CHAPTER FIVE PHRA PHAYOM'S RHETORICAL DEVICES

5.0 Introduction

A great deal of Phra Phayom's fame rests on his speaking ability. He adeptly weaves together jokes, current events, and Buddhist doctrine in a way that both gets his points across and keeps his audience listening.

The purpose of this chapter, then, is to examine some of the rhetorical techniques used by Phra Phayom. Attention will be given to surface-level devices that might occur anywhere in the course of a sermon, and will include audience-involvement devices, jokes, and collocational lists. All of these relate to the way in which Phra Phayom packages his message.

5.1 Audience-Involvement Devices

From the outset of virtually any sermon Phra Phayom attempts to get his audience involved in the preaching process. Appeals for audience approval and mental participation are numerous and frequent. The two devices utilized in this are rhetorical questions and the particle na^{73} .

5.1.1 Rhetorical Questions

As mentioned in chapter three, rhetorical questions begin to be used during the global conflict situation of a typical Phra Phayom discourse. This is true of all the sermons examined in this study. Again, these rhetorical questions may be addressed directly to the audience or be framed as

quotations that might be going through people's heads. Typical global conflict situation rhetorical questions follow:

(24) "Solve Greed" (¶ 6)

t^hamhai² wa:2 'a'1rai ma: man people this cause what come they part. have say ²a²¹rai реп mai² mi: chi:wit3 chi:wa: primary factor lively what have not chi:wa: ra:k² ra:k² kat ^l kin ma: life lively root hite root come

Someone asks, "What comes and causes these people not to have lively life? What is the source, the root that comes and bites and eats the root of lively life?"

(25) "Wealth" (¶ 2)

 k^h on cho: $p^2 \tan^2$ $1\alpha:w^3$ cin pen already people like truly that part. is sap3 kap1 mi: $wa:^2$ "mi: kan possession with have "Have together say kwa:1 kan" di: [?]an together" than good which unit

It is true that people like to say, "There is wealth and then there is merit; which one is better?"

The pattern of rhetorical questions continues throughout the discourse. In the sermon "Solve Greed," for example, rhetorical questions are found in 51 of 242 paragraphs. By way of comparison, the word "Solve Greed," the unmistakable theme of the discourse (see chapter 3), is found in 48 paragraphs.

Rhetorical questions often contain high-ranked information. This is

due in part to the fact that rhetorical questions can be technically defined as declarations (Larson 1984:234). The question form demands an agreeable answer from the audience (in their minds, if not with their mouths). Being thus 'put on the spot' makes the listener more liable to agree with the speaker.

Phra Phayom uses rhetorical questions to both introduce new topics, advance the story line within already-introduced topics, and summarize completed topics. Out of the ten *Aw!*- based megasection divisions in "Greed," three contain rhetorical questions:

(26) "Greed" (¶ 21)

 $th_1.2$ wa:2khon ni:3 hen4 $r_{aw}2$ we:la: raw that that person this see Aw!time we da:n1cha:ŋ3 1a:j4 k^hon $t^{h_i,2}$ su^{r4}panbu^{r1}ri: °amph∂: person district Danchang many Supanburi that $p^h r o^{i3}$ ²a²1rai chi.wa: ni:3 maj² $k^h g: i^2$ chi:wit3 mi: what this because slowly have life lively

Aw! Nowadays we can see that many people in Supanburi do not have lively life. Why is this? [...because of the greed among them]

(27) "Solve Greed" (¶ 33)

 $^{7}aw^{2}$ yan³ we:1a: ni:³ $^{7}a^{7}1raj$ kamlay toy² $t^{h}a:y^{4}$ Aw! thus time this what in the process of have to cut Aw! Thus, at this time, what are we in the process of having to cut out?

[...greed]

(28) "Solve Greed" (¶ 60)

 r_{aw}^{2} $tok^{1}loy$ $wa:^{2}$ raw mia^{3} $rac{m^{2}}{mo:y}$ Aw! agree that we this begin look

Aw! Are we agreed that we are beginning to see? [...in order to be successful we must cut out greed]

Rhetorical questions are also found before and after declarations and narratives (documentary material):

(29) "Solve Greed" (¶ 32)

(Declaration that monks, too, need to watch out for greed) If a monk was greedy, keeping things for himself, would it cause disorder in the temple?

(30) "Solve Greed" (¶ 49)

$$k^hon$$
 nay^2 $p^he:y^2$ $ja:y^1$ $ni:^3$ $di:$ maj^3 person sit gaze manner this good question part. nay^2 $p^he:y^2$ mua^2raj $max:^2$ ca^{*1} $ta:j$ som^4bat^1 sit gaze when mother will die wealth v^2an $ni:^3$ ca^{*1} daj^2 pen $k^ho:y^4$ raw part. this will able to become of we

Are people who sit and gaze like this good? They gaze and think, 'When will mother die? Then her wealth will be mine.' (Story about a son killing his father to get insurance money.)

