CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Thailand is a country having area of 514,000 square kilometers and its population is of about 61.5 million with population density of 110 people per square kilometer. Out of the total population, about 77 percent population is in rural areas while 23 percent is the urban population. Thailand has a relatively higher per capita income of about 5,950 dollars. Still Thailand is a developing economy as around 63 percent of the total work force depend upon primary sector, which includes agriculture, fisheries, forestry, mineral etc. and around 11 percent of work force is employed in manufacturing sections, although contribution of primary and secondary sector to the gross domestic product is nearly equal.

Thailand is a land of Buddhism since a long period of time and even today about 95 percent of the Thai people are Buddhist. Hence the Buddhist educational approach in Thailand has been operating since a long time. The Rulers of Thailand have encouraged and supported Buddhism not only by way of providing financial assistance on regular basis, but also by building and maintaining monasteries, and by providing monks with the material necessities and facilities for performing religious duties by patronizing their educational activities, such as the Buddhists councils for revising Tripitaka and having scriptures translated into Thai language and by reforming the Sangha and appointing able supreme patriarchs to govern the order. As a result,
the influence of Buddhism can be seen in all aspects of the Thai life and culture.

The teachings of Buddha and Buddhist literature such as Jātaka tales have inspired Thai literature and arts and Pāli and Sanskrit are recognized as classical languages. Many people are interested in meditation and there are several meditation centers at several places in Thailand namely, the two Buddhist Universities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya and Mahamakutrajavidyalaya. Both the Universities provide their students training and education in Buddhism along with modern educational programmes. These universities conduct courses upto Ph.D. level in subjects of Buddhism, Education, Humanities, Social sciences, Philosophy, Pāli etc.

It can be said that in the early days of Thai history education was primarily provided by the religious and royal institutions Buddhist monks afforded basic education to boys in classes set up within the compound of the monasteries. At the present time, there are two methods of acquiring knowledge from the Buddhist monastery. The first method is enrollment to stay in the temple as ‘Temple boy, known in Thai as Sit Wat or Dek Wat. The temple boy is neither a monk nor a novice. He is a lay person who out of poverty, depends on the monasteries, or individual monks to support his education during the compulsory schooling age. After completing his secular studies, he may leave the monastery and engage in an occupation suitable to his knowledge and capacity. This condition is prevalent in religions all over the country. The second method is ordination, through which the individual gains access to the study of secular subjects along with
religious principles.

It can be said that the Sangha has made a great contribution to the cause of national education and Buddhist education still plays an important role for Thais, especially in the countryside where Buddhism, enormously influences the people. The Buddhist education remains an open option for Thais who cannot get access to the mainstream education provided by the government. The monastery can be said to be the stepping-stone for a poor village boy to step up into a higher position in society. It also has helped to bridge the vast gap between the rich and the poor and it has helps the poor village boy get a better chance for his life through education. The Buddhist Sangha has helps in alleviating the problem of inequality in education opportunity faced by Thai society as a whole.

It has been observed that there has been very intimate relationship between Buddhism, the state and the kings, and spread of Buddhism in Thai society viz. customs and traditions since a long period of time from the Sukhkothai period up to the present day, It has also been noticed that Buddhist monks have played a vital role not only in propagation of Buddhism, but also for bringing about all round development of the disciple and preparing them not only as an ideal citizens but also fit to travel the faith of Nibbāna or salvation.

It has been observed that the Buddha adopted various approaches in his mission, depending on circumstances. He gradually teaches from the lowest step up to the more advance step. He keeps changing the strategy in order to make things suitable to individual character, or a particular situation.
It is worth noticing that the techniques and method used by the Buddha remain practical in the contemporary world. As far as Buddhist education is concerned, individuals are encouraged to look into themselves first before studying others and external surrounding. That is a unique approach proposed by the Buddha in several methods cleverly applied by him.

It is clear the education is a way of the individuals’ life, a society and the world as Sekka (education) has a wider connotation. It does not refer to only study, but spiritual development and moral training as well. The approach has a larger prospect. It includes the relations between a teacher and students, their duties and obligations to one another. Education in Buddhism requires three modes; namely 1) Pariyati – competence and accomplishment 2) Patipatti – practice, performance 3) Pativedha – Penetration, realisation.

The Buddha advocated and recommended ‘being educated’, especially in morals, intellect and education. According to him, those without education and without being trained in good way would be like blind buffaloes wandering in the forest. The well – educated people are in a better chance to be prosperous and if properly trained, can attain the path of virtues. On the contrary, the illiterate may grow bodily while his knowledge does not increase.

The teaching of Buddha or Buddhist concepts like rebirth, Karma, Noble Truths and Nibbāna (though these were used before the Buddha’s time, he used them in a new and different context) play a very important part in Buddhism, especially, to the Buddhists or those interested in metaphysical problem like;
What is life?

Why are we born?

Why do we live?

What is the ultimate aim of our life?

Does the afterlife exist?

Buddhist cosmology has been depicted. But it should be kept in mind that a lot of metaphor and analogy is used in the process, therefore, it should not be taken literally.

