CHAPTER VI

EDUCATIONAL ROLE OF THAI BUDDHIST MONKS
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In this chapter, I will explore three eminent Buddhist reformers and thinkers who are all monks, one of whom is from the royal family. The present study will look at three aspects of these thinkers, namely, life, works and role contributing to Buddhist education in Thai Sangha and Thai society as a whole.

The study begins with Wachirayanwarorot (1860-1921) who lived during the reign of Rama V, and Rama VI of the current Chakri dynasty. He who in later life became a supreme patriarch had brought about the change of Buddhist education of Thai Sangha from oral tradition to written examination. And he had written some Buddhist texts still in use today.

The second Buddhist (monk) thinker to be explored is Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1906-1993) whose radical approach in reinterpreting Buddhism has caused both positive and negative response from Thai society, especially from the elite. However, it is undeniable that he is an influential figure in Thai Buddhist world. His monastery, Suanmokkhaphalaram, is well known to Buddhists, both Thais and foreigners.

While Thai Buddhists are having dilemma regarding their religion, many have found Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s interpretation of
Buddhism relevant to and consistent with the present-day society. His ideas and approach cover various issues; Zen Buddhism, environment, education, democracy, marxism etc. Therefore, it is not possible to explore all his ideas in a limited space. Some scholars have said that his teachings are widely scattered. However, controversial he may be, he is still regarded as an important Buddhist thinker in contemporary society.

The last Buddhist thinker to be studied is Phra Prayudh Payutto (1939 - present). The author of many books on Buddhism, important of which is Buddhadhamma, he is influential among Thai intellectuals and scholars. His writings are said to be systematic and well-organized.

His dominant approach often seen in his work is the reconciliation between Buddhism and the fast-moving society. What he clearly expresses is that Buddhists should have appropriate Buddhist approach to life. As far as the environmental issue is concerned, he holds the view that human beings must not greedily and blindly destroy nature, because by doing so, human beings inevitably harm and destroy themselves.

Technology should be used with care and caution to avoid the disaster, which could occur if we blindly use it. Regarding education, he views that Thai Buddhist should not blindly follow and appreciate the Western education. Instead, they should be wisely selective in this approach.
Prince-Patriarch Wachirayanwarorot (1860-1921)

The Buddhist monkhood or Sangha has been one of the pillars of Siamese (Thailand) society since the thirteenth century, and it is still an important educational institution, avenue of social mobility, and focus of village leadership and loyalty in Thailand today. The Sangha helps society to cohere; it provides 'a right binding between the government and the people'.

It has been said that Siamese cultural life took place in the palaces and monasteries, and if a single justification were needed for introducing and translating the autobiography of Prince Wachirayanwarorot it would be that in this life of a prince-monk the twin Siamese traditions of royal guidance and monastic example coalesce. Son of the king, half-brother to another, and uncle to a third, Prince Wachirayanwarorot was born into the main branch of the Chakri royal family that has given Thailand its kings since 1782. As a monk from his ordination in 1879 until his death in 1921, the prince provided leadership for the reform order, served as abbot of a prestigious Bangkok monastery from 1892 and presided over the entire monkhood as supreme patriarch between 1910 and 1921. In this one man interdependence and institutional reciprocity of the monarchy and the Sangha reach their fullest expression. During the nationalist period that began in the last decade of the prince's life, a third strand, the Nation became fused with these first two to form the popular ideological slogan of King-Nation-Religion under which Thai regimes have governed to the present day.
Prince Wachirayanwarorot was born on 12 April 1860 in the Grande Palace, Bangiok. He was the son of Mongkut, the reigning king from 1851 to 1868, and Phae, one of the king’s concubines who was descended from a noble in the first Bangkok reign.

Although Wachirayanwarorot was born into a privileged class, the hierarchy of statuses in the royal family determined that he was less privileged than some of his fellow princes. As the forty-seventh child of a king and as the child of a concubines, Wachirayanwarorot did not enjoy the highest princely status. The children of Mongkut’s chief queen and those children of concubines older than Wachirayanwarorot were senior to him. Moreover, he was the fourth eldest of his mother’s five children, so even in his sibling group he deferred to others until his ordination as a monk.

Prince Wachirayanwarorot’s education began with a woman who taught him to memorize the letters of the Siames alphabet. Then at the age of seven or eight along with some of the older prince he studied the khmer script used to inscribe religious texts. The teacher who made the strongest impression on him, however, was Princess Wachirayanwarorot, or Aunt, from whom he learned verse forms, Siamese arithmetic, and astrology after the change of reign in 1868. This woman, a relative of his mother and a daughter of King Rama III, had also taught King Chulalongkorn during the early years of his education in the 1850s. A respected woman of latter’s who preferred reading religious books, histories, and the works of poets to the feminine domestic arts, she was a resolute person, even severe, in the minds of others because of her restrained emotions. But
Wachirayanwarorot clearly admired her firmness and individuality, and the two remained close for the next four decades. When he became a monk the princess continued in a supportive role as his principal lay patron until she died in 1907. Up to this point, the prince’s education was unexceptional, even if privileged. He was tutored as any prince in centuries past would have been tutored – by knowledgeable and literate men and women of the court.

But by 1850s and 1860s a proper education for princes growing up in the palace was deemed to include subjects such as Western languages, geography, and history. British and French imperial pressures on Siam and neighbouring kingdoms as well as the introduction of such machines as the printing press and the steam engine had forced the Siamese elite to be conscious of western examples.

Prince Wachirayanwarorot was ordained a novice on 7 August 1873 at the age of fourteen. Under the guidance of Prince Pavares and a lay Pāli scholar. Prince Wachirayanwarorot took up the study of Dhamma.

In his account of this religious instruction, Prince Wachirayanwarorot is critical of the methods by which students learned Pāli, and after he became a monk he set about rewriting the texts used in the monasteries. He began his study books on Dhamma written in Siamese script, as opposed to Khmer script, which relatively few people could read.

On 27 June 1879, Prince Wachirayanwarorot was ordained a monk, with Prince Pavares serving as preceptor and another senior monk from Wat Makutaksatriya assisting in the ceremony.
“In 1881, during his third year in the Sangha Wachirayanwarorot began to prepare seriously for the Pāli examination. Until the late nineteenth century when the government began to introduce primary and secondary schooling throughout the kingdom, the examinations for a Pāli degree were the only examinations in Siamese Society. Degree holders were addressed by the horific prefix Mahā, they received ecclesiastical fans and their level of accomplishment was taken into account when the king conferred ecclesiastical ranks. Degree holders were literate in Siamese as well as Pāli, and to the extent that some of them ultimately disrobed and entered government service, the examination system provided the court with literate administrators.”

But the curriculum was too specialized in Pāli scripture to produce the kind of classically educated mandarin bureaucrat that emerged from the Vietnamese examination system. The Siamese Pāli examinations aimed at producing religious specialists who would eventually become abbots or teachers; literate civil officials were a secondary, though wholly desirable, by-product of the examination system.

Prince Wachirayanwarorot, after a final few months of intense study, entered the throne hall of the Grand Palace and for the next few days before the king and an assemblage of high ecclesiastical dignitaries translated Pāli passages for a degree of V. On the final day when the outcome had been decided, the king presented him a set of robes, a shoulder bag, and a handsome endowment on which he could draw for allowable monastic articles. In reaching this level of Pāli expertise, he equaled the Pāli degree of his father, Mongkut, and acquired the respectability he desired as a prince-monk, knowledgeable in Pāli. His
preparations for the examinations - his struggle with the books in use at the time and his experience with the examination procedure - were of importance later in his life when he revised the religious examination system and established the curriculum still in use today.

