



CHAPTER II

THAI BELIEFS IN TSUNAMI SONGS AND POEMS

In this chapter, the researcher will explore Thai beliefs reflected in tsunami songs and poems written by Thais. Many Thai beliefs related to Buddhism, Hinduism, and local beliefs are displayed in these songs and poems.

Thai major beliefs as seen in tsunami songs and poems are Tilakkhana, the Buddhist attitude toward death: the law of karma, the belief in the goodness of the Triple Gem, the cycle of life, Indian myths such the Churning the Milky Ocean at the Dawn of Time, animism, and *khwan*. In addition, Buddhist teachings about loving-kindness and compassion are also reflected in Thai tsunami songs and poems.

2.1 Tilakkhana

Tilakkhana, or the Three Characteristics of Existence, is one of Buddhist concepts:

1. Aniccata or Impermanence: Every condition has birth, decadence, and death.
2. Dukkata or Conflict: The condition which is oppressed by birth, decadence, and death; the condition that is imperfect.
3. Anatta or Non-Self: The state of being not self; there is no self that is absolutely controllable.¹

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P.A.Payutto, *Buddha Dhamma (Original Version)*, 2001. p.60.

Everything, concrete or abstract, shares these Three Common Characteristics, including the human body and mind. According to the concept of Aniccata, everything is in the state of becoming: the smallest part is changing every moment. Usually, men are unaware of the smallest change; they can only see the results of this process. As a result, they mistakenly believe that "there is a 'thing' that can change". In fact, there is no such "thing" or self; there is only a condition of changing.²

Buddhist scripture teaches that:

*It is the everlasting and unchanging rule of this world that everything is created by a series of causes and conditions and everything disappears by the same rule; everything changes, nothing remains constant.*³

*People cling obstinately to lives of wealth and honor, comfort and pleasure, excitement and self-indulgence, ignorant of the fact that the desires for these very things are the source of human suffering. From its beginning, the world has been filled with a succession of calamities, over and above the unavoidable facts of illness, old age, and death. However, if one carefully considers all the facts, one must be convinced that at the root of all suffering lies the principle of craving desire. If avarice can be removed, human suffering will come to an end.*⁴

² Ibid. p.63.

³ Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai, The Teaching of Buddha, 1966. p. 82.

⁴ Ibid. p. 84.

*Ignorance is manifested in greed that fills the human mind. It comes from the fact that men are unaware of the true reason for the succession of things.*⁵

In Thai tsunami songs and poems, the poets encourage the victims to consider the fact that everything is not self but changing, according to Buddhist teachings; therefore, they will not cling to their lives, their beloved, their residences, and their property, so that their suffering will be reduced.

Moreover, the poets also convince the readers to reduce their ego and selfishness by considering Tilakkhana. People in this world have a fight with each other because of their greed and ego, manifested by their ignorance. So the poets try to convince the readers to get together and help each other by reviewing this Buddhist teaching about Tilakkhana. In addition, if their selfishness is lessened, people will dedicate their time, labor, and property to help other people who are in trouble.

By considering the greed of men as a cause of the ecological crisis, Phra Paisal Visalo also explains that humans destroy nature to serve their greed which can never be fulfilled. In fact, humans are only destroying the nature, and also destroy themselves because of their ignorance, without realizing the fact that they are just a tiny part of nature.⁶

⁵ ibid. p. 84.

⁶ Chompoo Trakullertsathien. Global Warming vs Dharma Cooling. *Bangkok Post, My Life*. Vol. 2, 074, August 20-26, 2009.

In Thai tsunami songs and poems, the poets also reviewed the concepts of Tilakkhana in order to convince the reader to preserve nature. By preserving nature, humans can stop the causes of natural disasters.

Phaiwarin Khaongam / World-Sumatra-Tsunami

The earth is angry. The hungry ocean

Devours all the living things on earth.

The natural disaster is the doom resulting from merit and sin.

All living things are weeping.

Does any god see

5

The time when big waves come?

Gigantic waves, roaring waves

Devastate the earth, hell, and heaven.

The sign of tomorrow

To warn that the disaster would continue.

10

Our hearts are in pain

In time of sleeping or fully awake.

Sing a lullaby for the earth and the sky.

Both this world and the afterworld are in pain.

Sing for the cycle of birth and death.

15

Let the universe pause a while. Sing for the day and the night.

Please sympathize with Asia.

It's tragedy in world history.

Sharing the same fate: a large number of corpses.

It's the burden of mankind to reconsider the future. 20

The suffering of heaven and the portent of earth

Will happen because of cause and effect.

Sumatra - tsunami signifies the characteristic of Anicca⁷.

Here, our friends in the whole earth will be in deep sorrow.

Sending the Thai heart from all corners of the country, 25

Let peace be with us everywhere.

Let's learn and be aware that

Life is covered by nothing but dust.

In "World-Sumatra-Tsunami", in lines 13-16, Phaiwarin Khaongam uses the words "this world" and "afterworld", "birth" and "death", "day" and "night" to express the concept of changing. So far, in Buddhist teaching, there is no constant thing. As time goes by, "tomorrow" will become "today" and "today" will become "yesterday". So, when people die, the "afterworld" will become their "present world". According to Buddhist concepts about the cycle of life, at the moment one

⁷ The characteristic of Anicca (อนิจจัง) means the characteristic of impermanence

dies, he will be suddenly reborn in the afterworld and then he will die again; likewise, the world turns from day to night and night to day continually. So neither death nor birth is the beginning or the end of life. Everything, therefore, is just only the condition of changing.

In lines 17-24, the poet says that the tsunami exemplified the characteristics of "Anicca". The earth shakes, the disaster occurs, people are killed, ones who are still alive are in pain; the poet depicts all of these incidents to remind the readers that everything is changing and life is uncertain. In line 28, the poet explains that life is nothing, only covered by dust, in order to remind people that men are equal and almost nothing. By expressing the concept of Tilakkhana, the poet convinces the reader to be aware that human life is almost nothing in order to reduce their ego and greed. The poet aims at making the readers become less egoistic so that they will help each other, turn to each other, and render peace, as seen in lines 25-28.

Moreover, by displaying the concept of Tilakkhana, the poet also encourages the readers to preserve the nature. In lines 3 and 22, he also writes that the disaster occurred for a reason. In other words, it occurred because humans destroyed the nature. So, in lines 17-20, the poet encourages the reader to consider the tsunami tragedy as the responsibility and burden of mankind. He asks the reader to sympathize with tsunami victims and stop destroying the nature.

Chommarn na Moobaanmuenaksorn / Untitled 2

Remember the anniversary of bad waves

There are complicated causes

Why it attacked us mercilessly

Thai people are as painful as the rest of the world

A hundred thousands of sadness could not be healed easily. 5

Shall this pain unite our heart to make it over?

The remains of disaster are lessons which have to be prevented.

Hope that every lost life will go to heaven peacefully.

Those bodies reminded us about the birth, illness, aging and death.

They reinforced us to reconsider again and again about suffering. 10

The heart is almost torn apart

The South is still waiting for the warning system.

Please manage the budget to get it done.

In this poem, the poet expresses his sadness about the tsunami disaster. In lines 9 and 10, the poet reviews the Buddhist concepts that everyone has to go through the process of birth, illness, old age, and death. The concept that everything is changing and has to decay one day represents the suffering of human life.

By displaying the concept of suffering, the poet tries to urge the government to provide a warning system in order to prevent suffering in the future.

Waree Wayu / Through the Ages

This world turns too fast

But life is faster,

Just a moment from child to adult.

We walk for just a little while,

Year by year,

5

And then reach the edge of life.

This world turns too fast

If the earth moves just a bit

No one can see the change.

No one knows when the Ananda fish will move.

10

Suddenly the huge trees are felled by the storm.

This world still turns fast without our noticing anything.

The plants grow in a hurry,

The trees rush bearing their fruit,

But it is not as fast as time.

15

Flowers decay before the bees come.

Who can ask this world to turn slower?

When your voice goes through your mouth

Your life already passes through an age of time.

Your word also drifts in the air.

20

And above in the sky

There are only twinkling stars.

In the poem "Through the Time", Waree Wayu explains that time is running very fast. In lines 1-6 and lines 12-20 he uses imagery to express that everything turns too fast.

In line 10, the poet uses the allusion of the Ananda fish. Thai people in the past believed that the earth is lying on the back of the Ananda fish and the earthquake is triggered when Ananda moves. By using the allusion to Ananda, the poet explains that the tsunami disaster occurred very fast and silently. This allusion reinforces the reader that human is powerless and almost nothing, even small shakes of the earth can affect a million of people.

In lines 21 and 22, the poet says that above the sky there is nothing but star light, which is almost extinguished. He makes the readers consider that even the star which live longer than human a million times can also disappear. Everything is in the state of becoming, so nothing has its essence to hold on. The image of the sky which has only twinkling stars reflects the state of non-self which expresses the emptiness of life.

All these images which are created by the poet represent the concept of changing and nothingness, similar to the concept of Tilakkhana. In line 17, the poet says that no one can control the time, which is identical to the concept of Anatta that everything is uncontrollable. In lines 18-20, the poet writes that the voice suddenly disappears as soon as it comes out of the mouth. This reflects the characteristic of Dukkha: nothing lasts forever. In addition, all the concepts of change represent the characteristics of Anicca.

The poet tries to convince the reader to consider Tilikkhana. By considering this fact, their greed will be lessened. In addition, people will turn to each other, care for each other, and be concerned more about nature.

2.2 Buddhist Attitude toward Death

According to Buddhist teachings, every living thing goes through the same process that is to suffer from birth, aging, illness, and death. Besides, Buddhism teaches people that death is a part of human life and the nature of life. Therefore, death is not the end of life: both birth and death are the conditions that occur continually and interchangeably. Death is just a changing of the life form from the previous world to a new world.

Phra Paisal Visalo explains that "If we put it strictly, Buddhism will not use the word 'rebirth' because rebirth means there is a constant life that dies and then this same life can be reborn again. Buddhism offers a different viewpoint, and explains that life and death is a continual condition. In other words, human consciousness is appearing and disappearing all the time. When one dies, his consciousness will appear in the new world. The last consciousness when one dies and the first consciousness when he moves to the new world are related to each other but they are not the same thing. As we plant the rice, reap it, and sow its seed, then, the new rice will grow. We can not say that the first rice is reborn as the second rice. The new rice is not the rebirth of the old rice. It is undeniable that they are absolutely related to each other; however, they are not the same rice".⁸

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Jernsak Pinthong. *Life and Death in Modern Society*. 2002. p.30.

