

Thai views of nature

Napat Chaipraditkul
Eubios Ethics Institute
Thailand
napat@eubios.info

1. Summary

What is a Thai person's view of Nature? Thailand is a country which once was under the rule of Khmer Civilizations, so the culture and tradition of its people has roots including significant input from Cambodian arts, as well as Brahman culture and more recent influences of mundalization. Thailand is a melting pot of Indic, Buddhist, Chinese, (Hindu) and tribal culture. The culture and beliefs of Thai people have been shaped through numerous cultural exchanges through trading and conquering of lands back and forth. This paper explores different elements of the world views of Thai persons towards nature, finding elements of anthropocentrism, biocentrism and ecocentrism.

2. Introduction: Thailand and Siam

Everything that surrounds us is Nature. Nature is related to everyone of us. Basically, we may not even notice how much our activities are related to nature. Technology has advanced to where people may have forgotten Nature. We can say that Nature is the land one steps on, the water one drinks, and the air one breathes. Even though human beings appear to be indifferent towards nature, the human being is a part of biological diversity and the world itself.

Throughout history and civilizations, humanity has managed to continue and pass down generations its ways of living by coexisting, and sometimes fighting, with Nature. People struggled to survive in many harsh climates but comfortably in others. This overview is of the views of nature from Thailand.¹ This includes reflection on the various schools of thought and tradition in this community, not only referring to ancient or romanticized views, but also to the views of people today.

Thailand is complex due to the fact that it is located in the centre of the South East Asian mainland, it is connected to Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam and Malaysia. The history of Siam often emphasizes themes of serenity and harmony of nature, though there are references to natural disasters such as flooding. The King is sacred because he is the representative of a divine god. This divine nature of the royal King is adopted from traditions we can also see in the Cambodian royal court. The lands do not belong to the people, but the king (Ruler class). The land people are living in is lent, rented or borrowed, and in the end to be returned to the king. Siam has been a hierarchical society since the beginning of recorded history.

¹ The Ethics and Climate Change in Asia and the Pacific (ECCAP) Project Working Group 2 is focusing on producing an ethical repository of world views of nature. This exercise is to examine whether there are indeed universal foundations underneath the external and superficial coating of differences or whether there are indeed irreconcilable perspectives that lead to different worldviews and approaches to ethics and issues of concerns in different civilisations. It follows up the working Group 1 report on *Universalism and Ethical Views of Nature* (Rai, et al. 2011). We invite scholars from different schools of thought, communities and traditions, to provide a summary of Views of Nature from other communities, with historical references following a general structure to allow readers to compare different traditions for common views of nature. See www.unescobkk.org/rushsap

The human species depends on nature in every part. This includes the prosperity of crops, which has usually provided a constant food supply in Thailand. Since humans have learnt how to plant crops, we have been planting, storing and collecting natural products for many purposes. In farming people use food with respect and sometimes ascribe great reverence to plants and foods.

The current United Nations approach to ethics is to reach a normative set of concepts, principles, ethics and commitments that assume universal foundations to enact ‘universal’ conventions. However, a contrary perspective is that different civilisations and Peoples have evolved different philosophical perspectives to knowledge, to human relations with nature and human relations to other humans and species. Inside the nation called Thailand there are several groups of “People”.²

3. Outlook of Environmental Concepts in Thai Tradition

Thailand has a long history and The Thai people have been influenced by various traditions, beliefs and cultures through periods. There are also a plurality of beliefs resulting in different perspectives on nature. However some traditions seem to be held in common by a majority of Thai people. In modern times, modernity and western perspectives have also influenced Thai people’s approach to the environment in the last century, replacing some deeply held views.

People in the past worshipped Animism and Hinduism, then adopted Buddhism. Hinduism was directly introduced by the Cambodian Empire. The Cambodians at that time was the Khmer empire. Then they accepted Buddhism as it swept through the East. But people integrated Hinduism into their world view along with Buddhism.

