

Good Governance: A Buddhist Perspective

Dr. Tavivat Puntarigivat

Buddhist Socialism: A Concept of Good Governance in Southeast Asia

In Southeast Asia, there have been several attempts to establish Buddhist socialism in the struggles against Western colonialism, capitalism, and neocolonialism. The leaders who tried to establish Buddhist socialism in the struggles for their economic and cultural independence included S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka in 1958; U Nu, the Prime Minister of Burma from 1948 to 1962; and Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia during the 1950s and 1960s. Buddhist socialism can be characterized as an attempt to integrate a national and cultural identity, represented by Buddhism and its ethics, into political and economic structures and programs in Asia, particularly modern Southeast Asian nation states, in their struggles against Western domination.

U Nu, for example, proposed that Burma could become a Buddhist socialist country if the state guaranteed sufficient material needs for people--the four Buddhist requisites of food, shelter, clothing and medicine--and people were enabled to overcome Western consumerism. The state should minimize social class and property distinctions produced by colonialism, and encourage people to control their self-acquisitive interests and to place renewed value on morality. In short, the state was to meet people's material needs, and Buddhism their ethical and spiritual needs.

Buddhist socialism was not confined only to Theravada cultures such as Sri Lanka, Burma and Cambodia, it also developed in Mahayana cultures such as Vietnam. During the Vietnam war, Buddhist leaders based their struggles to end the war and bring peace to the country on Buddhist principles. They characterized their political and social philosophy as Buddhist socialism. From this perspective, Buddhist socialism can be seen as the struggle of Third World countries in Southeast Asia in response to Western political, economic and cultural domination. Outside of the Third World, the Sokka Gakkai movement and its Kometo political party in Japan were characterized by their leader as a form of Buddhist socialism. Donald K. Swearer, a well-known American scholar of Southeast Asian Buddhism, has pointed out:

Buddhist socialism as an ideology and a political program came to the fore in the Buddhist countries of Asia at the end of the colonial era and beginning of the modern Asian nation-state; roughly speaking, in the two decades following the end of World War II. As an ideology it was indebted to the Buddhist understanding of the world and the meaning of human existence, and to many of the liberal democratic ideals of the West. As a political and economic program it reflected Western socialist egalitarian ideals of the production and distribution of wealth. It was, in short, a syncretic marriage of varying elements from Buddhism and Western political philosophies by Asian leaders who, for the most part, had either been educated in the

West or under a Western educational system (Swearer, “Dhammic Socialism,” 19-20).

Asian political leaders such as Mao Tse-Tung and Ho Chi-Minh were influenced by Marxist revolutionary theory, and Buddhist political leaders such as U Nu and S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike were influenced by Western political theory. In contrast, Bhikkhu Buddhadasa, a contemporary Thai Buddhist thinker, has proposed his social theory of dhammic socialism out of an Asian way of thinking, within an Asian context. Since Thailand has never been colonized by a Western power, Buddhist socialism can be interpreted as a struggle for economic and cultural independence rather than as a political ideology.

Buddhadasa’s Theory of Good Governance: An Analysis and Critique

In response to rapid social change in Thailand, Bhikkhu Buddhadasa (1906-1993), a contemporary Thai Buddhist thinker, has interpreted Buddhism not only from a religious point of view but also from a socio-political perspective. After devoting most of his life to reforming Buddhism in Thailand, Buddhadasa found it necessary to address socio-political issues from a Buddhist perspective. In the 1960’s, he articulated his socio-political position in terms of “dhammocracy” (*dhamma-thipatai*): the social and political order should follow the law of Dhamma--the teachings of the Buddha. Later on in the atmosphere of the student led Revolution in Thailand from 1973 to 1976, Buddhadasa presented his unique theory of Buddhist socialism or “dhammic socialism” (*dhammika sangkhom-niyom*).

