



# Justice and Peace

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## Love, Truth, Justice : In the Times of Social Recovery

The '2010 May' event caused invaluable damage to the political and social situation of Thailand as we have already known from all kinds of media that spread all over. After the event it seems that the conflicts in political thought and ideology among the people that have divided Thai society for long time are even worse and the splits among the people widen. Especially those who were affected by the event, all of their emotions and reasons can only harden their thoughts and beliefs more than ever.

Therefore, the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) takes it as our mission to join in the building up of understanding in Thai society. We invited believers in every religion to reflect the problems that happened with unbiased mind. We hope that with the religious doctrines as basic principles people may comprehend the real causes of conflicts. Faith and belief will calm them and they will join in recovering our society which is facing crisis and bring peace back to Thai society.

CCJP thus arranged a seminar on 'Love, truth, justice : in the times of social recovery' on Wednesday 7 July, 2010 at the third floor meeting room of the Assumption Personnel Development Center, the St. Gabriel Foundation Building, Thonglor 25 road, Bangkok. The seminar began with a lecture by M.R. Akin Raphiphat, the Chairman of Tai Community Foundation on the topic of 'Understanding the inequality in Thai Society'. M.R. Akin has been named 'Down

to Earth Prince' or the 'Slum Prince' - (*M.R. or Mom Rachawong is a great-grandchild of a King*) - because he has been a leading figure who fights for the poor, the communities and the slum dwellers for almost all his life. Listening the view about the poor from this 'Down to Earth Prince' was thus very interesting.

After that was the seminar on the topic of 'Love, truth, justice : in the times of social recovery' from 3 religious points of view:

- Buddhism by **Phra Paisal Visalo**, the abbot of Wat Pa Sukhato Temple, Chaiyaphum Province, well-known by the society as a monk who advocates the non-violence.
- Islam by Mr. Winai Sama-oon, the imam of the Gamalul Islam Mosque, an experienced Muslim intellectual as can be seen from his numerous important posts of the country - two terms as the senator, two terms as the MP - Member of the Parliament, general secretary of the Chief of the Muslim of Thailand (Mr. Prasert Mahamad) and general secretary of the Central Committee of Islam of Thailand.
- Christianity by Fr. Phichan Chaiseri, the Chaplain of CCJP and Director of the Redemptorists in Pattaya.

This edition of 'Puthai' which is the issue of situation report will present the content of the seminar to our readers.

# Understanding the Inequality in Thai Society



M.R. Akin said that the inequality in Thai Society has long been existed. Mostly comes from the injustices in the ruling system. From his working experience he finds injustices in the legal cases which the riches always win while the poor can never escape from the lawsuits, accusations and imprisonment. Especially when Thailand followed the west to enter the age of industrialization the gap between the rich and the poor widened because the industrial development needs as many as both natural and local resources. With the growth, roads were built up to the provinces, dams were constructed for producing electricity in order to support the expansion of industry. And all of those were done by exploiting and evicting a huge number of people from their homes, their lands. The injustices from the State's policies thus widen the gap in the society.

*'The state's policies take important part in engendering injustices. At the times that we built the Mittrapap or Friendship Highway, Thai government began to build dams, the most scandal one was the Sirintorn Dam in the district of Khong Jiam, Ubon Ratchathani Province. With the construction of dam, water flooded in many areas. The people were moved up to the estate on the mountain while low land became reservoir. I met the people in the estate there. They couldn't grow*