The long relationship of Thai people and Theravada Buddhism is deep. Thai people consider Buddhism as their national religion. It came from India. During early 19th century, Christian priests introduced Christianity with their missionary efforts.

When Buddhism first arrived, Thai people were worshipping animism and Brahmanism. They believed in ghosts and ancestral spirits. The Thai adopted Buddhism upon their existing beliefs without facing any conflicts or segregation of their previous beliefs (Adian, D.G. and Arivia, G. 2009). But the depth of Buddhism and its impact on tradition beliefs has been variable in different regions of Thailand. Consequently, in each province we may see some difference in the common views of nature, for instance in the north more people believe in animism.³ On the other hand Christian, western and scientific ideas have strongly influenced views in larger cities such as Bangkok.

3.1. Anthropocentrism

Anthropocentrism means human-centred – the view of an issue, need or problem from a human eye. Although traditional Thai views do not explicitly state it, anthropocentrism seems evident in practice. One of the basic human relationships with animals is of utility. Let us consider some examples.

The elephant has significant importance in Thailand. In history, elephants have been great companions in warfare, and were used for fighting. They were the transport for fighting wars for kings. In the reign of king Rama the second, the national flag of Siam or Thailand had a portrait of an albino elephant which is believed to be the majestic elephant that only belonged to kings and suited their great virtue. Elephants were also domesticated for labour, to shift heavy logs and forest work.

Every year Thais celebrate Wan Chang Thai, or Thai Elephants Day on the 13th March to

² The term “People” refers to a group of persons that form a community or nation.

³ สัตว์

show their appreciation of Elephants. However, paradoxically, even if elephants may be viewed as a great animal over other kinds of animals in the wild hierarchy, they are also hunted down for ivory. Consequently there are not many elephants left in Thailand. They are also used for forest work and hard labour. In practice, the respect of elephants or animals may not be as high as that written in literature, It can be said that attitudes to elephants are a form of theoretical tokenism to give the impression that they are protected whereas in reality they are not. In reality, while the elephant is revered in folklore, its real relationship with humans is one of utility, serving an anthropocentric attitude.

3.2. Biocentrism

There is a ceremony in Thailand for the care of trees called Phithee Buadpa.⁴ Trees are ordained by people, and the ordained trees are bound with colourful cloth to protect them being cut down. As a result other people wouldn't dare harm these ordained trees for they are now sacred and not allowed to be used for any purpose. This practice may be regarded as saving the tree for its sake, so any harmful action against the tree as a living being will not be tolerated.

Another example is the Bodhi tree which is related to the epic of Guatama Bhudda or "The Enlightened one". Thai people don't dare to cut down this special tree for fear of sinning by cutting down the symbolic tree of Lord Buddha's enlightenment. The Bodhi tree represents the same Bodhi tree where Buddha has attained his enlightenment, Cutting it down is considered symbolically to destroying the existence of Buddhism.

In Thailand snakes are regarded as holy and fearful animal. Naga is an image of a great snake who lives on the land, earth and in water. We can see images of Naga in Khmer Buddhist art as well as in Thai art. Naga was believed to be a powerful mythical creature. Naga is known as "the guardian of the aquatic world." Naga is also associated with rainfall in Thai beliefs. Mythical Thai view of biological diversity. In addition, Garuda is also included in such creatures of Hinduism. The Thai national emblem has a portrait of Garuda.(Desai, S.N. 1980).

Animism is from Latin word "Anima", meaning soul. Animism related to the belief of inhabited spirit in rocks, tree, rivers or things, which is animate and inanimate,(Subberwal, R. 2009).In addition, simply, the personification of non living or living things to be associated with spirit of the higher realm that consists of emotions and behaviors.

Belief in such mysticism is still widespread across the Asian region. Cambodians believed in "Neak Ta" or so-called the spirit or the Ancient one. It is believed that natural resources are provided and protected by the spirit. This view is also found in neighboring countries as well, for instance in Cambodia. This view of environment is that a superior being protects water, rivers, forests, earth, sea and so on. An offensive act against nature is unacceptable which may cause discord of harmony of nature.

