

## CHAPTER II

### FROM OLD CHANTING TO NEW PHENOMENON: THE RETURN OF JINAPANJARA AFTER ONE DECADE SOMDEJ TOH PASSED AWAY

“HRH Princess Srirasmi, the Royal Consort of HRH Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn, revealed that she uses *Jinapanjara* song as a lullaby for the baby prince.”<sup>1</sup>

“Soraphong Chatri puts trusts in *Jinapanjara Gatha* power, he has a strong belief that *Jinapanjara Gatha* protects him from accidents and danger and he also hangs a picture of “Somdej Toh” as a sacred amulet.”<sup>2</sup>

“When my wife was bed-ridden, in a critical state, I went and made propitiations at shrines everywhere. I would chant continuously the *Jinapanjara*, an ancient mantra popularized by the late Buddhist saint, Somdej Toh of Wat Rakhang.”<sup>3</sup>

“Patavee said after he continuously chanted *Jinapanjara Gatha* each time for hours and started making merit, something wonderful happened to him, whatever he wanted to know, he succeeded in knowing, since then he has become a fortune teller.”<sup>4</sup>

“Latest, bring “Pra Somdej Bang Khun Prom” to Luang Phore Koon of Wat Baan Rai to recite incantation over it along with continuously chanting *Jinapanjara* 108 times.”<sup>5</sup>

These are some news items regarding *Jinapanjara* that have appeared in several media sources, much like celebrities are often mentioned in magazines and another kinds of media. Of course, *Jinapanjara* is a prayer, but a celebrated one, which recently has become very well known among Thais, not only among the elderly, but also adolescents and, in particular, city working people.

Chanting is usually treated as a religious activity by Thai society. But, with respect to *Jinapanjara Gatha*, the difference is it has been adopted with more expectation than other Buddhist prayers. Spreading by word of mouth, the trend of chanting *Jinapanjara* has become widely known; with at least 10,000,000 copies distributed for free on various occasions.<sup>6</sup>

In this chapter the *Jinapanjara* popularity in contemporary Thai society will be explored. As the popularity of the *Jinapanjara* can be found through the media,

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1 Khao Sod (11 August 2005)

2 The Daily News (15 January 2005)

3 “House of Hope,” Montien Boonma at Deith Projects, ARTseenSOHO.

4 Baan Muang (13 August 2005)

5 Khao Sod (15 March 2005)

6 Interview with Preecha Dhammaphiphop, 7 October 2005.

the results of a survey of what has happened in the media concerning the Jinapanjara will be detailed, starting with audio products, as that is a significant factor of increasing its vogue.

## 2.1 JINAPANJARA ON AUDIO PRODUCTS: A NEW LOOK OF CHANTING

At present, several different chants, such as “Pahung” or “Jayamangala Gatha,” “Yod Pra Kan Tripidok,” and “Jinapanjara Gatha,” are produced in the form of cassette tapes, CDs and VCDs. They are available on the shelves of many bookstores and audio shops. For “Jinapanjara Gatha” and “Pahung” it appears that Sathienphong Wannapok, a famous Buddhist thinker, was the first person to bring them to the public in the form of audio cassettes. Later Supachai Jarusomboon, an alternative medical therapist, did the same thing with Sathienphongs. Besides these two versions, there are also traditional-style chanting voiced by Thai monks and musical versions done by different producers.

Sathienphong Wannapok was the first person to reproduce the Jinapanjara and Pahung in the form of song, with Surapol Tonavanik, a national artist, the person who arranged the music. This Jinapanjara version has both Pali and Thai text, which was translated by Sathienphong himself.

“I would like to communicate to a new Buddhist generation to enjoy listening to Dhamma since it would enable them to pay attention to Dhamma later. Importantly, this is my strategy to communicate with teenagers”<sup>7</sup>

He also noted that his Jinapanjara song has been produced into two versions; the first one is for elders and the second version, which is faster, is designed to be appreciated by teenagers. Meanwhile, Supachai Jarusomboon, described his product as “Mantra Therapy” which has healing effects both on mental and physical health. He explained that chanting can create energy vibration which can impact directly to all body systems. He strongly believes that voicing the chanting in Pali and Sanskrit will produce a certain force that is useful for stimulating organs to work effectively. By this activity, many physical ailments and also mental health can recover better. He also advises listeners about the way to receive more good energy from listening to his CD by using a certain gesture called “Ti Lanjakorn,” which is the way to center all energy in order to gain advantage for mental health.

