Transforming Conflict as Compassion
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INEB as an inter-religious and faith-based network has been continuing to play its vital role in catalyzing the involvement of the religious/faith based sector in contributing towards global social and environmental issues. Recently, INEB offered activists and practitioners with “Buddhist Leadership Training” and the “English for Engaged Social Service” program, both very powerful courses that offered spiritual energy, perspectives and skills to be able to work for social change. The programs are into their second year, with the previous year being equally successful and impacting as this years. Participants from all over the world joined the programs, representing an incredibly diverse and rich learning community.

More over, on April 7-8, Buddhist leaders from the Mekong region and Sri Lanka gathered in Bangkok, proposing to create a new network in Asia to increase their commitment and action to strengthen child protection in their communities. The two-day consultation in Bangkok focused on the critical role of Buddhist leaders and practitioners in preventing violence against children, in particular the sexual exploitation and abuse of children. The consultation was organized by Arigatou International/Prayer and Action for Children, the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) and ECPAT International.

INEB also voiced its commitments for the environmental cause by actively participating in the International Union of Conservation of Nature’s (IUCN) World Conservation Congress (WCC) Planet at the Crossroads event, held in September 2016 at Honolulu, Hawai’i. INEB's participation proved to be a valuable engagement, widening circles of discourse across conservation and climate action communities around the planet. This engagement brought to light a spiritually-rooted articulation of inspiring and catalyzing values for conservation and climate action.

We at INEB seek to further empower our own network and support efforts by like-minded organizations and individuals from different faiths and different fields. In line with planning for our future endeavors, we are formulating a 10 years strategy, for which we will host our International Conference in Taiwan in November 2017. The conference will be titled “A Conference on Transforming Conflict as Compassion”. While environmental integrity, cultural inclusivity & diversity, inner peace & psychological wholeness, and socio-political justice form our goals, compassion is one of our principle means and conflict is our field. In keeping with our core Buddhist view of non-duality, conflict provides a rich field for our practice, without which we could not practice compassion. Therefore, conflict is not our enemy, but actually the ground for realization, hence we transform conflict as we realize compassion, the two working together in a creative dynamic. We encourage you to join us not just for this conference, but also in the journey that lies ahead.

Religion is sometimes seen as a hindrance to development and peace. However, religion can be part of the solution to the global challenges that we face. The strong potential of religion as a positive change maker has been realized, as religion has been an immense source of faith and inspiration for people from a majority of countries and communities around the world. Given this, today, a very strong question is asked, how can religion and religious/faith leaders promote constructive and sustainable development? The answer is very positive and very promising for our world's future, that the religious and faith-based sector has been rapidly increasing its involvement in addressing the major global issues that we face today.

The major religions existing today have the power and capacity to bring together their multifaceted wisdom and indigenous traditions, and direct them towards contributing to meaningful solutions aimed at resolving major global issues such as social and economic inequality and climate change. Common spiritual values are at the heart of all religious and indigenous traditions, and bringing these virtues to manifest in reality can strongly contribute to overcoming environmental destruction, poverty, forced migration, corruption, terror, discrimination and injustice. However, it is easier said than done, to act upon the spiritual tenets of religion and apply them to the highly complex nature of our world’s problems. For inter-religious and faith-based entities such as the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), this is the principal challenge that has to be addressed and overcome.
For the coming year we will take the following priority actions:

1. The Future Policy Award: Combating Desertiﬁcation and Land Degradation: More than 135 million people are at risk of being displaced by desertification. Dry lands cover over 30% of the Earth’s land and are extremely vulnerable to over-exploitation and climate variability. Dry lands are the most conﬂict-prone regions of the world. Together with the UN Convention on Combating Desertiﬁcation (UNCCD) Secretariat, we will identify and award policies that effectively combat desertiﬁcation and land degradation. The award ceremony will take place at the upcoming Conference of the Parties of the Convention in China in autumn 2017.

2. We want to have a future just energy system based on 100% renewable energy and regenerative urbanization. We will build capacity and cross-sectorial networks among policy makers. To this end, we will host an impact workshop with parliamentarians and experts at the UN Climate Change Conference in Bonn, Germany.

3. Children are human beings with a distinct set of rights. As part of our work to raise awareness of child rights, we will hold a high level policy hearing in Zanzibar to promote best policies on child protection and juvenile justice in Africa for others to emulate and publish these results. We will also intensify our work to promote Education for Sustainable Development with special focus on children’s rights to a healthy environment.