Reverence for life is common. Thais believe in celestial beings or spirits that live in trees as protectors of the wild and/or supreme beings. However a parallel view is that Nature is wild and dangerous and not a place for humans but only for other animals and hermits, but still as something sacred and mysterious.

As mentioned, before, Thai people, just like any other people from neighboring countries, have a strong background in Agriculture. Their lives ultimately rotate around natural resources such as rice fields, crops and cattle. The culture of dependency on nature has given rise to and survival of Animism as a belief in Thailand. In addition, Siamese also consider themselves as Theravada Buddhist, similar to Cambodians. Like them, Thai Theravada Buddhist society live around and connect strongly with the Buddhist temples. However some

⁴ พิธีบวชป่า

people still hold on to Animism as a belief. Animism has integrated with the wider culture and traditions.

3.3. Ecocentrism

Views about nature in Thailand have been influenced by the rich biodiversity and environment that have provided and continue to provide ready access to food, water and other necessities of life.⁵ People living in harsher environments may have different views of nature. The diversity of nature surrounding a People is bound to influence views on Nature.

Many cultures and civilization share the belief in Mother Earth as a living entity. The Thai regional culture on this is influenced by Hindu literature and arts. The portrayal of Mother Earth is shown in many cultures, for instance Hinduism or as it is known in Tamil, Bhumi devi (Bhu devi) is Mother Earth. She represents earth, soil, and is the supporter for daily activities. (Nelson, L.E. 1998). Mother Earth is also believed to be an avatar of goddess Lakshmi. Thai culture still has strong influences of Hinduism with Thai names for gods and goddesses. The goddess Lakshmi is called Prae Dharti⁶ (Dharti or bhumi devi). It is the same in Cambodian Hinduism. Bhumi Devi is respected according to the Hindu culture. This theology and view of nature can be found in a number of South East Asian cultures and mythological beliefs. Their origins are in Hinduism but transformed into regional versions first in ancient Cambodia then the rest of the region.

3.4. Cosmocentrism

The centre of Thailand is dominated by Theravada Buddhism, whereas the eastern part of Thailand has strong remnants of Hinduism. Mahayana Buddhism also coexists with them. Although the philosophy and theology of Hinduism doesn't religiously affect the Thai, however the essence of value from epics (e.g. Ramayana) and rituals do play a role in Thai society, arts, politics, astrology and culture tremendously. (Desai, S.N.1980).

According to one Thai cosmological view influenced by Hinduism, the universe is composed of three realms: Earth as a place for humans and animals, Heaven as a place for Supreme Being, while demons and ghosts occupy Hell. They can be reborn due to the beneficent or maleficent actions in different realms. Their previous forms would be changed due to their previous "karma". Some ghosts behave as a guardian of certain places for instance forests. This influenced Thai people to give humble respect to the sacred nature.

As an example Himmaphan⁷ was an imaginary mystical forest located in the Himalayas. According to the myth, legends, and folktales there are many auspicious diverse creatures that are magical.

3.5. The creation and cycle of life

The general concept about life and death in Thailand is of "reincarnation." People believe that every being on this planet gets transformed from one kind of life form to another after death. Most people believe that this is predetermined by the good or bad karma they have in their previous lifetimes. One of the Buddhist cosmological views is that past previous karma determines why individuals are born to be men, women, rich, poor, ugly, or beautiful. Humans are born in human realms because of their predestined fate while karma causes suffering of their own actions. Theravada Buddhists who lived in South East Asia for

⁵ Similarities are noted with other countries in South East Asia. South East Asia includes mainland and islands. The climate is very well known as tropical, warm and humid. South East Asia consists of Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia and several other countries.

⁶ พระแม่ธรณี

⁷ ป่าหิมพานต์

instance, also believed that their goal is to have a better life in the next birth by not doing acts that lead to demerit. For instance, stealing, killing lives, telling lies, and drinking.