Buddhadasa bases his theory of dhammic socialism on nature. To him, nature represents the state of balance for the survival and well-being of human beings, animals, plants, and the ecology of the world. In the state of nature, every being produces according to its capacity and consumes according to its needs; no being, whatever form, hoards “surplus” for its own sake. Buddhadasa calls this balanced state of nature socialistic. Problems arise, however, when human beings begin to hoard a “surplus” for the sake of their own profit; this leaves others facing scarcity and poverty. According to Buddhadasa, human beings can and should produce a “surplus,” but the “surplus” should be distributed for the well-being of everyone, and Buddhism provides the ethical tools for this fair distribution.

Philosophically, dhammic socialism is based on this principle: none of us should take more than we really need. We should share whatever extra we have with those who have less. Social problems are fundamentally a result of greed. In other words, greed is at the heart of scarcity and poverty (Buddhadasa, *Dhammic Socialism*, 107). Buddhadasa’s individualistic approach to social and economic problems is implemented via the personal practices of generosity (*dana*) and self-restraint, which consists of keeping precepts (*sila*) and being self-disciplined (*vinaya*). This in many ways reflects his Theravada Buddhist worldview. Within the modern economic situation, however, it remains to be seen whether such an approach can address the issue of scarcity and poverty at the structural level caused by the global market economy. Now, I propose to present Buddhadasa’s theory of Good Governance or Dhammic Socialism and then to analyze and critique it.

Buddhadasa proposes that in a dhammic socialist society a just government could be obtained by having moral rulers who care for the welfare of the people rather than for themselves. Buddhadasa portrays the ideal leader of a dhammic socialist country as a *dhammaraja*, a leader with the “ten royal virtues” (*dasarajadhamma*). He bases his theory of the emergence of a political leader on the Pali scriptures:

According to the Pali scriptures it became necessary to extend natural socialism to the political foundations of the community when oppression in the community became intolerable. People saw fit to invest a particularly capable, just leader with their trust and power. This leader or *raja* would govern in such a way that no one could oppress anyone else, and the community would thus enjoy contentment (Thai: *po-jai*). Indeed, the word *raja* actually means contentment. Socialism as a political system, then, is truly socialistic in so far as its leaders secure the contentment of the entire community (Buddhadasa, “A Dictatorial Dhammic Socialism,” 89).

Buddhadasa further clarifies his theory of the emergence of political leadership by referring to a legend from the Agganna-suttanta. According to this legend, in the olden days when people lived in the forests and jungles without culture, they all had sufficient resources to meet their needs and they lived in peace. This original socialistic condition prevailed until people began to hoard, steal and quarrel. Such behavior was incited by greed, a defilement (*kilesa*). People took advantage of one another causing widespread trouble. King Sammadiraja--the legendary first king in the world--appeared to bring peace and order. He was a strong, clever, and righteous leader who brought contentment to the people. He prevented quarrels, instructed the people, punished wrongdoers, and rewarded those who were good and righteous. This seems to be the basic model of political leadership for Buddhadasa. Such leaders strictly observe the ten royal virtues, the Buddhist ethical principles of leadership. The ten royal virtues as given in the Jataka text are as follows:

1. *Dana* (generosity, charity). The ruler should not have craving and attachment to wealth and property, but should give it away for the welfare of the people.
2. *Sila* (a high moral character). One should never destroy life, cheat, steal and exploit others, commit adultery, utter falsehood, and take intoxicating drinks. That is, one must at least observe the Five Precepts of the layperson.
3. *Pariccaga* (sacrifice everything for the good of the people). The leader must be prepared to give up all personal comfort, name and fame, and even one’s own life, in the interest of the people.
4. *Ajjava* (honesty and integrity). One must be free from fear or favoritism while fulfilling duties, have sincere intentions, and not deceive the public.
5. *Maddava* (kindness and gentleness). One must possess a genial temperament.
6. *Tapa* (austerity in habits). One must lead a simple life, and should not indulge in a life of luxury. The leader must have self-control.

7. *Akkadha* (freedom from hatred, ill-will, enmity). One should bear no grudge against anybody.

8. *Avihimsa* (non-violence). Not only should one not harm another, but also a leader should try to promote peace by avoiding and preventing war, and everything which involves violence and the destruction of life.

9. *Khanti* (patience, forbearance, tolerance, understanding). A leader must be able to bear hardships, difficulties and insults without losing one's temper.