However, the Western thought reflected in modern medicine has the different idea about death. According to materialism, human life is just a process of biochemical phenomenon in his body: the human mind is also a biochemical phenomenon, centered in his brain. So death in modern medication means the end of life. Human life and mind come from his body; therefore, when the body ceases to function, everything will come to an end.⁹

Moreover, according to modern medical ideas, death is an unusual condition: it occurs when some part of human body has a problem or does not function properly. Sherwin Nuland, an American doctor who wrote the book entitled *How We Die*, said that in 35 years of his career as a doctor, he was never allowed to write in a death certificate that the 80-100-yearold patients died because of "old age". The death certificate would be sent back to him as an illegal document unless he pointed out that there was a problem in some part of their bodies. Nuland concluded that everywhere on this earth, death of old age is "illegal".¹⁰

So death by old age is not considered a natural phenomenon. On the other hand, death is not the nature of life but disease.¹¹ According to scientific thinking, it is believed that they can control and conquer the nature. Modern medicine tries to conquer death and prolong the patients' life as long as possible. So the patients' death is also the failure of modern medicine.¹²

⁹ Paisal Visalo, *Beyond Death: From Crisis to Chance*, p. 63.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* pp.60-61.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.61.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp.62-64.

According to modern medicine, death is the end of life; therefore, it becomes the most horrible thing in human life.¹³ People who are influenced by this idea try to avoid death. They spend money as much as possible to postpone their death, although some of them are in the state of dying.¹⁴

However, Phra Paisal Visalo claims that death is not a horrible thing; moreover, it is a chance. Once, Lord Buddha suggested to a follower, who had a bad disease, to consider that everything is uncertain, suffering, and not self, so that he will gain wisdom. When he has wisdom, pain and death are not horrible for him anymore.

Death is horrible because people still cling to the idea that "this is my body", "this house belongs to me", and "this is my beloved". People are afraid of departing from their beloved persons or things. If they have wisdom and realize the fact that suffering occurs when their mind clings to anything, their mind will not try to cling to anything and then they will be released from suffering.¹⁵

Phra Paisal Visalo explains that:

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ibid., p.61.

14
ibid., p.67.

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ibid. pp.114-115.

Death is a chance because, in Buddhism, the last consciousness at the moment when people die is the most powerful consciousness, compared to cows that are squeezed in a pen: when the door opens the cow that exits first is the one that stays close to the door. If the last consciousness can let go of everything, then it will be released from suffering; if the last consciousness holds on to its treasure, it might come back to be near its treasure.¹⁶

In the Buddha's day, there is a case of Samawadee who was the wife of King Uthen. Samawadee had faith in Buddhist teaching and practiced Dharma. However, she was envied by Makantiya, the first wife of King Uthen. One day, Makantiya lured Samawadee and her servants to be locked up in the warehouse and then Makantiya set a fire to burn them. Samawadee was not frightened, she advised her servants to consider their sensation. All servants obeyed her and practiced what Samawadee suggested until they were burned to death. After that, Lord Buddha said that some of them became Sotapanna, Sakadagami, and Anagami. (Sotapanna, Sakadagami, Anagami, and Arahanta are the title for one who becomes holy persons in Buddhist concept: all of them certainly have Nirvana as their goal.) Lord Buddha said that Sumawadee and her servants did not take death for granted.¹⁷

In Thai tsunami songs and poems, the writers also try to encourage the reader to reconsider about death: that death is nature of life. He tries to convince the readers that death is not the end of

¹⁶ Ibid. pp.120-121.

¹⁷ Ibid. p.17.

life but a condition of change so that the readers will not fear death; moreover, they can be released from pain.

Surachai Chanthimathorn / *Sleep on Death*

*Friends, sleep, please sleep, sleep under the blue sky
Beside the ocean, amid the wind, and the moon light!
Friends, please dream of the sweet old days and wake up with hope.
Give us new days after we sleep on the sand ashore.*

*One morning, the storm raged and the big tidal wave arose. 5
It was a moment of life-and-death, and of disaster!*

*Coconut trees sway, white clouds roll by, and kids play on the beach;
Sea-shells, crabs and fishes on the beach, sand dunes and coral reefs;
Look at the horizon where the blue sky meets the sea,
And be blessed with the life-force. 10*

*Give us new days after we sleep on death!
Give us new lives after we sleep on death!*

In the song titled "Sleep on Death", Surachai Chantimathorn displays the terrible scene of disaster in lines 5 and 6. Paradoxically, he describes the beautiful scenery before and after the tsunami occurred in lines 1-4 and lines 7-10. By depicting the beach which turns from the dangerous place to the beautiful place, the poet displays the concept of changing. He tries to

convince the readers that everything can change, in order to encourage them to have a hope and look forward to “new days” and “new lives”.

Moreover, according to Phra Paisal Visalo,¹⁸ Thai people, and even other nationalities, are always sensitive of using the word “death” or “dying”. When our beloved die we have many expressions to use instead of “he is dead” such as “he passed away” or “he’s gone”. In Thai, we also say that “*mod boon*” (หมดบุญ) or “his boon is over”. This means that his good karma which sent him to be born as a man in this life is over, and now it is time for him to be reborn into another being. People invent many other terms to symbolize “death” in order to avoid the fear of death. In modern society people pretend to forget about death. Nowadays the modern medicine has been developed and many people believe that it can cure any disease. Many people try to escape from aging, illness, and death. The bad point is that, when the time has come, they can hardly accept their death or their beloved’s.

However, in the Four Noble Truths, the Lord Buddha taught that the mind and body of men are suffering. The duty of men is to know and understand suffering.¹⁹ Lord Buddha also teaches people to again and again contemplate this: “I am subject to death and I cannot escape it; there

¹⁸ Jernsak Pinthong. *Life and Death in Modern Society*, 2002.

¹⁹ ป.จ. ปยุตโต. *พุทธธรรม (ฉบับเดิม)*, 2001. หน้า 179

will be division and separation from all that are dear to me and beloved." By contemplating these thoughts, men can be released from the suffering of losing their beloved and the fear of death.²⁰

In "Sleep on Death", the poet reinforces the audiences with the word "death"; he encourages people to "sleep on death" in order to accept death and conquer the fear of death.

In other words, what the poet expresses in lines 11 and 12, "Give us new days after we sleep on death! / Give us new lives after we sleep on death!" can remind the readers about the condition that is always changing between life and death. The poet tries to point out to the readers that after death, there is life, and after life, there is death. He encourages the readers to consider this fact so that people can accept that death is the nature of life and to let go of their suffering.

2.3 The Law of Karma

According to P.A. Payutto, the law of karma is the law of causal relation and the law of nature. People who are Buddhists should not believe anything easily and spontaneously, until they prove it themselves. Lord Buddha said that even if one who has bad Karma, washes his body in the holy river, he will not be cleansed from his bad karma. So we should wash ourselves with Dharma: not telling lies, not harming the others, not stealing anything, having faith, and being generous; then we do not have to seek the holy water because even our drinking water is now the holy water. If anyone can be free from the sin by washing in the river, then the frogs, tortoises, nagas (mythical

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P.A. Payutto, *Dictionary of Buddhism*, 2003, p.180.

serpents), and crocodiles would go to heaven, too. If the river water can wash away sin, then it should carry away good deeds, also. The cleanliness does not come from the river water. One who is honest to his word and practices dharma will be the Brahman and be clean.²¹

In other words, the law of karma is the law of morality for all kinds of living things that have consciousness, especially humans, who are capable of reasoning. The principle for the law of karma is that "we reap what we sow". One who believes in Karma; realizes the penalties and benefits of Karma, will practice good deed and avoid practicing bad deed. So, the law of karma is about both the Truth and Ethics.

In Thai tsunami songs and poems, the poets explains that the disaster occurred by the law of Karma. Moreover, people who survived and died in this disaster were also chosen by their own karma. Buddhism explains that death of men does not occur randomly but is deliberately decided by what they have done in the past. From the Buddhist point of view, it is explicable why some people survived and some people were killed in the tsunami, even if they were walking side by side in the moment when tsunami came.

Phra Bhasakorn Bhavilai explained that:

Karma takes time. Although we are the owner of our own Karma, it does not mean that the result of our good actions and bad actions will return to us immediately. In the

²¹ ป.อ. ปยุตโต. พุทธธรรม (ฉบับเดิม), 2001. หน้า 171

*Buddhist view, if the conditions for the feedback from the world are not yet in place, their Karma has not yet returned. Likewise, in many instances, the cause of returning Karma is unpredictable. We experience good or bad luck seemingly for no reason. Buddhist teaching says that we are simply receiving the result from the past action that we are unaware of.*²²

*Thus, Buddhists would say that winning the lottery is actually not a case of random luck, but is the feedback from our previous actions returning to us—the result of our own action in a forgotten past. These past actions still resonate in our world, affecting our world equilibrium.*²³

*Karma may take a long time; suppose we were to die suddenly tomorrow and the results of our good and bad actions had not yet ripened. These actions do not just vanish. Just as energy can neither be created nor destroyed, but merely transformed, the same idea can be applied to the effects of our Karma. According to Buddhism, our responsibility for our actions does not end with our death. Our ownership of our actions continues beyond this lifetime. Buddhist doctrine says that we are responsible for our actions through more than this single life. We are responsible for everything we think, say, or do, until we finally move beyond the playing field of birth and death, until we reach the point that we are free.*²⁴

22 Bhasakorn Bhavilai. *Karma: A New Look at the Buddhist Concept of Cause and Effect*. 2006, pp.32-33.

23 *Ibid.* p. 34.

24 *Ibid.* p. 35.

Our present life is a short span when compared with the effects of some Karma. However, this is not to say that we are helpless victims of our old Karma. On the contrary, this means that we are truly the makers of our own fate, architects of our own environment. Our actions are meaningful. We have the power to make things better. There is nothing random or haphazard about the work of the universe.²⁵

According to the Buddhist concept, as described by Phra Bhasakorn, bad luck and good luck do not occur randomly. This means that the fates of tsunami victims were determined by their previous action. Karma can take a long time; therefore, sometimes people cannot know what they have done in order to deserve their fate in the present. However, this concept does not convince people to surrender to their fate and do nothing. In the contrary, it encourages people to determine their own fate by their action in the present.

In Thai tsunami songs and poems, the poets also express the law of karma in order to encourage people to do good action and help the victims to create a better world.

Moreover, the Buddhist concept about the law of karma can explain not only the action and result of a single person but also the action and result of human race. In the Buddhist view, natural disasters occur because humans destroy the nature; that means humans have to be responsible for what they have done to nature.

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ibid. p. 37.

According to the law of cause and effect, nothing can exist independently. When humans destroy nature, it affects not only people who destroy or the human race, but everything in the entire universe.

Phra Buddhadasa Bikkhu was a monk who had the idea about bio-centric philosophy using Buddhist concept. He encouraged people to care for the nature. Everything exists corresponding with each other. Buddhadasa said that things in their natural, true state are characterized by their dynamic, interdependent nature ("idappaccayata" or "patticcasamuppada"). Everything is linked in a process of interdependent co-arising, or as Buddhadasa often said, "We are mutual friends inextricably bound together in the same process of birth, old age, suffering, and death." In other words, the world is a conjoint, interdynamic, cooperative whole, not a collection of disparate, oppositional parts. In the deepest sense, therefore, to care for nature means participation in this state of inter-becoming, not just human beings preserving nature for the sake of human beings.²⁶

Buddhadasa also explained that "The entire cosmos is a cooperative. The sun, the moon, and the stars live together as a cooperative. The same is true for humans and animals, trees and the earth. Our bodily parts function as a cooperative. When we realize that the world is a mutual, interdependent, cooperative enterprise, that human beings are all mutual friends in the process of

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Tuckerm , Evelyn Mary and Williams, Ryuken Duncan (Editors). Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds. p.32.

birth, old age, suffering, and death, then we can build a noble, even a heavenly environment. If our lives are not based on this truth then we'll all perish."²⁷

According to Buddhadasa's view, if humans do not realize the fact that they are part of the nature and continue destroying the nature, the whole universe will be affected by an ecological crisis, including humans.