The reward of good deeds is to become rich, enjoy worldly material, higher social status and being male. The punishment is vice versa. According to these theories, human lives and karma seems to be restricted to the cycle of rebirth and death. Good Karma and bad karma follow anyone causing many unexplainable situations and events in their lifetimes. (Watts, J.S. 2009).

One must always be careful of one's action as once someone commits an action, it is impossible to change it. Similar many catastrophes are caused by uncaring selfish acts against nature by humanity. Humans are at risk of losing their lives and households because they have challenged nature since the beginning of humankind. On the other hand, humanity has been struggling to survive in many different environments. A similar struggle for living and continuing their clan is made across the world (Keyes, C.F. 1997). The relation between humans and nature may be considered exploitative and misusing natural resources for selfish purposes. This needs some sort of redemption. Perhaps this is an aspect for survival of humankind which needs to be revisited.

4. Human –environmental relationships

4.1. Apathetic

There is a growing apathy towards caring for the environment and a distant relationship with nature that is becoming part of modern society. Instead of a close and caring attitude towards nature we can see that many areas of Thailand are being developed by industry in what could be described as signs of an indifference towards nature. In recent times, human activity has abused the balance of nature, which has caused many natural disasters and catastrophes to all living creatures including ourselves. This may even lead to the end of our beloved planet. There are some important questions, how are humans subjected to nature? Should human beings continue to bring nature upon her knees?

4.2. Apocalyptic

All in all we could say that the Siamese or Thai people have the practice of worshipping pristine nature and succumbing to the wrath of disasters that affect their lives and well-being. Could this be considered an instrumental view of nature associated with animism?

Compared to nature human beings are inferior. Nature is powerful and cannot be tamed. Thailand is located in the centre of the mainland surrounded by Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. There are annual floods in these areas every year. In recent years, Thai people have faced natural disasters and traumas caused by the wrath of nature. They have seen the horrifying experiences of their neighbouring countries. For instance, the tsunami which caused thousands of deaths of people at the south of Thailand, as well as in Sumatra and Indonesia. This also traumatized people's minds with the fear of natural disaster. Thai people have learnt and fear disasters that might could happen to them. The great numbers of deaths and media coverage increases the awareness of environment issues.

At the time of an apocalypse, the differences between every animate or inanimate beings would come to an end, one way or another. Suffering as a result of Karma and reincarnation cycles of living creatures will affect human beings. Exploitation of natural resources has become perhaps the biggest selfish act and violation of the relationship between human beings and nature. As redemption, humankind will be forced to respond to the retribution.

Thai tradition mentions about the era of evil⁸, where people are morally unjust and commit

⁸ นภียุค

wrongful actions. Nature will restore its own order.

4.3. Symbiotic

In a Buddhist view the relation of humans and other beings needs to be cooperative. It is impossible to be created alone and to live alone. Every being is intertwined as Bhuddhadasa said, “We are all mutual friends inextricably bound together in the same process birth, old age suffering, and death.”(Mun, C. 2006).

4.4. Anthropomorphism and Mother Earth

The northeastern people of Thailand, or Isaan people have an anthropomorphic belief of nature. They explain nature in the form of male and female personifications. The female represents nature in her ability to give birth and breastfeeding. (Bruun, O. and Kalland, A. 1995). Men meanwhile are considered superior over women in reproductive rights. In Buddhism, women are believed to be an inferior gender born as female according to the bad karma of their previous lives.

Thailand is essentially a male dominated society where men are considered as being more spiritual. Men can become monks catering for communities while women are deprived of seeking spiritual guidance. For instance, women are restricted from many sacred places or areas, for instance, Pra thad Sri Song Rak. Buddhist nun institutions are not fully supported and recognized by the general public compared to monasteries for men because Men hold a spiritually higher position than women. Women cannot find a female Buddhism resort in Thailand while men can find plenty.

One of the beliefs that empowers male domination concerns women’s menstruation. Menstrual blood is considered sordid and unclean. According to some beliefs, evil women would use their menstrual blood to become powerful control men. Consequentially, menstruating women would not be allowed to give any offering to the monks for it could “ruin” the monk.