4. Massive accounting and ﬁnancial failures have sufﬁciently contributed to climate change and other environmental threats. Based on our innovative research, we advise decision-makers on how best to reform the central bank’s money creation policies to help fund the implementation of the Paris Climate agreement and the global Sustainable Development Goals.

5. The combined explosive yield of the more than 15,000 nuclear weapons around the world is enough to destroy life on earth as we know it. Global military spending stands at over US$4 billion a day. This is an intolerable waste. We will promote measures to prohibit the ﬁnancing of nuclear weapons and facilitate an exchange of best practices between Latin American and Balkan countries on reducing gun violence.

6. Our Global Policy Action Plan (GPACT) catalyzes breakthrough policies which represent tried and tested actions that have been in successful in one or more countries. The upcoming publication 'BREAKTHROUGH - Building a shared human future' will tell the stories behind these policies.

7. We seek to establish Guardians for Future Generations at global, regional and national levels. We will highlight their value as catalysts for sustainable development and as principal advocates for the common interests of present and future generations.

From March 30th - April 2nd, 2017 we, the Councillors, Ambassadors and recipients of the Right Livelihood Award from Africa, Latin America, Asia, Oceana, Europe and North America met at the World Future Forum 2017 in Bregenz. Austria, to tackle the global challenges ahead and shape a world that is just, sustainable, peaceful and that works for people of all walks of life.

Bregenz - A partner for a common future

We convened in Bregenz
on the invitation of the Mayor of the city of Bregenz, the Kongresskultur Bregenz, the city marketing of Bregenz, the Government of Vorarlberg, Convention Partner Vorarlberg, the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water, the Hilti Foundation and its partners. We will continue to engage with our partners in Bregenz to work for a sustainable, peaceful and just future. As stated in our commitment to future generations, we will do everything in our power to protect future life on earth in all its beauty and diversity, and promote for comprehensive peace and true justice between the world’s peoples and nations.

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Govt Bans U Wirathu from Preaching Sermons

IAN JOHNSON

Burma’s infamous nationalist Buddhist monk U Wirathu was banned from delivering sermons across the country for one year, starting from March 10, due to his religious hate speeches.

The decision was made at a special meeting of the country’s 47 senior Buddhist monks who run the state Buddhist authority State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee in Naypyidaw on Thursday, according to U Myint Zaw Win, a director of the Ministry for Religious Affairs and Culture.

The statement from the meeting released on Friday warned U Wirathu that any breach of the order will lead to legal action. The ban will be in effect until March 9 next year.

The State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee said in the statement that the nationalist monk was repeatedly delivering hate speeches against religions to cause communal strife, hinder rule of law, and that he took sides with political parties to inflame tensions.

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ZHENGDING, China — In 1982, two men arrived in this dusty provincial town. One was Shi Youming, a Buddhist monk who was taking up a post in the ruins of one of Zhengding’s legendary temples. The other was Xi Jinping, the 29-year-old son of a top Communist Party official putting in a mandatory stint in the provinces as a bureaucrat in the government he would eventually lead.

The two forged an unusual alliance that resonates today. With Mr. Xi’s backing, Youming, who like most Buddhist monks preferred to go by one name, rebuilt the city’s Linji Temple, the birthplace of one of the best-known schools of Buddhism. Even after Mr. Xi was transferred, he regularly visited Youming in Zhengding and sent officials there to study the partnership between the party and religion.

Mr. Xi’s early encounters with religious life give insight into a man who has run China with a firmer hand than any other leader since Mao Zedong. Although he is best known abroad for his efforts to expand China’s territorial reach in the South China Sea or his high-profile campaign against corruption, at home the president is engineering a remarkable about-face for the Communist Party: an effort to rejuvenate China’s spiritual life through an embrace of some religions.

As an organization that has tried to squelch religion, the Communist Party under Mr. Xi is now backing it in ways that echo the approach of strongmen like Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, who use faith to legitimize their rule. Faced with growing social tensions and slowing economic growth, the government is turning to religion to bolster its hold on power.

Mr. Xi, by making China a guardian of a major faith like Buddhism, also sees religion as a way to promote China’s position in a world still dominated by the United States, which he tentatively plans to visit for a meeting with President Trump early next month.

Indeed, one of Mr. Xi’s
signature lines is, "If the people have faith, the nation has hope, and the country has strength."

China’s Communists were not always antagonistic toward religion. Before winning the civil war in 1949, the party found refuge in China’s northwest. Its numbers reduced by disease and attacks, the Communist Party needed local allies, such as Tibetan Buddhists and Hui Muslims, and pious Chinese farmers. So the party took a pragmatic approach, basically leaving religion alone as long as it didn’t challenge party rule.