10. *Avirodha* (non-opposition, non-obstruction). A leader should not oppose the will of the people. One should not obstruct any measures that are conducive to the welfare of the people. In other words, a leader should rule in harmony with the people (Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 84-85).

The character of the ruler is the crucial factor in Buddhadasa's concept of Good Governance. If a good person becomes the ruler, then the whole system of dhammic socialism will be good. On the other hand, a bad ruler will produce an unacceptable type of socialism. Buddhadasa's dhammic socialist state depends almost exclusively on the virtues, the responsibilities, and the decisions of its leadership. Buddhadasa cites a number of legendary and historical kings as the exemplary righteous rulers, such as King Sammadiraja, King Asoka of India, and some Thai kings of the Sukhothai and Ayutthaya periods. Kingship based on the ten royal virtues is, according to Buddhadasa, a pure form of socialistic leadership. He maintains that,

The best example is King Asoka... He purified the Sangha by wiping out the heretics, and he insisted on right behavior on the part of all classes of people... He was a gentle person who acted for the good of the whole society. He constructed wells and assembly halls, and had various kinds of fruit trees planted for the benefit of all. He was "dictatorial" in the sense that if his subjects did not do these public works as commanded, they were punished (Buddhadasa, "A Dictatorial Dhammic Socialism," 92).

Again, he argues that:

Rama Khamhaeng [a Thai king in the Sukhothai period] ruled socialistically, looking after the people the way a father and mother look after their children. Such a system should be revived today (Buddhadasa, "A Dictatorial Dhammic Socialism," 99).

This model might have worked well for some kingdoms in the remote past, but for a highly structured and complex society today, checks and balances on power are required for social justice.

The question to be raised here is about the idea of the "common good." Who decides what the common good is? In all contemporary societies there are tough moral questions involving the common good. In the case of Asoka, it may be easy to look back and say that what he did was for the common good and therefore the punishments he imposed on those who refused to work for that goal were justified. Because none of us were there to experience Asoka's rule, we can idealize it. It is much easier to determine a generalized common good in retrospect than during the time the decisions are

being made. In contrast to most Western paradigms, Buddhadasa's approach lacks the perspective of a more structurally advanced model of society and leadership. For Buddhadasa claims,

If a monarch rules with tyranny, of course such governments should be done away with. If, however, the monarch fulfills the Ten Royal Virtues, then the rule will embody the principles of socialism and bring about contentment in society. Under such rule there would be no capitalist oppressors or division of labor according to wealth and power; there would be no underclass of angry laborers resentful at being oppressed and at not having the power to accumulate wealth for themselves. A truly socialistic government would embody the characteristics of dhamma. It would not allow for class distinctions based on wealth. Nor would it permit anyone to accumulate private wealth at the expense of others (Buddhadasa, "A Dictatorial Dhammic Socialism," 89-90).

Louis Gabaude comments that Buddhadasa's vocabulary is problematic: he uses common words but with his own special meaning. Gabaude argues that Buddhadasa's model of rulership is unrealistic in the modern world:

"Socialism," "democracy," "dictatorship" have a common meaning affected by the historical implementations of their ideals. They refer not only to a precise set of ideas but to actual experiences. Buddhadasa's new sets refer only to principles, to ideas and to dreams. As for experiences or facts, a Jataka King, a 3rd century B.C. ruler like Asoka, or a 13th century A.D. Sukhothai ruler, Ramakamheng, can hardly be realistic models for ruling our complex societies and our independent citizens (Gabaude, "Thai Society and Buddhadasa: Structural Difficulties," 220).