“Listening to Jinapanjara before sleeping would allow the listener to have better sleep.”<sup>8</sup>

Prasert Sukhothanang, the Secretary of The Jinapanjara Gatha Chanting Club, said regarding various versions of Jinapanjara, that:

“As I know, there are at least 5 versions of Jinapanjara Gatha on CDs or tapes, even in a form of Thai folk song (Pleng Luktoong) done by

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with Sathienphong Wannapok, 10 October 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Thai Post (3 June 2005)

Wongchan Pairote. Furthermore, there are about 10 traditional non-music versions appearing on the market.”<sup>9</sup>

Preecha Dhammaphiphop, owner of Ocean Media Co, Ltd., who has reproduced several chantings, including *Jinapanjara Gatha*, as song, views this phenomenon as:

“No rights are reserved for *Jinapanjara*, so whoever is able, can reproduce it.”<sup>10</sup>

Information from some producers and distributors who are working with the chantings in audio recording format, found that among all chantings in audio recordings, *Jinapanjara Gatha* ranks the best-seller as follows:

#### OCEAN MEDIA'S AUDIO RECORDS

##### TOP 3 BEST SELLERS

1. *Jinapanjara Gatha* on CD,VCD
2. *Yod Pra Kan Tripidok*<Pinnacle of the Tripitaka>
3. *Buddhajayamangala*

##### TARGET CUSTOMERS

1. Middle age people
2. Working people
3. Elders
4. Teenagers

#### DHAMMA SAPA'S AUDIO RECORDS

##### TOP 3 BEST SELLERS

1. *Jinapanjara Gatha* in cassette tapes
2. *Yod Pra Kan Tripidok*
3. *Buddhajayamangala Gatha*

##### TARGET CUSTOMERS

1. Elders
2. Working people
3. Young people

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with Prasert Sukhotanang, 17 September 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Preecha Dhammaphiphop, 7 October 2005.

## CHULA BOOKSTORE'S AUDIO RECORDS

### TOP 3 BEST SELLERS

1. Jinapanjara Gatha both of CD and VCD
2. General chanting
3. Dhamma teaching

### TARGET CUSTOMERS

1. Most are working people, 30 years old up
2. Teachers, purchase for libraries or for use as teaching media
3. Monks

## BOOK SHOP AT VEGETERIAN RESTAURANT AT CHATUCHAK

### TOP 3 BEST SELLERS

1. Jinapanjara Gatha on CD, VCD
2. Tibetan Chanting Song
3. General Chanting

### TARGET CUSTOMERS

1. Middle age people, 50 years old and up
2. Working age people, 30 years old
3. Elders

## 2.2 INTERNET SURVEYING

In the cyber world, *Jinapanjara Gatha* is easily found on different websites and visitors are welcome to listen or download *Jinapanjara Gatha* free of charge. Noticeably, it is usually attached with stories and pictures of its reviser, "Somdej Toh" as a kind of trademark.

When the word *Jinapanjara Gatha* (in Thai) was searched on the GOOGLE search engine, 707 items appeared. This can be compared with other famous chants, as follows:

- Jinapanjara	707
- Mangalasutta	263
- Jayamangala	155
- Dhamachakhappawattanasutta	107
- Karaneeyamettasutta	52

It should be noted that the Thai names for the Pali chantings can be spelled more than one way. For example Jayamangala is also called "Gatha Pahung." When the chantings were searched to make this comparison, it was done through the many possible ways of spelling the chant. Notwithstanding, the *Jinapanjara* was still

found on the top of the list. It was not only found on different websites, but sometime the *Jinapanjara* was raised as a topic of information and experience exchange, mainly from the younger generation, based on the style of language used. At [www.mthai.com](http://www.mthai.com), between 17-21 November 2004, one visitor posted some point about *Jinapanjara Gatha*, then 62 visitors came to join, sharing their views and experience.