*anything on the land like that - all the pebble and gravel. You see, you moved up there - on the top, then you looked down and saw that the places that used to be your homes became water, how would you feel? How hard it would be to you? And at that time the government told people that they should sacrifice. The villagers didn't protest, they just yield because they were told that they should sacrifice for the growth of the nation. So, the construction of dams is shameful because of this. The people those days thought simply that they must sacrifice for their country. They were moved up to highland but they could not earn their living there, they had to find other land to farm. That was the happening of injustices and inequalities. Then, nowadays, there is the problem of Paak Moon Dam which we know well. The dam was the huge project of the Government that operated for the wealth of the nation; for the central part. The wealth of the nation never reaches the poor, it just clusters around a group of rich. The result is that today the gap between the rich and the poor in our country is almost 20 times which is very high and only secondary to Brazil. Professor Dr. Nithi Eausriwong - a well-known social critic - told me that if the gap between the rich and the poor is so high, it is no way that our country can be peaceful. No any country can be in peace if the inequality was high. The protest and demonstration of the 'red-shirt' came from the people who felt that they were treated unjustly, they were exploited in every aspect. They felt bad already with the injustices and inequalities imposed upon them, when were incited and distorted by the politicians for their own benefit the situation thus worsened to be riot - bloodshed and incendiary.'*

M.R. Akin said that the industrialization of Thai Government had imposed great difficulties and sufferings upon a very large

number of people in rural area. The villagers were inevitably affected from the water and air pollutions; waste of the factories. The problems comes from the corruption of the officials and the exploitation of the capitalists. The exploitation of natural resources in locals by the central government became chronicle problems. If anyone made use of these problems as a tool to destroy the nation, to stir up violence and commit a coup it was just too easy to do.

The poor have neither rights nor voice. We knew from many petitions now that we didn't know so many issues when they happened but we would know after the problems worsened like the problems of Map Ta Phut Industrial Estate and the Pak Moon Dam. There are still many issues that we don't know - particularly the problems of land after the Tsunami disaster. The problems were there. But since no violent protest just only some complaints by the victims, they were not heard. Therefore, at last, they had to block the roads. I was told that blocking the roads were only way to attract the attention from the concern parties, otherwise they were just harassed and could do nothing. But many times that they protested the politicians always have their hands in and made the situation worsen.

M.R. Akin also talked about the democracy and election. He viewed that the elections which should engender democracy as those in the western countries failed to reach the point in Thailand. In deed, in developing or underdeveloped countries the elections are always unsuccessful because the politicians that the people voted them in do no benefit for the people but only search for their self-interests. *'The election is a ritual of democracy of the western countries. It likes that you consider one is a Christian or not by watching whether he goes to church to attend the ritual. Therefore, the country that has no election will not be considered as a democratic country. So our country must have*

*election in order to be a democratic country. Now let's look at Myanmar, we can't say that they are democratic even they have election, they just do it to show that they are.'*

Actually, the villagers elect the representatives in order to be their patrons, to help them instead of electing the good persons as we expect. M.R. Akin said that *'A serious problem of Thailand is the attitude that come with the patronage system. The people develop a mentality of dependence. They think that they have no ability to help themselves for survival, they can't be self-reliant and prosperous. They think that they need connections if they wanted to survive, they have to depend upon others. If they wanted to apply for works they must have some connections. The election as well, in many areas, people do not elect their representatives but they elect their patronages. So they elect the ones who give them money. After the election they will go to ask for money and everything they want.'*

Finally, M.R. Akin proposed that Thailand should have a People Council which the representatives are elected from the networks of the communities in all over the country. And have some 'senior citizens' who are respected in the society in order to be the delegates to converse with the state and to oversee the working of the officials.

*'Nothing can reform the bureaucracy or the Parliament except the people. We must find out some methods to let the people express their opinions. The people will be the ones who will change either by violent or non-violent ways. But we mush find the methods to change non-violently. Therefore the People Council may be helpful if the people organize and become a pressure to force the officials to behave better and develop more service mind; beside, the people must press them to not cooperate with the business sector to take advantage from the people. The corruption has long been happened and no one can solve only the people!'*



# Love, Truth, Justice : In the Times of Social Recovery

## In the Viewpoints of 3 Religions

### Buddhism - Phra Paisal Visalo, the abbot of Wat Pa Sukhato Temple, Chaiphum Province



Phra Paisal Visalo began by pointing out that the Thai society lacks of love, truth and justice. The structural problems, the capitalism and consumerism are the root causes of problems that have been accumulated for long time. The causes of the ‘May 2010 Crisis’ thus related to the insurgency and violence in the three southern border provinces during the past 7 years.

