

APPENDIX III  
ANNIVERSARY OF A PERSONALITY

*A. Information concerning the personality to be commemorated*

**1. Family name: The Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikkhu**

First name: original name : Ngeuam PANICH

**2. Born:** 27 May 1906

**Died:** 8 July 1993

**3. Field of Activity**

Extensive research, scholarly publications, teachings and practices of socially engaged Buddhism and promotion of interfaith understanding.

**4. Brief description of the personality and of its most important works**

**4.A Brief description**

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (which means the monk who is the servant of the Buddha) was born as Ngeuam Panich in Chaiya district, Surat Thani province in the southern part of Siam (Thailand). He became a Buddhist monk in 1926 at the age of twenty and was given the religious name "Indapanno". After a few years of study in Bangkok, he decided to quit his formal monastic education to pursue a more effective and appropriate approach. After returning to his hometown he began to investigate the teachings of the Buddha by going back to the original sources. At this time he made an effort to integrate Buddhist philosophical theory with practice, i.e. how to transform greed to generosity, hatred to compassion and delusion to wisdom. In 1932, he established a spiritual center in the forest called Suan Mokkhabalarama (meaning The Grove of the Powers of Liberation). This center was the first of its kind in Siam or anywhere else in the world. The name *Suan Mokh* expressed the essence of Buddhist spiritual practice which is the liberation of all beings from ignorance, selfishness and suffering. After extensive studies, experiments and practices with the spiritual life, he declared himself as *Buddhadasa* and devoted his life to disseminating the essence of Buddhist teachings, and to bringing spiritual values back into the modern world. In his effort he always sought cooperation and understanding with other religions.

**4.B His important work**

**4.B.1 Restoration of the essence of Buddhism**

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu devoted himself to extensive research and sought to articulate the correct and essential principles of what he called "pristine Buddhism" (namely the original realization of the Buddha which was later concealed under ritualism, nationalism, superstition, interpretations and commentaries, and politicization). He restored a number of profound teachings which had not been taught for a long time, such as the essence of interdependence of all. By reintroducing this concept as an active Buddhist teaching he challenged the modern concept of individualism.

He was skillful in elaborating the teachings of the Buddha and other spiritual practices to fit the traits and backgrounds of his audience without discriminating against nationalities, religions, beliefs, etc. His mastery over words in explaining the teachings attracted public attention, and even caused reaction, irritation and critique from conservative practitioners, particularly when he re-interpreted certain Buddhist teachings to encourage understanding between all peoples of the world.

**4.B.2 Writing and translation**

Buddhadasa's important work is the collection of his lectures and writings called "Dhammakosana," comprising of 61 volumes at 500-pages each. These volumes have already been published; another 100 volumes await printing.

Some of his writings are quotations taken directly from the original Pali canon. These writings contain a biography of the Buddha and other profound teachings.

Buddhadasa was also a poet, writing poems using his pen name "Sirivayasa."

In his time, Mahayana Buddhism was not accepted as equally to Theravada tradition in Siam. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's interest in the Mahayana teachings inspired him to do translations of the teachings from two teachers: Wei Lang and Huang Po. He was the first Thai monk to declare Mahayana and Vajrayana Schools of Buddhism as essential to the understanding of Buddhhadhamma.

More than 140 of Buddhadasa's books have been translated into English, more than 15 books into French, and 8 into German. Some of his books have also appeared in Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian, Lao and Tagalog languages. Moreover, his work is studied in practically every university in Europe and North America offering courses in world religions.

#### 4.B.3 Ecumenical activity and dialogue

Buddhadasa was always enthusiastic in his studies of the world's religions. His areas of interest extended from Buddhism to Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism. He gave a number of lectures to promote interfaith understanding and the comparative studies of religions. He was also participated in ecumenical activities and interfaith dialogues.

With his deep respect for those spiritual values that contribute to the welfare of the world, he put forth the following "Three Resolutions":

- To help everyone penetrate to the heart of their own religion,
- To create mutual good understanding among all religions,
- To work together to drag the world out from materialism and selfishness.

#### 4.B.4 Establishment of Suan Mokkh and other Dhamma centers

Suan Mokkhabalarama (or Suan Mokkh) was established as a place for the investigation and practice of Dhamma. It was set in natural surroundings with minimum construction. In the beginning, only a few monks resided there, but later it became a gathering point for people of all walks of life, not only Thai Buddhists, but people of all religions and nationalities came there to live mindfully in simple conditions.