Rhetorical quesitons are not found in the salutation, conclusion, or terminus of Phra Phayom's sermons.

5.1.2 The Particle na'3

A second, even more frequently used audience-involvement device is Phra Phayom's use of the tag na^{3} , the sociolinguistic equivalent of the idiomatic American English tag 'you know' or 'right?' This particle is found in 65 of the 242 paragraphs of the sermon 'Solve Greed"--only Phra Phayom self-references occur with greater frequency--and endeavors to garner some sort of audience response.

One of the most important responses sought by na^{r3} is agreement. Using a rhetorical device familiar to Socrates and Dale Carnegie alike, Phra Phayom tries to get the audience to say "yes" over and over again--even to declarations which otherwise might be questionable or offensive.

(31) "Solve Greed" (¶ 63)

$$k^h raj$$
 $t^h i:2$ $ma:$ $^i a^{i1} t^h i^{i3} t^h a: n^4$ yok^3 $ma:$ na^{i3} who that come pray greed come part.

Whoever comes to pray comes in greed, you know.

(32) "Wealth" (¶ 83)

(Section defending the monkhood as a whole against a handful of much-publicized scandals) Thus, in any event, monks are much better, you know. (2:43)

The second use of na^3 involves what Joseph R. Cooke (1989:125) terms "Action-inducement utterances." These are "utterances of various kinds in which the speaker is prompting the addressee to perform, or not

perform some particular action. They include commands, instructions or warnings, requests, and invitations."

(33) "Solve Greed" (¶ 63)

nak¹ 'i:k¹ bo:'ri'³ca:k¹ 300 $ni:^2$ nok³ 300 will want raise heavy again donate greed this kha:3kamrai wi³main 1a:n³ lan⁴ $n_{H_i}^{I}$ ²aw 10 profit one want paradise price million 10 million ton^2 haj² ŋan³ di: khuan nia³ kə:n good give this thus have to should exceed na 13 you know

This is heavy greed again. Donate 300 baht and want 10 million baht and paradise in return. There is too much profit here! Thus you have to decide to do good, you know.

(34) "Solve Greed" (¶ 141)

to:n ni: 3 ja: k^1 haj 2 raw nia 3 sa i1 nap 1 sa i1 nun 4 time this want give I this support

mu:nla: 3 ni 3 thi: 3 ju: 1 mu:nna: 3 ni 3 thi: 3 nuy 1 na 3 foundation in foundation one part.

Now I want us to support a certain foundation, you know.

(35) "Solve Greed" (¶ 86)

man toy^2 t^hay^3 haj^2 t^hay^3 rap^3 na^{*3} it must both give both receive part.

We have to both give and receive, you know.

Similarly, *na*¹³ can mark or bring into prominence the reason why a certain command should be obeyed.

(36) "Solve Greed" (¶ 65)

cha:w
$$p^h vt^3$$
 na^{i3} $r_a r_1 t^h i^{i3} t^h a:n^4$ $k^h x r_2 ni r_3 di$: $t^h i r_2 sut^4$ people Buddha part. pray extent this good rank most $r_a r_1 t^h i^{i3} t^h a:n^4$ haj^2 $cha^{i3} na^{i3}$ $k^h wa:m$ yok^3 pray give win Nom. greed

Since we are Buddhists, you know--praying this much is the best. Pray to have victory over greed.

Since na^{3} is generally seeking some sort of confirmation or affirmation from the listeners, it is also used to give the audience the feeling that they are involved in the preaching process--that there is a high degree of interaction, however nonverbal, between Phra Phayom and his listeners. This particle will almost invariably be used when Phra Phayom refers to recent events, thereby appealing to another pool of common knowledge.

(37) "Solve Greed" (¶ 24)

°aj²	k ^h ra:w	ko:n ¹	ni:3	khaw 1	wa:2	rot ³	kæs
Ay	this	before	this	news	that	vehicle	gas
<i>man</i>	kwam ²	læ:w ³	k ^h on	<i>ta:j</i>	jə:	<i>na⁴</i> 3	
it	turn over	then	person	die	many	part.	

Ay--before this there was the news about the gas truck that exploded. Many people died, you know.