This changed in the late 1950s, when Mao entered the 20-year megalomaniacal final phase of his life. Mao presided over the destruction of tens of thousands of temples, churches and mosques. But others in the party were much more cautious — and eventually they took power.

Xi Jinping’s father, Xi Zhongxun, was a key member of this pragmatic faction. Beginning in 1980, Xi Zhongxun headed the party’s religious work. Two years later, still on his watch, the Central Committee issued what to date is its most important paper on religious policy, Document 19. This 11,000-word report warned party members against banning religious activity, saying doing so would alienate too many people. It also called for temples, mosques and churches to be restored, and religious professionals to be “rehabilitated.”

That same year, his son Xi Jinping arrived in Zhengding. The younger Xi’s attitude toward Youming and the temples in the old city could have been motivated by many factors. Zhengding was isolated and poor, but its cultural wealth could be parlayed into tourism. Mr. Xi used his family ties to lure to Zhengding the filming of a big historical drama — he probably saw religion as part of an economic development strategy. And like his father, Mr. Xi might have also seen religion as a tool to develop and rule a part of the country with strong religious roots.

But during several visits to Zhengding over the past five years, I discovered a more complex picture of China’s leader. Mr. Xi was a pragmatist, but evidence also points to his being motivated by genuine respect for traditional Chinese faiths, such as Buddhism, Taoism and folk religion. He became a regular visitor to Linji, helping to dismantle bureaucratic hurdles while Youming raised money for the temple’s reconstruction. In 1983, according to local records, Mr. Xi approved the reopening of the temple to the public, even though it was still in ruins, and he eventually installed Youming as its abbot.

Today, Zhengding is a suburb of Shijiazhuang, the sprawling capital of Hebei Province. The Linji Temple has expanded from one ruined pagoda to a much bigger complex of rebuilt halls, a library and monks’ quarters. Youming died in 2010, and his living area has been turned into a little shrine, decorated with calligraphy, an altar and display cases along the walls.

During one of my visits, I met Youming’s successor, Shi Huichang. He had come to the temple in 1989, well after Mr. Xi had been transferred to a bigger post on China’s coast, but he was present for Mr. Xi’s later visits.

“Xi did a great service for Buddhism,” Huichang told me as we viewed the display cases filled with Youming’s clothes, books and photos. “He showed respect. I’m not sure he was a believer but he respected it. He knew more about it than most people.”

We stopped at a vitrine holding a picture of the two from the 1980s. They were an odd couple: Mr. Xi tall for a man of his generation at 5-foot-11, with the thick black sweptback hair of a South Korean movie star. Next to him, Youming was a wisp in a saffron robe, his head shaven, laughing like the Zen master he was — what could be more absurd than my present situation, he seemed to be saying, walking with a representative of the party that tried to wipe out my faith?
Zhengding was not a one-off in Mr. Xi’s political biography. During a 2005 visit to Zhengding and the Linji Temple, Mr. Xi ordered senior Buddhist leaders to study how the temple had been rebuilt — a clear sign that his stint in Zhengding was meant to be an example of how government and religion should work together. He also called on Buddhists to unite to promote China’s biggest religion — an unusual request from a Communist Party official.

Does any of this prove Mr. Xi’s own religiosity? As Communist Party members, China’s leaders are required to be atheist. And yet Chinese who knew Mr. Xi well believe he at least looked favorably on Buddhism and other traditional religions.

A childhood friend of his who was also his neighbor in the 1980s supported this view in conversations with an American diplomat. According to a record of this transcript released through WikiLeaks, Mr. Xi’s friend — referred to in the diplomatic cable as “the professor” — said he visited Mr. Xi in Fujian, shortly after having left Zhengding. Mr. Xi, according to the professor, “displayed a fascination with Buddhist martial arts, qigong and other mystical powers said to aid health, as well as with Buddhist sacred sites.”

The professor said that he did not know whether Mr. Xi was truly religious but that he “was extremely surprised by how much Xi knew about the subject and Xi’s seeming belief in supernatural forces.”

If Mr. Xi was favorably disposed toward Buddhism, he seems to have had more trouble with Christianity. From 2002 to 2007, he served as party leader of Zhejiang Province, where his administration received a black eye when it confronted local Christians. A congregation in the township of Xiaoshan had built a church, but the government declared it illegal and tried to demolish it in 2006. Hundreds of believers flooded the area, pushing back the police.