Buddhism focused more attention on the present life, first and foremost. It does not inspire or encourage individuals to speculate or think about the future. It teaches that, when the present is good or complete, so will the future be.

It is worth noticing that though the Buddha, in teaching the Four Holy Truths, begins with Dukkha Buddhism is not pessimistic. In fact, Buddhism is neither pessimistic nor optimistic. It is realistic and sees things as they really are.

Buddhism somehow seems to care for the concern of all beings who are keen on knowing what their ultimate aim would be. That is why it gives Nibbāna as the highest goal and supreme liberation and salvation.

In the field of education, the role of Thai Buddhist monks, is clear. Thus, the three eminent Buddhist reformers and thinkers who are all monks play an important role in education.

The study begins with Wachirayanwarorot (1860 - 1921) who lived during the reign of Rama V, and Rama VI of the current Chakri
dynasty. He in late life became a supreme patriarch, and 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. He had written some Buddhist texts which are still in used today.

The second Buddhist monk is Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1906 – 1993) whose radical approach in reinterpreting Buddhism has caused both positive and negative changes in Thai society, especially from the elite. However, it is undeniable that he is an influential figure in the Thai Buddhist world. The monastery, Suanmokkhaphalaram is well known to Buddhists, both Thais and foreigners. While Thai Buddhists are having dilemma regarding their religion, many have found Buddhadasa’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 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, he is still regarded as an important Buddhist thinker in contemporary society.

The last Buddhist monk is Phra Prayudh Payatto (1939 – present). The author of many books on Buddhism the more important of which is Buddhadhamma. He is influential among the Thai intellectuals and scholars. His writings are said to be systematic and well – organised. His dominant approach is often seen in his work as the reconciliation between Buddhism and the swift 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 being 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, his views is that the Thai Buddhist should not blindly follow and appreciate western education. Instead, they should be wisely selective in their approach.

Suggestions

The present research is Buddhist educational approach in Thai society. The suggestions are following:

1) The new 1992 national educational scheme emphasizes that, education serves as an essential means to build up peoples intellect, ethics and morality. It also aims at enabling them to realize the significance of utilization and preservation of natural resources and to adjust themselves to the socio-economic changes and modern technologies while preserving their traditional culture and identity. Even the seventh National Education Development plan (1992-1996) emphasized quality improvement of the citizens so that they will be self-reliant, able to live happily and peacefully under the constitutional monarchy, adjust themselves appropriately and to be creative, take initiative and support the national development. As this is a national task, it is felt that the Buddhist educational institutions especially the two universities can play a significant role in helping the government
to achieve the above mentioned objectives.

2) At present the Buddhist educational institutes are concentrating more and more only on spiritual and religious training. It is true religious education is necessary for character building, developing moral behaviour and developing individual personality. But at the same time it is necessary that educational systems have to take into consideration the changes in the social environment and have to adjust themselves so as to meet the social needs. Theses institutions can train the students on how to do business within the moral framework of religion. For example, Japan has achieved rapid progress in technological field keeping intact its own culture. Similar attempt may be made in Thailand to bring about rapid economic development of the century.

3) At present a large rural population needs educational facilities in rural areas in this context. Also the Buddhist universities may workout suitable educational programmes for rural youths on the same line as open universities in India and by way of conducting correspondence courses. These institutions may workout various schemes for improving quality of the education.

4) At present these institutions have to depend upon government grants and donation from the public. However there is a need to find out ways and means so as to make these institutions financially strong and self sufficient.

5) At present research activities also have been slowed down, mostly on account of shortage of funds, talented and devoted personnel etc. Several international organizations may be approached and
Buddhist public as well as those who are interested in Buddhist literature and religion may be contacted to obtain grants, donations etc. so that financial problems can be solved. In order to develop a team of research scholars, those talented undergraduate students may be identified and provided training facilities, which may help in making required staff available for conducting research activities.

6) Modern age is the age of advertisements and publicity. The Buddhist universities may publish their activities at an international level so as to attract large number of students from other nations to learn and practice Buddhism.

7) These universities can undertake the job of preparing and distributing reading material in local language not only to create awareness about Buddhist literature but also making them good citizens. The ultimate aim of a man is to live life full of happiness and satisfaction and therefore educational and developmental activities needs to be developed in this direction. An attempt should be made to develop tools and techniques so that a person can achieve balance between internal and external environment. A man cannot be happy and be able to enjoy peaceful life unless he is able to create his own harmony. It is in this field, Buddhist Universities can play significant role.

8) At present in the non-formal educational programme, a process known as Khit-pen has been adopted to achieve the harmony. Khit-pen is critical or rational thinking or problem solving. The study of Buddhist literature trains the mind of an individual to think scientifically and systematically. This helps him in identifying
analyzing and finding solution to the problem faced by him in his day to day life. In addition meditation may also be practiced so that his mind and soul will become pure and active.

9) It is also desirable to make use of audio visual aids for propagating Buddhism. Lecture series of well-known speakers in local languages may be broadcasted or telecasted for the benefit of rural population.

10) Necessary steps may be taken to attract, students from all over the world especially from developed countries as they are in urgent need to find out tools and techniques to achieve and maintain peace, satisfaction and harmony.