(38) "Solve Greed" (¶ 143)

$$mia^3$$
 t^hi : 2 mua^2 k^ha : w^1 rew rew mi : 3 jo: m du: this that when news fast fast this laypeople look lax : w^3 ma : 2 t^hu^3 re: t^2 ma ; 4 mia^2 ta : $1ax$: a^3 then should pity quest part. this die already part. t^ha : t^ha :

And then there is this even more recent news, you laypeople. Isn't it pitiful? This [child] has already died, you know-died just two days ago.

Phra Phayom also uses na^{2} in his personal documentaries, giving the listener the same sort of "feel" that would be found in an ordinary conversation between two neighbors.

(39) "Solve Greed" (¶ 76)

paj nay
2
 k^h o: j na i3 p^h ro i3 diaw 4 ni: 3 mi: t^h u k^3 go sit wait part. because nowadays have every t^h iaw 2 10: j trip at all

(Story about airplane travel and people who make merit in airports)
[I] go and wait there [in the airport], you know. Because nowadays they are there every time. Every trip they come up to me and make offerings.

5.2 Jokes

The first words that seem to come into the minds of many if not most Thai people when they hear the name "Phra Phayom" are along the lines of "He's funny" or "He gives funny examples." A great deal of Phra Phayom's reputation seems to be based on his ability to make people laugh. This has earned him both praise and criticism; the venerable Phu Tha That, when asked his opinion of his former student, stated:

The good things about Phra Phayom definitely outweigh the bad, but I'd like to advise, remind him that he should be complete--not only making his sermons funny, but also remembering to teach the truth. Don't let the truth be outweighed by the funny stories (Umontian 1991: 232).

Nevertheless, Phra Phayom's jokes and humorous stories often are distinctly double-edged. Very rarely is a Phra Phayom joke made for laughter's sake alone; indeed, some his most severe criticisms of individuals within or Thai society as a whole are clothed in humor.

The purpose of this section, then, is to examine the use of jokes in the sermons "Wealth" and "Solve Greed" in an effort to comprehend their hortatory and rhetorical usage and value. ¹

5.2.1 Irony of Situation

One type of joke used frequently by Phra Phayom (as well as by a number of Thai comedians the author has heard) involves irony of situation. These jokes find humor in social situations in which something definitely abnormal or ill-mannered takes place. In the example below, an air hostess is initially seen as virtually violating Phra Phayom's celibacy (monks are never allowed to come into any sort of physical contact with women):

(40) "Solve Greed" (¶74)

Every single time I go in an airplane the air hostess works to please me. When we take off--instantly she gets newspapers and gives me two or three

Due to limited space, the Thai phonemic transcriptions of these jokes do not accompany their free translations.

¹ No effort to analyze Thai humor in the abstract will be made here; the fact that these are jokes at all rests on the judgement of my native Thai language assistants, as well as the audience responses audible on the tapes involved.

to read. She knows that I like to read newspapers. Take off--in a moment she gets drinks and cool cloths and comes to wipe off my face. [Laughter] I mean, she gives me a cloth to wipe my face off with.

Similarly, after a diatribe against the "water merit" teachings of one General Sena, Phra Phayom makes a joke that could only be understood against the backdrop of normal Thai concepts of merit and karma:²

(41) "Solve Greed" (¶ 113)

In reality, we listen to the monks chant "Yatawriahabribrati," which translates as "Whoever can accumulate merit will be successful in everything." Not "Whoever makes water merit will get to drink water; whoever makes ceramic tile merit will get to eat ceramic tiles. [Laughter] Donate a mat and then come nibble at it." [Laughter] Merit that is narrow brings fruit that is narrow.

5.2.2 People in Moha

A good number of the humorous stories told by Phra Phayom deal with what are here kindly referred to as people in *moha* -- ignoranamouses. The obvious hortatory value of these stories lies in the negative evaluations of certain types of behavior. In denigrating people concerned exclusively with material wealth, for example, Phra Phayom declares:

(42) "Wealth" (¶ 5)

Some of these people sit and worry exceedingly about this material wealth. When they get it, they put it in a safe. Then they come and sit and worry about the safe. Someone tells them, "Come and listen to the monk." They reply, "I can't go--I have to sit and worry about the safe." When these people die their spirits can't go and live in their safes!

²General Sena is alleged to have been clinically dead for three days before suddenly resurrecting--much to the astonishment of the relatives gathered for the funeral. In a widely read book, he describes a tour of heaven and hell given to him by an angel. Sena felt thirsty the whole time, and was told that this was because he had failed to make sufficient "water merit" while alive.