In the case of large bookstores, those that provide searching on their website, like Chula Book Store and Se-education, *Jinapanjara* books and audio records items are found to be the most among chanting material as well:

<i>www.chulabook.com</i>	
- Jinapanjara	15
- Jayamangala	11
- Mangalasutta	3
<i>www.se-ed.com</i>	
- Jinapanjara	22
- Jayamangala	10
- Mangalasutta	1

### 2.3 THE JINAPANJARA ON RADIO PROGRAMS

With respect to radio broadcasts, the *Jinapanjara Gatha* has at least two regular programs devoted to the matter. By this, it has been popularized by certain moderators who are very ardent followers of *Jinapanjara* and “Somdej Toh.” While it is difficult to know the exact number of listeners who have been influenced by this media; clearly, this has been one way to popularize the *Jinapanjara* to new chanters and also keep those who already know informed about this chant.

#### “CHANTING FOR LIFE”

By Prasert Sukhothanang

On air 10.00 – 11.00 p.m.

Monday – Friday, A.M.1053 Khz.



This program’s concept focuses on the benefits to be found in chantings. Certainly, the *Jinapanjara Gatha* is the most popular among many chantings. The main format of the program is that the moderator would lead the audience in chanting together and will end with sending loving kindness to all others in the world. For this reason, the program is not merely a radio program but also provides

a forum for group performing a spiritual rite at the same time. There is a close connection to “The Jinapanjara Gatha Chanting Club”, thus linking the two groups. It could be said that the radio program is a public relation channel of the club.

“NEW DIMENSION”

By Dr. Boonchai Kosolthanakul,

On air 9.00 – 10.00 a.m., Sunday, F.M. 96.5 MHz.



Actually, the NEW DIMENSION Program is not directly related to the *Jinapanjara Gatha*. The objective of the program aims to integrate ideas and knowledge between the West and the East as a new dimension of business and life.

“Anyway, I usually talk about *Jinapanjara* whenever I can because for me I regard chanting of *Jinapanjara* as a tool of practicing meditation and it works quite well for me. So when my audience has some life problem, I usually suggest that they start with chanting *Jinapanjara* in order to make them feel relaxed and calm, then the way out would appear eventually when the mind is silent enough.”<sup>11</sup>

“Personally, I am fond of *Jinapanjara* because its content has a poetic beauty and importantly it is not very difficult to remember even though it looks quite long. I started chanting *Jinapanjara* when I was only 12. At that time, migraine headaches were my big trouble and many doctors were not able to heal me. Then, my older brother introduced me to try chanting *Jinapanjara*. Amazingly, within 2 to 3 weeks after chanting *Jinapanjara* 9 times per day more or less, the migraines had totally gone away. I have never suffered from them since.”<sup>12</sup>

After finding these amazing benefits, Dr.Boonchai continued chanting *Jinapanjara* because his brother told him that one who chants will have well being in life.

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with Dr.Boonchai Kosolthanakul, 9 October 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., interview with Dr.Boonchai Kosolthanakul.

“For me, I chant whenever I can and wonderful results happened again and again. It may sound unbelievable; my studies were much more developed than before. I could pass to a higher class and control myself while my concentration is much better. My thoughts are clearer and everything has improved. Importantly, I was successful in every test I took, such as the entrance to Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University. I was also successful in get a job at the Ministry of Foreign Affair and in getting a Fulbright scholarship.”

It should be noted that F.M. 96.5 MHz. by MCOT (Mass Communication Organization of Thailand) is recognized as one of the highest rated “News and Talk Channel” while FAST ENGLISH is accepted as one of the leading English teaching schools in Bangkok as well. So it is interesting how many audience members and how many students have been inspired by him to starting *Jinapanjara* chanting. Besides those radio programs mentioned above, two informal surveys were conducted on another radio program not related to *Jinapanjara Gatha*. With the aim of doing a random check to see if the audience knew *Jinapanjara Gatha*, the host picked up a story about one man who remarkably survived a severe car accident. According to the story, the man really believed that one particular prayer saved his life. After telling the story, the host let audience members guess which prayer he chanted. Most of answers were *Jinapanjara* while only 10 percent of the answers were other prayers.

