did not exist as a "separate" group. This was felt to be true because no census of followers was taken, and there are no institutional devices for recruiting followers. There are neither criteria nor a set of tests for distinguishing those who are accepted for membership from those who are not; no committees and official duties of any kind; no law and rules within the movement; no regular pledges of financial support were organized. No efforts were made to formulate a common, explicit creed of beliefs and practices. It is impossible to estimate the number of people who, while living in their own homes and employed in "outside" jobs devoted almost all of their spare time to promoting Buddhadasa's teaching by their own methods in their own localities.

Though the movement has no formal members, it has a character of intimacy and devotion. Followers identify themselves as members of the movement based on their personal religious understanding and not based on a formal membership in the movement. Significantly, laymen who adopted Buddhadasa's teaching become propagators and spread it in various "forms" according to their own abilities and concepts without being subject to anybody's assignment. Some followers have organized themselves to spread the teaching through activities such as the establishment of forest monastic centers, public libraries, press houses, publication of Buddhadasa's teaching, to face to face talks. Buddhadasa's movement spreads unofficially, through various possible forms of relationships. The activities of these scattered groups and individuals were carried on almost entirely by volunteers and at their own expense. Suan Mokkh does not function as an administrative headquarter with branch offices but as the centre of ideology (see Chapter 5). Buddhadasa plays the role of being inspirator rather than charismatic or authoritarian leader.

It seems likely that the simple organizational structure of the movement is not an accident or because of its inability to set up an effective modern organization. Buddhadasa's movement appeared at the beginning with rather common structure, and although it underwent several changes in the course of its development, the basic pattern of the movement remained substantially the same. This stems partly from the characteristic of Buddhadasa's teaching which allows the flexibility to emerge, and partly it is an intention of

Buddhadasa himself. Volunteering and sharing, for him, are not only a way of growth, but a way of discipline or even an instrument of social control. To some extent the loosely organized movement is essentially tolerant toward other religious groups. In this sense Buddhadasa advocates interdependency within the social order.

Rather than interpreting the characteristic of Buddhadasa's movement as a loosely organized movement I see in it the increasing acceptance of the notion, which is always emphasized by Buddhadasa, that each individual must work out his own ultimate solutions. The answer to religious questions and life can validly be sought in various spheres of secular art and thought (see Chapter 5). At the same time it also reflects the emphasis of the movement on the development of personality which is viewed by Buddhadasa as endlessly revisable. In other words the search for adequate standards of action which is the same time a search for personal maturity and social relevance.

#### **(5) Who are followers of the Buddhadasa movement ?**

In The Sociology of Religion, Weber points out the great fecundity of the "middle class" in religious innovations which in turn has implications for the society in which it becomes institutionalized.<sup>7</sup> Two main characteristics of such "middle class" or "urban citizenry", according to Weber are: (1) the communal feeling of an urban citizenry which is necessary for middle class intellectualism, and (2) emancipation from magic which is a precondition for middle class intellectualism.<sup>8</sup>

Our sample population of Buddhadasa's followers suggests that they are found in all regions of the country, and from a wide range of socio-economic and educational backgrounds. However, the largest group is well-educated, urban, drawn from upper-middle to middle strata of Thai society (see Chapter6). They are of urban origin. They require their religion not only to be "right" and "true" but beneficial in this world. They have some resemblance to the Weberian type of middle class.

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7 Weber: 1963, pp. 93-98.

8 Ibid., p. 127.

Although this group contains large numbers of government officials and professionals (see Chapter 6). It is not an independent unofficial intelligentsia as Weber's postulates. They assemble their forces under the symbol of class unity which results in its restricted intensive influence to society as a whole. Nevertheless I argue that in Thailand, particularly after 1932, well-educated, urban upper and middle strata has played a leading role as an agent of change within the Thai context (see Chapter 2). From our interviews we found that this urban middle strata is the source of greatest support for propagating and publishing of Buddhadasa's teaching, including various development programs launched by Buddhadasa's monk-followers in rural areas. It can be said that the expansion of the movement throughout the country lies in the hands of this group.

#### **(6) Why do people join the movement?**

The central feature of Buddhadasa's movement focuses on Buddhadasa's interpretation of Buddhism. The attention at the beginning of the movement and throughout 50 years was and still is the promotion of Buddhadasa's teaching. Why do people accept Buddhadasa's teaching?