**Wachirayanwarorot's Role in Education**

Only after Prince Pavares died in 1892 did Wachirayanwarorot assume a prominent position in the Sangha. He immediately became abbot of Wat Pavara, and in the following year the king raised his monastic status and made him patriarch of the Dhammayut order. In 1893, he was only in his thirty-fourth year, a mere youth compared to his predecessor who was an octogenarian at his death.

The first task Wachirayanwarorot faced, in addition to his duties as abbot, was one, which derived from and exploited his experience in religious education. In early 1892, King Chulalongkorn inaugurated cabinet government and appointed as Minister of Public Instruction a loyalist nobleman who burst forth in June 1892 with several education proposals. One of these favoured the creation of a Buddhist academy for the Dhammayut order at Wat Makuta where Wachirayanwarorot had been experimenting with a new curriculum for Pāli study. The king, while conceding that Wat Makuta was an appropriate place to honor Mangkut's name since his father had built the monastery, preferred the academy to be located at Wat Pavara where the patriarchs of the Dhammayut order had always resided. In September 1892, some three weeks before the death of the Prince-
preceptor, Prince Wachirayanwarorot presided over a meeting of middle-aged Dhammayut monks - most of them abbots, high Pāli degree holders, and restless for reform of the Pāli instruction they had received - and, over the opposition of one older prince-monk, reached agreement on the new curriculum and examining procedures. The Mahamakuta Royal Academy for religious studies under the Prince Wachirayanwarorot’s direction was formally opened on 1 October 1893 to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of Mongkut’s death.

In founding the academy, rallying the royal family to support it, and granting Wachirayanwarorot the authority to direct its development, king Chulalongkorn wanted not only to honour his father who had enhanced the prestige of the Sangha but to celebrate his own accomplishment as well. 1893 was also the year of his Silver Jubilee, his twenty-fifth on the throne. It was also the year of the reign’s most serious territorial crisis when French aggression in Cambodia and the Laotian states brought the realm close to war. Far from celebrating past accomplishment and auguring future success, the Jubilee year reminded Siam of its vulnerability: Chulalongkorn’s kingdom was fortunate to have survived with relatively little bloodshed. As the crisis subsided and Chulalongkorn and his government gradually resumed the reform program with renewed urgency, the enterprise of creating an Academy devoted to excellence in Pāli studies look on a new dimension of merit-making. The public was invited to support the Academy; officials from remote provinces sent in donations and good wishes. “To acknowledge these public subscriptions, Prince Wachirayanwarorot in 1894 began publication of a monthly journal, Dhammacaksu (The Eye of Dhamma),
containing news of the Academy, articles on Buddhism, and sermons." Within three years more than two hundred Dhammayut monks were attempting the examinations held at the Academy in the Wat Pavara compound. They had prepared at four branches of the Academy which offered instruction in the new curriculum.

While some of Wachirayanwarorot's ideas had to await their time for the whole Sangha, he was still free to make the Academy a showcase of monastic education. The instruction offered there was not confined to religious studies and preparation for the Pāli examinations. Wachirayanwarorot had also introduced secular subjects: reading and writing Siamese, history and some science. "At the end of 1896, he (Wachirayanwarorot) was in charge of all secular education in Dhammayut monasteries; by 1898 there were four schools in Bangkok with 450 students and three schools in the provinces with 150 students."

The branches of the Mahamakuta Academy doubled as paragons of modern secular as well as religious education methods, and when the king's education reform stalled under civil officials in the Ministry of Public instruction, he turned to Prince Wachirayanwarorot for ideas, advice, and leadership.

In order to bypass an ineffectual and inadequately funded Department of Education, the king in 1898 gave Prince Wachirayanwarorot and Prince Damrong - another half-brother of the king who was then Minister of Interior - joint responsibility for establishing government-sponsored primary education in the provinces. The kingdom lacked teachers and the finance to build an education
system from scratch, so the king, taking the advice of Princes Wachirayanwarorot and Damrong, decided to utilize the monasteries throughout the kingdom to introduce new texts and techniques. The plan was expedient in more ways than one. It made use of the available teaching manpower, the monks. It took advantage of the traditional practice of schooling young boys in the monasteries, and it kept secular and religious learning bound together as they had always been. In Wachirayanwarorot’s words, “Secular and religious learning flow in the same channel. Each will sustain the burdens of the other so that both may move forward and progress.”

Monks who had completed the Mahamakuta Academy’s course of study became the teachers with the most advanced training of the time, and many of them departed for the countryside to take up teaching positions in provincial monasteries.

Lacking texts, Wachirayanwarorot set about writing some, for both the secular and religious streams. He borrowed English books from Prince Damrong with such titles as the Teaching of Geography, Teacher’s Handbook of Psychology, and On the Teaching of Modern Languages in Theory and Practice. Science and Pedagogy dominated the list of titles he used. For the moral instruction of primary school pupils he wrote. The Five Precepts, The Five Ennoblers (Pañcasīla Pañ cadhamma) and for newly ordained monks and novices he composed Instructions for New Ordinands (Navakovada), a work which has been through several editions and countless reprintings. All of the texts - secular as well as religious - were popularising in the most constructive
sense of the term: they brought new knowledge to the countryside and reinforced old values in a new medium.

The Later Years 1910-1921

The periodization of Siamese history since 1782 tends to follow closely - unimaginatively, it sometimes seems - the regal dates of Siamese monarchs, but it is difficult to avoid marking another period of Wachirayanwarorot’s life from 1910 when king Chulalongkorn died and his son, Wachiravudh, acceded as the sixth Bangkok king. Wachiravudh, educated at Sandhurst and Oxford, was a different kind of king from his father with reputation as a poet and dramatist towers over modern Siamese letters. He did not have the executive skills of his father, and more important, he did not feel the pressing need to assert his will in order to assure the safety and advancement in official service of the royal family. The kingdom’s territory was secure; the wave of Western imperialism had peaked. Chulalongkorn’s sons had gone abroad for their education, and they were returning to take up posts in government King Chulalongkorn’s brothers, mere boys during the Regency of the Fifth Reign, were now senior ministers. Peers in age and pupils in tutelage to the late king, they were now elder uncles to the new king. Prince Wachirayanwarorot, who had been preceptor at Wachiravudh’s ordination in 1904, now became a senior religious adviser. With the death of Rama V and the accession of Rama VI, the generational relationships in the monarchy had suddenly permutated.
Acting promptly in December 1910, scarcely more than a month after his coronation, King Wachiravudh appointed Wachirayanwarorot as supreme patriarch, the third prince in the dynasty to hold the position. At the same time, Wachirayanwarorot’s princely rank was increased to Kromphraya, a promotion, which skipped an intermediate level (Kromphra) and brought him to the highest conferred princely rank. The appointment of a Prince-Patriarch required special ceremonial apparatus reserved for members of the royal family; supreme patriarchs from the commonalty, exalted as they were, did not have the ceremony performed for him. In 1921, the king created an honorific for prince-patriarchs - Phramahasamanachao, Most Eminent Prince - Monk - and conferred it on Wachirayanwarorot and posthumously on the two previous incumbents. The sixth king of the dynasty thus elaborated the pageantry for prince-monks in a period when nationalism found expression in religious symbols. Wachirayanwarorot’s appointment with regal splendor to the supreme patriarchship, conferred with coronation paraphernalia as a kind of enthronement, had more to do with the exigencies of state than with the message of the Buddha’s teaching.