*‘During the past 7 years, began from the rob of guns from the military camp in Jau Eye Rong District, Narathiwat Province on 4 January 2004 by the thieves that Taksin - the then prime minister - called ‘shoddy thieves’, from that day up to now the Thai society is full of news of violence and split in the nation. Superficially, the event in 2004 may seem to be the split between the Buddhist-Thai communities and the Muslim-Thai communities or may view it as the conflict that*

*is limited in only three southern provinces, but actually it has the same root cause as the event of the Red-Shirt Riot in May 2010. How can they be the same things since the events happened in different places? The actors or the persons who involved were not the same at all. If we didn’t just look at the characters but look deep down into the roots of the problems we will see that they are the same matters :- 1, **the poverty** is the injustice in economic, and 2, **the injustices**, especially those imposed upon the poor by the state’s people’*

Phra Paisal said that the people in the three southern border provinces are the poorest compare to other regions of the country. When they are unjustly treated by the governmental officials they feel like second class citizens. This feeling also happens to the people in the North, the Northeastern and the poor in the cities like Bangkok. This gives rise to the Red-Shirt Movement that supports Taksin Chinnawat. *‘In the time of Mr. Taksin, those who were the canvassers of Thai Rak Thai Party were influential. Even the heads of districts who used to be feared by the villagers feared them because the districts’ heads or the officials feared the MPs of Thai Rak Thai Party. Those days the MPs were more powerful than the officials, they could even shift the governors. That was a reason that why the people favoured Taksin - because his*

*men could support them and give them chance to approach the resources and services of the State, they were protected from the corrupted officials. This situation arose because of the economical inequality and social injustices which cause the people to yearn for patrons.'*

Phra Paisal also said that *'The problem of Thailand is that we always view the problems in the aspect of person so we can't look deeper into the structural aspect of the problems. We think that the red-shirts come out because of Mr. Taksin, we do not consider many social factors that lay behind the phenomenon of having this kind of people, and why so many people cheer him. In a society like ours even there is no Mr. Taksin there will always be someone in his like that the people will favour. Take the case of three provinces in the Southern border, even today the government can arrest all the insurgents but tomorrow the same problem will occur again since the root of the structural problems still.'*

In addition, love in Thai society disappears owing to the influence of capitalism and nationalism. Anger and hatred happen in Thai society. People are hostile among one another, become either victims or rivals, take advantage from each others. The obsolete nationalism make us unable to accept the difference of thought. *'We do not accept the different thought, and that bring about anger, hatred, prejudice, lack of toleration. The difference thus become cause of conflict and hatred. And now we row, we hate each others just because we think in a different way. Only wear different color of shirts can make husband and wife; brother and sisters and parents hate one another. This is the example of hatred in Thai society'*.

Phra Paisal viewed that before asking the Thais to love each one another we must begin from respecting the rights of human-beings, respecting rights of each others, accepting the difference in idea. *'We don't respect the rights in thinking differently. We always secretly curse those who don't think like us or even mark that this one is our foe. Horrifyingly, we have a belief about silent power in morality. It means that if we viewed that someone was immoral or illegal we have power to punish them. In this kind of thought the wrong-doer's rights is zero. Therefore, it is not surprise that many Thai people once believe that the red-shirts are terrorists they think that they are deserve to die, and there are many people agreed that they should be suppressed violently because they are terrorists. I think that if we had this kind of thought the society can not find peace at all because we will always judge the people as wrong-doers if not be illegal, and they are immoral or wrong just only because they think differently from us.'*