In Thai tsunami songs and poems, the poets also describe the tsunami as a punishment from nature. In other words, humans deserve what they have done. As a result, the poets encourage the readers to preserve nature in order to prevent natural disasters.

However, the explanations of the law of Karma, for a single person, and for the entire human race, are not in contrast. Although the natural destruction can affect every life in the entire world, each person will receive only the effects from their previous action. In other words, the natural disaster or ecological crisis is just a suitable circumstance for returning the result of bad Karma to people.

Phaiwarin Khaongam / *World-Sumatra-Tsunami*

*The earth is angry. The hungry ocean
Devours all the living things on earth.*

²⁷ Ibid. p.33.

The natural disaster is the doom resulting from merit and sin.

All living things are weeping.

Does any god see

5

The time when big waves come?

Gigantic waves, roaring waves

Devastate the earth, hell, and heaven.

The sign of tomorrow

To warn that the disaster would continue.

10

Our hearts are in pain

In time of sleeping or fully awake.

Sing a lullaby for the earth and the sky.

Both this world and the afterworld are in pain.

Sing for the cycle of birth and death.

15

Let the universe pause a while. Sing for the day and the night.

Please sympathize with Asia.

It's tragedy in world history.

Sharing the same fate: a large number of corpses.

It's the burden of mankind to reconsider the future.

20

The suffering of heaven and the portent of earth

Will happen because of cause and effect.

Sumatra - tsunami signifies the characteristic of Anicca.

Here, our friends in the whole earth will be in deep sorrow.

Sending the Thai heart from all corners of the country,

25

Let peace be with us everywhere.

Let's learn and be aware that

Life is covered by nothing but dust.

In the poem titled "World-Sumatra-Tsunami", in line 3 Phaiwarin Khaongam says that "the natural disaster is the doom resulting from merit and sin". It expresses the concept of the law of Karma. In line 22, he also repeats that the disaster occurred from a cause.

In Buddhadasa's view, the destruction of nature can cause disaster. So it can be implied that tsunamis happen because men destroy the nature. From lines 17-20 the poet encourages the readers to sympathize with the fate of tsunami victims. He explains that the tsunami shows that mankind must be concerned with nature. As Buddhadasa said every life corresponds with each other, so the action of a single person can affect the entire world. The poet explains that the tragedy occurred because humans destroy the nature. He tries to convince the readers to prevent the disaster in the future by preserving nature. In lines 25-28, the poet urges the readers to consider that life is almost nothing so that the readers will not be selfish but be concerned more about other people and nature.

According to what the poet expresses, the tsunami disaster is not a coincidence; the disaster results from the law of Karma. As Phra Bhasakorn explains, the law of Karma teaches people that they can determine their own fate: what people do in the present can create their future.

The word "god" in line 5 can refer to any unspecified god. This "god" plays a role as a witness of the disaster, so it has done nothing. If god does exist, why does he do nothing? The poet presents the idea of god to express that, in the face of tsunami catastrophe men seem to be abandoned by their god. So men have to depend on themselves and help each other. In other word, the poet asks the readers to consider that their action in the present is more important than god. So far, he explains that the tsunami was caused by humans, while god did nothing in the disaster. As a result, men should be more concerned about their own actions, because they can affect every life in the entire world. In other words, men should sympathize with other and help each other to create a better world, because their own action is the only thing that can decide their future.

Phrakru Silsangwaraphirat / *Wiping away Andaman's Tears*

On 26 December there was a great earthquake;

The crazy big wave made Thai people cry.

This great disaster destroyed everything so horribly.

Many Thai people are heart broken.

Some are dead, some lost their relatives, and some are injured.

5

They are very cold and sad.

The house, money, everything is taken into the ocean.

What a pity for the companions left on this world,

In sorrow, having nothing, and so lonely,

They search for their beloved and relatives

10

With confused mind and staggering legs,

Then fall down on the sand.

Some were watching at their kids playing around-

Suddenly the waves crushed and drowned them

Like the hand of a bloody demon.

15

The hand of a great reaper took away the kids so fast, like a giant wheel,

That the mother had no chance to pull them back.

Oh dear! Her honey is gone,

The mother's heart is broken,

Lying down, crying incessantly in deep sorrow.

20

This disaster shakes Thai hearts.

The paradise of tourism is changed into the gloomy rotten clay.

How distressing is the world's catastrophe.

Almost ten countries lost their people and wealth.

Friends on this planet drop their tears

30

Because of the earthquake under the ocean.

"Let's make merit

Let's have a united Thai heart,

To send the stream of loving-kindness and practice moral acts.

Our natives are suffering because of the big waves 35

Some survived because of their virtue and returned to their home.

But how sad they are, their houses are destroyed.

Thai people never ignore the others in time of crisis:

Lives are hard and people are hungry.

We send food, clothes and medicine. 40

The crisis is softened when our kindness pours in."

In the poem titled "Wiping Away Andaman's Tears", Phra Silsangwaraphirat describes the law of karma. In lines 32, 34, and 36 he uses the phrase "make merit", "loving-kindness" and "moral acts" which are Buddhist concepts, encouraging people to do good actions. Buddhists believe that their good Karma can protect them from harm. In line 36, the poet also says that "some survived because of their virtue". The poet reminds the readers about the law of karma. According to the law of karma, our action (what we think, say, and do) never disappears without any effect. The result of our own action, both good and bad, will return to us in due time. So the poet encourages the readers to pay attention to their own action, which will decide their fate. He convinces the readers to practice moral acts by helping tsunami victims and sending a stream of loving-kindness. Thus, by helping tsunami victims, the readers also do good action in order to develop their mind.

There is also the Buddhist concept about giving or charity. It teaches people to make donations in order to reduce their selfishness and greed, not to serve their desire or to expect a reward. So, by helping tsunami victims, people can practice Dharma at the same time.

Moreover, according to Buddhadasa's view, no man can live independently. So it is a duty for people all around Thailand to help tsunami victims in the south. The poet encourages the readers to sympathize with tsunami victims and help them. In other words, he encourages the readers to develop their mind by practicing Dharma and widen their feeling of loving-kindness and compassion.

Phanda Thammada / For Those Who Survive

People who pass away go to heaven,

People who are alive make merit

And say prayers with tears,

In tribute to those who have gone

Bringing an end to all suffering and illness of humans, .

5

Bringing an end to all burdens, leave the bodies.

The good deed will be the judgment

To judge all spirits with justice.

In the poem titled "For Those Who Survive", the poet expresses Thai culture: when others are dead "People who are alive make merit / And say prayers with tears / In tribute to those who have gone". In lines 7 and 8, the poet reviews the concepts of the law of Karma: "The good deed will be the judgment / To judge all spirits with justice".

Lamnam C / Untitled 3

Maybe the Nature called for justice,

Or it was the result of sin.

Either way, the Tsunami is remembered for its brutality,

As if it wanted to show off its power

In line 2 the poet assumes that tsunami disaster may have been caused by the immoral practice of men. According to Buddhadasa, Dharma and *thamachat* (ธรรมชาต) or nature, are quite similar. *Thamachat* in Thai term is the combination of two words *thama* (ธรรม) or *dharma* in the Pali root, and *chat* (ชาต) or *jati* in the Pali root, which literally means "Dharma originated".²⁸

It can be implied that to do something against nature means to stand against Dharma, too. Buddhadasa said "Greed and selfishness are destroying nature. Our whole environment has been poisoned - prisons everywhere, hospitals filled with the physically ill, and we can't build enough facilities to take care of all the mentally ill. This is the consequence of utter selfishness. And in the face of all of this our greed and selfishness continue to increase. Is there no end to this madness?"²⁹

In other words, the madness of men creates the madness of nature. The abnormality of the human mind (greed and selfishness) brings the abnormal circumstance to the entire world.

28
Ibid. p.27.

29
Ibid. p.29.

In this poem, the poet wonders if nature called for justice. On the other hand, nature only returns the result from the action of men. It can be implied that the tsunami was caused by humans. Finally, the poet tells the readers that the power of nature is greater than anyone can resist. By considering this fact, men should be humble before nature and do nothing against nature.

Pantamuang / Tsunami 2

*The crazy wave attacked the beaches,
Sweeping everything along its path.
Men are running away chaotically.
There was no rain, no clue to the danger.*

*The chaotic tsunami chased after lives, 5
Attacking everything in front of it.
The Andaman is shocked by the news of death toll.
Some died, some struggled in the waves.*

*The tourist place becomes worthless.
Dead bodies are all around everywhere. 10
The beaches become graves with the smell of corpses.
The pain, the death, the loss from the chaotic waves.*

*The capitalists took advantage of nature for their riches,
The fishermen were also defeated;
The beautiful sea had been sold to fulfill rich men's dreams. 15*

*Then, the time came, as
The mad ocean cleaned up all those luxurious things on the beach,
Which were built by the thoughtless people.*

*Maybe one day,
Men would have no right to possess anything; 20
They will lose their beautiful earth
Because the land will be submerged under the sea.*

*Maybe one day,
Men would have nowhere to live because of false consciousness.
The land will be shaking like a cradle
And the buildings will bury the bodies. 25*

In the poem titled "Tsunami 2", in lines 1-12, the poet describes the tsunami that killed people brutally and destroyed everything in front of it with madness. In lines 13-18, the poet expresses the bad side of capitalists who "took advantages from nature". Then the poet says that the tsunami occurred in order to punish the "thoughtless people". From lines 19-25, the poet predicts that mankind will lose their homeland because of their greed and ignorance.

This poem displays the law of karma. The poet describes that, men who practices immoral will be punished. Moreover, by destroying nature, humans also destroy themselves because they are a part of nature.

Phra Paisal Visalo also gave his opinion about the environmental crisis: "Humans fail to realize that they're part of nature. They can survive and maintain their race throughout the passage of time, simply because of nature's mercy and hospitality. Humans should be grateful to nature."³⁰

Phanom Nantapruek / *On the Stretch of the Andaman*

*Ah... ah... startled by the death epic of the age,
The song of anger by earth and sea, 10
The great warning song of the universe.*

*No matter their race and class,
Death is everywhere.
We sing the sad song for all spirits,
To the Andaman's great tragedy. 15*

*Suddenly disappearing,
Broken like a dream,
It's a nightmare, under the sky and sun,
That is too large for humans to prevent.*

Sadder than any sad songs, 20

30

Chompoo Trakullertsathien. Global Warming VS Dharma Cooling. *Bangkok Post, My Life*. Vol. 2, 074, (August 20-26, 2009). p.9.