Similarly, in a passage emphasizing the importance of belief or faith, Phra Phayom simultaneously assaults stupid people and the party going crowd:

(43) "Wealth" (¶ 21-22)

Some people drive four to six hours to hear me preach. Ask them, "What motivated you to come?" "Belief." Ay--some people answer very stupidly. "The car made me come." [Laughter] You know--but if the owner of that vehicle didn't believe, it wouldn't force them to come. Do cars force people to enter bars, brothels, theaters?

Members of the audience are by no means excluded from Phra Phayom's jabs. In a sermon given to college students, he pokes fun at lazy girls:

(44) "Wealth" (¶ 34)

It is to the point where some of these girls can say this. They say, "Studying is a headache--it would be better to just get a husband." These people are lost They study with dryness of heart.

5.2.3 Embarrassing Moments in the Life of Phra Phayom

Phra Phayom does not spare himself when a good sermon illustration is at stake. Urging students to really value and pursue a good education, he relates an unfortunate hotel incident:

(45) "Wealth" (¶ 96)

At this time I am trying to study English because of a terrible experience. Before this I went to Europe--went to England. I couldn't read English. I was going to go to the rest room, but couldn't read the signs. I rushed into someone else's bedroom. I didn't know which room was which. I considered my not being kicked out an act of merit. . . .

I've just started with "A-B-C-D." "B-O-Y boy." At least I will be able to read some signs.

5.2.4 Humor on the Offensive

Phra Phayom's humor is not limited to the relatively short "pinches" shown above; it can also be a strong weapon. In defending the monkhood against media attacks focused on a few corrupt monks, Phra Phayom mixes humor and strong accusations in comparing the morality of monks and "villagers" (a term used here to represent all non-monks):

(46) "Wealth" (¶ 67-68, 72, 81-83)

Then are there monks who knock people over and stab them with forks? Look!--Lady loan sharks have to use commando units for protection. And they will kill those who don't pay back the right amount, you know. They are much worse than monks.

Monks are still much more respectable. How many people are killed by monks in a year? How many cases are there of monks raking entire temples with M-16 fire? Hardly any. Only once in a long, long time would you hear anything like that, you know. . . .

As for promiscuity, sinning against one's husband or wife--which group has more cases of venereal disease--monks or villagers? How many of the students at this college get [illegal] abortions every year?

And more so with drinking alcohol and becoming drunk--who is more evil? The fifth principle: in one year, how many cases of alcohol are consumed by monks? How many truckfuls do villagers drink? They are always having parties, such as when someone is transferred to a different place. If a civil servant is transferred, they take him out for a drink. When a monk moves to a different temple, no one ever takes him out for a drink-not even one! Thus, in whatever it may be, these monks are much better, you know. Monks are still respectable.

In an unusually strong few paragraphs, Phra Phayom blasts the technological obsession of the West, makes some harsh jabs at government officials, and calls people back to Buddhism:

(47) "Wealth" (¶ 142-150)

[The Westerners] went to the moon and then the man who took the spacecraft up to the moon came back and died of what? He died of

alcoholism. They could take him out to the moon, but they couldn't take the very evil unwholesome thoughts away or take the alcohol out of his mouth.

Thus if the Westerners used just a little of their thinking in this area of getting rid of unwholesome thoughts...they should build a technological machine.

Nowadays they build this machine and that machine. In America the faucets are all controlled by computers. Put your hands under it-you don't have to turn the faucet on--just poke your hands under it and the water flows. When you remove your hands, it stops. It's already to this point. You don't have to open doors. Some cars have remote controls. You can be outside and just press a button and the air conditioning will turn on. The inside of the car will be nice and cool when you are ready to get in. They are clever at--Ay--science. They are really, really clever, you know. But they don't have the wisdom to help unwholesome thoughts be abated.

They should build a technological machine--a machine to suck out unwholesome thoughts. Take a really bad child and have him go into the unwholesome thought sucking machine. Phap phap phap phap --"That's it-your son is fine." There's a man who drinks and is a playboy. His wife takes him into the sucking machine--phap phap phap phap --"That's it-your husband will be good from now on."

If they were able to do it, I (Rev.) would sell the temple and buy one. Then I would be the first monk to get into it and be sucked. Once the sucking is finished the unwholesome thoughts that I used to have, the passion that I used to have toward the opposite sex, well, it would be like a dog seeing ripe rice in the field--seeing something but not being able to do anything about it and thus not care. It would give a feeling of peace, not having anything to make us hot hearted, you know.

If the Westerners could do it, I (Rev.) would fall at their feet and kowtow three times. I would sing the praises of the Westerners!

But they can't do this. Thus, we have to continually obey our lord Buddha. He has wisdom that leads to the real happiness of the individual and the real peace for the people of the world.