In 1987, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu established the International Dhamma Hermitage, located opposite the original center. Facilities offered included an introduction to the principles and practices of Buddhism, meditation courses for foreigners, simple facilities for foreign monks (known as Don Kiam or Suan Atammayatarama), and training courses for spiritual awakening.

Shortly before his death, Buddhadasa initiated a similar facility for women called Dhamma-Mata.

With the appreciation of Suan Mokkh style of living - simple but facilitating spiritual practice - similar places in other parts of the country were established by his followers with help from Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. Buddha-Nigama in Chiangmai, Suan Usom in Bangkok and Panta Garden in Nakorn Si Thammarat are a few examples.

#### 4.B.5 Socially engaged Buddhism

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu was very skilful in using the age-old Theravada Buddhist principles to respond to concerns of the modern society. His sharp commentaries concerning social problems and his proposed guidelines were instrumental in raising the public awareness to various issues such as violence and war, blind faith and indifference toward other faiths, struggles between political ideologies, consumerism and materialism, education, etc. He also raised the issue on tackling the social structure which is usually unjust and violent.

### 5. Full list of her/his works and/or actions

A List of important/influential works of The Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikkhu are mentioned in detail in the last section which was compiled by Louis Gabaude. (Gabaude, L. (1990), Bibliography of Buddhadasa's translated works. *Radical Conservatism: Buddhism in Contemporary World*, (TICD and INEB, Bangkok)

### 6. Please state whether this commemoration related to the work as a whole or to a particular work or action (if so, which?)

The commemoration is related to the work of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's as a whole.

### 7. Describe how this work/action has had a genuine impact at the regional and/or universal level

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's work has been translated into more languages than any other Thai personality. His works are studied worldwide.

He was a pioneer in promoting understanding between different religions. His forest temple has provided services for people from all over the world seeking inner peace. He also shared with people of different faiths. He was highly regarded not only by many Christians in Thailand but many progressive Christians in other countries as well. Similarly he gained respect from many Muslims, locally and globally, and even non-believers. His approach and teaching has always been in ecumenical manner.

According to Professor Donald K. Swearer, Director of Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard University, who has studied deeply the life and work of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, observed that his ecumenical vision was of "*universality and inclusiveness. His is a bridge-building understanding of religions that encourages every religious person to be faithful to his or her own tradition while at the same time respecting the truth and value of the other. Buddhadasa's interpretation of Buddhism and Christianity has been controversial. .... Buddhadasa's purpose was to encourage both Buddhists and Christians to recover the deepest principles of their religions, to delve beyond the outer superficial covering that hide the true core and in doing so to discover a common ground.*" (Swearer, D. 'The Ecumenical Vision of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and His Dialogue with Christianity'. *Seeds of Peace*, Vol. 21 No. 1 (Jan.-Apr. 2005), pp. 32-35)

Within Thailand, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu was highly respected by many leaders including His Holiness the Supreme Patriarch and The Venerable Bhikkhu P.A. Payutto. Beyond Thailand, he was respected by many leaders from different Buddhist traditions such as His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet.

His work has been frequently and widely discussed in seminars and study groups in communities of scholars and religious practitioners. Some of his ideas, such as dhammic socialism, gave rise to public debate and exploration of new socio-political paradigms.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's work has always been in response to the concerns of modern society. His interpretations have inspired his disciples and other young people, Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike, who are active in social services and social change. Some of them set up a local network of monks and nuns called Sekhiyadhamma Network to work in various issues such as ecology, cultural preservation, social services, education, poverty eradication, etc. The work of Sekhiyahamma Network, is now expanding to cooperate with other faith organizations in Thailand as well as to work with Buddhist monks in Laos, Cambodia, Burma and Sri Lanka. Likewise, he is a patron of International Network of Engaged Buddhists whose members are active in many parts of the world.

In the USA, his leading American disciple, formerly known as Santikaro Bhikkhu is setting up Liberation Park in Chicago to offer Dhamma study and meditation following the approach of Buddhadasa. Similarly, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's Suan Mokkh has become a model for other forest Dhamma centers in many parts of the country.

In the time of information technology, there are a number of websites that disseminate the original teachings of Buddhadasa as well as the application of his teachings in many areas of social activism, both in Thai and English to reach a wider audience.

