Chapter VIII
Summary and Conclusion
Chapter 8

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This study is an attempt of comprehending political interplay between the state, Buddhism and Sangha. This study is also a result of analysis of changes that have occurred over the years in the structure and functions of political and religious institutions in the wake of political modernization in Thailand.

Thailand was known as Siam for a long time Since the period of King Monkut IV. Thailand emerged as most important and distinct country among southeast countries namely, Malaysia, Burma, Combodia and Laos. An emergence of Thailand as a nation–state is a result of eventual development of the religious Monarchy, and Sangha and also their perpetual interlinks in each other. The demographic characteristics social- traditions, culture, and popular belief system remained significant in maintaining homogeneity and helped Thailand to come out as a nation.

Thai Kingdom was established in 1350 in Ayuddhya dynasty which had imitated combodia so far buildings of the political organization, material civilization, writing skills etc. are concerned. The work of revival Buddhism took place in Dhonburi Dynasty by collecting religious books, building of temples.

It is the first dynasty of Kings, Sukhothai (1275-1317) attempted to foster the religious teaching of Buddhism on the line of cyclone, The Rattanakosin Ayuddhya dynasty followed the footsteps of dynasty by consolidating Buddhist practices and teaching in Thailand. Rama V, had especially founded two Buddhist Universities in Thailand namely: Mahamakuta Rajavidayalaya and Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidayalaya.

The successive dynasties have had not only concentrated on improving the practices and teaching of Buddhism but had also given adequate attention on evolving the administrative mechanism and regulation of the network of Sangha
and Monasteries. The important laws in this regard have been enacted namely, the Sangha Administrative Act of R.E. 121 (1903 C.E.), the Sangha Act of B.E. 2484 (1941 C.E.) and the Sangha Act B.E. 2005 (1962 C.E.) All these acts provides basic jurisdiction of the working of Sangha and also establishes the inter relationship with the government.

It has observed from this study that the Thailand become a constitutional state of limited Monarchy after Military coup in 1932. It reveals from the fact that this the revolution considered to be a breakthrough for having democratization of the Thai politics, the attempts of Military drove out the civilian leader from enjoying political power for one reason or the other. This has substantiated from the very fact that there were five coups d’etat between 1932 to 1958 and all the Military leaders typically have justified their moves by pointing out the mistakes, incompetence and corruption of civilian regime. Field Marshall Sarit Thanarat found to be most powerful Military ruler among all, who is responsible for having launched major infrastructure development programmes in Thailand. He also established Constituent Assembly for drafting new constitution. The revolutionary party was to look after the subjects till the completion of the constitution. However, field Marshall Thanom Kittikhachorn and field Marshall Prapas Charusatian who have remained in power for a long time with the help of conservative civil groups. However, in 1972-73 a group of idealist students, farmer and labour mobilized the protest against the government for its pro Japanese Stance, not meeting the promises of promulgating the constitution.

Consequently, both of them were sent to exile. The caretaker government led by Dr. Sanya Dhammasak had initiated the work of drafting of constitution keeping eyes on the elections of 1975. However the counter coup took place in 1976 with support of the king and some members of Military this was led to the formation of new government under the leadership of Thanin Kraivichien, who was a former supreme court justice. But his government also remained more repressive than the earlier regime in term of imposing a lot of restrictions on the
people which in result culminated into violence. By implications, Army commander General Kriangsak Chamanan and taken over the power from Thamin Kraivichian. It is interesting enough that Kriangsak has tackle the issues very cleverly in the sense of providing certain amount of freedom giving verbal support to land reform. He gave impression to the people that this as plashed democracy. Due to his efforts new constitution was promulgated in 1978. However, opposition grew against government on the issued of price hike of oil, gas, and electricity. The people demanded his resignation. In 1980, General Prem Tinsulanonda became the Prime Minister with the support of army officers and continue till 1987; eight consecutive years. The main contribution that he has made to Thai politics in regard of accelerating the political process, involving democratic party, social action, and brought chat Thai in to politics and provided stable government by curbing many forces into size. However, his government was criticized as indecisiveness, undemocratic and uncivilized.