This gender hierarchy is reflected in ideas about nature. In Boon Bang Fai, a traditional rain-making ceremony in Isaan, or North Eastern part of Thailand, people gather and construct a rocket looking like a male sex organ, then shoot the rocket into the sky. The rocket symbolized the male phallic. Believing that the rain would fall down on earth as semen⁹, it is a way to impregnate mother earth. (Stott, P.A. 1978). During the ceremony men wear women’s clothes and people are allowed to publicly talk about sexuality which is otherwise considered a taboo.

4.5. Integrationist

The king of Thailand or Bhumibol Adulyadej has mentioned that Dhamma is Nature. Humans should try to adapt in order to survive. According to this view if human beings maintain the balance of the four elements, earth, wind, water and fire, everything will be back the way it used to be.

There are influences from Animistic beliefs in Thai cultural practices. Most of these emanate from Cambodia, particularly in relation to agriculture. Annually, Loy Krathong (what is it about) festival is still held on the full moon night during November or December in Thailand. The festival is still popular among Thai, and foreigners.

There are many beliefs behind this festival. Buddhists gather for Loy Krathong festival in honoring Buddha’s footprint by giving offerings. Others give offerings to Mae Khongkha (Gangas River), “the goddess or the mother of water.”(Swearer,D.K.2010).People take an apologetic attitude towards the great lady of the rivers. The river of the kings or Chaophraya

⁹ น้ำกาม

River is one of the most important water source for Thailand agriculture. As the main river, it has a spiritual value. In old Bangkok people commuted by boats as it used to be called Rattanakosin , or the Venice of the East. People's daily life depended on the riverside. Nature is viewed as the supporter of daily life and is celebrated or thanked during these festivals.

Although floods can be considered as apocalyptic, their annual occurrence made them part of life's relationship with nature. Consequently a more of an integrationist view of nature emerged with appropriate strategies to cope with floods. In upcountry or rural areas, Thai wooden houses are built on stilts to withstand floods. People escape by being on upper floors of stilted houses. However, these form of Thai houses are not so popular anymore. Modernisation with new building materials and concrete, able to withstand floods are more common. The cities are expanding.

I interviewed, Mr. Chonlatid Suraswadi the Deputy Director General of Royal Forest Department of Thailand, on his views of nature. Regarding Thai views on Natural disaster he said:

“Humans exist because of nature. Before we were surrounded by the natural environment, forests, rivers, mountains. Later on, we have acknowledged the great usage of natural resources around us. Nonetheless, humans seek for nature and religious beliefs at the same time, therefore Nature, religion and beliefs are related to our lives. Nowadays people around the world are aware of, and fearful of, the natural disasters which have happened, for instance, the Tsunami in Phuket. At that time, many Thai people had never learnt of or experienced, or some may even never heard of the word “Tsunami”, until it occurred and destroyed so many lives in our and neighboring countries. However, I think Thai people are more aware of natural disasters the same as people around the globe, and we have learnt from that lesson. On the other hand we mustn't forget economics, social, and ecology for our country to move forward”.

Natural disasters couldn't be stopped in the past. People often considered them as vengeance by nature. Sp traditions developed around fear of nature and appeasing it with respect. However with modern science offering alternative rationalist explanations a more critical thinking has emerged in the minds of people replacing traditional perspectives. This has also taken away awe and fear of nature. People are increasingly less integrationists.

5. Human beings and nature

As has been described above, there are several parallel views about nature, human relations with nature and human approaches to nature in Thailand. Over history some have survived as dominant views in certain regions or among some trades and classes of people. Other views have become hybridised with new ideas. Modern scientific thinking has become dominant in cities although festivals and cultural practices still have strong traditional influences.

Views range from animistic, religious to rationalist, anthropocentric to cosmocentric as explained before.

5.1. Animism

Reincarnation is an important belief in animism. A person who commits sins gets reincarnated as an animal. After going through several cycles of animal births, a soul may be born as human again with an opportunity to redeem itself.