Although the government eventually succeeded in tearing down the church, it became one of the most embarrassing episodes in Mr. Xi’s period in Zhejiang. Not surprisingly, Christians have fared poorly during the past five years of Mr. Xi’s rule. Most notoriously, over 1,500 crosses have been pulled off the steeples of churches in that same province. Probably not coincidentally, the head of Zhejiang who has overseen this operation was Mr. Xi’s top law enforcement officer during the 2006 episode. Mr. Xi almost certainly would have had to have signed off on the cross-removal campaign, re-emphasizing the fact that he is probably better disposed toward religions considered more traditional in China — Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and folk religion — than those deemed foreign, like Christianity and Islam.

This is reinforced by Mr. Xi’s activities since taking office. In 2013, he lauded Confucius on a visit to his birthplace, Qufu, in Shandong Province. The next year, he spoke favorably about Buddhism while visiting Paris.

Over the past five years, religion has also become a tool for improving Communist Party officials’ ethics, with officials in some localities instructed to read the
classes to elevate their morals.

What does this mean for China's future? Economically, it's fair to say, the easy phase of reform has passed. If Beijing wants to continue economic reform, it will require asking the population for yet more wrenching changes. But if it doesn't reform, growth will stagnate. Either way, the government faces potential social unrest.

I've found that Mr. Xi's embrace of faith is incredibly popular among most Chinese. While Christians may cringe at his views, many more others see his support for traditional faiths as positive — a re-creation of the imperial Chinese state's support for certain faiths and belief systems. Far from being an anomaly in Mr. Xi's rise, his stint in Zhengding is most likely something else: a template for the mixing of faith and politics — a reimagining of the political-religious state that once ruled China.

Ian Johnson, a reporter in Beijing for The New York Times, is the author of "The Souls of China: The Return of Religion After Mao," from which this essay is adapted.

Thais Struggle

In Thailand, where over 90 percent of the population is Theravada Buddhist, religion and politics mix freely, as the government has a role in overseeing the religion where the king is its appointed defender.

The law barring bhikkhunis from being fully ordained is the 1928 Sangha Act, which predated Thailand's move to democracy in 1932. Under the law, the closest women could get was to become Mae Chi, the white-robed nuns who hold to the 10 basic precepts. But that hasn't stopped some from pursuing their spiritual calling.

"You have excellent bhikkhunis such as Dhammananda, who's done so much good works in society that people have trust and faith in her actions," Chao-hwei said.

In 2003, Dhammananda Bhikkhuni became the first Thai woman of the modern era to be fully ordained.
She’s currently abbess of the Songdhammakalyani Monastery in Nakhon Pathom. It’s estimated that there are 100 fully ordained bhik-khunis across the country. Still, the government and some people marginalize them as illegal impersonators.

“We’re as close as Buddha’s teaching,” Dhammananda said in February at the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Thailand. “The status of Bhikkhuni in Thailand is improving and our existence is already a step ahead. We also reach out to people and educate them.”

In February, a group of bhikkhus and Paiboon Nititawan, a former chairman of the committee for the National Reform Council’s protection of Buddhism, petitioned the National Human Rights Commission to submit a 2015 report on human rights violations against bhikkhunis to the prime minister. Calls have been made to update the Sangha Act so women can be fully ordained.

The Saffron Ceiling

For Chao-hwei, Buddhist institutions remain problematic for their patriarchy and gender discrimination, something she’s spent 16 years fighting.

Underpinning the problem are the so-called Eight Heavy Rules, or The Eight Garudhammas. These are additional – and disputed – precepts for female monks which religious authorities say were established by the Buddha when he allowed his aunt to become the first bhikkhuni.

The controversial rules subordinate female monks to male monks (bhikkhus) by only allowing them to be fully ordained under bhikkhus. The rules also bar them from criticizing male monks, no matter how much seniority a bhikkhuni may have.

“Bhikkhus, bhikkhunis, laymen and laywomen, who are the four members of the Buddhist community, should be equal to one another,” said Chao-hwei, who first called for the rules to be abolished in 2001.

That was also the year she urged the Dalai Lama at a conference in Taipei to allow the revival of bhikkhunis in Tibet, where women are prohibited from being fully ordained.

She acknowledges that there are laypeople and monks who disagree with her, and whether the Buddha really established the rules – their only source of legitimacy – remains an unsettled historical argument.

“It doesn’t mean that bhikkhunis are less respectful of bhikkhus,” Chao-hwei said, as a fluffy feline inserted itself into the conversation for stomach-scratching and as a reminder that her fight for equality extends beyond the realm of religion.