For the 'truth', Phra Paisal viewed that the truth is gray not white or black as the government and the National United Front of Democracy Against Dictatorship - UDD - or the Red Shirts look at each other. *'How can we see that the truth is not white nor black, it is not the fight between the angel and demon as we used to look at it during the time of May crisis in 1992. Viewing matters as white and black give no place for those who are in the middle. But in fact, the protest of UDD during the past two years is not black nor white. I think that this is the missing truth. The truth that both sides of the conflict are not white nor black. The truth in the structure is always unseen, we see only the truth in person but not*

*in structure, we think that if only we can chase away the person - if only we can get rid of Taksin - everything will be okay. If only we can get rid of the corrupted politicians the country will be peaceful. But that is impossible because the present system will create men like Taksin, create endlessly more and more politicians in this like, and these type of politicians will be favoured by the people. So this is the truth that has been overlooked.'*

For the 'justice', Phra Paisal said that Thai society is unequal in economic and law which is call 'double standard'. It reflects the injustice that happens in society. But the double standard which is the structural problem of Thai society reflects also the problem in the thinking of Thai people 'When we get less salary than others we feel it's unjust, isn't it? But if we get more than others have we ever think that it's unjust? The injustice happens when we feel that we get less than others. But if we get more than others it is not the injustice but it is because we are lucky. And this is the double standard in the mind of people not in the structure.'

Phra Paisal proposed that now there is high distrust in Thai society, so the trust in each other must be built up first. 'When there is no trust in each others there will be anger, hatred, prejudice. No trust no love. The slander can easily happen. I think that if we would like to create love we must build up trust first'. He raised the example of South Africa that there had been problem of racism between the white and the black. The chief of the black - Nelson Mandela - could negotiate with the white president - Frederic de Clerk - and successfully ended the problem of racism by beginning with the mutual trust.

For the problem in Thailand, Phra Paisal viewed that in order to build up harmony in the country the truth must be disclosed - that is the cause of the loss. It should not just be ignored and forgotten, that will make the violence occurs again and again. The disclosure of the truth will give justice to the victims and the losers of the violent event that took place. It will help the victims to forgive the perpetrators and open their minds to accept the other persons, they will be free from anger and hatred and start their life anew. When justice be done it will lead to love.

*'Sometimes we are afraid of truth. We believe that truth hurts, makes people angry. We think that justice will make that person demand for his rights. But sometimes it can lead to love. I believe that every human-being has love in his heart, everyone has virtue in mind but it is suppressed by the anger, hatred, resentment. And if we could free those anger, hatred and resentment, love will come out and eventually we will see that the ones whom we viewed as our foes who destroyed us are just our human fellows. We will also know that the real enemies are not men but the anger, hatred and resentment.'*

Finally, Phra Paisal talk about love, 'It is not late that we will join together to promote love. Even it is just only the power of few little people but it will be able to draw love of the give and expand it. This love is like something that can be spread. When one has love he will make people around him love too and it will spread widely. Anger too, it can spread like the epidemics. We have to fight with the epidemic of anger by love and give it out with the same intensity, then it will help our country to be more peaceful.'



**Islam by Mr. Winai Sama-oon,  
the imam of the Gamalul Islam Mosque, Muslim intellectual.**



Mr. Winai said that love, truth, justice are generally called “The Truth of Life”. These three truth or three virtues are in the hearts of men but they disappear from our Thai society now. Therefore, to solve the social problem we should solve our hearts and begin from the communities which are the important places in building up this truth or virtue. Mr. Winai viewed that the difference and the diversity in religions and races in Thailand has been existing since the Sukhothai Era. But the State does not deal with the difference and diversity in communities with love and truth, it therefore create injustices which leads to many problems. Islam principles teach about love; truth, justice and trust.