The second time, on the same program, but one year later, *Petch Pra Uma*, a great Thai jungle adventure series novel, was discussed, telling a particular part of episode 2 when Darin, the heroine, encounters monsters without the hero’s assistance. She recites one prayer which is successful in suppressing the monsters. Then the host let audience members join by sending an SMS to answer what chant she had used. The result was almost the same, 90 percent of audience gave *Jinapanjara Gatha* as their answer. This program is a part of sports station F.M. 99 MHz., under the roof of Mass Communication Organization of Thailand. The target is not elder people, but most are young and working people who are interested in sports and health. As mentioned before, it was merely an informal survey, however, it demonstrates something that should not be ignored in term of people’s random perception.

#### 2.4 JINAPANJARA IN NOVELS

Among all Thai adventure novels, *Petch Pra Uma* is considered one of most famous series, containing 48 volumes. The author, Phnomthien, took 25 years 7 months to write the series. Inspired by the story of “King Solomon’s Mines,” he took main points from that story and applied it to be more Thai in detail. First published in 1964, it is continuously popularity until today. It is a story about a group of people who go into the jungle in order to find someone who has been lost for years. They encounter various strange incidents such as giants centipedes, a sleeping city, primitive jungle or even ghosts and monsters. This series gained high popularity among Thai readers, and, even now, *Pech Pra Uma* is available in bookstores and is still in vogue. Every book fair, readers can find *Petch Pra Uma* in a big set (containing 48 volumes).

On the page 1391 of the Naga Devi episode, Darin Vararit and her team face a troop of monsters without the assistance of Raphin Phraiwan. At that moment, her brother reminds her to use *Jinapanjara* in order to suppress those monsters since only Darin is capable of reciting this long *gatha*. As soon as she does, all of monsters scatter immediately. After that, Chaiyan (one of the team) asks Darin to teach him and then Darin gives the full *gatha* to Chaiyan, accompanied with the meaning, translation and directions to use it in detail. That particular part attracted a lot interest in *Jinapanjara* as a powerful mantra in suppressing ghosts or monsters.

As an author, Phanomthien was promoted as a National Artist in 1997, now he is 75 years old <2007>, and still be an ardent followers of *Jinapanjara*, chant at least 3-4 times every day. He stressed that *Jinapanjara* in Phet Pra U-ma inspired by his real experience as well as his faith. As detailed in chapter 3, see that he is really believed the sacred of *Jinapanjara* since has his own experience. Thus, it is like another certification to certified *Jinapanjara* by an author who is trusted by readers as an expert of mantra and magical implement.

“*Jinapanjara* changed my life at all, I used to be a hunter, killed many jungle animals but since I know *Jinapanjara* all bad thing were absolutely stopped. It avert dangers, and evils either from outside or inner meanwhile bringing good luck as well.”<sup>13</sup>

Phanomthien emphasized that *Jinapanjara* enable him to stop hunting and also modified him to be a better man who concerns on moral and virtue more than before. Ask for the total sale throughout 42 years of popularity he said that Phetch Pra Uma has been selling **several millions** copies for the whole set comprise 48 volumes. Personally, he also propagates *Jinapanjara* to others with strong recommend that

“This is the extraordinary mantra best in term of protection as well as providing all good things such as good health, fame, wealth and prosperity. Another mantra might works for safety but *Jinapanjara* give you more than that, it take you to the good and the right things and directions”<sup>14</sup>

## 2.5 JINAPANJARA ON FILM: NANG NAG

Although, Nang Nag died a long time ago<on Thai belief that she used to be a real person> but actually, her story become an immortal love story ,re-produced several times as TV series and films.On the latest version made by Nonsi Nimibutra in the middle of 1999 ,Nang Nag had been awaken again with a good- taste production and good research.This version gained high success and remarked as a Thai film which accomplishment to awaken Thai movies return in vogue again<after Hollywood movies occupied Thai movies market for a long time>.