The democratic process is a time-consuming one, often at the expense of the community's good. Hence, Buddhadasa adds the concept of dictatorship, not in the sense of a tyrant, but in the sense of a protector of the common good. As Buddhadasa understands it, the term "dictatorship" (Thai: *phadetkan*) has two meanings. As a political ideology like those found in the authoritarianism of a military dictatorship, it is certainly undesirable. But as a means of leading to a desirable goal, it means to handle things expeditiously. Buddhadasa's notion of "dictatorial"--means to obtain a desirable goal, especially peace and justice in the society. It is worthy to note that Buddhadasa developed this concept at a time of social turmoil during the 1973-1976 period of political unrest in Thailand. During that period, it seemed that democracy could not really solve the problems facing Thai people, who were ideologically divided between the extremes of right and left. To be able to bring peace and justice to Thai society, Buddhadasa argued that "dictatorial" meant the exercise of virtue and wisdom (*dhammaraja*) to end the hatred and turmoil, and to lead society to peace and order. Buddhadasa explains "dictatorial" as a means to obtain peace and justice in dhammic socialism. Thus:

Let us examine a very controversial notion, "dictatorial democracy" (*prajadhipatai-phadetjakara*). We tend to shy away from the word, "dictatorship," because we are so infatuated with liberalism (*saeri-niyama*)...

To sum up, there are various forms of democracy such as liberal democracy and socialist democracy. The ideal form is dhammic socialist democracy in which “dictatorial” means are used to expedite solutions to social problems. We must not be misled by the usual associations of the word, “dictatorial.” Dictatorship in the sense of tyranny has no place in dhammic socialism. If dictatorial methods are consistent with dhamma, they will help expedite moral solutions to social problems, and should be used to the fullest extent. Our own country is currently in great turmoil, and we seem to have no clear vision of where we are headed. If we were more “dictatorial” in a dhammic way, we would be able to solve our problems quickly (Buddhadasa, “A Dictatorial Dhammic Socialism,” 82-83).

Generally speaking, the notion of a dictatorial, dhammic socialist ruler is problematic because it is based almost exclusively on the personal “moral” qualities of the ruler. Buddhadasa seems to believe that with the ten royal virtues, the “dictator” would not go astray. Unfortunately, the justification of forcing people to do things for the common good comes frighteningly close to the old idea of the end justifies the means. One person is empowered to define the common good and then enforce it. This is a questionable approach to politics because it could potentially provide the opportunity for corruption and the misuse of power due to human fallibility. Furthermore, one may ask these questions: Does personal morality guarantee political ability and efficient rule? Who will check the virtues of the ruler? Who will decide that he/she is lacking those virtues? When should the leader quit? And what if he/she is not willing to quit? And what about the other sub-powers in the society itself? Louis Gabaude raised these questions and points to the European experience in discussing the question of dictatorship:

Buddhadasa understands that, lacking a common ideal, dictatorial power is needed to rule society according to the Dhamma. The problem is to define what actually, precisely, fits with the Dhamma and what does not. He trusts the dictator to decide, in a rather Manichaean way, what and who should be “dhammic” and what and who should not. Europeans still remember that, between the two World Wars, joint refusal of liberal democracy and communism gave all dictatorial powers to a “Caudillo,” an “Il Duce” and a “Führer” who were even supported at times by some religious groups in the very name of social order, morals, and efficiency (Gabaude, “Thai Society and Buddhadasa: Structural Difficulties,” 220).

Like many of Buddhadasa’s supporters among progressive Thai Buddhists, Sulak Sivaraksa, a strong proponent of democratic processes in government, finds it difficult to accept Buddhadasa’s claims about the desirability of a dictatorial form of Buddhist government. Sulak Sivaraksa comments:

I think a weak point of Buddhadasa lies in this matter of “dictator,” because dictators never possess dhamma, and it’s like this everywhere because we abandon ourselves to having dictators. Even the abbots at almost every temple are dictators (Sivaraksa, “Buddhadasa and the New Generation,” 56).

Buddhadasa sums up his political position saying, “I favor a Buddhist socialist democracy which is composed of dhamma and managed by a “dictator” whose character exemplifies the ten royal virtues (*dasarajadhamma*),” and “In particular, small countries like Thailand should have democracy in the form of a dictatorial dhammic socialism.” In discussing these views, Louis Gabaude further points out how unrealistic the political position taken by Buddhadasa is in terms of the actual world, observing that Buddhadasa’s political thought is not convincing because no one can see how the three components of his utopian regime--dictatorship, dhamma, and socialism--could possibly be implemented at the same time in modern Thai society as it is.