For the first time the democratic elections in 1988 were held and Chatchai, a leader of the chat Thai party, took over as Prime Minister and was hardly remained in power for two years. He was unable to control over the price hike, corruption and was could not able satisfy the urges of the Military forces. Another military coup led by Suchinda Kraprayoon took over the power in 1991 for a short while and followed by Anand Panyarachun. His government is credited for providing freedom to the normal political struggle and also paved a way for the elections of 1992. After 1993, Anand Panyarachun become the Prime Minister for second time as the anti-Military party won the elections. In 1996, as per the new constitution, the general elections were held and new Aspiration party secured the largest majority seats and Chaivalit government, came to power under the prime Minister ship of chaivalit Yongchaiyudha. He made a lot of promises to the people but did not materialize them. As a result, the people began to demonstrate against the government and asked Chavalit to resign. But some how he managed to stay back as prime Minister upto the general elections of 2000. A businessman,
Taksin Chinnawat’s political party ‘Thai Rak Thai’ got thumping majority consequently and he become the Prime Minister. Though the present led by Taksin has been democratically elected, the majority of the members in government are corrupt.

Apart from the political developments in Thailand, the politics of constitution making is also equally important. The constitution of Thailand has been scraped so often by the Military which failed to create a sense of stability in Thailand the present constitution is sixteenth constitution. However, this time the work of the constitution making has been properly planned by Chatchai Chunhawan then Prime Minister of Thailand. As per the present constitution, the King is the head of the state and the Prime Minister is head of the government. The legislature consist, two houses namely, upper house and lower house. An independence of judiciary has been maintained.

It is evident from the fact that Thai nation in pre modern period attained firmer roots of Buddhism in Thailand through the Sangha and Monastery 700 years ago in Ayudhaya period. The religion became mode of nationalism and demonstration of Thai people to bring them to the respect to follow the King. The very concept of Monks and Monasteries has been shaped from written Buddhist idea of Buddhist brotherhood. It also indicates that Dhamma and the Vinaya are the two limbs of for us Buddhism. The conventional sangha depends on Monks for its existence and stability on the Vinaya. It is Vinaya that gives life to Bhikhus sangha. Another Sangha is Arya sangha or noble sangha is based on Dhamma. In short, the two Kinds of sangha are reciprocally helpful and complementary in realization of Buddhist ideals.

Another important fact this study reflects on the meanings of Monks. The Buddhist brotherhood is comprised of four assemblies; Monks and Nuns, layman and lay women. Monks and Nuns came form monastic scheme, while layman and laywoman come from the lay section. The Monks are those who have devoted to the spiritual development of the laymen. The monks depend on layman for
material needs such as food, clothing, lodging, and medicine. The monastery is
the residence of Monks where they also undertake spiritual activities and over the
years, they have become the centers of social life and the nuclear when from art
and education prosper. There are two kinds of Monasteries, the Royal and
community or private ones. The Royal Monasteries are large, beautiful, sacred
buildings built by the King, while private Monasteries are built by the people.

In this study, it was observed that emergence of the Sanghas and
Monastery have had long past legacy. It was Lord Buddha who for the first time
established Sangha for, propagating his teaching; while Monasteries had found by
“Bimbisara”, Indian King. In Thailand, we found that Sukhothai Dynasty in efforts
of preaching and practices of Buddhism, importance of Sangha and Monasteries
was emphasized. The King Rokaraja of Sukhothai consequently asserted to
consolidate the work of Buddhism through establishing ecclesiastical institutions
in Thailand on Sinhalese Model of Sri Lanka, while Dhammaraja of Sukhothai
(1317-1347) established Sinhalese Buddhist Sangha and adopted monastic
discipline in order to reorganize the Buddhist religious activities.

It is also observed that Ayuthdhaya dynasty also found to be increasingly
active in establishing warm the links of Thailand with Sri Lanka for the
development and propagation of Sinhalese Buddhism in Thailand. For such purpose
the development of Sangha and Monastery was believed to be necessary for the
Kings in Ayuthaya period. There was Thonburi dynasty for a short while only for
fifteen years. General Taksin, the King of Thonburi dynasty had concentrated on
restoring Thai nation and consolidation of Sangha. He also attempted to reform
Sangha by appointing nobleman to assertion the Monks knowledge of Dhamma.
The King Monkut who had brought a lot of reforms in the structure and functions
under Chakri dynasty. Monkut being acclaimed monk of sangha devoted twenty
six years for improving the standard of scholarship of Monks, most surprisingly he
evolved Thammayut order which promoted stricter observance of vinaya rules
which attracted the best minds to Sangha. Moreover, he brought out new edition of *Tripiṭika* with the efforts of Monks.

This study sheds the light on the working of Sangha and Monasteries since pre modern period. The activities of Sangha basically centers around the accomplishment of freedom. The prime function of Monasteries was to provide aids to aspirants in search for Nirvana. Monastery has also been considered as store house of Buddha images. It is also truism that Monasteries have been remained the center of primary education. The rural or village people look at Monastery as every thing for them including counseling.