She has successfully campaigned for laws against animal abuse, horse racing, gambling, nuclear power, gender inequality and other issues.

She went outside the law in 2012 to be the first to preside over a same-sex Buddhist wedding in Taiwan, where it is illegal. The provocative event sparked optimism there that Taiwan may be the first Asian country to make marriage equality the law.
Bhikkhunis in Thailand & Taiwan

Buddhism has flourished in Taiwan in recent decades, with numbers of practicing Buddhists increasing fourfold. Chao-hwei estimated the numbers of bhikkunis has also increased to outnumber male monks three times over.

Chao-Hwei recounted the big change in the Taiwanese bhikkhuni circle that stemmed in 1966 when Cheng Yen Bhikkhuni found Tzu Chi Foundation as a compassion relief that uses Buddhist Precepts to help people in almost 50 countries.

Education, society’s acceptance and economic independence of bhikkunis haveed also help in the growing number of female monks.

Also, the success comes from the fact that Taiwan adopted Mahayana rather than Theravada Buddhism from Sri Lanka and China, where women have been fully ordained for the past 2,000 years, combined with its implementation of Humanistic Buddhism that better fits the modern world.

Born in Yangon in Myanmar in 1957, Ven Chao-Hwei chose to ordain when she was 21 before graduating from National Taiwan Normal University a year later. For her, Buddhism was more reasonable and a way through which she could be free from traditional gender roles and have her own agency.

Now, she is chairwoman of the Department of Religious Studies and Dean of the College of Social Science at Hsuan Chuang University, a private Buddhist university. She has never ceased to voice her opinion on social issues through Buddhist point of views, with more than 20 books and 70 research papers published.

“With the freedom to be bhikkhuni, I look at things and phenomena more openly,” she said. “Some people might be afraid to take action, but I don’t doubt that I’m doing the right thing by following Buddha’s will.”

She said the many schools and traditions in Taiwanese Buddhism are open-minded and resolve disputes by an elected Chinese Buddhist Association through processes with women are allowed to participate.

There, the government does not interfere in spiritual matters.

“To identify whether it’s legal can’t be decided only by government legislation,” she said.

Recommended Readings

Dreams in Rural China
Compiled: Zhang Xiaode and Ye Peihong
Translated: Zhou Gang
Press: NEW WORLD PRESS

Thutiyawiset “Boonlua”
Author: Momluang Boonlua Debyasuvann
Publisher: Abbassara Charubha and Charungkiat Phutiratana
Press: The Momluang Boonlua Debyasuvann Cultural Fund

Vanishing Shangri La
History of Tibet and Dalai Lamas In 20th Century
Author: Kn Raghavan
Press: The Book People
The International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB)
18th General Conference

A Conference on Transforming Conflict as Compassion with Exposure and Retreat
November 22-29, 2017 Taiwan

The Challenge for Engaged Buddhism in the Next Decade

A questioner asked the Buddha:
“Life seems a tangle-- An inner tangle and an outer tangle. This generation is hopelessly tangled up. And so I ask the Buddha this question:
Who will succeed in disentangling this tangle?”
The Buddha replied: “When a wise one, thoughtful and good, develops a greater consciousness, they will understand the tangle. As a truth follower, ardent and wise, they will succeed in disentangling the tangle.”

Samyutta Nikaya SN 1:23

Some 2,500 years later, humanity seems to be more tangled than it has ever been. Facing environmental crisis and continuing violent conflicts, many seem to be turning inward and away from the embrace of a world of inclusivity, where we overcome the constructed barriers of our diverse identities to rebuild our mother earth and find a new home amongst it. The role of institutionalized religion amongst this struggle is debatable. Is it a source of continued division and intolerance. Or a platform to develop common values and infuse our economic and political systems with ethics? Socially Engaged Buddhism has been a movement oriented to the latter of these possibilities. Emerging out of the anti-colonial struggles of the peoples of Asia, socially engaged Buddhism has flowered over the last three decades into an incredible diversity of movements—holistic community development in Sri Lanka and Thailand, suicide prevention and psycho-spiritual care in Japan, meditation for application in modern medical science in the U.S and Europe, campaigns for social justice and equality in India, and a growing movement for environmental justice worldwide—to name just a few.