This version of Nang Nag achieved income 150 millions baths, regards as a high income of Thai movie at that time. One point interesting is Nang Nag or Mae Nag in 1999 was not attractive mere general Thai people but also drawn attention to

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Chatchai Visetsuwarnabumi<Phanomthien>, 7 December 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., interview with Chatchai Visetsuwarnabumi<Phanomthien>



educated people or middle class people as well because of its production quality and also the credit of Nonsi Nimibutra ,the film director and his team.

Although the hero is Nai Mag, Nang Nag's husband, but actually, the real hero who had an opportunity to show hero ability is "Somdej Toh", the monk who was capable to suppress Nang Nag eventually<after several attempts were failed before>.In the movie at last, audiences would see "Somdej Toh" recited Jinapanjara before Nang Nag burial ground calling her to negotiate and accept the truth of life then penetrated her forehead bone kept it as an buckle. This story has been told popularly until nowadays reconfirmed "Somdej Toh" as an sacred monk who had superstitious power over a horrible ghost like Nan Nag who nobody success to stop her.

**Dr.Justin McDaniel**, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at the University of California at Riverside, USA. Who has researched on “Somdej Toh” topic and about to launch his book in near future, gave his opinion on this point that:

“It’s very important since in Nang Nag version 1999 different to versions before this. In other Nang Nag there was Samanen สามีเฒ่า a novice as a hero but in this version “Somdej Toh” was portrayed as a hero , chanting Jinapanjara on the climax scene so he was like “Praek พระเอก”the real hero of film. I think one of the reasons he become popular again come from that film partly.”<sup>15</sup>

Dr.Justin also pointed that a lot of people saw Nang Nag then many might continue their attention by visiting some places connected to“Somdej Toh” such as Wat Indravihan or Wat Rakhang so it is possible that they would become new chanters of Jinapanjara Gatha eventually.

## 2.6. JINAPANJARA AND RELEVANT PLACES

### 2.6.1 WAT RAKHANG GHOSITARAM

With the aim to examine the route of the *Jinapanjara* chant, we should start from Wat Rakhang where Somdej Toh, commonly known as Somdej Toh Wat Rakhang, stayed. Today Wat Rakhang is full of shops selling animal for release to make merit, such as fish, eels, pond snails, turtles, and birds. People can come to the Wat and buy something for releasing at the river nearby. When entering the monastery, one can see that there is a vihan where Somdej Toh’s statue is placed with a holy water jar. In this vihan there are many free copies of *Jinapanjara Gatha* distributed by people who have strong faith in Somdej Toh and try to make merit by spreading *Jinapanjara Gatha*. Inside this small place, people come to pay respect to Somdej Toh as well as to chant *Jinapanjara Gatha*. Anyone who is unable to recite from memory can use a copy provided here, with many copies of *Jinapanjara* available. Although Wat Rakhang is usually associated with Somdej Toh, as we find in the name ‘Somdej Toh of Wat Rakhang’, in fact there is only one small vihan that is directly connected to Somdej Toh and *Jinapanjara Gatha*.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Dr.Justin McDaniel , 1 August 2006.

“I did a lot for *Jinapanjara* propaganda. Now it’s enough. People mostly do know this *gatha*, so it is not necessary for Wat Rakhang to take anymore action.”<sup>16</sup>

The caretaker abbot Chao Khun Tiang or Pra Devisutthimethi, who is 70 years old, revealed that the *Jinapanjara Gatha* of Wat Rakhang, which is regarded as the most believable version, actually comes from Wat Kallayanamitra.