Donald Swearer maintains that Buddhadasa’s dhammic socialism has three basic principles. First, the principle of the good of the whole deals with political, economic, and social structures. Second, the principle of restraint and generosity governs individual behavior. And third, the principle of respect and loving-kindness prescribes the right attitude toward all forms of life. He argues that Buddhadasa’s vision serves as a critique of both capitalism and communism and provides the basic principles for a political philosophy with the potential to help guide Buddhist Thailand to a more just and equitable social, political and economic order.

Louis Gabaude takes a very different view. In developing his critique of Buddhadasa’s proposed political regime he argues that Buddhadasa is assigning all the good to his dictatorial dhammic socialism. At the same time he is assigning all the evil equally to liberal democracy and communism. Gabaude points out that the only difference is that liberal democracy and communism are real, actual regimes, while dictatorial dhammic socialism is a projection or mental construction.

However, cultural geographer, Bhikkhuni Dr. Lee interprets Buddhadasa’s concept of dhammic socialism as consisting of a “beneficent ruler,” dhamma and socialism. In her analysis, she states that dhamma does not necessarily mean Buddhism but may be expressed by the highest moral ideals which are present in all world religions, for example, altruism. Thus, Dr. Lee finds Buddhadasa’s Dhammic Socialism alive and well in the example of the beneficent rule and altruism of Denmark’s Queen and system of democratic socialism.

When revisiting the past and considering the dialogue on good governance according to the ancient Greeks, Buddhadasa’s dictatorial dhammic socialist leadership reminds one of the philosopher king in the *Republic* of Plato. In his socialist republic, Plato categorizes people into three classes: philosopher king(s), warriors, and merchants (including all kinds of laborers). The philosopher king is the ruler who is the most virtuous and has the most wisdom. Plato’s philosopher king is similar to a ruler with the ten royal virtues in Buddhadasa’s dhammic socialism. Plato’s *Republic*, however, was criticized by his famous disciple, Aristotle, who advocated for a more democratic form of government. Aristotle, in his fourth book of the *Politics*, after describing the four principal forms of government as monarchy, oligarchy, democracy, and aristocracy, adds: “But there is a fifth... Constitutional government may be described generally as a fusion of oligarchy and democracy, but the term is usually applied to the forms of government which incline towards democracy.” Aristotle’s constitutional

government serves as a more democratic contrast to the leadership of both Plato's *Republic* and Buddhadasa's dhammic socialism.

A more modern critique of the hierarchy of power explicit in Buddhadasa's dictatorial dhammic socialism or good governance comes from the contemporary French philosopher Michel Foucault. In his book, *Power/Knowledge*, Foucault argues that the universal or super-structural theory of power has created problems in human civilization. As Foucault points out,

Where Soviet socialist power was in question, its opponents called it totalitarianism; power in Western capitalism was denounced by the Marxists as class domination; but the mechanics of power in themselves were never analyzed (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 116).

What we need, argues Foucault, is not a political philosophy that is constructed around the problem of sovereignty, or around the mechanism of law and prohibition, but a political theory that advocates the elimination of central power. Foucault analyzes the mechanics of power as something which circulates, or something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localized here or there, never in anybody's hands. Power is exercised through a net-like organization. It is concrete power which every individual holds, existing only in action. Individuals are the vehicles of power and the individual is an effect of power and the element of its articulation. Foucault concludes that one needs to investigate historically, and beginning from the lowest level, how mechanisms of power have been able to function. By his new theory of power, Foucault has challenged not only a hierarchical structure of power such as that of a virtuous dictatorial ruler in Buddhadasa's dhammic socialism, but also an institutional democratic structure of power. The best form of government for Foucault is probably the most decentralized which is abstract just as Buddhadasa's concept of dhammic socialism, yet worthy of working towards.

Defilements or Corruption and Good Governance

Buddhadasa's social theory is closely link to his Buddhist view of the primacy of the personal. For him, the psychological oppression of defilements (*kilesa*), such as greed, hatred, and confusion within oneself eventually leads to exploitation of others, hence social oppression. To solve the problems of social exploitation, in Buddhadasa's view, is to let those oppressors, as well as, the oppressed, overcome their own greed and selfishness, hence social liberation. Buddhadasa's approach to social issues is quite traditional and individualistic. He maintains that liberation in the ideal sense is *nibbana* (trancendence)--at both personal and social levels. Furthermore, freedom in the fullest sense is the freedom from defilements (*kilesa*)--again, both at personal and social levels.