In Sangha administration he breathed new life into the Council of Elders (Theras), the body of ranking monks established by the 1902 Sangha Law which had never really exercised its powers for want of senior leadership. Prince Wachirayanwarorot convened it regularly and expanded its membership so that it could deal systematically with administrative matters and disciplinary cases. In order to acquaint himself with state of the Sangha and Buddhism in the provinces where
the Council’s decisions were to have effect, Wachirayanwarorot traveled to different regions of Siam every year from 1912 through 1917 until poor health began to curtail his peripatetic impulses.

As the Sixth Reign began, one of the first items on the agenda for the Council of Elders was to establish criteria by which monks and novices who were ‘knowledgeable in Dhamma’ would be exempt from military conscription. The Council laid down guidelines, and in 1912 a new course of Dhamma study was introduced which did not require knowledge of Pāli at the elementary level. Written examinations in the new course were held at Wat Peñā, while the traditional oral translations for Pāli degrees continued at the Royal Chapel. Over the next few years, the curricula for the various levels of Pāli expertise underwent reform, beginning with the lowest levels and working gradually to the highest levels until the reform was completed at the end of the decade. Written examinations finally replaced the word by word oral translations, and texts for Pāli study became available in Siamese language. These changes took place throughout the Siamese Sangha, in the Mahānikāya order, whose monasteries had schools, which offered instruction in the new curricula, as well as in the Dhammayut order. Wachirayanwarorot’s religious education reform, temporarily abandoned around 1900, now came to fruition. The expansion of the courses of study downward and the accessibility of texts in Siamese meant that more young men could be introduced to Dhamma study and awarded degrees of proficiency. A more productive religious education system supplied a growing Sangha hierarchy with monastic administrators.
Toward the end of that first decade in king Wachiravudh’s reign Wachirayanwarorot’s health began to deteriorate as tuberculosis, the disease of which he ultimately died, gradually took its toll, preventing him in 1919 and 1920 from administering the Pāli degree examinations. His discomfort became acute after the celebrations for his sixty-first birthday in April 1921, and in late June of that year he traveled by ship to the southern province of Songkhla for a rest. Despite considerable efforts by his physicians, his health did not improve, and realizing the end was near, he returned to Bangkok on 28th July. He died on 2 August 1921 at Wat Pavaranivesa, the monastery over which he had presided for almost twenty-nine years.

**Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1906-1993)**

Since the early 1970s the thought of the aging Buddhist monk, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, has become a primary focus of debates about Theravada Buddhist doctrine in Thailand. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu began to systematically reappraise and reinterpret Theravada Buddhist teachings in 1932, and some of his sermons and articles were published in local Buddhist journals in the 1930s and 1940s. However, it was not until the late 1960s and early 1970s, in particular during the period of civilian government from 1973 until 1976, that Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s ideas found a broader national audience in Thailand. This is because it has only been during the last couple of decades, in response to the rapid socio-economic development of the country, that considerable numbers of fellow Thais have come to share the modernist and reformist views
on Buddhism that Buddhadasa Bhikkhu has been propounding for over fifty years.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu has been hailed as a progressive reformer and even a genius by his supporters and followers. His critics, however, have labeled him a dangerous heretic whose work subverts both the teachings of the Buddha and the institution of Buddhism in Thailand. But whatever the status of such conflicting claims, it is nevertheless still the case that no serious study of the interpretation of Buddhist doctrine in contemporary Thailand can omit a consideration of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s views without being left deficient and inadequate. This is true whether one’s interests lie in the area of Buddhist doctrine and accounts of salvation and spiritual practice, or whether one is concerned with issues such as the role of Buddhist monks and laypeople in modern Thai society, for Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s reinterpretative work covers all areas of Buddhist doctrine and practice. Indeed, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s life work can be regarded as an attempt to develop a thorough reinterpretation of the entire body of Theravada doctrine, including both the stereological and the social aspects of Buddhist teachings.

In reinterpreting the totality of Theravada doctrine, “Buddhadasa Bhikkhu is fundamentally concerned to shift the focus of Thai Buddhism from the transcendent to this world, and to incorporate the hopes and aspirations of contemporary Thai laymen and laywomen into Buddhism by conferring religious value on action in the social world.”

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu was born on 27 May 1906 at Phumriang village in what is today the district of Chaiya in Suratthani Province, Southern Thailand. He was the first son of a Chinese store owner,
Siang Phanit, and his Thai wife, Khlyan and was given the name Ngyam. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu is a Pāli pen name which he later assumed and by which he now prefers to be known.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s education began when, at the age of eight, he became a temple boy at Wat Nork (also called Wat Ubon) in Phumriang, where he lived for three years. However, his formal schooling started in 1914 when he began attending Phothiphitthayakorn School at Wat Photharam (also called Wat Nya) in Phumriang, where he studied for three years and completed the primary education grade of Prathom 3. He then moved to Chaiya where his father worked and he began studying at the Chaiya District School, Saraphi-uthit School. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu completed the high school grade of Mathayom 3 but had to leave school to run the family business at Phumriang when his father died in 1922. He then took on the responsibility of supporting the education of his younger brother, Yikey, who was studying at the prestigious Suan Kulap School in Bangkok. Yikey subsequently began studying medicine at Chulalongkorn University but did not complete his course.

When Yikey returned from studying in Bangkok in 1926 he took over the running of the family business. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu was then freed from his family responsibilities and was able to follow the Thai custom of being ordained into the monkhood at the customary age of 21. He was ordained into the Mahanikay order at Wat Nork (Wat Ubon), Phumriang, on 29 July 1926 by Phrakhru Sophanacetasikaram (Vimalo), who gave him the Pāli clerical name of Indapañño (Thai: Inthapanyo), Phra Ngyam Indapañño then spent his first Phansa or rainy season
retreat at Wat Mai (also called Wat Phumriang), where he passed his Naktham-tri exam.

At the instigation of an uncle Buddhadasa Bhikkhu went to Bangkok in order to further his studies in July 1928, staying at Wat Pathumkhongkha. However, he did not find the sort of spiritual education he had expected and met none whom he regarded as an able teacher. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu was also dissatisfied with the clerical education of the time and complained that, “in studying the Pariyattidhamma in his period we don’t truly study the Tipitaka itself, we study only the commentaries.”

This together with his disappointment with laxities in the practice of the Vinaya among Mahanikay monks in Bangkok, made him disinterested in obtaining a theological degree. After only two months Buddhadasa Bhikkhu found his studies oppressive and boring and returned to Chaiya.