*The separation of gloomy sky and earth,
As if the hand of the universe was trying to warn humans about death.*

Warning us not to be overjoyed by desire

But know how to reduce it,

To calm down, be peaceful and know the limits,

25

Before the human race will be extinguished by the universe.

Ah... ah... startled because dead bodies are everywhere,

They try to show and warn us

On the stretch of the Andaman.

In the poem "On the Stretch of the Andaman", from lines 20-26, the poet describes the tsunami disaster as the sign from nature to warn people not to be overjoyed because one day everyone will die. The poet implies that people overuse natural resources in order to fulfill their desire; therefore, the tsunami occurred. Moreover, he also warns the readers that if men continue destroying nature, one day the "human race will be extinguished by the universe".

In Buddhist concepts, desire is called *tanha* (ตัณหา) or craving which come in this forms:

1. *Kama-tanha*: craving for sensual pleasure; sensual craving
2. *Bhava-tanha*: craving for existence

3. *Vibhava-tanha*: craving for non-existence; craving for self-annihilation³¹

Craving causes men to practice immoral acts but the Lord Buddha teaches people to eliminate their desire, so that they will not be controlled by it.

Icchaya bajjhati loko

icchavinayaya muccati

icchaya vippahanena

sabbam chindati bandhanam.

"The world is bound by desires and can be free only by cutting it away. With desire destroyed all bounds will be accordingly removed."³²

Phra Paisal Visalo also claims that the greed of men is the cause of nature- destruction: "It's no exaggeration to say that our natural environment is in crisis because our interior nature is out of balance. Deep down inside people feel lonely, depressed and hopeless. That is why they are trying to indulge themselves with material things."³³

³¹ P.A. Payutto, *Dictionary of Buddhism*, 2003. p.86.

³² *Buddhist Proverbs*, 2007, p.13. references from Tipitaka, Samyuttanikaya 15/56.

³³ Chompoo Trakullertsathien. Global Warming VS Dharma Cooling. *Bangkok Post, My Life*. Vol. 2, 074, (August 20-26, 2009). p.10.

He also explains that "human greed has never been fulfilled because people still want more and more, resulting in the ceaseless destruction of nature in order to pamper their luxurious and wasteful life".³⁴

In Buddhadasa's view, everything is interdependent. He emphasized that humanity is a part of nature. If men destroy nature, the effects from nature destruction will return to them.

Anonymous / Untitled 1

*The tsunami has passed but is always remembered,
A year after the tragedy has passed.
Men tried to defeat Nature, Nature paid back.
The tears of Thai people overflowing!*

In this poem, the poet describes that the tsunami as the punishment from the nature, because men tried to conquer nature. By displaying this Thai belief, the poet reminds the readers to be aware of the power of nature.

In other words, the poet explains the tsunami disaster as part of the law of cause and effect. So far, the ignorance of men leads them to destroy nature. As a result, the nature is in crisis so men must take responsibility for what they have done, as a part of nature.

34
Ibid.

According to Buddhist beliefs, men are a small part of nature as Phra Paisal Visalo says: "Nature is the greatest while we're just a tiny life form. Nature teaches us to be humble and understand our real status. We're just a small part of it. When we feel humble, we will not be arrogant and we will get closer to nature."³⁵

The poet tries to remind the readers about the power of nature which is greater beyond humans' imagination, so that they should feel humble to nature and stop destroying it.

Hope's Family / Tsunami 26 Dec

26 December, the world was sad:

Tsunami attacked the Andaman unexpectedly.

After the sea was calm, the sky turned dark and dreary,

Everything was lost, and their lives tumbled down.

Men can look as far as the horizon of the Andaman Sea.

5

Don't lose your faith or dreams!

Life must go on.

Nature is too complex, beyond our understanding,

But it is not too hard to learn.

The world has separated the land from the sea;

10

Men should share the land and the sea with one another;

Help each other; reduce the hazards in time of disaster.

In the song "Tsunami 26 Dec", in lines 1-4, the poet draws the image when "tsunami attacked Andaman unexpectedly". In lines 5-9, he says that "men can look as far as the horizon", which implies that the knowledge of men has a limit. Men cannot know everything about nature. In other words, nature is greater than men. In lines 10-12, the poet encourages the readers to learn from nature and to live side by side with nature so that the disasters will be reduced.

P.A. Payutto also teaches people to learn to be grateful to nature so that they will not harm nature: "A person who sits or sleeps in the shade of a tree should not cut off a tree branch. One who injures such a friend is evil. This maxim reminds us that the shade of a tree we enjoy is enjoyed by others as well. A tree is like a friend which we have no reason to injure. To injure a tree is like hurting a friend. Such a virtuous inner attitude toward nature will prevent us from destructive behavior, on the one hand, and will prompt helpful actions, on the other."³⁶

The poet encourages the reader to consider that nature always gives everything to us and asks for nothing in return. Consequently, we should learn to be grateful to nature and share everything with each other. By doing this, we can prevent disasters.

36

Tuckerm, M.E., and Williams, D.R. (Editors). Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds. p.32.

Nuphap Sawantarat / *The Angry Earth*

What made the earth angry and sent the big wave to kill madly!

No matter what nationality, Nature destroyed what it created,

Since it's gone now, please go forever with no return.

Take away the sadness. Let's all hold our heads up high.

In the song titled "The Angry Earth", Nuphap Sawantarat says that, for some reason, the earth was angry and triggered the tsunami, killing a number of people. Moreover, in line 1, the poet asks why the earth was angry. Deep in his heart, the poet believes that humans did something to nature, and the nature sent tsunami in return. The law of Karma teaches Thai people to think rationally. Nothing occurs without a cause.

However, in lines 3 and 4, the poet encourages tsunami victims to let go of their sadness. There is nothing to be done with the thing that has passed: what people should think about is only their present. The law of Karma teaches us that we can create the future with our action in the present.

2.4 Loving-kindness and Compassion

Loving-kindness and compassion are Buddhist teaching expressed in the Four Ideals of Mind:

1. Loving-kindness (*metta*)

2. Compassion (*karuna*)
3. Sympathetic Joy (*mudita*)
4. Equanimity (*upekkha*)

Phra Bhasakorn describes these concepts in his book entitled *Karma: A New Look at the Buddhist Concept of Cause and Effect*.

Loving-kindness: Everyone wants to be happy. People love their own lives, and would like to be shown kindness. Thus we should do unto others, giving love to all, and wish all others happiness. And as good begets good, our mental intention of loving-kindness brings happiness to our mental world. We should do our best to make a habit of viewing the world with loving-kindness.

Compassion: Other beings wish to be free from suffering too. We should have compassion for ourselves and all who suffer. If I have compassion, then I would like you, myself, and all others, to be free from suffering. Compassion is a good mental habit to adopt.³⁷

In Thai tsunami songs and poems, the poets express pathetic images of tsunami victims after they were hit by the devastating tsunami. The poets encourage the readers to care for tsunami victims and help ease their pain and suffering. Although the poets do not express this Buddhist concept directly, they still tell the readers to love one another. Moreover, the poets believe that if

37

Bhasakorn Bhavilai, *Karma: A New Look at the Buddhist Concept of Cause and Effect*, 2006. pp.115-116.

people realize the fact that everyone has the same fate, is bounded by suffering from birth, old age, illness, and death, and learns to love each other, then this world will become a paradise.

As Buddhadasa said, "When we realize that the world is a mutual, interdependent, cooperative enterprise, that human beings are all mutual friends in the process of birth, old age, suffering, and death, then we can build a noble, even a heavenly environment."

Yuenyong Ophakul / *Tsunami*

Never dreamt, Never thought of what may come

To be completed in the dark, to live these lives upon the fear,

Never saw, never sensed it, And there's no clue.

What if TSUNAMI came out of the blue. How many lives we have lost?

Waves come like the great reaper upon the beach, unstoppable power 5

Destroying everything, TSUNAMI.

Never dare, we're all surrounded. They're seeking survivors.

Oh can't you see? We're all tremble now with pain.

No matter who, No matter which nation,

There's no exception, Mother Nature masters everything, 10

Everyone is like a tiny grain of sand.

Andaman (Andaman), A place of paradise (A place of paradise),

Now we're leaving when they're dying, They'd suffered whilst

We're crying oh life (oh life)

Andaman (Andaman), Still a paradise (Still a paradise).

15

No more pain, no more crying. Healing by love-giving heart.

Oh Ohhh...TSUNAMI

In the poem entitled "Tsunami", Yuenyong Ophakul draws the image of tsunami which is panic. In lines 3 and 4 the poet conveys the ignorance of men who are surprised because they have no idea about tsunami. In lines 9-11, the poet says that men are equal on the hand of nature. In other words, men are very small, "like a tiny grain of sand".

The poet explains that humankind is a small part of nature. Nature is the master everything, so people have to follow the law of nature or they will be punished.

Donald K. Swearer describes Buddhadasa's idea about caring for nature:

In Buddhadasa's view, caring for thamachat necessarily means not only that we care for other human beings and for nature, but also that we care for ourselves. Outwardly, thamachat means physical nature. But the inner truth of nature is dhammadhatu, the essential or fundamental nature of dhamma, namely, the interdependent co-arising nature of things (patticca smuppada, idappaccayata). "When we realize this truth, the truth of dhammadhatu, when this law of the very nature of

*things is firmly in our hearts and minds, then we will overcome selfishness and greed.
By caring for this inner truth we are then able to truly care for nature.*³⁸

According to Buddhadasa's view, caring for nature is not only caring for other human beings or nature but also our inner nature. People who realize the essential nature of Dharma from their own inner nature will understand that everything is a part of each other. In other words, people who realize this truth will love everything: human beings, animals, or trees, equally with no exception.

The poet expresses the transient nature of life in order to convince the readers to lessen their ego and selfishness. Then, in lines 16 and 17, he encourages people to help each other with "love-giving heart". He convinces the reader to sympathize with tsunami victims, who were suffering, and to help them. By loving and caring for each other, both human beings and nature, the poet believes that the Andaman will become a paradise on earth.

Tuak Banthad / *The Song of Tanyong Andaman*

*In an instant the big wave extends its hand
Andaman, the paradise, is destroyed
Look! brother, the death comes before the illness,
The way it is.*

38

Tuckerm, M.E., and Williams, D.R. (Editors). Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds. p.31.

The way it is, how terrible it is. 5

This sadness is beyond lamentation.

It is beyond death and

There is no word in this world that can explain it.

Look! Brother

Here, where death is everywhere, 10

Sometimes, the flower in the mind

Can bloom from the inside.

Sometimes, in silence, there is the sound of heaven,

The song of Tanyong Andaman,

That wakes up the mind from the inside. 15

Listen! Brother,

Listen to the sound of the crazy wave,

Listen to the sound of death,

Asking us what to do in the future.

The answer is in the question. 20

The beauty is in the heart of heaven.

The truth is in the Andaman,

To make the paradise become real.

