

Our Distinguished Guest in CAMBODIA

AMBASSADOR DAVIDSON HEPBURN joined our Christmas trip group in Cambodia and shared many adventures and stories with us all. He was able to be present for many inspirational meetings with the group, including cultural activities, meditations, recitations and musical performances.

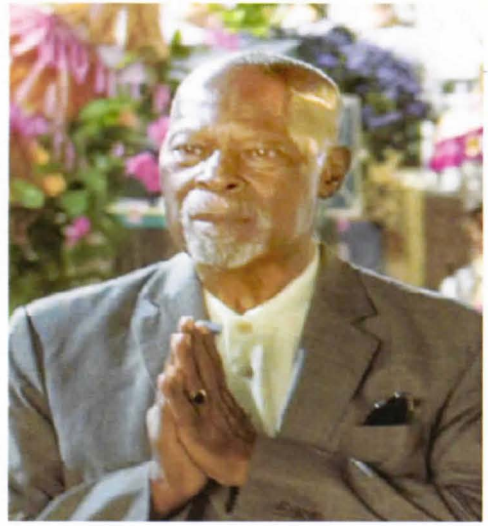
At the first opportunity on Jan 20, Dr. Hepburn was warmly introduced and gave a wonderful response. Some who had not heard him speak previously were especially surprised by the easy warmth of his message and the deep resonance of his voice. At an early day's function Davidson Hepburn also sang one of his favorite inspirational songs for our group.

Our first visit with him in Siem Reap was to the famous site Angkor Thom or literally "Great City", the last and most enduring capital city of the Khmer empire. It was established in the late twelfth century by King Jayavarman VII. It covers an area of 9 km, within which are located several monuments from earlier eras as well as those established by Jayavarman and his successors. Accompanying us was our informal guide, Trishatur, who has a great love for Cambodia ever since he served there with the UN years ago.

Founded as a Mahayana Buddhist monastery and university, Ta Prohm is in much the same condition in which it was found: the photogenic and atmospheric combination of trees growing out of the ruins and the jungle surroundings have made it one of Angkor's most popular temples with visitors. UNESCO inscribed Ta Prohm on the World Heritage List in 1992. Today, it is one of the most visited complexes in Cambodia's Angkor region.

We also visited the main temple, the Angkor Wat complex in Cambodia, the largest religious monument in the world. It was originally constructed as a Hindu temple for the god Vishnu for the Khmer Empire, gradually transforming into a Buddhist temple towards the end of the 12th century.

Dr Hepburn was present at quite a few



functions, and demonstrated his usual willingness to participate in cultural events such as sharing his amazing voice for readings about the message of Christmas and of peace from Guru's writings. He was joined by Pramodan from Germany, playing music that enhanced the readings, and Bhashwar from New York who gathered related excerpts and read with Dr. Hepburn.

Then on his last full morning, 30 January, as a farewell gift he surprised and charmed the group and recited a selection from the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. He also joined the Sri Chinmoy Oneness-Home Peace Run team, holding the torch and banner on his last day.

"I am impressed that you all are so dedicated to this cause. You can't concentrate a great deal on the evil that is happening in the world. It is not going to stop. You have to continue what you are doing. In that way you counteract the evil that is happening."

When asked if he can detect progress in the world: "I don't think it is possible for us to determine the degree of progress that we have made in achieving peace. I feel we have to look at this step by step.... It is very difficult when you look at what is happening around you and see that you are faced with so many trials and tribulations. You can easily wonder, what in the world am I doing this for. But that is when you fight. That is when you continue to move on."

"All I want to do is bring people together. And this is what I think the meditation group is doing.... This mediation group consists of over 100 countries who get together to try and bring about a kind of love that is lasting. That is never going to fade away." *ADHIRATHA*