“Luang Poo Nag, the ninth abbot, received *Jinapanjara Gatha* from Luang Por Heng of Wat Kallayanamitra. It was the first time that I saw *Jinapanjara* on paper. It is written “*Jinapanjara Gatha* by Somdej Toh Wat Rakhang.” Luang Poo Nag didn’t tell me anything about that *gatha*. After that I made photo copies and try to chant by myself”<sup>17</sup>

After trying to chant the *Jinapanjara* for some time, Chao Khun Tieng felt that this particular *gatha* was very outstanding in terms of magical power. By his own experience he felt very impressed with *Jinapanjara* since it created a sense of security, self-confidence and also concentration. With this, he started making copies of *Jinapanjara Gatha*, accompanied by the text describing its benefit from his own experience and distributed it to people, so far more than 100,000 copies. Subsequently, around 10 years later, the monks at Wat Rakhang started to chant *Jinapanjara* daily by adding it to the morning chanting. This would indicate that the monks at Wat Rakhang did not chant *Jinapanjara Gatha* since the time of Somdej Toh, but just started 30 years ago after receiving it from Wat Kallayanamitra. Although it is difficult to count the exact number of people who have been inspired by Chao Khun Thieng’s *Jinapanjara* copies, surely this small operation must have had some impact on the increasing of *Jinapanjara* chanters. In addition, Chao Khun Thieng also gave the value of *Jinapanjara* by making a link with Pra Somdej amulets, the most expensive amulet in market, that:

“One who chants *Jinapanjara Gatha* regularly will get benefit as if he has 100 Pra Somdej.”<sup>18</sup>

This sounds like some sort of metaphor, but the significance is that Pra Somdej amulets are very popular in amulet circles. One genuine Pra Somdej amulet can cost around 15-50 million baht.<sup>19</sup> In addition, people believe that *Jinapanjara* is the only mantra Somdej Toh used in making Pra Somdej amulets. By this belief, Pra Somdej amulets and *Jinapanjara* have been linked together as an alternative to common people who are unable to possess real Pra Somdet amulets. They are able to chant *Jinapanjara* as much as they want. From the interview, Chao Khun Thieng emphasized firmly that *Jinapanjara Gatha* is a special chant which contains a strong meditative power which can give great protection as well as bring good luck to

16 Interview with Pra Devisutthimethi<Chao Khun Thieng>, 21 June 2006.

17 Ibid., interview with Pra Devisutthimethi<Chao Khun Thieng>

18 Ibid., interview with Pra Devisutthimethi<Chao Khun Thieng>

19 Saththa lae Ngen-Tra Nai Loke Thurakit Prakrueng, *Sarakadee Magazine* (January 2006): 63.

chanters. This is the reason why he has made an attempt to distribute as many copies of *Jinapanjara* as possible.

### 2.6.2 WAT INDRAVIHAN

Another related place to *Jinapanjara* and Somdej Toh is Wat Indravihan, Bangkhunprom, Bangkok. Directly upon entering the monastery boundary, one encounters the words “Somdej Prabuddhajarn Toh Bramarungsi” placed at various places. This monastery is understood as the place where Somdej Toh grew and learned before moving to study further at Wat Rakhang when he was 18 years old. Although Somdej Toh is always associated with Wat Rakhang, it appears that people today think of Wat Indra more than Wat Rakhang when talking about Somdej Toh, especially when that they want to find a particular place to chant *Jinapanjara*. Everyday a number of people of various ages come to the pavilion located in front of main chapel (Ubosot). This place was built over holy water (one of the Somdej Toh-related places) and had an official opening ceremony on March 1988 by Crown Princess Sirindhon.

In front of “Bor Nam Mon” there is an 84 year old woman selling flowers and incense sticks for chanters as a volunteer. She said that Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays are the most crowded days because Thursdays are regarded as auspicious days for starting a chant of *Jinapanjara*, while Saturdays and Sundays are the day off and thus convenient for people to come.

“Some came here with flowers on a tray to offer to Somdej Toh, asking to be able to remember *Jinapanjara* successfully, while some aim to ask for lottery numbers (Kor huay); it’s a variety, depending on each Karma.”<sup>20</sup>

Even though her job is related to *Jinapanjara*, she can not recite *Jinapanjara* from memory without a text to read. She said she first knew *Jinapanjara* 40 years ago, but she does not chant *Jinapanjara* regularly as an ardent chanter. She just chants sometime, like other chant, with no special impression for her; and she comes here just to help do something for the monastery. Upon entering the pavilion, one will see people sitting around in meditation; most are chanting while some have their eyes closed and are sitting peacefully. One point that should be noted is that people who came to chant here mostly are from the younger generation, old people are found less.