Our interviews suggest that interest in the movement is often sparked by Buddhadasa's books. Individuals read them for one reason and are inspired and influenced by other aspects of the teaching. In this sense Buddhadasa's teaching can be seen as directed toward literate people who pursue their interest in Buddhism by reading books. To a considerable degree, individuals join the movement on the basis of their understanding of the teachings and because they feel they have been enlightened. The importance of religious rationalization and this worldly activity are considerable.

"Buddhadasa's books changed my life" or "I found a new quality of life" or "no conflict with others and no fear for future" or "Buddhadasa's teaching give me hope for the future of our country" were the phrases I most heard from my respondents both monks and laymen. However, change and changed life seems to be not required by the movement, but

for those who changed, once they understood the "meaning" of life through Buddhadasa's teaching, problems of every sort were perceived to melt away and disappear, and free themselves from the tight determinism of social conditions. They found a new relation to others. The relation of man to the condition of his existence has been conceived as more open and more subject to change and development. They adopted new means to attain this-worldly ends, and change their conduct because these means come to be values as ends (see Chapter 6). In this way Buddhadasa's teaching is creative.

The fundamental characteristic of Buddhadasa's teaching lies in an attempt to illustrate the broader spheres of life relevant to everyday experience or the law of one's own existence rather than the standards of doctrine or moral purity. By denying a fatalistic attitude and stressing this-worldly activism and individualistic responsibility offer opportunities for creative development and exploration in every sphere of human action. Modern man can accept Buddhism and "modern" values simultaneously. This is a part of an answer to the question of why Buddhadasa's movement is popular among Thai intellectuals.

However, it should be noted that their attitudes toward social problems tended towards oversimplification and incompleteness from the point of view of the social scientist. They are largely seen in term of individual rather than as institutional breakdowns, social conflicts or cultural lags. Poverty, corruption, unemployment are considered in a framework of personal moral terms and concepts of ethical conduct. Their belief was that with individual change would come direct solutions of the social problems, whatever they might be. These attitudes did not differ from those of general Thai Buddhists.

Some respondents directly expressed their problems in sense of normative and moral ambiguity. To a considerable degree Buddhadasa's teaching responds to problems of personal adjustment and offers a sense of security and direction for individuals by providing a foundation of self-definition in the confusion of rapid social change. Moreover, the attractiveness of the movement is much enhanced when the degree of social change increases. And after the 1970s, a period marked by greatly accelerated socio-political changes and moral crisis, the movement rapidly expanded. Numerous people were also attracted to numerous

new religious movements and various kinds of healing mediums and superstitions (see Chapter 2). Furthermore we found that political circumstance has played an important role in the expansion of religious movements. In the case of Buddhadasa's movement, a number of followers involve themselves in social issues, particularly in rural areas (see Chapter 7).

#### **(7) What is the social impact of the movement?**

Buddhadasa's movement began with a primarily religious interest. It has not only had an impact on individuals but also on society at large in so far as it has encouraged individuals to become more active in social involvement. From our study we found that while Buddhadasa's movement has attracted a large number of urban well-educated middle strata of Thai society, there are some evidences indicating that a change is occurring at the level of mass religiosity particularly since 1980s when communist insurgency and political tempo were calm (see Chapter 2, 7). That is, Buddhadasa's teaching has spread among people in the rural areas where his followers, in particular monks have taken part in a wide range of social activities. They have moved beyond Buddhadasa by simplifying or reinterpreting his teaching in order to meet the needs of rural people. They play an important role as "cultural brokers" or "middle men" to bridge Buddhadasa's teaching and the masses through various community development programs and social welfare in rural areas. At the same time, they preached Buddhist teaching, emphasizing this-worldly activities to people. These programs were developed over the years. It could be said that without such monk-followers Buddhadasa's teaching can be only a teaching for the literate. For them, religious action is no more than in the temple, it is conceived to be identical with social activities. The involvement of social issues give credibility to their claim of being spokesman for the masses. They have justified their social activism on the grounds of both their historical function and sociological inevitability. Obviously, the form of social involvement has changed from what it was century ago. And their new roles have some considerable differences from the conservative traditional role of the monk in the traditional villages and communities today.

During the past thirty years, national socio-economic development policies of the Thai government have brought about rapid socio-cultural changes and economic growth,

increasing urbanization and industrialization. At the same time they have led to the increasing differential between rural poor and more affluent urban classes, rural economic bankruptcy, ecological destruction, dissolution of family bonds and community life that poses the major problems for the development of the country. In short, the past three decades have created a crisis in rural communities.