In "The Song of Tanyong Andaman", in line 3 Tuak Banthad writes "Look! brother, the death comes before the illness, The way it is". So far, birth, old age, illness, and death are the nature of all living beings: human beings, animals, and plants. The poet says that whether death comes before illness or not; it is the nature of life. The poet encourages people to listen to "the sound of the crazy wave" and "the sound of death". By saying this, he encourages people to sympathize with tsunami victims and help them.

The lord Buddha compares people who are awake to a blooming lotus. In line 11, the poet also says that, by considering death, "the flower in the mind can bloom from the inside". On the other hand, the poet convinces the readers to realize the transient nature of life, birth, old age, illness, and death, so that they will lessen their ego and selfishness. Moreover, the poet also encourages the readers to love each other. As in the song "Tsunami", this poem says that if people enlighten from the inside (line 15) they will learn to love each other, then paradise will happen (line 20-24).

In lines 16-19, the poet stimulates the readers to think that "sound of the crazy wave" and "sound of death" asks them what to do. The poet does not give the exact answer; he only says that "The answer is in the question / The beauty is in the heart of heaven / The truth is in the Andaman / To make the paradise be come true". In this way, the poet can encourage the readers to think for themselves what to do in the future in order to make paradise become real.

However, the poet already gives the answer: he encourages people to look at death so that their inner flower will bloom. The flower also symbolizes the person who enlightens. The poet explains that if people look at death, they will realize that everyone is bound by the suffering and

has to die one day. They will initiate the truth of life and get rid of their selfishness. The phrase "the heart of heaven" (line 21) means goodness in the heart of people. According to Buddhist view, a person who enlighten will have loving-kindness in his mind. He will love nature, other people, everything without bias.

Noawarat Phongphaibul / *Dark Sky, New Sky*

*Paying great respect to the spirits
Which are in the glorious heaven,
Wishing all who passed away to be happy
And to be loved forever.*

This earth, this sky and this sea 5
*Are not big enough to bear all of the great sadness.
All of us who share the suffering and relationships
Will keep this in our hearts forever.*

*The land is covered by pain because of the disaster.
We face and suffer it together.* 10
*Our stream of kindness, then,
May clear all the troubles from this disaster,*

*Restore all to peace and happiness,
Console the frightened heart.*
The day of darkness will pass, 15

The new day of brightness will come.

The great disaster is very terrible.

It can frighten people anywhere in the world.

Sufferings arise every time it happens.

In this world men are so tiny, so meaningless.

20

We all live in the same planet

We all share our sadness: we have become closer.

We all should create a new age with love

And save the world with everlasting effort.

In the poem "Dark Sky, New Sky", in lines 1 and 2 Noawarat Phongphaibul displays the belief in the cycle of life. He pays respect to the spirits in heaven. In addition, in lines 17-20, the poet expresses his belief about nature. He reminds the readers about tsunami disaster so that the readers will be aware of the power of nature. He describes men as tiny and meaningless; therefore, men should help each other and try to save the world with all their heart and effort. Moreover, the poet expresses the sadness resulting from the disaster in order to remind the readers to love one another.

As in "The Song of Tanyong Andaman", this poem convinces the readers to realize the fact that everyone is under the same fate—that is suffering from birth, old age, illness, and death - so that their loving-kindness will be awakened from the inside. In lines 5-8 and lines 21-24, the poet suggests that people should share the sadness. They should turn to each other and try to save the world.

According to the Lord Buddha's view, everything is interdependent. The action of each person can affect the entire world. So everyone should be aware of their action. In other words, if people realize that everything lives in harmony with each other, they will try to save other beings from suffering. Conclusively, the poet encourages the readers to care for one another and try their best to save the world.

As Buddhadasa said, "When we realize that the world is a mutual, interdependent, cooperative enterprise, that human beings are all mutual friends in the process of birth, old age, suffering, and death, then we can build a noble, even a heavenly environment. If our lives are not based on this truth, then we'll all perish."³⁹

Preecha Chanaphai / *Thais Never Forsake One Another*

*Andaman, Andaman, it came to the Andaman,
Beautiful Andaman, beloved Andaman, full of small islands,
Pretty beaches with white sand like a paradise on earth.*

Alas, there occurred, unexpectedly, to haunt us forever,

The big waves, so many lives were taken away.

5

The flood of tears filled up the land, tsunami at Andaman.

39
Ibid. p.33.

*However, kindness has always stayed with Thai people since the old days,
So the stream of kindness pours
To the south to shed the tears and cure the mind.*

"We'll never forsake one another,"

10

Will be inscribed upon the land flooded with tears.

"We'll never forsake one another,"

We are the sons of the land, golden-axe shaped.

We never forsake our brothers.

This is the song titled "Thai Never Forsake Each Other", written by Preecha Chanaphai. In lines 1-3, he says that the Andaman is beautiful, "like a paradise on earth". In other words, the feeling in lines 4-6 changes to horror at the moment the big waves attack the land. In lines 8-10, the poet mentions kindness. He says that "kindness has always stayed with Thai people since the old days". In lines 11-14, he emphasizes that "we'll (Thai people) never forsake each other" to persuade the readers to help the tsunami victims.

Preecha illustrates the images of the tsunami to make people sympathize with the fate of the victims. In this poem, the poet does not describe that everything is a part of each other. However, he describes that all Thai people are brothers, so it is the duty of Thai people to help one another. In addition, the poet connects the heart of Thai people with the theme of nationalism so that Thais will think of other Thai people as their family.

Although the poet does not describe the relationship between Thai people and other beings such as animals and trees, he encourages people to sympathize with tsunami victims and help them. However, encouraging Thai people to love people in the nation is like a beginning. If people learn to open their mind to love other people as their brother, then they will also be able to love other beings, even every life on earth in the future.

Sek Saksit / *United Thai Hearts to Fight against the Tsunami Disaster*

Sadness, the sadness that shocked the world.

The big waves brought devastation unexpectedly, fatally.

Tsunami, Tsunami is the name of that brutal wave of death.

On 26 December 2004, the earth shook violently, and

The Andaman was in sudden danger from the big tidal waves from Sumatra. 5

The big wave raged upon the beach,

Flooded the land in a wink, with no escape.

Villagers, fishermen, and tourists were swallowed by the big wave.

Ten of thousands were lost and injured, and all their possessions.

Screams were heard just a while before they're lost in the waves.

10

Husbands and wives, parents and children were separated;

Some were left alone. Oh, dear...

It deprived us of our beloved ones. How many tears must we shed?

Or this is a test of Thai warrior-blood. There's no way you can defeat us!

Let's donate money, and goods to the victims 15

And help them rebuild their homes.

For a long time known, "Thais never leave their fellows,

Thais always help each other, remember that we all are Thais."

No matter what race or religion they belong to,

Once sad and in danger, no matter how far, 20

Thais will do their best for them.

In the song "United Thai Hearts to Fight against the Tsunami Disaster", in lines 1-12, Sek Saksit portrays the horrible scene when "the big wave raged upon the beach" and "flooded the land in a wink, with no escape". The poet employs such a terrible scene to awaken the readers' hearts; then he encourages the readers to fight against the tsunami by saying "or this is a test of Thai warrior-blood. There's no way you can defeat us!" to encourage the readers to help the victims.

As in "Thais Never Forsake One Another", the concept of nationalism is used in this song in order to unite the heart of Thai people. Then, the tsunami plays the role of a bad guy or an enemy who attacked Thai people and Thai territory. In its conclusion, this song also encourages the readers to have loving-kindness for other people.

Phanom Chaiyarote / Chaotic Andaman

The tsunami destroyed Phuket and Patong.

Thai people, please, restore them together.

Phi Phi and Krabi are also the Andaman paradises

That were destroyed by the tsunami.

The big wave attacked the beaches.

5

Schools, cars, houses, and resorts are destroyed.

Some villages are flooded. Many lives and possessions are lost.

About a hundred thousand people from all around the world died.

Sadly, dead bodies are found lying everywhere.

The people who are left behind are searching where their beloved have gone.

10

The kindness from Thai people all around the country pours in

To wipe away the tears in the South.

Labor and goods flood in.

The big tsunami has been defeated by the wave of kindness.

We wish for all the spirits from the disaster to go to heaven.

15

Anyone who survived, we will be by your side.

Please know that Thais will always love you.

In the poem titled "Chaotic Andaman", In lines 1-10, Phanom Chaiyarote describes the terrible scene of tsunami disaster. From lines 11-14, the poet proudly shows that kindness from Thai people all around the country pours in and eventually defeats the tsunami. In lines 15-17, the author expresses his loving-kindness toward those who died and those who are still alive.

As Phra Bhasakorn explains, in Buddhism, thinking is an action. If we think of good, we do a moral act. Showing loving-kindness to other people is one of the Buddhist practices to develop our mind. Phra Bhaskorn says that loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity, should be cultivated until they are firmly established in our mental world, and the opposite mental states, such as anger, selfishness, and jealousy, should be abandoned. This is the way to happiness.⁴⁰

In this poem, the poet expresses his love and compassion in order to console tsunami victims. On the other hand, by expressing his love toward tsunami victims, the poet also practices Dharma in order to develop his mind.

Chama / Thanks for the Kindness of Thai People

Look at the Andaman after the big wave.

The southerners feel very sad,

Property and lives were lost,

40

Phra Bhasakorn Bhavila., *Karma: A New Look at the Buddhist Concept of Cause and Effect*, 2006. p 117.

Our beloved as well.

Never imagined this would happen; 5

Never thought that the tsunami would come;

So many people were attacked and sacrificed to the tsunami.

The big wave attacked the southern people.

Fortunately, Thai people are so kind,

Helping us with money and things, so we can stand up again. 10

So we have the energy to stand up again;

We appreciate the kindness of Thai people,

Even though it was tiring and hard; still, we can smile,

Smile with the tears of appreciation, because the love from all of you.

Thanks, thanks. 15

Thais never leave their fellows; the kindness of Thais is greater than the sky;

Even the big wave cannot defeat the kindness of Thai people!

In the song titled "Thanks for the Kindness of Thai People", in lines 1-7, the writer describes the terrible scene when the tsunami attacked Andaman beaches. In lines 8-17, he expresses the feeling of gratefulness toward Thai people who helped the tsunami victims. The narrator in this song speaks from the point of view of southern people who were attacked by the tsunami. As a tsunami victim himself, the narrator appreciates the kindness of Thai people. He thanks Thai people repeatedly. Moreover, he praises the kindness of Thai people which is "greater than the sky".

This song expresses the gratitude of Southern people toward the kindness of other Thai people. Buddhism also teaches people to be grateful. Lord Buddha said that "To be grateful is a characteristic of good men".⁴¹

This song emphasizes the virtue of kindness. People who give kindness will receive gratitude in return. Having loving-kindness is a way to develop the mind according to Buddhist teaching. Moreover, people who receive kindness and help will be released from suffering. Conclusively, by expressing the appreciation toward kindness, the poet convinces the readers that having kindness will make anyone, both those who give and those who receive, happy. In other words, this poem indirectly encourages the readers to have loving-kindness to one another.