If they could make a machine and were selling them for 5 billion baht each, I would be glad to buy one. Then I would have the government employees sucked out first-and of those, the police would be sucked out first.

This sort of alternation between humor and strong accusations seems typical of all Phra Phayom sermons. This mixing enables Phra Phayom to phu:t² troŋ, 'speak straight' (another of his most-cited characteristics) while not totally offending or disheartening his audience. The jokes themselves seem to release pressure, however briefly, sometimes thus making way for more strong words.

In speaking about expensive beds, caffeinated beverages, and other

unnecessary things that modern people spend money on, Phra Phayom starts strong, puts in a quick joke, then continues with a somewhat unsavory comparison:

(48) "Solve Greed" (¶ 234-236)

These people-laypeople, do you believe me? Lipo and Kratingdang cannot be found in other countries; foreigners don't drink them.³ Only Thai people get addicted to these things. If a Thai person went and lived abroad for a long time he wouldn't drink those kind of things any more.

So we agree that Thai people have fallen into slavery-into the slavery of putting caffeine into almost everything. In the future you will see that restaurants will have to put caffeine in the food. "Caffeinated rice soup." [laughter] People will come and say, "We have to eat at this shop because

other ones aren't any good."

This makes me think of times past--back when I was really, really small, you know. You know? They--Ay--back then raised pigeons, you know. How would we raise them such that they would eat at our house but not at the houses of other people? We took yellow marijuana seeds and put them in the cages. Uy! When the birds ate the marijuana and became addicted they wouldn't go back to their own houses to eat, but would stay with us all the time! So we caught them.

5.3 Collocational Lists

The final rhetorical device examined in this chapter is Phra Phayom's usage of collocational lists--that is, series of words similar in meaning. Primarily used as descriptive agents, such lists are found frequently in Phra Phayom's sermons. The words in these lists are generally spoken rather quickly; the collocations would be well known to all Thais, and the entire lists themselves reducible in point of fact to one or two words. Thus these collocative lists would seem to emphasize a certain point, description, or attribute while displaying a certain amount of linguistic competence or

³Caffeinated "power drinks" frequently drunk by laborers and truck drivers to keep awake and active.

oratorical flash (Chaisang 1993).

(49) "Wealth" (¶ 3)

thi:2 daj^2 ko: ² daj^2 kæ: sap3 $th_1.2$ k^hIвап part. can extent gem wealth that move that can ma:3 wæ∶n ⁴ $t^h \circ n$ cha:ŋ3 k^hwai wua n:Gn buffalo cow gold elephant horse ring silver

khruanpra dap 1 phe: t3 nin chinta: jewelery diamond precious stones

The wealth that can be moved, for example, includes gems, rings, silver, gold, elephants, horses, cows, buffalo, ornaments, diamonds, and precious stones.

(50) "Solve Greed" (¶ 3)

chi:wit³ $p\alpha:p^1$ mai² $t^ha:3$ mi: raw mi: example have lively this not if have life we se:2_{ra:}3_{soi}3 thuk3 $p\alpha:p^1$ chi:4wit3 khu: mi: suffer sad example grieve that is have life pa¹ri¹³te:wa³ bə:p1cham3 ram²hai so:1ka: ²ok tramcaj hit chest mourning cry sad pining hurt ju: 1 ram²haj² nia³ hua⁴ chok³ tua live this head punch body

If we have life but not liveliness-that is, have a life that has grief, suffering, sadness, pining, hurt, sadness, mourning, crying, beating the chest, punching the body, hitting the head, crying--living something like this here.

(51) "Solve Greed" (¶ 11)

 $t^ha:^2$ k^hon лі:3 wa:2than everywhere world if this person all world this say $hen^4k\alpha$: 1tua 7 ua 2 fua 3 maj² phualpha: $p\alpha:p^1$ ju:1 kan generous not selfish generous together example live

°o:p°o:m² nam³cai chuai²Iua⁴ ²a:ri: mi: сваса:п help together generous helpful have generosity give to poor ²ва²fва³ $p^hua^1p^h\alpha:1$ $bw:\eta^{1}ban...$ generous generous share together

All the world says that if people everywhere in this world lived together in a way that was not selfish--generous, giving, good-hearted, helpful, generous, helping together, giving to the poor, be generous, giving, sharing ... (would human beings be more fresh now?)

5.4. Conclusion

This chapter has examined several rhetorical devices used in the sermons of Phra Phayom. These include rhetorical questions, the particle na^{3} , jokes, and collocational lists. It has been demonstrated that all of these serve to improve the overall appeal of Phra Phayom's orations, making the audience feel a part of all that is going on while entertaining them with sometimes hard-hitting humor coming from a highly competent speaker.