In 1929, one of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s uncles, Nguan Sethaphakdi, of the neighbouring town of Ban Dorn, donated 5,000 baht for the establishment of a school of scriptural studies at Wat Phrathat in Chaiya, and Buddhadasa Bhikkhu was invited to be the instructor. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu also wrote his first book in 1929, a cremation volume for Phrakhru Sophanacetasikaram, entitled, Kan-tham Than or Giving Alms. When his students passed their Naktham III and Naktham II exams well Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s family decided that he should not waste his obvious academic talents teaching novices and advised him to return to Bangkok and attempt higher study there once again.
1930 found Buddhadasa Bhikkhu once more at Wat Pathumkhongkha in Bangkok, although this time he decided that he could study more efficiently by doing a significant part of the work by himself. His individualistic approach, so characteristic in the later style of his life and in the innovativeness of his ideas, paid off well and he topped his class in the Parian sam-prayok (III) Pāli examinations that year. However, his interests ranged far outside the scriptures and Pāli studies and he followed courses in science, photography and radio as well as the traditional lectures on the exegesis of the Tipitaka.

The years Buddhadasa Bhikkhu spent in Bangkok in the early 1930s saw his ideas about Buddhism and the direction of his life crystallize. It was a period when a set of diverse influences prodded him to take a course of action he himself later described as daring. Gradually the issues of religious reform became Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s predominating concern and he began to neglect his formal studies, which he came to see as irrelevant to the crucial problems facing Buddhism. In 1931, he failed his Parian prayok si (IV) Pāli examination, something he had expected. After his private reading of the Tipitaka, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu felt that here were significant differences between the commentaries upon which his clerical examinations were based and the actual canonical scriptures. He realised that even if he gave the answers to questions on doctrine which he regarded as being correct, he would fail the Pāli examinations, because his views differed radically from the orthodox interpretations taught in Bangkok. As a consequence, he regarded further formal education to be pointless. A letter written to his brother Dhammadasa
towards the end of his second stay in Bangkok shows how Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's reformist ideas had crystallised. He wrote that he intended to discontinue his studies, leave Bangkok and that he had resolved to look for a quiet place free from internal and external vexations... in order to examine and research the Dhammic science which he had been studying. "I have had a stroke of good luck... in that I have found a friend who has the same feelings about life... we each have the same intention in the future work. We have agreed that Bangkok certainly is not the place to find purity; blundering around studying the scriptures in a way polluted by concern for status. The benefit of this is that we realise we have been misdirected. We have followed the world from the minute we were born until the minute we gained this awareness. After this we will not follow the world, and will farewell the world in order to search for what is pure by following the path of the Aryans (saints) who searched until they found (Nibbāna)."

In fulfillment of his desire to follow the actual path of the Buddha, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu left Bangkok on 5 April 1932 and returned to Wat Mai at Phumriang. Other monks were to have accompanied him but because of family pressures they abandoned the idea, leaving Buddhadasa Bhikkhu to carry on alone. But Dhammadasa and a small party of his associates strongly supported Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and together they decided that the spiritual retreat should be undertaken at a long-abandoned and overgrown temple, Wat Traphangcik, near Phumriang. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu took up residence there on 12 May 1932 and renamed the temple area Suan Mokkhaphalaram, literally, 'The garden to arose the spirits to attain
liberation’. Today the temple is usually simply called Suan Mok, ‘The garden of liberation’.

In the following month, the democratic revolution overthrew the absolute monarchy, and Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s comments on this event reflect how he viewed his religious enterprise: “We take this event (the revolution) as an omen of changing to a new era for rectifying and improving various things as much as we can.”

The intensity of the twenty-six year old monk’s determination can be gauged from the following vow, written in a notebook on 28 August 1932: “I commit this life and body as a dedication to the Lord Buddha. I am a servant of the Buddha, the Buddha is my lord. For this reason I am named ‘Buddhadasa’ (literally, servant of the Buddha).” For the following two years Buddhadasa Bhikkhu lived alone at Suan Mok, following the solitary life of a forest monk.

Dhammadasa was far from inactive during these formative years and was in constant contact with his brother. Together they developed a plan for propagating their ideas of the purer, original Buddhism. They agreed that their work needed to proceed gradually, starting with a few and only slowly building up numbers. They also felt it had to be a truly religious work, avoiding fame and honour. The first stage was for Dhammadasa to establish a group of people interested in publishing books on the Dhamma, and the second stage was for this group to actively promote the Dhamma. Dhammadasa established the Khana Thammathan ‘The Society of the Gift of Truth’, and took the Pāli motto, Sabbadanam Dhammadanam Jinti, ‘The gift of truth excels all other gifts’.
With the object of ‘propagating the correct principles of the dhamma’, Dhammdasa in 1933 began publishing a magazine, Phutthasasana (Buddhism), aiming a national distribution.

Since World War II other organizations have been established with the specific purpose of publishing and distributing Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s writings and sermons. In 1953, Dhammadasa formally incorporated the Khana Thammathan as a foundation, the Thammathan Mulanithi. In association with this Chaiya-based organisation, which has its own library and press, is the Bangkok based Thammabucha (Honouring Dhamma) printing house, which in turn is operated by the Khana Phoe-phrae Withi Kan-damnoen Chiwit An Prasoet ‘the Group for Promoting the Method of Leading One’s Life Perfectly’. Another organisation dedicated to the publication of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s work is the Ongkan Fyn-fu Phra Phutthasasana (The Organisation for the Revival of Buddhism), which was established by the late Pun Congprasoe at Samut Prakan near Bangkok. Gradually since 1932 Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s ideas have become more and more widely recognised.

Recent years have seen Buddhadasa Bhikkhu receive increasing public recognition, being the first monk to be made an honorary member of the widely recognised research body, the Siam Society. During the 1973-76 period Buddhadasa Bhikkhu received nation-wide coverage when he debated the senior Thai politician Khukrit Pramot television and radio. In 1980, the Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University conferred on him an Honorary Doctorate of Buddhism, the first it had presented in its ninety-year existence. This degree was conferred by
none other than the Supreme Patriarch of the Thai Sangha. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu died on July 8, 1993.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s in Education

Earlier in Thai history, education was being standardized and aided by the great assistance of Prince-Patriarch Wachirayanwarorot (1860-1921). At the turn of the century, and under certain amount of pressure of the possible control by foreign nations, King Chulalongkorn overhauled the bureaucracy of Siam. At this time a reconsideration of educational reform was also taking place. Wachirayanwarorot revitalized national Buddhism by writing a number of texts (the influential Navakovada is still used for newly-ordained monks and novices) and standardizing examinations for Buddhist studies. For many decades, he was seen as the patriarch of institutional Thai Buddhism and Buddhist scholarship. But by the mid - 1990s many people were looking for a monk who could revitalize Buddhism and take it beyond many of its established folk traditions and ‘superstitious’ aspects.

While Wachirayanwarorot’s works cannot be blamed for a certain amount of stagnation of the education of Buddhist monks, their continued use and the status afforded them by those overseeing the Buddhist universities, along with the lack of other high-quality texts, can be faulted. Wachirayanwarorot’s texts became the basis of a good portion of the rote learning that took place at these institutions. In order to move beyond these texts, some of the works of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu
were eventually introduced as supplementary reading. His own questioning of the scope of Buddhism and the status of certain commentaries and commentators, including the ‘untouchable’ Buddhagosha, the famous 5th century commentator, challenged many young minds engaged in the study of Buddhist doctrine. This has continued to the point that Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and his Garden are now viewed as an extension of the course materials and models available to students of Buddhism.

Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu has focused his interests primarily on issues pertaining to doctrine as opposed to moral issues. The Theravada tradition has usually been very conservative and has centered its debates mainly on aspects of discipline, conduct, and the wearing of robes. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s primary concerns compelled people to redirect their attention to the end point of Buddhist practice - final freedom, or Nibbāna. Taking exception to some of the notions he felt were inherited from Buddhagosha, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu moved the notions of karma, heaven, and hell into the present. In light of his teachings, there is no way that one could postpone paying attention to matters of deliverance or enlightenment until the next life; falling into hell or going to heaven is the direct result of proper actions performed from moment to moment.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu can also be viewed against the background of Thai Buddhism that is categorized or analyzed in another prominent way following the Three Trainings. According to the three trainings (Tisikkhā), monks are to engage in the development of Sila (morality), Samadhi (concentration meditation), and ‘wisdom’ (Paññā). This triad
of training has become a strong part of the Theravada tradition in Thailand because of the attention paid to the writing of Buddhagosha, whose Visuddhimagga (The Path of Purification) follows this pattern, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s doctrinal approach has put him in the class of monks of ‘wisdom’ (Paññā). In fact, he is seen at the centre of a line starting from Prince-Patriarch Wachirayanwarorot, continuing to Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, and coming to the most modern period with Phra Debvedi - agreement exists that these monks follow a line of monks of ‘wisdom’. Many Buddhist scholars perceive a significant progression between these three monks in the development of Thai Buddhism.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu has interpreted the Pāli Tipitaka of Theravada Buddhism in light of its primary principles - noble truths (Ariya-Sacca), not-self (Anatta) or voidness (Sunnata), and dependent origination (Paticcasamuppada) so that all of the core teachings fit together and are more deeply understood through each other. In doing so, he moved away from some cherished, albeit secondary, dogmas of orthodox Theravada belief. The consequences of this re appraisal have been many, including an emphasis on the here-and-now rediscovery of the spiritual dimension of everyday life, a bridging of the lay-monastic fracture, greater compatibility with science, greater intellectual rigor, and the reinteg ration of political and social issues within a Dammic worldview. According to Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, “There tend to be people who wrongly understand that Buddhism doesn’t have much to do with society or that the connections are only on a lower level. Some people misunderstand so far as to say that those who strictly train themselves according to Buddhist principles find it difficult to do
anything tangibly beneficial for society. I feel that such understanding is not yet in line with the truth. However, there is a way for us to develop the kind of understanding through which our socially beneficial actions become the highest spiritual benefit for ourselves, also. So I’ve tried to distinguish and make obvious social benefits... In addition I try to point out that the social goods and acting for the benefit of society are prerequisites of travelling beyond to Nibbāna.”

“The Buddhist goal of quenching or ending Dukkha is not to be falsely spiritualized into an other-worldly end, for the genuinely spiritual does not denigrate or reject the body. Nibbāna can only be found right here in the middle of Samsara, the whirlpool of birth and death. So when we talk about ending Dukkha, we mean both personal and social problems.”

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s emphasis on the importance of education in his view of a better Thai society has strong historical precedents. Historically it was the monks who were the educators in Thailand and the temples were the only schools, a situation which has only changed significantly since World War II, when the state education system was able to take over the role of the old temple school. But until quite recently the state school system and the temple schools were often one and the same. In 1898, when King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) sought to establish government sponsored primary education in the Thai provinces, he did it through the temples, by using the monks as teachers, because the then Siam lacked both the teachers and the finances to build an education system from scratch. Reynolds observes that this decision, took advantage of the traditional practice of schooling young boys in the
monasteries, and it kept secular and religious learning bound together as they had always been. In Wachirayanwarorot’s words (the then Supreme Patriarch): “Secular and religious learning flow in the same channel. Each will sustain the burdens of the other so that both may move forward and progress.”

However, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu regards the increasing secularisation of education in Thailand as a negative development and wanted to return to the old historical norm where religious and worldly educations were integrated. He criticizes the tend towards purely vocational education, calling it education for mere survival rather than for spiritual development. In particular, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu condemns the Thai educators and educational administrators who base education in Thailand on what he considers to be the materialist, career-centred systems common in Western countries, instead of following spiritual principles: “because they (Thai educators) believe the foreigners more than the Lord Buddha, more than Jesus Christ, more than the Prophet Mohammed, they consequently arrange the educational system to follow the foreigners.”

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu contends that concern for the details of material survival has become so great that it has been forgotten that without a religious code of ethics such things are devoid of meaning. To counter this trend he says that the central purpose of education should be to teach children spiritual fundamentals. And the result of the sort of education Buddhadasa Bhikkhu proposes would be people reaping the spiritual and material benefits of living according to freed-
For Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, there was no ultimate separation between the social and spiritual. They are two interpenetrating aspects of the one reality (Dhamma) according to the law of Nature (Dhamma), that is interdependency. "Don’t separate them, otherwise world peace is not possible."\(^{15}\)

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu used the word ‘spiritual’ in a way that includes the material, physical, and social. Previously, Theravada has spoken only of body (Kaya or Rupa) and mind or heart (Citta). For Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, a problem arises when we overemphasize the distinction between body and mind - any duality for that matter - because one cannot be understood without the other. To avoid polarizing this pair, he used ‘spiritual’ to encompass and transcend them both. "Buddhism is neither materialism or mentalism, but is the correctness between the two or is both of them in the right proportions. The religion which can be taken as the best social science must not be a slave of materialism nor crazy about mental things."\(^{16}\)

The spiritual does not reject the body, society, economics, politics, or any other area of life but understands all the dimensions of life in a fundamental way, that is, in the context of Dhamma. Essentially, the spiritual is concerned with the central issue of life - the illusion of self and the voidness of self - that permeates all aspects of human life.
Phra Prayudh Payutto (1939 - Present)

Phra Prayudh Payutto was born on January 12, 1939. He was the fourth son of Chunki and Samran Aryankura, who were merchants in the market village of Bun Krang, Siprachan, in the Central Province of Suphanburi, Thailand. At the age of seven, Prayuth’s parents had him ordained as a novice. He completed the first four years of compulsory education near his hometown, and then, under a scholarship from the government, he moved to Wat Puthumkhongkha School in Bangkok to begin the next level of his studies. Like many young, upcountry boys, he depended on the temple as a dwelling place while he pursued his schooling in the city. Prayuth became a temple boy (Dek Wat) at Wat Phra Phirain in Bangkok.

About six months of staying in Bangkok, Prayudh developed intestinal problems and returned home. His father convinced him that it might be a good idea to think of novicehood. The reason for this is that he would be able to live a peaceful life and stay at a temple closer to home. This time, he was eleven years old. For further schooling, he moved to the provincial capital of Suphanburi. However, many upcountry temples had limited classes in Buddhist studies and the Pāli language.

In order to obtain schooling, young novice Prayudh went to Bangkok once again to stay at Wat Phra Phirain, while he studied the Buddhist canonical language of Pāli at the royal temple of Wat Suthat. Novice Prayudh began working his way through the various levels of Pāli study (Parian), of which there are nine. After having
passed level 4, he was eligible to enter the Buddhist University of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya. In 1961, he became one of a very small circle of ordinands to have passed the highest level of Pāli study level 9, while he was a novice. This made him eligible to have his higher ordination sponsored by King Bhumibol Adulyadej at Wat Phra Kaeo, The Temple of the Emerald Buddha. He then became Phra Maha Prayudh Payutto. In 1962, he graduated at the top of his class with a B.A. degree (the highest degree offered at that time) from Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University.