2.5 Belief in the Goodness of the Triple Gem

In Thai culture, people, especially monks, chant for two reasons: first to maintain Buddhist teaching, and second to protect from hazards and to bless them with good fortune.⁴²

Buddhist monks have to memorize Buddhist teachings; therefore, they chant Buddhist teachings. This tradition began in Sri Lanka, and Thai monks in the Sukhothai period followed this tradition, which has been passed on to the present.

⁴¹ Udom Saramethee. *Katannukatavedita: Knowing How to Be Grateful*, p.17.

⁴² Suwan Suwanwecho. *Background of Thai Beliefs*, 2003. p.302.

Chanting to protect people from danger and to bless them with good fortune also began in Sri Lanka. According to Prince Damrong Rajanubhap, it is believed: in about 500 B.E., after Buddhism spread into Sri Lanka, Sri Lankan people were afraid of Tamil people who brought Hinduism into Sri Lanka. It was believed in Hinduism that the righteous priest could chant a magic spell to bless people and protect them from danger. So Buddhists in Sri Lanka asked the monks for the same kind of magic. The Buddhist monks wanted to fulfill a wish of Lanka people. However, Hindu priests worked their magic by praying to their gods, which is forbidden in Buddhism. So, to chant for Sri Lanka people, Buddhist monks chose Buddhist chanting of the Goodness of Ratanattaya, or the Triple Gem, which comprises Buddha or the Enlightened One, Dharma or the Doctrine, and the Sangha or the Order.⁴³ By praising the goodness of the Triple Gem, the chanters and the listeners will be protected from the danger. Buddhist monks also included Buddhist teaching in the chanting of protection for the benefit of listeners. Moreover, it is still also the policy for Buddhist monks to memorize Buddhist teachings.⁴⁴

Danupol Kaewkarn / *Brutal Wave, Beloved Sea*

Chanting, asking for blessing, making a wish before going to sleep;

Making a dedication from the depth of my heart to encourage you;

My only wish, you can recover from the disaster.

⁴³ P.A. Payutto, *Dictionary of Buddhism*. 2003, pp.98-99.

⁴⁴ Suwan Suwanwecho. *Background of Thai Beliefs*, 2003. p.304.

I will sleep later but now I want you to be all right.

Please sleep, Tsunami, don't wake up and destroy all.

5

Beloved sea and brutal wave, the pain and the dead on the beach, Tsunami!

In the song titled, "Brutal Wave, Beloved Sea", in lines 1-4, Danupol Kaewakarn chants, asks for a blessing, and makes a wish for the victims to "be all right". In line 5, he asks the tsunami not to come back again. In chanting, he tries to console tsunami victims and wish them a better life. Moreover, according to Suwan Suwanwecho, Thai people nowadays still believe that chanting can stop the causes of disaster or, at least, reduce the damage from disaster.

Anda / To Shed Tears

The tears dropped and the hope was lost,

Sorry for you, no one to blame

Nature was angry but with what?

You disappeared and the possessions were destroyed.

The big wave charged and flooded.

5

So sad: how cruel the earth is!

I will encourage you to help you stand up and fight.

Let this not happen again; pray to the Triple Gem to protect you.

The big wave destroyed all and went away,

But every heart still cared,

10

We'll send this song to dry your tears

Let the nightmare not happen again; don't be sad.

The waves of kindness never become dry.

Send a cheer and wish from the North to the South

To live peacefully, we don't want to see you suffer.

15

Raise the hands to say a prayer to save you from any harm.

In the song titled "To Shed Tears", the poet prays to the goodness of the Triple Gem (line 8) to protect the victims, as in "Brutal Wave, Beloved Sea". In line 16, the poet does the same thing; he prays to the goodness of the Triple Gem to save the victims from harm.

Phanthip Yingrungruang / Go Away Tsunami

I hate you; I hate you most;

You know, Tsunami? I want you to disappear from this world

Tsunami, what a cruel name you are!

On December 26, you were condemned of man-slaughter.

Neither storm nor Hurricane is not as cruel as you.

5

You damaged this world as if you were from hell.

You know, Tsunami? You killed innocent people!

You destroyed a hundred thousand lives. What makes you so angry?

Almost nothing of the Andaman remains because of your rage.

You destroyed without a second thought!

10

Because you are brutal or you want to kill them all!

The most ruthless thief still lets the children survive,

Why are you so cruel and kills the whole families, and nations!

You killed them in broad daylight; you gave them death.

Buddhang Dhammang Sangho,

15

I chant Namō to chase you away;

You can be born anywhere

But, please, let this be your last time here!

In the song "Go Away Tsunami", the poet personalizes the tsunami as a merciless being who is "cruel and kills whole families, and nations". The poet expresses the hatred toward tsunami, for example, the poet says to tsunami that "you were from hell". In line 15 "Buddhang Dhammang Sangho" is the chanting for praising the goodness of the Triple Gem: Buddhang refers to Lord Buddha; Dhammang refers to Dharma; and Sango refers to the Sangha.

The poet writes that Thai people chant to the goodness of the Triple Gem in order to protect them from harm. However, the poet treats the tsunami as an evil spirit. The word "be born" in line 17, is translated from "*pai pud*" in the original text. The Thai expression, "*pai pud pai kerd*" (ไปผุดไปเกิด) refers to the poor ghost that lives in the different world from men. In this song, the singer chants "Buddhang Dhammang Sangho" in order to chase away the evil spirit or tsunami: it is the way to express her hatred toward the tsunami disaster which "destroyed a hundred thousand lives".

2.6 The Cycle of Life

The cycle of life is reviewed in Buddhist literature, Traibhumikatha. All beings - men, animals, demons, spirits, deities, gods, and brahmas have to travel through these three planes (sensual plane, corporeal plane, and incorporeal plane). When they die, all beings will move to a new world due to their previous action. If they practice moral acts then they will be reborn in the good place such as the realm of happiness; if they practice immoral acts they will be reborn in the bad place such as hell. However, all beings in 31 domains, according to Traibhumikatha, still suffer. The only way to be free from suffering is to practice Dharma in order to get rid of their ignorance, ego, and desire so that they will reach Nirvana.⁴⁵

Thippawan Pinphibarn / *Good Night, My Dear*

*So sad as if my heart were torn from my body,
Only the loneliness and a house without you.*

*The devilish water chased you so far that we cannot meet again.
Heaven, please don't tear us apart!*

You know your mom is in pain in search of you, day and night,

5

45

King Lithai. *Traibhumikatha: the Story of the Three Planes of Existence*. 1987.

Still no trace, so I wait and wish to see you again.

The minute I know you are gone forever,

The dream is over; the sun does not shine anymore.

Good night, my dear, I will let you sleep

Good night, my dear, be happy "khwanyuey..."

10

In the song titled "Good Night, My Dear", Thippawan Pinphibarn expresses the care of a mother toward her dead child. The mother tries to console her child who died in the tsunami, as seen in line 9 and 10. The mother believes that after her child was dead, his spirit still be nearby and can hear her voice; therefore, she tries to console the spirit of her child. Thus this song displays the belief that there is a life after death. So far, before Buddhism and Hinduism came into Thai region, Thai people had believed in the world of spirit.

Naphacharee Nambenchaphol / For the Beloved

The big wave, high as the clouds, attacked the beaches.

Men, animals, and things are scattered everywhere,

Too terrible to tell, some lost in the sea.

The big waves swallowed lives into the ocean.

They are uncertain and unpredictable.

5

Send a kiss with the wind like the smell of incense.

Lead every soul in the Andaman

To heaven to rest in great happiness

In the celestial abode of Mahabrahmabhumi.⁴⁶

The cold won't be cold when the clouds disappear from the sky.

10

We hope you all enjoy looking at the twinkling stars from heaven.

Don't worry, my dear, if it's time to say farewell, then let it be.

See you again someday in the next life under the Andaman sky.

In the poem "For the Beloved", in lines 1-5 Naphacharee Nambenchapol draws the scene of the disaster, which is terrible. In lines 6-13, the poet expresses the idea of the afterworld. She consoles the spirit of the victims in the Andaman ocean and makes a wish that they will be happy in the heaven. The word "Mahabrahmabhumi", in line 9, refers to the place of the corporeal brahmas, as mentioned in Traibhumikatha, book seven: the higher non-sensual gods. People who do good deeds are reborn there and live with happiness for a very long time. Some people worry that their beloved will suffer after death. If they believe that their beloved will be happy in heaven, their anxiety will be released. Moreover, if people believe that death is not the end of life, they will have a chance to see their beloved; therefore, their sadness will be lessened.

People fear death because they have no knowledge of death. For them, death deprives them of their beloved, and takes them away from their familiar environment to an unknown place. It is like when children are sent to study abroad; their parents will worry whether they are fine or not. If the parents are sure that their children are happy and are surrounded with good friends and a good

⁴⁶ Mahabrahmabhumi (ชั้นพรหม) means the non-sensual realm of the corporeal brahmas

environment, their anxiety will be lessened. Like the case of tsunami disaster, if people know that their beloved are happy in the next life, they will not worry too much. So the poet draws the image of heaven and convinces the readers that tsunami victims are happy in the heaven, in order to console the readers' pain.

We have seen in this section that Buddhism teaches us that life is suffering. According to Traibhumikatha, human beings are not the happiest beings in the world: there are domains of deities and gods that are happier than the domain of human beings. In other words, death may bring the end of the suffering and transfer them to a better world. In this way, sometime death may not be as bad as it seems.

2.7 Hindu – Buddhist Myth

In some tsunami songs and poems, such as "Ocean Weeps", the poet also uses the allusion to Buddhist literature and Hindu myths which are familiar in Thai society. In this poem the poet refers to the story of Traibhumikatha, which is part of Buddhist literature. Moreover, he also refers to the Hindu myth "Churning the Milky Ocean at the Dawn of the Time".

Noawarat Phongphaibul / *Ocean Weeps*

The suffering ocean weeps and floods the earth.

All three worlds are separated and overwhelmed with tears.

Or it might be the end of the earth,

That's why it is falling apart.

The death toll is pouring in from everywhere.

5

Bodies of our compatriots pile on each other dying,

While the rest hang their heads and wallow in the sand, crying.

Churning Thai land's Milky Ocean into the disastrous flame,

Piles of sand will be the crematorium absorbing the tears.

The gigantic tidal waves will roar loudly,

10

Likewise the big Ocean will lament.

Fight side by side to save the world and face our destination;

Come together and become united to create sandhidham in Thailand.

In "Ocean Weeps", Noawarat Phongphaibul draws the horrible image of tsunami, which is more enormous than the fact. "Three worlds" in line 2 means heaven, earth, and ocean. Moreover a word "three worlds" can also refer to the three planes of existence which are described in Traibhumakatha.⁴⁷

1. Sensual Plane: consisting of 11 planes, which are the planes for humans, animals, demons, spirits, angels, and deities;

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King Lithai. *Traibhumikatha: the Story of the Three Planes of Existence*, 1987.

2. Corporeal Plane: consisting of 16 planes, which are the planes for brahmas;
3. Incorporeal Plane: consisting of 4 planes, which are the planes for arupa brahmas or the bodiless brahmas.