Buddhadasa's movement represents a contemporary attempt to respond to the problem of rural communities of Thai society. It has generated a number of groups to perform communal functions for individuals as well as integrative functions for society. The case of Phra Pongsak's activities in Mae Soy illustrates the community involvement among Buddhadasa's followers (see Chapter 7). Phra Pongsak came to Mae Soy in the 1980s to set up a meditation center to introduce new perspectives of Buddhist teaching and practice to Mae Soy's inhabitants. He recognized that the villagers faced serious problems of poverty which were directly linked to drastic deforestation. He sought to raise villagers' consciousness by the link between Buddhadasa's teaching based on self-reliance and the sense of gratitude to nature to the problem of villagers's poverty and deforestation. Once the villagers came to realize that their destiny lay in their own hands, the largest local forest preservation movement in the north emerged. The new found sense of community spirit and dissatisfaction with government environmental policies, particularly with respect to logging concessions and deforestation led them to confront not only local authorities and capitalist influential groups but also the central government. Their campaigns were successful in many areas. Certainly, they have coped with many problems both from conventional senior monks and government officials, including political pressures.

The monk's leadership of the conservation campaign to protect the forest, and the villagers' confrontations with the government officials have social and political consequences. The success of the local conservation movement, which is a serious issue not only for villagers but also for society as a whole, implies not only social involvement but also political activism.

Villagers cooperating in community development, which parallels environmental

preservation in order to improve the quality of life, both in its physical and spiritual sense, reveals a kind of social reform. Though many villagers at Mae Soy still believe in the next life, kamma, and merit making in traditional view (see Chapter 4, 7). The magical world view certainly persists in their minds. They do not know Suan Mokkh even the name Buddhadasa. But to a considerable degree the notion of self-revising, self-reliance, and cooperation have developed elaborate rationalization to bring their faith in the new experience validity into some kind of harmony with the modern world. Meditation is no more considered only for monks but also for them. Many villagers have given up all addictions, gambling, able to pay their debt, and can gradually solve their economic problem. No doubt, it is not easy but it is a real challenge for them. These are the result of long years of Phra Pongsak's effort. In these respect Buddhadasa's movement can continue the ideals of Buddhism and at the same time speak to the needs of society.

It is important to note that there are some different characters between two groups of Buddhadasa's followers: urban well-educated middle strata and rural group. For the former, their religious concerns are more personal and individual-centered; less organized structure; more relevance to written texts and dissemination of written material. While the latter are more community-oriented; more concerned with social and ecological issues; more collective action under inspiration of monk who is the transmitter and reinterpreter of Buddhadasa's ideas.

The last concern of this concluding chapter opens to a final look at Buddhadasa's movement from the standpoint of its possible growth and success in future. To begin with, it should be noted that through over fifty years of change and development (1932-) Buddhadasa's movement has occupied an important place in Thai religious history. Up to the present day (1991), the movement is still active and has increasingly attracted the young generation. As far as our study is concerned there is no evidence to indicate that there has been serious dissent within the movement which might result in its future decline. This is partly because its "organization" is based on a flexible, multi-centered mode of dissemination based on voluntary groups and individuals.

One of the most important questions is what will happen to the movement after Buddhadasa passes away? Our interviews suggest that the expansion of Buddhadasa's movement seems not to center or depend on the leader. Its followers do not demand to see the leader. Until now (Buddhadasa is 87 years old) is relatively unknown, and he has appointed no successor. Buddhadasa's movement can remain a movement without a leader so long as his writings remain relevant (see Chapter 5).

There are many obstacles to the future growth of the movement, such as a number of completely traditionalist movements, the flourishing of popular beliefs, political instability, and the ambivalent institutions of government. It is also true that the Thai elite is motivated mainly by secular ideologies. However, the position of Buddhadasa's movement is not anti-modern.

There are signs that the movement continues to attract followers. The increasing proportion of educated Thai, and the expanding urban middle class can ensure the future growth of the movement. Further, the movement has developed a community development program based on Buddhist ethics which has proved to be feasible. The relatively successful social engagement of the movement in rural areas, particularly in addressing urgent current problems, allows it not only to spread among rural people but also provides a way of rousing the masses as well as awakening the Sangha as a whole. New directions in the development of the movement will be closely linked to its social activities both in towns and in rural areas.