Buddhadasa's views on social liberation are, in fact, not so different from those of traditional Buddhists who maintain that social liberation or social peace is obtained if all individuals are psychologically liberated or peaceful within themselves. Peter Jackson claims that Buddhadasa provides a more developed social analysis of the origins of social liberation and peace, but Jackson fails to provide more concrete and specific evidence in support of his claim. He writes:

While criticizing the anti-capitalist workers and labor leaders for being as materialist as their capitalist opponents, he also acknowledges that the former's materialism is conditioned by the self-centered greed of the capitalists, and that workers-capitalist conflicts are primarily caused by the latter and not by the former. For Buddhadasa peace is not only attained through inner, moral and meditative practice but also by combining this with morally guided social action directed towards ending the power of certain exploitative and self-centered sections of society (Jackson, *Buddhadasa: A Buddhist Thinker for the Modern World*, 272).

Buddhadasa sees peace as an important social goal. Peace is attained by both inner and outer action, not by either alone. Donald Swearer sees Buddhadasa as a peace advocate who condemns war and all forms of violence toward human beings and the environment. Buddhadasa criticizes those Buddhists who do not act in the world--especially in politics because they regards politics as "dirty." He also criticizes the capitalists and the communists who act only in the world without a religious base. However, Buddhadasa does not go beyond this criticism to suggest a concrete political program to overcome social conflicts.

Buddhadasa's views cannot be categorized as following the pattern of any existing political ideology, nor as supporting the programs of any Thai political party or movement. His political philosophy is general and theoretical, and he avoids making remarks on specific political debates and current controversies. He is more concerned with setting out what he regards as correct Buddhist principles for the operation of politics rather than with acting as a Buddhist critic of political events. Fundamental to Buddhadasa's conception of politics is the principle that all political doctrines and political activity should be judged against a spiritual criterion. Peter Jackson has pointed out that:

For Buddhadasa any political form is good and of benefit if it encourages the populace to reach towards nibbana by uprooting self-centeredness and establishing social and individual peace (Jackson, *Buddhadasa: A Buddhist Thinker for the Modern World*, 269).

What might be considered the traditional goals of political activity, such as promoting the production of wealth or attaining socio-economic equity and justice, according to Buddhadasa, are not regarded as having intrinsic value in themselves. Rather, for Buddhadasa, the production of material wealth and the promotion of social equity only have value inasmuch as their attainment permits or encourages the populace to further their spiritual interests. Buddhadasa considers all forms of "materialism" to be threats to social well-being and to peace, and does not regard either capitalism or communism as being inherently a better political form.

Buddhadasa takes a utilitarian approach to traditional political systems, because he regards them as having no intrinsic value. For Buddhadasa, any political system, be it dictatorial or democratic, is acceptable as long as the leaders are moral and the system promotes dhamma in the world. Because of this stance, Buddhadasa is regarded as a political conservative. In my opinion Buddhadasa's views on social liberation are inadequate, since he takes an individualistic approach that lets everyone liberate

himself or herself from the defilements (*kilesa*) first, assuming that the whole society will then be automatically liberated.

While this is a personalistic utopian view difficult to realize in the real world, cultural geographer, Venerable Dr. Lee gives the example of Taiwanese Bhiksuni Master Cheng Yen as doing exactly what Buddhadasa described as an individualistic approach to liberation which has spread to four million people internationally. Master Cheng Yen in her efforts successfully heralds a democratic and altruistic based social order, a social order beyond the concept of nation-state, and implemented via the leadership of a spiritual *dhammaraja* resulting in sustainable development socio-economically and political transformation towards peace.

Despite its inadequacies Buddhadasa's theory of dhammic socialism, as Donald Swearer has pointed out, is one of the few attempts on the part of an original Theravada Buddhist thinker to propose a political philosophy for his time generated out of an Asian belief system within an Asian context.