In this passage, "three worlds" refers to the whole universe. "Churning Thailand's Milky Ocean" in line 8, is derived from the Hindu myth "Churning of the Milky Ocean at the Dawn of Time":

According to the myth, Vishnu, the preserver, devised a plan to restore order and set the mighty axis in motion and churning once more. By insisting on the co-operation of both the gods and the demons his plan was to activate the dynamic equilibrium by churning the great Milk Ocean using Mount Meru as a churning stick. However, the weight of Mount Meru was such that it began to sink into the soft bed of the Milk Ocean and so Vishnu assumed the form of the Tortoise, Kurma, whose curved back became the stable support and pivot upon which the churning stick could rest. He then called on the cosmic serpent Vasuki who conveniently wrapped himself around the Mount Meru axis, as a churning rope. Following a ruse by Vishnu who convinced the demons that the gods wanted to hold Vasuki's head, they became irate and insisted that the demons should take the head and the gods the tail. Thus the demons and the gods took opposite ends of the cosmic serpent and the churning process began. Unbeknownst to the demons, as the churning progressed Vasuki's breath became hot and out of his mouth came poisonous fumes which suffocated the demons while the gods, at the tail, were refreshed by cool ocean winds. As the churning of the Milk Ocean continued, treasures began to appear in the manner as butter might emerge from the churning of cream. Most important of the treasures was Amrita, the nectar of

*immortality. Surabhi, the cow of plenty also emerged from the churning process as did Airavata, a beautiful white elephant and Uchchaisravas the white horse.*⁴⁸

The image of Churning of the Milky Ocean reflects the chaos of the whole universe. So the poet uses the allusion of a Buddhist myth together with a Hindu myth to say that tsunami disaster is the expression of the chaos of the world and the whole universe also.

In lines 10-14, the poet describes the tsunami as a sign from nature: "Likewise the big Ocean will lament" to "fight side by side to save the world and face our destination" and "come together and become united to create *sandhidham* in Thailand".

Thai people believe that "madness and immorality of men will cause the madness of nature" as seen in Thai literature. In Traibhumikatha, this concept plays significant role to control the ruler to behave morally; in Phra Chaisuriya, the fall of Sawatthee city is an example of the law of Karma because the king and the people in the ruling class were immoral.⁴⁹

According to Traibhumikatha, not only men but also gods and deities are part of the nature. So gods and deities cannot judge men; otherwise, men, gods and deities are in the same fate: they all are attacked by disastrous flame when the universe comes to an end.⁵⁰

48 Patrizia, N.B. *Churning the Milky Ocean at the Dawn of the Time* [Internet]. <http://www.aeongroup.com/churning.htm>. 18th November 2009.

49 Duangmon Jitjamnong. *Value and Outstanding Characteristic of Thai Literature in Early Rattanakosin Period*. 1997. p.74.

50 *Ibid.* p.75.

The word “*sandhidham*” in line 13 is a Buddhist term which means peace of mind and the peace contributed by Dharma. Noawarat encourages people to practice moral acts in order to “save the world”. In other word, it can be implied that Thai society in the present is abnormal or immoral; therefore, the tsunami had to come.

Conclusively, this poem is inspired by the story of Traibhumikatha. It also informs us indirectly that if men practice immoral acts, disasters will occur. Moreover, the poet also refers to Hindu myth to create a horrible scene of the tsunami disaster.

2.8 Local Beliefs

Thai tsunami songs and poems also reflect Thai local beliefs such as animism and khwan.

2.8.1 Animism

According to Prakong Nimmanhemina, there are historical evidences and Thai rituals showing that Animism had existed before Hinduism and Buddhism spread into the Thai region. The spirits in animism can be divided in to two groups:⁵¹

a) *Phii fah* (ผีฟ้า) are the spirits who live in the sky (*phii* means ghost or spirit and *fah* means sky). People in Lao and Isaan call them than (แทน) or *phii than* (ผีแทน). There are many *phii fah* who

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Prakong Nimmanhaeminda. *Review of Buddhist Literature*, 1999. pp. 1-2.

are responsible for their own duty. Some look after the sunshine, some look after the rain, and some look after the wind. The greatest *phii's* duty is to look after the world and everything. He can control the fate of men also. This concept is similar to the gods in some religions.

Other spirits in nature include the spirits of mountains, the spirits of forests, the spirits of caves, the spirit of the earth, the spirit of water, the spirits of trees and many more. Thai people pay respect to these spirits when they want to ask for help or permission from nature, such as permission to use the water for their agriculture, to use the soil for growing rice, or to cut down trees for building a house.

b) The spirits of dead people refer to the spirits of those who passed away: some are good, some bad. These spirits are categorized into three levels: *phii ruan* (ผีเรือน), *phii baan* (ผีบ้าน), and *phii muang* (ผีเมือง).

Phii muang or *sua muang* (เสื้อเมือง) is the spirit of the city who protects and helps the citizens. *Phii muang* is the spirit of the ex-leaders or the heroes of the city. Normally, the leader will hold the ritual for worship *phii muang*. Each city will have its specific place for holding this ritual.

Thai people worship these spirits so that these spirits will protect them from harm and guarantee them seasonal rain and sunshine for their agriculture. It is believed that if they do not pay respect to these spirits, the spirits will bring them bad fortune or disaster.

After Hinduism and Buddhism spread into the Thai region, the good spirits became deities or gods.

Su Boonliang / Greeting Card 2005

*Wait for the good news, wait for someone to send,
To send happiness for this annual occasion when the cold wind blows.*

*This year the Earth sent us a greeting, shaking our homeland,
Sent us sadness to greet the New Year.*

*Fah is so afraid that we're lured by too much happiness, 5
So it gave a warning - the earth shook, the waves rose high.*

In the song titled "Greeting Card 2005", Su Boonliang presents the idea of a greeting card because the time when tsunami came was close to the New Year. The word "fah" (ฟ้า) in line 5 means the sky. In Thai "fah" symbolizes heaven or the spirits who live in heaven.

Thai people believe that the spirits can control nature and the fate of men. Moreover, by living close to nature Thai people usually personalize nature as human⁵². They believe that nature has life or spirit. So the word "fah" can refer to both spirits (who live in heaven) and nature, as well.

According to this song, the tsunami disaster is like a greeting card from spirit or Mother Nature to encourage people to love each other.

52

Sutthiwong Phongphaibul. *Literature Criticism*, 1982. p.18.

Noawarat Phongphaibul / Ocean Weeps

The suffering ocean weeps and floods the earth.

All three worlds are separated and overwhelmed with tears.

Or it might be the end of the earth,

That's why it is falling apart.

The death toll is pouring in from everywhere.

5

In this poem, Noawarat Phonphaibul uses personification. He tells that "the suffering ocean weeps and floods the earth". The action of ocean that can "suffer" and "weep" like human reflected Thai local belief that look at nature as a living thing.

The poet describes that ocean or nature is suffering and weeping which means that nature is just a victims. So nature itself is not the one to blame for this tsunami disaster. As the researcher already explained, in Traibhumikatha, the madness of nature comes from the madness of men. In other words, men who practice immoral are making the ocean or nature suffer and weep.

The gigantic tidal waves will roar loudly,

10

Likewise the big Ocean will lament.

Fight side by side to save the world and face our destination;

Come together and become united to create sandhidham in Thailand.

In line 10 and 11, the poet also personalizes the ocean as it wants human to practice moral in order to bring peace to Thailand.

Caravan / By Your Side, Andaman

The earth quaked; Andaman wept.

The beloved were taken away without a farewell.

Tsunami attacked again and again; houses were destroyed.

The beach covered with bodies, became the killing field.

Oh Andaman, your suffering was almost beyond any treatment.

5

People all around the world heard and the help poured in.

To shed your tears.

We love you, we care for you, Andaman.

We will stay by your side, Andaman.

The sky, once getting dark, can become bright again; let's fight.

10

The suffering comes and goes; bring our hearts back to normal.

In *By Your Side, Andaman*, the poet also personalizes nature as if it has spirit. In line 1, he tells that Andaman is weeping because it is attacked by tsunami. A word 'Andaman' in this poem can refer to both Andaman's people and nature. In tsunami disaster Andaman's beach is terribly damaged so the poet tries to console Andaman and shed its tear. As in *Ocean Weep*, the poet treats Andaman or nature as a victim of tsunami tragedy.

2.8.2 Khwan

Khwan is a primitive belief which has survived among the people of Thailand. There is a “*khwan*” (ขวัญ) in every person either old or young.

Phraya Anuman Rajadhon describes that:

The *khwan*, as vaguely understood in a confused way, is an unsubstantial thing supposed to reside in the physical body of a person. When it is there the person enjoys good health and happiness. If it leaves the body the person will be ill or experience some undesirable effects.

Such belief is not confined to the Thais of Thailand; the Shans of Upper Burma, the Laos of the Lao Democratic People's Republic and other Tai minority groups in other lands have similar belief. In fact, this belief may be generalized to other races in Southeast Asia as well. It is a belief rooted in the dim past and has survived in many Thai expressions embedded in the language, rites and ceremonies in connection with the khwan.

The khwan is not confined to human beings only, Based on certain ceremonies which are performed in connection with the khwan and also on certain expressions in the Thai language, we may say that some kinds of animals, trees and inanimate objects useful to man have individual khwans. For example: an elephant, a horse, a buffalo or bullock, a certain house post, a bullock cart, a paddy field or paddy, and even a city, each has a khwan.

*The khwan may therefore be described as something in the nature of a principle of life, vital to the welfare of man animals. Certain inanimate things have also khwan because such inanimate things have their particular spirit or genius residing in them.*⁵³

Phraya Anuman also describes about *tham khwan* ceremonies (พิธีทำขวัญ) that: if a child comes home crying and in feverish condition after experiencing a fall or a scare, people believe that the *khwan* has left the child. Someone, usually the child's mother, will in an instant take a brass bowl with its lade and a piece of cloth and go out directly to the spot where the child is supposed to have lost the *khwan*. Calling back the child's *khwan* which is imagined to be nearby at the spot, the child's mother takes the ladle out and dips up the imagined *khwan*, which she puts in the brass bowl, and covers it with the piece of cloth. Returning home to the sick child she turns the brass bowl round and round many times over the child, in the hope that the *kwan* will scent, possibly from odor, the child; thus enabling it to go back to its former abode in the child. Pieces of unspun cotton thread (a thing to be found in every Thai home where there is home spinning and weaving) are then tied in a fast knot round either wrist of the child. Then follows a wish or blessing with a present as a gift to the child. With such procedure and treatment it is believed that the sick child in due time will regain its normal self.⁵⁴

53 Anuman Rahajdhon, Phraya. Essyas on Thai Folklore, 2009. pp. 208-209

54 Ibid pp. 219-220

In other words, *tham khwan* ceremonies will be hold in order to console a child who is frightened or sick so that he will turn to be normal. In this simple ceremony just described, the first act done is called *riak khwan* (เรียกขวัญ) meaning the calling of the *khwan*⁵⁵.