Under dim lights and cool temperature, the sound of *Jinapanjara* chanted by the monks plays continuously. With this kind of atmosphere, this particular place then easily has become a suitable place for chanting, especially *Jinapanjara Gatha*. It gives the impression of a special world, where people feel free to do individual religious activity among others who do the same, as long as they want from 6.00 a.m to 8.00 p.m. everyday. Near Bor Nam Mon, there is an open pavilion full of

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with old woman <denied to be named >who sells flowers at Wat Indravihan , 4 July 2006.

*Jinapanjara Gatha* material on every wall. Each wall portrays *Jinapanjara Gatha* in various languages:

- Thai;
- Lao;
- Khmer;
- English;
- Burmese;
- Lanna (Traditional Northern Language); and
- A big portrait of Somdej Toh.

Those languages represent each nation capable of causing aggression against any border of Thailand. Thus *Jinapanjara Gatha*, in this case, has special symbolic meaning in the protection of the country. With this kind of belief, *Jinapanjara*'s function can thus be considered not only for individual benefit, but also for national benefit.

Besides the pavilion over Bor Nam Mon, Wat Indra also produces *Jinapanjara* in audio media, such as cassette tapes, CD/VCDs, including other chants either in slow speed version or fast speed version depending on the customer's choices, as follows:

- Jinapanjara Gatha* 9 times and Yod Pra Kan Tripidok;
- Jinapanjara Gatha* 9 times in slow Sangyoke and Sorapanya fast melody; and
- Jinapanjara Gatha* 9 times in slow Sangyoke and Yod Pra Kan Tripidok.

Moreover, there is also a karaoke version for people who are unable to recite and want to practice in karaoke style. These audio products were produced after the *Jinapanjara* song produced by Sathienphong Wannapok in 2002. The difference between Wat Indra's product and Sathienphong's product is that Wat Indra uses monks' voice but Sathienphong uses a singer. Another difference is Sathienphong's song is presented with the music, not just the sound of chanting.

“Our *Jinapanjara Gatha* audio is voiced by the abbot and monks in a monastery so that you can feel the traditional atmosphere of genuine chanting.”<sup>21</sup>

The monk who takes care of a souvenir shop in the monastery points out the shelf of audio where there are T-shirts on which *Jinapanjara Gatha* is printed in different colors. According to the monks, these T-shirts were put in the incantation ceremony as well as other amulets. One point that should be mentioned is that these T-shirts are all right reserved, show clearly on the front of them.

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with a monk at Wat Indravihan's souvenir shop, 4 July 2006

Besides amulets, T-shirts and audio products, holy water in bottles is another thing related to Somdej Toh. With a price of 20 baht each and with modern packaging, it makes for easy selling. It could be said that in Wat Indravihan people can come to chant as well as enjoy shopping for amulet products, which are all connected to Somdej Toh and *Jinapanjara Gatha*.

### 2.6.3 THE JINAPANJARA GATHA CHANTING CLUB



Located on Petchkasem Road at Soi 65, about 200 meters from the front on the left side, is The Jinapanjara Gatha Chanting Club's head office. This office has many items connected to *Jinapanjara Gatha* and Somdej Toh, such as books, cassette tapes, CDs, VCDs, and Buddha images, holy water in bottles and other amulets. This place is descended from Samnag Pooawan some years ago. Subsequently, some key followers gathered again under the roof of a chanting club focusing on *Jinapanjara Gatha*, which was considered the most popular for general lay people. Founded in 1992, and kept going continuously for over 10 years, the club is still working on its aim to inspire people to chant both individually and in groups. From the beginning to the present, 100,000 people have participated in group-chanting here. Most particularly on Sunday, followers will gather here on the third floor to have a routine group chant. Group chanting is not only performed in the office, but also outside at important places.