There are several animistic traditions in Thailand. Phra Mae Thoranee is mother earth, and Phra mae Phosop is the rice goddess. Thai people have both worshipped and exploited these natural resources in many ways. However most show their appreciation to them. Agriculture and rice continue to dominate Thai traditional cultural practices.

5.2. Agriculture and rice

Agriculture remains the mainstay of the lives of most Thai people, in fact 90% have direct or indirect association with it. (Wielemans, W. and Choi-Ping Chan, P. 1992). Rice is the staple food in South East Asia. Thailand is world's number one rice exporter of rice. Some form of relationship between Nature and human is quite evident in Thailand.

The goddess of rice or Mae Phosop is highly worshipped by rice farmers. They would give her offerings as if she is personified as a goddess. She would be considered as a pregnant lady when the rice grains appeared. (Monaghan, P. 2010).

Language reflects civilization and its culture dominances. In Thai Language, whenever Thai people craved for food they say Heaw Kaow¹⁰ which means hunger for rice. The Khmer people use a similar term in their language, Nyham Bai which means similar to eating rice. Rice is a symbol of prosperity and life of the people.

In the old times, Thai people used banana leaves for eating food instead of Chinese porcelain plates and bowls and for some other purposes. As a result banana trees were revered. It was and is still believed by many that there are spirits inside them, for instance, one belief was in a female nymph which resides in a banana plantation or in the banana trees itself called Nang Tanee or Prai Tanee.¹¹

Consequently banana trees were not cut. It is still a practice among many rural Thai. It was common practice to get permission from the personified spirit in order to take the leaves of the bananas from the trees for consumption.^{12 13} In the form of a ritual just in case the spirit got angry.

Cambodia holds a royal ploughing service. Thailand also holds the royal ploughing ceremony annually so that every year the crops will have good productivity and prosperity.

The royal ground or Sanam Luang remains in inner Bangkok and used to be called "Ratanakosin Island". King Rama III allowed farmers to create rice plantations there while the country was in border arguments with Cambodia (Khmer). Gradually, they allowed farmers to use the royal ground, which was usually used only for royal cremations.

5.3. View of Nature

In the reign of Rama IX, His majesty created natural conservation projects. He has been a role model for Thai people to reconnect with nature and its reconstruction and preservation. The royal projects are generally highly regarded.

This is reversing some of the colder utilitarian approaches that people have developed under the influence of scientific rationality towards nature. One strong redeeming aspect is that mystical belief still lingers strongly among Thai people's perspective of nature.

¹⁰ หิวข้าว

¹¹ พรายตานี The scientific name is *Musa balbisiana* Colla from the family Musaceae.

¹² สกลุโทษ <http://www.sakulthai.com/DSakulcolumnndetailsql.asp?stcolumnid=3199&stissueid=2602&stcolcatid=2&stauthorid=19>

ตานี ๑ น. ชื่อกล้วยชนิด *Musa balbisiana* Colla ในวงศ์ Musaceae
ใบเหนียวกว่ากล้วยชนิดอื่น มีเมล็ดทั่วทั้งผล, เรียกผีผู้หญิงที่
กำลังตั้งท้องสิงอยู่ในต้นกล้วยตานีว่า พรายตานี.

<http://rirs3.royin.go.th/new-search/word-search-all-x.asp>

พจนานุกรม ฉบับราชบัณฑิตยสถาน พ.ศ. ๒๕๔๒

¹³ From the Department of Agricultural Extension. Retrieved from <http://www.doae.go.th/library/html/detail/banana/page94.html>

In 1993 in the International Bioethics Survey was conducted in a number of Asian countries including Thailand (Macer, D. 1994). The survey explored the views of ordinary citizens on their views of bioethical questions. One of the interesting questions was an open question, "Write in your own words, or draw in a picture, what comes into your mind when you hear the word "Nature"? The survey results of the view of nature among 685 Thai respondents were examined. Here are some answers of the question:

"Do you know nature is the same as Buddhism, if you want to know, you must understand Buddhism."