In 1969, he was given the royal title of Phra Srivisuddhimoli (Prayudh Payutto), and in 1972 he was made abbot of Wat Phra Phirain. In 1973, Promotion to another royal rank soon followed, when he was made Phra Rajavaramuni. In 1974, after disagreeing with certain aspects of politicization of the monkhood taking place during this more liberal period in Thai history, Phra Rajavaramuni resigned from the Buddhist University, and later he resigned his position as abbot of Wat Phra Phirain. He then wished to devote himself to writing and creating a number of works related to the study and application of Buddhism. At the time of his resignation, Phra Rajavaramuni was working on the first edition of his Dictionary of Buddhism. This resource, which includes standardized Thai and English translations of Pāli terms, lists of major Dhamma concepts from the Pāli canon, and numerous cross-references to the canonical texts, has become an indispensable tool for people doing research on Buddhism. Furthermore, its organization is a marvel of precomputer-era scholarship.
In 1972, Phra Rajavaramuni travelled with a small group of Thai monks to the United States to lecture at the University of Pennsylvania and study aspects of American life. He visited Universities with programs in Southeast Asian Studies paying calls on about eight East Coast Universities in the course of two weeks. In 1976, at the invitation of Professor Donald Swearer, Phra Rajavarimuni taught at Swarthmore College; and later in 1981, he taught again with Professor Swearer at Harvard University. One of the fruits of Phra Rajavaramuni’s travels to the United states was the publication of his lecture Mong Amerika ma Kae panha Thai (Looking to America to solve Thailand’s Problems) in which he warns Thai people against shunning their own valuable traditions and heedlessly borrowing many trends of social and material development from the West.\textsuperscript{17}

In 1987, after not having been promoted for some fourteen years, he was given the rank of Phra Debvedi. In 1993, he received the rank of Phra Dhammapitaka, a fitting title, for one who firmly grounded his learning in the Buddhist Canon or Tripitaka.

Since 1982, further recognition from Thai institutions of higher learning has come Phra Prayudh’s way. For example, in 1982, he was given an honorary doctorate in Buddhist studies from Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University, in 1986 an honorary doctorate in philosophy was bestowed upon him by Thammasat University; in 1987 in curriculum and teaching from Silpakorn University; in 1987 in education and teaching from Kasetsart University; in 1988 in linguistics from Chulalongkorn University, and in 1990 another degree in education from Srinakarinwirot University. And the recognition does
not stop there. In 1994, Phra Prayudh became the first Thai to receive the UNESCO Prize for Peace Education. As a result of his intellectual accomplishments, he has come to be seen as one of the major figures in the history of Thai Buddhism and stands as one of the foremost examples of a monk-scholar (Phra Nakwichakan).

Phra Prayudh Payutto’s Buddhadhamma

Buddhadhamma is considered as Prayudh’s masterpiece. The work has explained in depth the concepts like, Pañca-khandha, Paticcasamuppada, Majjhīnā Patipadā etc.

The fist version of Buddhadhamma - Written while Phra Prayudh was serving as an administrator at Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University - was just over two hundred pages long (1971).

With the publication of Buddhadhamma, Phra Prayudh’s reputation grew even further. The book began to be used by educators as a textbook and quickly became suggested reading for monks studying at Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University. Buddhadhamma had also attracted the attention of Dr. Rawi Bhavilai, head of the unit at Chulalongkorn University dedicated to religious studies called Thammasathan. He started a group called Radom-tham, or the ‘Dhamma Mobilization’ group. Through some of its activities during this period of Thai history, the Radom-tham group recognized the value of Buddhadhamma. Dr. Rawi Bhavilai says,

“At that time, we tried to find more copies of this book (Buddhadhama). Most stores were sold out. So we had to go to the
place that printed it and there we were able to obtain just a few copies. Our group agreed that we would reprint it. I, therefore, went to see Chaokhun (Prayudh). This was the first time I went to see him. I asked him if we could republish this book in the name of Khana Radom-tham. This was my reason for visiting him in 2519 (1976). But when I went to see him, he said he had already turned over the copyright to the textbook project of the Social studies society of Thailand. I knew Seneh Chamarik, who was a part of this project. Professor Saneh worked at Thammarat, and he was happy to give us permission. But then Chaokhun (Prayudh) asked to revise the book and add some things. We waited for him to make his changes and had to wait a very long time because just when he began to do this, he traveled abroad, occasionally returning to Thailand. But he continued with his alterations of the text. From a small book of some 200 pages, it became a work of some 940 pages. This process took over two years. I learned later that he worked very hard, that he became ill many times.”

“Although Phra Prayudh’s Buddhadhama was being revised and reconsidered, its influence was felt during this period of great searching and questioning. Buddhadhama is widely viewed as a part of the new trends of thought that were emerging at this time. However, it would be going too far to say that the scholarly publication Buddhadhama somehow advocated or contributed directly to activism. Moreover, during Phra Prayudh’s tenure as an administrator Mahachalongkorn Buddhist University, he eschewed and advised against monk-students taking part in any of the political actions.”

From memos he distributed at that time, it was clear that his feeling was
that monks should not disrupt their education (nor the educators in charge of their education) by taking a public political role, they should complete their studies and attain a position of responsibility that would allow them to carry out meaningful change from within the system. These disagreements over the role of monks in Sangha politics became one reason why Phra Prayudh eventually asked to be relieved of his administrative duties at Mahachulalongkorn.²⁰

According to Phra Prayudh, when he was asked by Khana Radom-tham to reprint Buddhadhamma, he asked for some more time to make further revisions and additions. For a variety of reasons, the republication of Buddhadhamma ended up taking over three years. It was during this time that he went to teach at Swarthmore, and in 1981 he was again asked to go to the USA and teach a class on Buddhism with Swearer at Harvard University. His travels, his poor health, the loss of a chapter of the final draft of the book, together with the slow pace of the government printing house in charge of the production led to an eventual publication date of 1982.

In the introduction to this second edition, Rawi Bhavilai wrote, "Khana Radom-tham is delighted to have the opportunity to publish the revised and expanded edition of Buddhadhamma by Phra (Prayudh) ... we are certain that it is a diamond of the first water and that it will serve as a foundation and reference for future Buddhist studies. The unintentional coincidence of the republication of this volume and the celebration of the Rattanakosin Bicentennial is especially auspicious and worthy of note."²¹
Some Buddhist scholars expressed their initial uncertainty over the hasty proclamation that the work was a ‘diamond of the first water’ - they said they would wait and see. Today, however, Buddhadhamma is widely held to be a masterpiece of modern Buddhist scholarship and Thai literature.

For the year 1982, in conjunction with the celebration of the Rattanakosin Bicentennial commemorately the founding of Bangkok and the beginning of the Chakri dynasty in 1782, Buddhadhamma was awarded first prize for literary prose by the Bangkok Bank Foundation, and in the same year Phra Prayudh was selected by the Department of Religious Affairs as an outstanding contributor to Buddhism, for which the creation of Buddhadhamma was cited as a prominent contribution. Giving a work of Buddhist theology an award for literature is further evidence of both Phra Prayudh’s artistry and how the definition of Thai literature has expended from its more classical roots in poetry. Such expansion and diversity has indeed made the Thai literary heritage rich and complex and bears out the statement that, at least for the modern period since the mid-19th century and the advent of printing, the ‘Thai always take the term ‘literature’ to cover a wider meaning than the Western notion of “imaginary literature”

The next edition of Buddhadhamma was published by Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University in 1986. This time the volume had been expanded to 1145 pages, which included additional revisions and an extensive 100 page index of its contents. As of this writing Mahachulalongkom University Press is completing the fourth revised edition. In the minds of most scholars, Buddhadhamma has been
deemed Phra Prayudh’s principal contribution to Thai Buddhist scholarship - and beyond the Thai realm it has been accepted a work of international standards. Buddhadhamma is widely vowed as the most significant Thai contribution to Buddhist scholarship in the last two hundred years.