This study also try to find out the basic changes in Sangha’s functioning that have taken place in the process of modernization in Thailand. Taking into consideration expanding role of Sangha and Monasteries in twentieth century in Thailand, the important laws such as sangha administration act 1902, the Sangha act 1941 and the Sangha act of 1962 have been passed to bring out to some reforms in the structure functions and control over the Sangha by the state. Though jurisdiction of Sangha and Monasteries has been specifically defined, the compulsions of time have forced the Monks to transcend the limitations imposed on them. Precisely for this reasons, there are two movements led by the Monks- Dhammakaya and SantiAshoke group, who have came to the forefront and have been mobilizing the Thai masses around certain haunting issues in Thailand. Consequently this has led to violation of the prescribed norms of Sangha. It is remarkable that there are certain factors which are responsible for decadence of the Sangha. Firstly, the rise of Buddhist base communities as an alternative to Sangha has increasingly been coming to the forefront and promoting the participatory democratic model for society i.e. Phra Khamkhian’s community, Phrakhru Sakurn’s community and Buddha Kaseta community. Secondly, Thai people have began to lost their faith in Sangha because of the fact that the widespread network of Sangha and monastery all over Thailand considered to be corrupt and manipulative. Moreover, some monks have directly involved in the
rape cases, and many others in many scandals. On the whole, the Sangha has been losing its credibility.

Since the politics of Thailand passing through various stages. As we have seen that many parties, Military leaders have ruled, Thailand especially after 1932 revolution. But it reveals from this study that the religion did play important role in shaping the politics. Similarly, the faith of Thai Masses by and large remained intact, in spite of a lot of changes that have been found in the Sangha. The Samgha which was supposed to concentrate on teaching and practices of Buddhism now tend to be heavily appropriated in the socio- political realm and actively involved in nation building programme. Earlier interplay between the state, Sangha, and the people appeared to have been entirely changed in the wake of the process of modernization and westernization of Thailand. It is due to the fact found that in the first place that Buddhism has large space of accommodating the changes occurred due to modernity. Thailand always cordial with the west. The ‘farangs’ when they came to Thaiport they were welcomed with open warms by local people. Secondly, more and more Thai intellectuals tended to adopt western thoughts and values and got detached from traditional Thai society, Thirdly, western values also have reflected quite largely in the field of education system, Sangha, economic system.

It is due to these factors, Thai Buddhism and Sangha have had tremendous implications. First implication is that the intellectual leadership has considerably been changed. Many monks coming out the Sangha and are opening up the space for day today issues of Thai masses without botheration of the criticism. They also trying to over come the barriers and weakness of traditional Buddhism and Sangha. Secondly, the Monks try to rediscover in them new confidence of Dhamma against the present Thai political unrest and crime against them and violence characterization of moral deterioration in society. Thirdly, the role of lay Buddhists as Dhamma teachers in modern religious has been recognized for demolishing the monopoly of Sangha and Monastery.
This study clearly reveals that the modern Thai state has treated the Sangha as an effective instrument for pursuing its politics and programmes. It was the first attempt of the government to politicize the religious institution for its own purposes on one hand. It is considered to be quite pragmatic approach of the government to involve the Sangha in national development. This has for the obvious reason that the villagers tend to put their trust in the abbot more than in the officials. In the second place, there is a decline in Buddhist teaching which government felt disastrous for national integration. Buddhism is a common ideology of all the classes and symbol of national unity.

It is from this point of view, the government evolved the programme called Phra Dhammatuta and took the help from the sangha for its implementation in order to strengthen the attachment of the people to Buddhism. Similarly the government found that there is threat to national integration from the hill tribes, Muslims and Christians from Northeast Thailand. For bringing these communities into Buddhist fold, the government brought out a strategy called Phra Dhammajarik programme and has been implemented out with help of the Sangha.

Apart from governments attempt of politicizing the Sangha and Monks for their own ends, the Monks on their own trying to involve in the politics by means of politicizing certain burning issues in Thailand namely environmental degradation and spread of HIV/AIDS. It can be substantiated from this study that Phrakhru Pitak, a monk of Northern Thailand leading the environmental movement quite prominently – making villagers aware about environmental conservation, showing slides and holding discussions about the problems that they face due to deforestation.

This study brought out the fact that how the monks have began to politics themselves by evolving their own perspective of development which is certainly different than the government. This study points out that the government have the programmes of macro level, while the Monks perspective is micro. The Monks
perspective of development aimed at active participation of village people in the programme, improves the self confidence of the community.