*‘Friendship must begin with trust no matter in what kind of relation - between the rulers and the subjects; parents and children. Without trust to each other will lead to many problems including the problem of the Red-Shirts. Many governments can not solve these problems because they have never really looked at the causes of the problems. I always tell people that, in Islam, Al-Koran says that Allah creates men that differ in races and He also clearly specifies that every group must*

*know among one another, not turn back on each other, not insult each other. And since we want to know each other we must trust each other, love and be kind to each other. When we really know each other we will love.*

*The Al-Koran emphasizes that only love is not enough, it must have also compassion. Because if we talked only love, in capitalistic world, it will always be interpreted as the sexual love, love in wealth and one own business. So in Al-Koran, two words are stressed - love and compassion. Both of them must go together. Love without compassion will cause bias. Al-Koran also teaches that we should not hate each other. Hatred gives no faith. Build up love, compassion and eliminate hatred.”*

Mr. Winai also raised the teaching of the Prophet Muhammad about the give or giving alms : ‘ **“Don’t be lower-hand but be upper-hand”**. Upper-hand is the hand that gives. Giving is an important factor in building a progressive society. We call the give as **Sodakoh** in Arabic, means to give alms. The Prophet said everyone can give alms. He also taught that we must be fair. **Justice is a kind of alms. Good words are alms.** And **“Every step that you step to pray is also giving alms”**. And finally he said **“When you see the garbage on the wayside, you pick it up to throw away, to not hinder the others’ way. That is also kind of giving alms”**. Therefore, I think that when we sum up all of these, we may say that we all have virtue, we need to give alms and don’t live by exploiting the others. We must give, when we meet the others we smile, smiling is a give - that is the teaching of the Prophet.”

**Christianity by Fr. Phichan Chaiseri,  
the Chaplain of CCJP and Director of the Redemptorists in Pattaya.**



Fr. Phichan raised the content from the Papal Encyclical : ‘Charity In Truth’ or ‘Caritas in Veritate’ in Latin, which Pope Benedics 16 issued in the year 2009 :

*‘The structure of Thai society is now very ill, unable to think, unable to think right. All of these tell that the virtue in Thai society is weak. So the recovery of the Thai society can not be done in one day but need many generations. Our King taught us the sufficient economy with 3 points - know to be enough; - be reasonable, know how to think; - have immunity. In the Encyclical Charity in Truth also talked about ‘Super Development’ - means the development to change from poverty to wealth quickly. But we don’t know that there is mechanism behind the men who have original sin but want to be rich, want to dominate the world, want to control the world. But today the powerful countries can’t say that they are developed because they face the dead ends. While other countries still follow them with all types of consumerism without knowing this.*

*The Charity In Truth praised the Populorum Progressio of Pope Paul 6 which wrote in 1967, two or three years after the*

*Second Vatican. Pope Paul 6 said that in development we must concern three points : - politic; economic and society. But today we are in the age of IT - information technology. So Pope Benedics also talked about technology. He said human beings must be developed in every aspects which he used the term Integral Human Development. It is the integral human development. In Thailand, the politicians said that they are serving the people but in fact they are doing for their interests alone. When they are elected to the Parliament they just try to be the Government, and when they can be the Government they are not the people’s government but their party’s government. We can say that this is not right. The Pope said that the government should be virtuous. He said about CSR - Corporate Social Responsibility - in Charity In Truth which is very up-to-date. He said that the government must have economical ethics. One teaching is that if you gave you will be given.*

*Our Thai society is sick because we have no ethics at all. We must work hard, we who have religion and want to develop the society, the country must work hard. Now when we talk about the riches, we have a very good example. There are two richest men in the world - Warren Buffett and Bill Gates. Buffett donates money to the foundation of Gates. When asked by the media he answered that because he is confident that Gates is really helping the society so he gives him money. Gates Foundation helps the patients of AIDS and Malaria in Africa. We are glad that beauty happens in the society when people care, so human is the center of everything. The encyclical ‘Charity In Truth’ end with this **‘If we wanted to develop men to be human we must develop his heart’***