In conclusion, Buddhadasa's theory of dhammic socialism represents a particular Buddhist response to rapid social change in a modern Asian state. For an ideal political system and society, Buddhadasa always refers to the "golden age" of the historical past--whether it be a society during the time of the Buddha, King Asoka of India, or the kings of the Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, and Bangkok periods in Thailand. Buddhadasa portrays those ancient societies as full of the spirit of dhammic socialism with the leadership observing the ten royal virtues, and people practicing Buddhist ethical principles such as self-restraint (*sila* and *vinaya*), loving-kindness (*metta-karuna*), and giving (*dana*). As in any traditional society, people in those periods might have had more intimate social relations and have followed religious disciplines more strictly. But Buddhadasa forgets the historical fact that those societies contained various forms of social oppression such as slavery, annual indentureship, an inhumane and arbitrary legal system, and many assassinations in the recurring power struggles for the throne. Buddhadasa's theory of dhammic socialism reflects his view of a Buddhist Utopia. As a political program, it fails to address realistically contemporary political, economic, and social issues facing Thailand today.

Conclusion

The importance of Buddhadasa's political thought lies in the fact that dhammic socialism serves as an indigenous traditional critique of modern economic and political theories as well as the constructing of a moral guideline to create a new political philosophy. Buddhadasa's greatest contribution lies in his theory of the state of nature which provides a philosophical agenda for solving the environmental and ecological crises facing the world today. As a leading reformist Buddhist figure, Buddhadasa has laid a religious foundation for contemporary Thai thinkers to search for a more realistic political ideology which would link traditional Thai culture to the modern problems under the influence of the global market economy.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aristotle. *Politics*. In W. H. Auden, *Greek Reader*. New York: Viking Press, 1952.
- Buddhadasa, Bhikkhu. *Dhammic Socialism*. Translated and edited by Donald K. Swearer. Bangkok: Thai Interreligious Commission For Development, 1986.
- _____. *Dhammika Sangkhom-niyom Baep Phadetkan* (A dictatorial dhammic socialism). Bangkok: Sublime Life Mission, 1975.
- _____. *Prachathipatai Baep Sangkhom-niyom* (Democratic socialism). Bangkok: Sublime Life Mission, 1974.
- _____. *Sangkhom-niyom Chanit Thi Chuai Lok Dai* (A socialism capable of benefiting the world). Bangkok: Sublime Life Mission, 1976.
- Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. Edited by Colin Gordon. Translated by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980.
- Gabaude, Louis. "Thai Society and Buddhadasa: Structural Difficulties." In Sulak Sivaraksa (general editor), *Radical Conservatism: Buddhism in the Contemporary World*. Bangkok: Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development, 1990.
- Jackson, Peter. *Buddhadasa: A Buddhist Thinker for the Modern World*. Bangkok: The Siam Society, 1988.
- Lee, Bhikkhuni Dr. Personal Interview. April 17, 2003. Bangkok, Thailand.
- Rahula, Walpola Sri. *What the Buddha Taught*. Revised and Expanded Edition with Texts from Suttas and Dhammapada. Foreword by Paul Demieville. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1974.
- Sivaraksa, Sulak. "Buddhadasa and the New Generation." In Khanakammakan Sasana Phya Kanphatana. *Phutthathat Kap Khon Run-mai*. Bangkok: Komon Khimthong Foundation, 1983.
- Swearer, Donald K. "Bhikkhu Buddhadasa on Ethics and Society." In Charles Reynolds and James Childress (editors), *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, Vol. 7/1. Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee, 1979.
- _____. "Dhammic Socialism." In Bhikkhu Buddhadasa, *Dhammic Socialism*. Translated and edited by Donald K. Swearer. Bangkok: Thai Interreligious Commission For Development, 1986.
- _____. "Introduction." In Bhikkhu Buddhadasa, *Me and Mine*. Edited with an introduction by Donald K. Swearer. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1989.
- _____. "The Vision of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa." In Bhikkhu Buddhadasa, *Dhammic Socialism*. Translated and edited by Donald K. Swearer. Bangkok: Thai Interreligious Commission For Development, 1986.