When acclaimed as a unique contribution to Thai Buddhist literature, Buddhadhamma’s systemization, clear source and references, and its evocative section headings are all frequently cited as important, interesting, and new. The volume was different from typical expositions of Buddhism that began with the course of practice based on the fruits of the attainment of enlightenment - such as the Four Noble Truths, the Eight-fold Path, Karma, and a description of Nibbāna, the final goal of Buddhism. Instead, Phra Prayudh had divided Buddhadhamma into two main part: part one begins with ‘The Middle Way of Expressing the Truth, that is, a description of unbiased, neutral, balanced, or natural truths that were the foundation of the Buddha’s enlightenment and the Buddhist system of practice as it later developed. A great deal of lengthy explanation is devoted to descriptions of these interrelated natural laws coupled with their ethical importance. It is only after these fundamental principles to be understood first which are clearly explained, that Phra Prayudh moves on to an elaboration of part two, The Middle Way of Practicing the Truth or the Middle Path advocated by the Buddha following his enlightenment.
Phra Prayudh’s Role in the Buddhist Education System

Phra Prayudh Payutto began teaching at Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University in 1962. He prepared a number of classroom materials, including English language texts that are still in use. In 1964, he received the position of assistant to the Secretary-general of the University and later became deputy secretary-general. He is credited with improving the University’s curriculum, its system of grading and credits, and its Buddhist Sunday School for the general public. He also helped to institute some of the programs involving monks in national development projects as a part their education. It was during his tenure at Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University that he wrote the bulk of his masterpiece on Buddhist doctrine, Buddhadhamma. People still describe this monk-scholar as so dedicated that he often sacrificed sleep and worked late into the night, often never returning to his temple and ending up sleeping where he worked.

The position of Phra Prayudh’s reforms is especially fascinating and is tied to various aspects of his own life story. Having made his way through the rigors of the ecclesiastical education system, which tends to rely heavily on rote learning he transcended this system’s limitations and has come to be one of its major constructive critics. His objective, carefully worded critiques of Thai Society and Thai Theravada Buddhism, attempt to care for the best of tradition while advocating a spiritually meaningful course for the future development of his country. Many scholars at secular Universities - who had turned away from Buddhism as a foundation for their thought because they
found the treatises on Buddhism very traditional and the predominantly superstitious outlook of the Thai people had little to offer the modern world - embraced Phra Prayudh’s view. This learned monk-scholar’s updated and competent applications of Buddhist doctrine started a new wave of writings on the social applications of Buddhism.

Phra Prayudh has stayed solidly within the Theravada tradition by using the Buddhist Pāli canon as the basis for his writings on Buddhism, thereby avoiding some of the criticism that Buddhadasa Bhikkhu has incurred because of his more liberal theological interpretations and applications of the Dhamma and his relatively free approach to incorporating aspects of other religious traditions, such as Zen and even Christianity, into the Theravada world. Phra Prayudh’s designation of the Thai Pāli canon as the foundation for his works has, therefore, made his scholarship more generally accepted by those who embrace Theravada Buddhism. In a Sangha (or state for that matter) that is often administered according to regional favouritism, Phra Prayudh, a monk who comes from rural Central Thailand, has been largely viewed as standing in the middle, remaining neutral. To date, Buddhadamma has been recognized as Phra Prayudh’s best scholarly effort to objectively represent the absence of the teachings of Buddhism.

For most scholars and students, Phra Prayudh’s views first became known after being published in the Social Science Review, a ‘radical’, revisionist forum for the discussion of modern and traditional ideas and ideals initiated by editor and social critic Sulak Sivaraksa in 1963.26 One of Phra Prayudh’s first publications in this journal was entitled ‘Panha thana, lae pharakit khong song (Problems, status and
activities of the Sangha)’ Sangkhomsat Barithat (Social Science Review), Special Issue 4, Botbat Phutthasatsana kap Sangkhom Thai (The Role of Buddhism in Thai Society) August 1962. Subsequently, Phra Prayudh was invited to lecture at a seminar given by the Siam Society in August of 1969 on the subject of Buddhism and Present-day Thai Society. He gave a talk, entitled, The role of Buddhist monks in Present-day Thai Society, that was later published in a succeeding volume, Buddhism and present-day Thai Society (Bangkok, Siam Society, 1970). His analysis of the conditions of the Buddhist Order and his challenges to those in charge of the Buddhist religion in Thailand were so honest that, according to Sulak Sivaraksa, “he made some Thai women in the audience weep”. However, with the demeanor of equanimity expected of Buddhist monks, he stated his position very diplomatically-people listened and took note. In his Siam Society talk, he pointed out the following issues: The dearth of monks in the Order (especially those of long standing), the poor state of the ecclesiastical education system (both in terms of curriculum and funding), that recently many foreigners were coming to Thailand to study Buddhism and that few people were prepared to instruct them, the lack of social applications of Buddhism in the development of the nation, the increase of beliefs in the powers of sacred objects rather than increased interest in the application of Buddhist values related to critical thinking, which could be used to solve the problems facing Thai Society, and the penchant for temples to become involved in building expensive, ornate edifices instead of other structures that might better serve social and monastic welfare. All of these themes were to be sustained and
developed in his future published works

Phra Prayudh’s indebtedness to other Buddhist teachers must be tempered with his profound knowledge of Buddhism and his own sense of history. While respectful of the efforts of part figures in Thai Buddhist history, Phra Prayudh had attempted to learn from and build upon their efforts. Part of his ‘middle’ position often involves as acknowledgement and a critique of courses of action taken by early reformers in Thai history. For example, while Phra Prayudh has an appreciation for the spirit of the reforms carried out by King Mongkut, which resulted in the establishment of he Thammayut reform order in the latter 1880’s, he does not advocate the establishment of new orders, that tend to cause further division within the monkhood. Accordingly each era in Thai history - especially from king Mongkut’s time, to the turn-of-the-century bureaucratic reforms at the time of Prince-Patriarch Wachirayanwarorot, to the more liberal period of the change of government in 1932, to the modern era - have all had an impact on the monkhood and can provide significant lessons for the future.28

Placing Phra Prayudh in the Context of Modern Buddhist Scholarship.

Grant A. Olson, 1989, quotes Maha Narong from A person -centred ethnography of thai Buddhism: the life of Phra Rajavaramuni (Prayudh Payutto), “Maha Narong: In the Ratanakosin period, during the reign of Rama V, Maha Samana Chao (Wachirayanwarorot) was a ‘Modern monk’; later Buddhadasa Bhikkhu was a ‘modern monk’
when the change of government took place. Now, there is Phra (Prayudh) who has given us a ‘Scientific’ explanation of Buddhism appropriate for these times.”

This statement by a Buddhist monk-administrator represents the opinion of the majority of scholars interviewed on the contributions of Phra Prayudh. Placing him in the company of these monks puts him in the circle of the finest Thai Buddhist thinkers of the modern era.