The belief in supernatural power, *khwan*, makes people feel anxious and worried because their life can be affected by the mysterious power. So they hold a *tham khwan* ceremony in order to make people cheerful and comfortable. For a *nak* who is going to be ordained, he may feel uneasy and worried because life of a monk is quite different from life he is familiar with. The host will speak about the relationship between the *nak* and his mother so that the *nak* would appreciate the love of his mother and be grateful. And then, he will be ready to face his new life as a monk. In the case of a patient, the host will ask for the blessing of the supernatural power to cure the patient so that the patient will feel better and more confident.⁵⁶

Thippawan Pinhibarn / *Good Night, My Dear*

So sad as if my heart were torn from my body,

Only the loneliness and a house without you.

The devilish water chased you so far that we cannot meet again.

Heaven, please don't tear us apart!

55
Ibid. p. 220

56
Sukanya Sujchaya, *Rituals, Legends, Tales, Songs: The Roles of Folklore in Thai Society*, 2005. pp. 163-201.

You know your mom is in pain in search of you, day and night, 5

Still no trace, so I wait and wish to see you again.

The minute I know you are gone forever,

The dream is over; the sun does not shine anymore.

Good night, my dear, I will let you sleep

Good night, my dear, be happy "kwan uey..." 10

In the song titled "Good Night My Dear", in lines 9 and 10, a mother sings a lullaby to her kid and ask he child to be happy. She says to her child "good night" and "be happy *kwan uey...*" The word "*kwan*" (ขวัญ) in this phrase means "my dear". Moreover, this word can be associated with Thai beliefs.

In this song, the composer expresses the motherly love. A mother sings a lullaby to her child and consoles her child. The word "*kwan*" is used to make her child feel warm and comfortable, although her child has gone. This is the impressive love of a mother that can shake the heart of the readers.

Kanakam Aphiradee / Calling Kwan

Swinging, swinging, the cloud is flooded;

Many drowned; many awaited,

Awaited for swinging.

My heart sank like a fallen leaf, our friends were lost.

The wave charged into our heart, swept the city and people.

5

A nightmare while awake, a moaning filled the air.

We still hope that tomorrow, we'll find each other.

Mom, dad, where are you? Oh... poor child!

Tomorrow will never be the same; many were lost as time goes by.

The tidal wave attacked, and tore all Thai hearts,

10

More news, more death.

I'll sing for you, cry for you, the tears and the kindness for the victims

To console their heart and tiredness "khwanyuey" please come back.

Be united, help one another

To restore the beaches and the island,

15

The homes and the places which disappeared.

Although I cannot bring back what you've lost,

How can I leave you alone?

Please, let me embrace you with kindness,

Let me embrace you with song.

20

Let me embrace you with song...

In the song titled "Calling Kwan", in lines 1-3, the composer draws a famous phrase from a Thai classical lullaby and makes some adaptation to fit in this catastrophe. In lines 4-9, the composer expresses his emotion toward the tsunami disaster: the sorrow of being separated. In lines 12 and 13, the composer shares his sympathy for the victims. He refers to the idea of *khwan* to console the victims as in "Good Night, My Dear". However, this song does not use the concept of *khwan* to console the survivors instead of the dead. The composer uses the idea of "calling *khwan*" to encourage the victims who survived.

Phanda Thammada / For Those Who Survive

People who pass away go to heaven,

People who are alive make merit

And say prayers with tears,

In tribute to those who have gone

Bringing an end to all suffering and illness of humans,

5

Bringing an end to all burdens, leave the bodies.

The good deed will be the judgment

To judge all spirits with justice.

The one who is left behind still in pain,

Please don't be sad, dear,

10

You have got a friend

Or at least I will be your shelter.

Maekwanmuang stop the suffering,

Shed the tear of the age.

Feel the wind which passes the forest,

15

The ripples of waves come and visit his friend, the beach.

The flowers beside the tomb still have their fragrance,

The bees swarm around the blooming flowers,

The grasses spread their hands to play with the elephants,

The spiders weave their webs.

20

I will be like nature to draw the dreams,

To erase all your sadness.

Please forget everything that makes you upset.

Enjoy walking among the people.

The word “*maekhwanmuang*” (แม่ขวัญเมือง) in line 13 refers to “*kwanmuang*” (ขวัญเมือง). “*khwanmuang*” is the guardian spirits who protect the city.⁵⁷ “*Mae*” (แม่) in the Thai language means “mother”. As a prefix, “*mae*” means the leader such as *maebaan* (แม่บ้าน) or the leader of the house, and *maethup* (แม่ทัพ) or the commander. The word “*mae*” is also used for praising female

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Ranee Lertluamsai. *Fah Khwan Muang, the Original Thai Cosmology*, p.240.

gods such as *Maethoranee* (แม่ธรณี), the goddess of earth, and *Maephosop* (แม่โพสพ), the goddess of rice.⁵⁸ So *maekwanmuang* can be a guardian spirit who looks after the city.

Conclusively, this poem expresses the Buddhist belief about making merit. Moreover, it displays the belief in *kwan*. The poet refers to animism in order to console the victims by saying that not only humans but also the spirit or *maekwanmuang* is looking after them.

2.3 Conclusion

Thai tsunami songs and poems reflect beliefs such as the law of Karma, the cycle of life, and Tilakkhana. These beliefs influenced the attitude of the poets. Some songs and poems reflect the belief in the law of Karma: they explain that the tsunami happened because humans destroy the nature as seen in "On the Stretch of Andaman", "Tsunami 2", "The Angry Earth", "Tsunami 26 Dec", "Untitled 1", and "Untitled 3".

Buddhadasa explains that everything lives interdependently with each other. So the action of human beings can affect the entire world. In "On the Stretch of Andaman" and "Tsunami 2", the poets say that greed and ignorance of human beings lead them to destroy the nature. In "Tsunami 26 Dec", the poet also encourages the readers to be grateful to nature and learn to share the world with each other, in the same way that nature always shares everything with human beings.

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Thai Dictionary: Ratchabandhittayasathan, 1999. p.876

In "Wiping away Andaman's Tears", the poet displays the law of Karma by explaining that good Karma can protect people from harm. Also, he encourages the readers to do good by helping tsunami victims. Similarly, in "Greeting Card 2005", "Tsunami", "Dark Sky, New Sky", "The Song of Tanyong Andaman", and "Chaotic Andaman", the poets describe the suffering of tsunami victims, to move the virtuous heart of the readers and encourage them to help the victims. In "Tsunami" and "The Song of Tanyong Andaman", not only do the poets urge the readers to help the victims, but they also emphasize that they should love each other so that this world will become a paradise. In "Dark Sky, New Sky", the poet also encourages the readers to love each other in order to save the world and create the wonderful future, while in "Chaotic Andaman", the poet expresses his loving-kindness in order to console the victims.

In "Thais Never Forsake One Another" and "United Thai Hearts to Fight against the Tsunami Disaster", the poets also persuade people to help tsunami victims. However, by using the theme of nationalism, they inspire the readers to help Thai tsunami victims because they are their fellow country.

Some Thai tsunami songs and poems reflect the belief in the goodness of the Triple Gem. In "Brutal Wave, Beloved Sea" and "To Shed Tears", the poets chant to the Triple Gem to protect tsunami victims from danger, while in "Go Away Tsunami", the poet chants to the Triple Gem to chase away tsunami as it is the evil ghost.

Some tsunami songs and poems present Tilakkhana such as "World-Sumatra-Tsunami", "Through the Age", and "Sleep on Death". In "World-Sumatra-Tsunami", the poet convinces the readers that life is almost nothing in order to decrease their ego so that they will turn to each

other and be humble with nature. In "Sleep on Death", the poet expresses the belief that death is the nature of life, in order to console the victims and ease their suffering. After death there is life, and after life there is death, just a condition that is in continual change. So death is not the horrible thing.

Local beliefs such as Animism and *khwan* are also reflected in Thai tsunami songs and poems. In Good Night My Dear, the poet uses the belief in *khwan* to express the love of a mother who wants to console her dead child. In Calling Khwan, the poet expresses the belief in *khwan* in order to console tsunami victims. In "For Those Who Survive", the poet expresses the belief in *maekhwanmuang* guardian spirits to console tsunami victims.

In For the Beloved, the poet expresses the belief in the cycle of life (by saying that the victims will go to heaven) to console the victims. In Ocean Weeps, the poet displays the belief in Traibhumikatha and the Hindu myth about Churning the Milky Ocean at the Dawn of Time. The story of Traibhumikatha also reflects the belief in the law of karma: the abnormality in human minds can cause a disaster. The poets explain that greed, selfishness, and ego of human beings are the causes of the tsunami disaster.

In conclusion, out of 28 Thai tsunami songs and poems, 8 of them express directly the law of Karma (Tsunami 26 Dec, The Angry Earth, On the Stretch of Andaman, Untitled 1, Untitled 3 World-Sumatra-Tsunami, Wiping away Andaman's Tears, and Tsunami 2). Moreover, in other songs (Dark Sky, New Sky, Ocean Weeps, Tsunami, and The Song of Tanyong Andaman), the poets also indirectly refer to the law of Karma and say that humans can determine their fate by their actions in

the present. In other words, the poets say that humans can prevent the disaster or even create paradise on earth if they learn to love each other, both human beings and nature.

The poets also express Buddhist teachings about loving-kindness and compassion to stimulate people to have sympathy with the victims and help them.

The beliefs in the law of Karma and Tilakkhana inspire the poets to think that human beings are part of nature. In addition, every life is interdependent on other beings. So humans should not try to take advantage of other people or nature. Vice versa, they should learn to be grateful to the nature and love each other. This is the ideal way to create the wonderful world for human beings and every life.

The concept of Tilakkhana and the cycle of life also convince the poets to think that death is just a transferring of the life form from the present world to the next world. According to the Buddhist view, death is not the most terrible thing because not only death but also human life is suffering.

Almost half of the tsunami songs and poems are written by poets who believe that tsunami disaster occurred by the action of men (men destroyed the nature and practiced immoral deeds so the tsunami occurred), while the rest focus on consoling the victims, and only one song (Go Away Tsunami) blames the tsunami without any explanation as to why the tsunami happened.

The poets also express the Triple Gem, they pray for the Triple Gem to save the victims. It shows the compassion of the poets toward the victims.

Some songs and poems express the idea of animism which interpret nature as a living thing. In "Greeting Card 2005", the poet describe that tsunami is the greeting card from heaven to warn and encourage people to love each other. In "Ocean Weep" the poet says that nature is suffering and weeping; therefore, tsunami occurred. In "By Your Side, Andaman", the poet consoles nature as a victims of tsunami disaster.

In "Ocean Weeps", the poet expresses the beliefs in Traibhumikatha and Hindu Myth (Churning the Milky Ocean at the Dawn of Time) to exaggerate tsunami as the chaos of the whole universe.

Most of tsunami songs and poems are influenced by Buddhist beliefs. The belief that is used in these songs and poems is the law of Karma. This idea influences the attitude of the poets. The poets use it to explain the cause of disaster (that disaster occurred because human destroy nature) and to find the solution. Moreover, the law of Karma also teaches people to practice good deed; to love and help one another.