In addition, the club also organizes a ritual ceremony related to Somdej Toh on important occasions. For example, every June 22, a ritual ceremony is organized in commemoration of the day Somdej Toh's passed away. Approximately 300-400 participants comprised of worker people, elders and some monks, all who believe in *Jinapanjara*, come and join the ceremony. On this occasion, a ritual will be held from morning until evening, with a superstitious atmosphere. This spiritual rite, conducted by monks and nuns, is called "The Heart of Jinapanjara." This ceremony is believed to have the ability to generate auspicious power, good health and wealth to participants and, particularly, healing power for those who suffer from anything. The expense of this rite is 100 baht per person, per time (some people join the

ceremony more than one time); and one who joins the ceremony will receive an amulet as a souvenir.

The club appears to play a role as a meeting center for chanters who like to share their belief or experience with others. On ordinary days, vegetarian shops are open for visitors whereas a small shop providing several books on Somdej Toh, as well as various audio products which include *Jinapanjara Gatha*. The club is usually quiet on ordinary days, but some days there are many followers who came to visit and talk with the staff or buy some cassettes or CDs for themselves and others. It would appear that this is a good place for one who is interested in Somdej Toh and *Jinapanjara Gatha*.

One ironically interesting point is that Head of the club, Dr. Phichai Tovivich, an associate professor, used to be a scientist teacher and the head of Chemistry Department at Chulalongkorn University. After retirement he conducts his own business meanwhile ranks a chairman of the chanting club with strong belief on *Jinapanjara* and Somdej Toh that it will be detailed in Chapter IV.

#### **2.6.4 SOMDEJ TOH CENTER AT NAKORN RATCHASIMA**

Away from Bangkok to the Northeastern region of Thailand, in Nakorn Ratchasima province, there is a huge statue of Somdej Toh in his familiar seated position. This is not a monastery occupied by monks, but a private place built by a famous actor, Soraphong Chatri, who has strong faith in Somdej Toh. He established this location by himself by collecting money from donations. From the beginning until now, at least 300-400 million baht has been spent on the huge project.

Every weekend, Soraphong comes to stay here as a host. Visitors are able to meet or take a photo with him. For those who might not be a Soraphong fan, clean toilets with free food, are other magnets to draw people to this site. In the main hall, there are also some people dressed in white who continuously chant *Jinapanjara*.

“I have to take care whoever comes to pay respect to “Poo Toh<Grandfather Toh>” here as much as I can because “Poo Toh” gave me a lot. He changed me to become a new Soraphong who loved others more than before, and also had a sense of shame. Importantly, I usually have gotten success and good luck so that it is my responsibility to take care whoever comes to pay respect to “Poo Toh” because they are “Poo Toh’s guests.”<sup>22</sup>

This private center started its activities by building the “Somdej Toh” statue, followed by building a hall. Now, in 2007, the “Somdej Toh” statue is considered to be the biggest in Thailand. Everyday, many people come here as their destination, while others just enjoy the location as a break point during a long travel. Nevertheless, Soraphong is willing to welcome everyone with free facilities such as car parks, toilets, free food and also an opportunity to meet the famous actor. It was

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Soraphong Chatri, 13 November 2006.

noted during the interview, Soraphong was very willing to talk about Somdej Toh and *Jinapanjara* as if he was speaking of his real grandfather.

“I still owe “Poo Toh” many times for *Jinapanjara* chanting.”<sup>23</sup>

Soraphong revealed that when he wanted help from “Poo Toh”, he offered him chanting *Jinapanjara* at least 100 to 1,000 times, depending on the importance of his request.

“I used chanting *Jinapanjara* as my offering to “Poo Toh” instead of food or things; this is the best worship, in my opinion.”<sup>24</sup>

The *Jinapanjara Gatha* is chanted at “Somdej Toh Center” by visitors with different aims. Most of them do not seem to be concerned much about its history, they just keep chanting as much as they can. In a sense of faith, sometimes knowledge is not necessarily needed. However, from an academic perspective, it is important. So, in the next chapter the history of *Jinapanjara* and its reviser will be investigated for more understanding.

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23 Ibid., interview with Soraphong Chatri.

24 Ibid.