Curiously, as Maha Narong implied, each of these Buddhist thinkers emerged at a crucial juncture in Thai history. At the turn of the century, Prince-Patriarch Wachirayanwarorot was one of the key figures involved in the bureaucratic reforms taking place at that time.

The Prince-Patriarch became a key figure in the reform of secular and monastic education in Thailand, writing many textbooks himself, perhaps the most famous being Navakovada (Instructions for new ordinands), which is still in use today. Steven Zack writing in 1987, observed that, “an educated monk in Thailand would probably understand the Dhamma-Vinaya Primarily on the basis of Wachirayanwarorot’s texts.”

But, this is changing. A point of contention between the Elder monks (Thera) and the younger monks (Yuwasong) still centers around the appropriateness of Wachirayanwarorot’s texts for the modern world - a debate that continues to unfold.

Phra Prayudh’s own experience and his concern for education has led him to take note of the tendency for some conservative, elder monks to cling to the works of Prince- Patriarch Wachirayanwarorot. He has
stated that “there has been a tendency to become so submerged in the tradition as to be blinded by it and he cites the continuing use of certain texts created by Wachirayanwarorot as constituting a Wachirayanwarorot cult.”31 Take, for example, Navakovada. According to Phra Prayudh, this book may be useful as a basic reference, but as a textbook it is inadequate and can indicate some of the things that are wrong with the way monks are educated.

A good deal of the monk’s education has depended on rote learning and this has often led monks to study and memorize reference books, such as dictionaries and fixed passages specified for certain Pāli examinations, instead of reading works that attempt to give a more holistic presentation of the Dhamma. If we examine the structure of Navakovada we can see that, it essentially contains the traditional lists of Dhamma teachings and does not integrate these into any coherent whole. This tendency to learn lists and isolated terms has been an obstacle to a more comprehensive conception of what the Buddha taught. Phra Prayudh has stated that when lists are learned in ascending order according to the number of elements that they contain - for example, the groups of two, groups of three, groups of four, and so on - important concepts are usually not linked according to the proper realization of the Dhamma. According to Phra Prayudh, “Most Dhamma concepts are separated and not present in proper sequence. For instance, there are three types of craving; the Four Noble Truths are in the groups of four; the Eight-fold Path in the groups of eight; the Five Appregates (Pañca-khandha) of Existence in the groups of five and they are usually separated far from one another and are not put in proper
sequence. They should be studied together, because when we study the Four Noble Truths, the first one deals with suffering (Dukkha), and suffering deals with the Five Aggregates of Existence, and so the Five Aggregates of Existence should come into play here. And then when we study the second Noble Truth, it deals with the three kinds of craving (Tanhā), and then we deal with the two kinds of Nibbāna, but Nibbāna is now in the groups of two, usually far away from consideration at this point."

And so, the tendency to cling to textbooks that do not go beyond this type of methodology has become an obstacle in improving education and the practical knowledge of Buddhists. While Phra Prayudh feels that many of the works of Wachirayanwarorot are good as far as they go, he feels very strongly that it is time to move on. There is much work that needs to be done, concepts need to be expanded upon, and those who have realized some of the inadequacies of these past works should be expanding and improving the curriculum with alternative materials. In this light, Phra Prayudh’s Dictionary of Buddhism can be seen as an improved and more integrated reference book, and Buddhadhamma is a more sweeping attempt to explain and integrate the major concepts found in the Buddha’s teachings.

The career of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu is also marked by significant turning points. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu was enrolled in the ecclesiastical system of education established at the turn of the century until he rejected it, determining that this system went against his nature. Buddhadasa bhikkhu’s works are innovative and deep, and yet they are different from those of Phra Prayudh. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s works
have been characterized as topical (Pen kho - kho), as focusing on or
emphasizing a particular point of the Buddhist doctrine, elaborating this
point, and then moving on to another. One of the important aspects of
this approach is that he dug deeply into the Buddhist canon to find
understudied concepts, and then elaborate on them in lectures that were
eventually published as books. In this regard, Phra Prayudh has said
that he was profoundly influenced by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s
explanation of causality. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s contribution, then tends
to be more topical than systematic; it is creative theology that takes
liberties with certain doctrinal aspects of the tradition and puts less
emphasis on offering a comprehensive outline of the whole of the canon.

And it is Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s creativity and generous
interpretation that have often made him the focus of criticism. It is
liberal comparisons of Buddhism and Christianity, equating Dhamma
with God, raised the eyebrows of many conservative Theravada
Buddhists. When Buddhadasa Bhikkhu was asked to compare his works
with Phra Prayudh’s, he offered the following: “Buddhadasa Bhikkhu:
..... Ah, comparisons! These should not be made in terms of which one
is better or worse or more correct; we should look at what direction we
are trying to go. Chaokhun Prayudh has put together Pāli statements
(Kho Khwam) that are beautiful (Phairo), easy to study and listen to
(Na Fang). In this current age, he has done very well. We (at Suan
Mokkh) may not have done as well by mainly focusing on certain
concepts or ideas (Chapho Ruang Chapho Ruang), speaking directly to
these concepts. But as to whether people now can accept this or not...
we speak directly, so this is different. He had paid attention to the
artistry of the verse (Roikrong) that will attract modern people, and this
should be of benefit in the future... Chaokhun Prayudh has helped to
digest (Yoi) the teachings, to make them relate to one another
(Samphan-kan), become linked (Nuang-kan).”

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and his thought have weathered many
storms, his lecture and writings comprise one of the largest bodies of
works on the interpretation of Buddhist thought in Thai history, and he
remains one of the most important contemporary reformers of
Buddhism. Monks like Phra Prayudh recognize the importance of the
inspiration they received from Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and the precedent
he set.

To conclude, it can be said that the three thinkers have shared the
common approach. Wachirayanwarorot played an important role in
bringing about the change in Sangha education, especially the
examination system, which was changed from the oral tradition to the
written system. In addition, he wanted monks to strictly follow the
monastic rules. That is the reason why he was a monk of Dhammayutta
Nikaya, the Buddhist sect established by his father. This sect is
different from Mahanikaya (great sect), the traditional sect of Thai
society. Dhammayutta Nikaya is believed to have strict monastic rules.

As far as Buddhadasa Bhikkhu is concerned, his interpretation of
Buddhism is radical and controversial. His teachings encompass
divergent issues. He is strongly opposed to the destruction of an
environment.

His approach towards education focuses on spiritual development
rather than mere survival. He is opposed to the Thai system of
education, which is almost entirely based on the materialist, career centred systems as followed in Western countries.

For him, concern only for material survival without spiritual development is devoid of meaning. Therefore, it is necessary that education should teach children spiritual fundamentals.

Like Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Phra Prayudh Payutto holds a strong opposition to the destruction of nature. He advises that we have to live with and presume nature, not to overcome with pride and destroy it.

The education must be for human beings, far greater harmony, for better environment. It must not be used to harm the environment out of greed, ignorance and pride or ego. Traditional Buddhist education should be appreciated and appropriately applied so that mind and body get synchronised and balanced, thereby the good and peaceful society can be expected.
REFERENCES


8. Ibid., p. 48.

9. Ibid., p. 11.


20. Ibid., pp. 78-89 and 160-181.
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33. Grant A. Olson, op.cit., p. 266.