**8. Website(s) :**

[www.suanmokkh.org](http://www.suanmokkh.org), [www.buddhadasa.com](http://www.buddhadasa.com)

**B. Anniversary to be celebrated**

- Fiftieth
- Centenary
- Multiple thereof

**Date(s) chosen for the celebration:** The whole year of 2006

**C. Information concerning the activities organized for this occasion by the country/countries concerned.**

Place	Type of activity	Institution responsible	Funds requested (under the participation program)
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<p>In your country (Thailand)</p>	<p>1 To transcribe lectures from recorded tapes to print approximately 100 more volumes of the Dhamma Kosana series.</p> <p>2. To record the Dhamma Kosana series of books onto CD.</p> <p>3. To remake the video recorded dhamma preachings onto CD.</p> <p>4. To continue the Dhamma-Mata project to facilitate female practitioners.</p> <p>5. To publish a book to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.</p> <p>6. To organize a Meditation Retreat at the International Dhamma Hermitage.</p> <p>7. To do translation of Buddhadasa's teachings into English.</p> <p>8. To set up a center for study of Buddhadasa's works.</p> <p>9. To set up a Buddhadasa Library in Phatoomkongka Temple where Buddhadasa Bhikkhu studied.</p> <p>10. To turn Buddhadasa's previous lodging in Phatoomkongka Temple into a museum.</p> <p>11. Series of Seminars from 2004-2005 to study Dhammakosana</p> <p>12. A project to bring his essential teachings especially his three resolutions into schools so that the youngsters, including non-</p>	<p>Dhammadana Foundation</p> <p>Rajbhat University at Surat Thani</p> <p>Phatoomkongka Temple and Puey Forum</p> <p>The Abbot of Phatoomkongka Temple</p> <p>Wongsanit Ashram and Sekhiyadhamma group.</p> <p>Wongsanit Ashram</p>	<p>No funds are requested from UNESCO. It is hoped that the Thai government would allocate enough fund as well as other resources to support the program as something more memorable than concrete monuments.</p>
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	Buddhists, would go beyond traditional Buddhism (which is linked with nationalism) to culture of awakening.		
In other countries (please state which) USA.	1. To publish a book in honor of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu to bring his teachings and resolutions to attention of non-Thai Buddhists	Donald Swearer (Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard University) and Louis Gabaude (L'Ecole Française d'Extreme-Orient)	
International	2. INEB's activities to alert its Buddhist and non-Buddhist members in many countries in America, Europe and Asia to be aware of his contribution. The program will be joined by its allied, affiliated, and member organizations. Such as Buddhist Peace Fellowship (USA), Neo-Buddhist movement (India) Tibetan Buddhist organizations under patronage of H.H. the Dalai Lama, Buddhist Educational Institutes (to be confirmed) e.g. Naropa Insitute (USA) Schumacher (UK), Bija Vidyapeeth (India)	International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) and other allied/affiliated/member organizations.	

*D. Links with UNESCO*

**1. Please indicate the field of competence of UNESCO to which this celebration is related**

- Education
- Science
- Culture
- Social and human sciences
- Communication
- Transdisciplinary projects .....

**2. How do you wish UNESCO to participate?**

1. To put the name of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu in UNESCO calendar so that the member states of UNESCO would be aware of his name and contribution to education, culture and peace. If any

member state of UNESCO would like to propose any activity in commemoration of him, we shall be happy to be in touch with them.

2. UN now celebrates Vesak Day – Full moon day in May – which were the days of birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha. As for Buddhadasa Bhikkhu who declared himself a true servant of the Buddha. May was the month of his birth and inauguration of his Suan Mokkhabalarama. We wish UNESCO would propose to UN to have a message delivered on the Vesak Day of 2006 by applying the appropriate teachings of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu on the year of his centenary. We also would like UNESCO to nominate The Venerable Bhikkhu P.A. Payutto to the UN as an appropriate person to deliver the message. The Venerable Bhikkhu P.A. Payutto was awarded a UNESCO Prize for Peace Education in recognition of his effort to promote world peace in 1994.

**3. Please state in what way this commemoration is linked to, and promotes, UNESCO's objectives and missions**

The commemoration of the Centenary of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu is in compliance with UNESCO's objectives and missions in the following ways.

1. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu devoted his life to education. While criticizing mainstream education system, he proposed alternative educational approaches that emphasize a spiritual dimension linking the head with the heart so that the educated person would also be a good human being:

2. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's main approach in exploring the essence of Buddhism is truly scientific. It is not merely materialistic, but it is based on scientific knowledge that transcends materialism.

3. He created a culture of peace and non-violence as well as understanding among different faiths and non-believers. His works are an attempt to bring people out of consumerism, economism and militarism toward the culture of awakening.

The commemoration of his life and work, we hope, would adhere to spirit of UNESCO. It shall spread an alternative approach to education, science and culture which is appropriate to the new millennium.

*E. Please add any other information*