Everything that is born on earth or other planets. In Buddhism : "Dham" means nature Nature is an untampered or non-interfered environment, especially by human beings.

Nature is? Everything that is not created by human.

Nature is something which is born spontaneously and vanished to same way.

Killing wild animals is killing nature.

Nature has an intrinsic value and a compliment for its beauty. Ecologically, Nature provides benefits and harms. Nature can perfectly counter balance itself. Thus, other variants, which joined with the ecosystem, have to comply accordingly in harmony, and simply coexisting is the essence of nature.¹⁴

Nature is not to take advantage of others, ourselves, and animals."

The views of the respondents are mixed. Some are heavily influenced by the impact of globalization and modernity while a few held some convictions drawn from old mythical beliefs without actually referring to the mythical stories.

Humans seem to have an innate desire to control all around us including the environment. This can be quite damaging as traditional myths which generated some veneration and awe for nature seem to be disappearing. In evolution a zero-sum game may have been the cause for our success but now human beings pursue domination and control.

There is hope as some Thai people still hold traditional views balancing them against an increasing media dismissal of traditions. However many people believe that some natural disasters are caused by the careless usage of natural resources and exploitation of nature, such as land slides in the mountains after deforestation.

5.4. Coping with modernity

Despite modern influences, most Thai people generally see nature as superior and the resource for survival of the human race. But their needs for comfortable lives, air conditioned houses, material goods are overwhelming. They forget that everything eventually originates from nature.

There are some movements to address over consumption and damage to nature. For instance while deforestation is still being practiced in parts of the country it is less than in some surrounding countries due to general antagonism.

6. Conclusions

Thailand is a country which is very well-known as Buddhist. It is the national religion, and 95 percent of the people are said to be Buddhist, with smaller numbers of Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, and persons of other faiths as minority members of society. However, due to the fact that there is mixture of Hinduism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Sikhism and other belief systems, Thai society may be considered as a society with a

¹⁴ ธรรมชาติ เป็นสิ่งที่สวยงาม และมีคุณค่าในตัวของมันเอง ถึงแม้จะให้ถูกหรือโทษก็อยู่ในขอบเขตของระบบนิเวศน์ ธรรมชาติสามารถจัดการกับตนเองได้ลงตัวที่สุด ตัวแปรอื่นๆที่จะเข้าแทรกในระบบนิเวศน์ของธรรมชาติ ต้องสอดคล้อง และเป็นไปตามแนวทางของ ธรรมชาติ ตามเรียบง่าย และการพึ่งพาอาศัยซึ่งกันและกัน เป็นสิ่งสำคัญสำหรับธรรมชาติ

diversity of views of nature. Also as surveys show, even within each faith system there are a variety of views of nature.

In conclusion, however, we may say that Thai culture was significantly influenced by Hinduism and Khmer civilisation. Like all countries the People of Thailand have passed through a series of events in history and period of times. The diversity of cultural difference were fused and shaped Thai culture. The perspectives on nature were a harmonious mixture of cultural traditions, beliefs and practices. They still are in large rural sections of society.

Nature is to be preserved for younger generations. Nature is everything around us, food resources, medicines, habitats, aesthetics, and traditions. Globalisation has changed the Thai view of Nature from respecting spirits of nature to more often instrumentally exploiting nature. Following and encountering the series of events of natural disasters, for example, floods, earthquakes, landslide, and global warming. Nowadays, Thai people and their beliefs are put to the test. Accordingly, a challenge for the survival of humanity on the planet has reached a critical phase.

There is a need to revive some of the principles that lay behind the myths and animistic as well as Buddhist ideas on nature. While the language of demons, gods and revengeful earth may not be much appreciated in a world brought up with scientific rationality, nevertheless the concepts that gave rise to these myths need to be reinterpreted in contemporary context. Some of the reverence for nature needs to be restored and the cultural practices and festivals need to be celebrated in new form, old foundations

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