It has been observed that the monks have began to take advantage of the of recent issue of HIV/AIDS for creating their own identity / reorganization of their work in public life. It is evident from the fact that some Monks have taken initiatives in launching, HIV/AIDs Narcotics’ awareness programmes. Amongst such monks, the main monk leaders are Phra Maha Sumpharn in Udon Thani province, Mahasarakam province who have devoted themselves for this cause. In addition to it, the Sangha Metta project has also carried out by monks in order to prevent HIV/AIDS.

Finally, the Monks have also created the ideological space for their politicization. This reveals from the fact that after 1973, broad two categories of Monks have been come out namely left wing Monks and Right wing Monks. The left wing Monks tends to radicalism and try to mobilize the dissatisfaction and protest of the people on the socio-economic problems, authoritarianism of government. The Right wing monks adhere to the basic teachings of Buddhism, they perceive that the communism is basic threat to religion, and monarchy and needs to be checked properly.

**Concluding Remarks :**

It is from the foregoing discussion efforts have been made to testify the statements made in the formulation of this research study. Here some broad conclusion have been drawn. It is evident from the fact that Thailand emerged as most homogenous state in Southeast Asia. There are number of factors which have contributed to homogeneity. The main factors such as religion, language, race, topography have played major role in making Thailand as a nation state. The similar socio-economic cultural background of Thai people put them together and made the society cohesive / integrated. Yet another important factor the King remained symbol of Thai faith. All the Thai people in every corner of Thailand and
else where have tremendous amount of respect and emotional attachment of the king since the first King Ramkhamheang. Historically, Buddhism and Monarchy have inter-linkages. The king is righteous rurer and bodhisattva and always considered as protector of religion in all the dynastic ruled Thailand. Whatever social, political and economic discontent prevailed in Thailand, the Thais remained committed to national identity symbolized by the King and Buddhism. It is from this points of view, it could be confirmed that there is wider acceptance to the Buddhism, King and nation as ultimate symbols of Thai political values.

This study revealed that many paradoxical political scens have been witnessed in Thai politics after the King became constitutional Monarch in bloodless revolution of 1932. The politics of Military coups and counter coups have gained prominence over period of six decades. In the struggle of political power, the Military and bureaucracy remained capable of gaining power, while civilian leadership has always been sidelined in the political processes. Inspite of such political complexities, there is not a single instance in which the significance of Buddhism is challenged or attacked either by Military / bureaucrat by civilian political leadership. On the contrary military rule was considered as legitimate unless the King grants his approval. On the contrary military rule was considered as legitimate unless the King grants his approval. This itself suggests that King and Buddhism continue to be public ideology and insisted upon the fact that the king, and insisted upon the fact that the king, religion and nation have been intertwined.

This study clearly finds out that the Sangha and Monasteries are the important tributaries / banners of Buddhism through which public realm of Thai has been shaped since pre-modern Thailand. The Sangha and Monasteries have been the basic link pins between the state and the society. Thai people of by their proximity to Sangha and Monasteries, they were able to have the knowledge of Buddhism, the King, the socio-cultural processes across the Thailand. They relied much on these institutions for the redressing their problems including formal
education, health and counseling. At the same time the Kings under various dynasties have had high opinion about the Sangha and Monasteries. Consequently these institutions have been nourished under the patronage of Kings continuously for the period of seven hundred years. Logically, the Sangha and Monasteries emerged as force to be reckoned with and occupied central position in society. This force has been considered as significant as political authority.

It is found in this study that the traditional face of Buddhism began to be changed when the first group of Christian Missionary came to Thailand in nineteenth century and have made inroad for westernizing Thai society. The Thai Monarchs also came to realized the importance of Modernizing the religious institution like Sangha and Monasteries. It is mainly for the reason in the working of Sangha through enacting laws and updating system of Buddhism. Similarly some Monks came to realize the changing situation in Thailand due to Modernity, and transgressed the prescribed norms of Sangha. They started news movements interpreting and practicing Buddhism is with fresh thoughts. In the recent years certain alternatives in the form of Buddhist, communities have been coming up to taken over the functions of Sangha. At the same time Sangha has also loosing its respect and dignity is society due to Monks involvement in many corrupt practices. On the whole, Sangha is increasingly found to be declined.

This study remarkably found that Sangha and the Monasteries have became more political than the religious in its working. However, one thing which is very identical to be mentioned here that the people of Thailand have been passing through the various phases of the time, traditional, modern, and western, Buddhism remained the major player in shaping Thai public realm because of its inbuilt capacity to change with changing circumstances.