The International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), founded in 1989, has been an integral part of many of these developments, identifying and nurturing grassroots initiatives in localities all over Asia and linking them together in a global network for holistic, inclusive, and non-violent social transformation. The immense complexity of our worlds—so interconnected by internet technology yet so fragile as seen in recent political and cultural shifting conflicts away from this interconnectedness—have more deeply awakened those of us at INEB towards taking new steps in our collective struggle. We feel we must now double-down on our efforts to realize over the next decade four essential goals for the livelihood of our planet, which make up our Roadmap for Socially Engaged Buddhism for the Next Decade:

- Environmental integrity, which consists of the integration of inner and outer ecology.
- Cultural inclusivity and diversity, which are essential to a vibrant and healthy system at any level.
- Inner peace, and the need for experiential forms of inner development to empower psychological wholeness.
Social justice, and the creation of larger political and economic systems that nurture ecology, diversity, and inner peace.

A Conference on Transforming Conflict as Compassion

As INEB seeks to further empower its own network and support efforts by like-minded colleagues from different faiths and different fields of endeavor, we will host our first international conference (our 18th overall) as part of this roadmap for the coming decade in Taiwan in November, 2017 entitled "A Conference on Transforming Conflict as Compassion". While environmental integrity, cultural inclusivity & diversity, inner peace & psychological wholeness, and socio-political justice form our goals; compassion is one of our principle means and conflict is our field. In keeping with our core Buddhist view of non-duality, conflict provides a rich field for our practice, without which we could not practice compassion. Therefore, conflict is not our enemy, but actually the ground for realization, hence we transform conflict as we realize compassion, the two working together in a creative dynamic. In our conference, we will investigate these themes further through a program of exposure, conference, and retreat covering one week.

- Exposure Days (Nov. 22-23): two days of visiting two of Taiwan's most prominent Buddhist orders, Dharma Drum Mountain and Tzu Chi, with a variety of special exposures to Taiwanese engaged Buddhism, including a symposium on dying and hospice care, a visit to a Buddhist hospital, and a massive, elderly volunteer run recycling campaign.
- Conference Days (Nov. 24-26): two and a half days of general conference to delve into the conference theme of "transforming conflict as compassion", while engaging in a deeper exploration of Taiwanese engaged Buddhism. Afternoons will be spent learning and engaging with the wider INEB community on the many interests and activities of the international network, which include Taiwanese engaged Buddhist activities. The conference will conclude with reflections and action plans from these afternoon sessions, an update on INEB's 10 year Road Map for Socially Engaged Buddhism, and a final reflection from our Taiwanese hosts.
- Retreat Days (Nov. 27-28): three days of post-conference meditation and practice retreat to internalize our experiences, reflect on them, and integrate them into our spiritual practice and daily lives. For realizing this, we have identified three sequential touchstones of Buddhist practice: the development of mindfulness, the cultivation of compassion, and the realization of transformation. Four leading female Dharma teachers from different traditions will lead the retreat, offering instructions on practice, dharma teachings, and perspectives on connecting them to our lives of social engagement.

While the challenges of this age are daunting, the potentials for transformation and collective awakening are tremendous. Bodhisattvas in their vows to engage in the immense vastness of suffering, sentient life, and practice never lack optimism and energy. We therefore encourage you to join us not just for this conference, but also for the journey that lies ahead.

DETAILS
Exposure Days:
Day 1: Symposium on Dying and Hospice Care & Exposure at Dharma Drum Mountain Temple (Jinshan, Northern Taiwan, 1.5 hours from Taipei City)
One of the outstanding examples of Taiwanese Engaged Buddhism is the development of Buddhist based hospice
care and the training of ordained sangha members in psycho-spiritual care for patients, family, and other caregivers. As it is hard for a large group such as ours to visit a hospice, we will instead host a half day symposium, bringing together some of the leaders of this movement, including one of our hosts, Ven. Huimin, President of the Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts. After a refreshing vegetarian lunch at Dharma Drum’s expansive cafeteria, we will tour around Dharma Drum Mountain Temple, one of Taiwan’s leading Buddhist sanghas, and learn about their volunteer training program.

**Day 2: Environmental Care and Human Care with the Tzu Chi Buddhist order (Taipei City)**

**Morning:** The Tzu Chi Recycling Project @ Neihu

Tzu Chi Buddhist order, another one of Taiwan’s most prominent sanghas, is known for its variety of social welfare activities, especially overseas disaster aid. We will visit the Tzu Chi Recycling Project which operates more than 5,000 recycling centers with tens of thousands of volunteers all over Taiwan. Their elderly volunteers recycle PET bottles and all sorts of materials to make blankets for use in overseas disaster aid as well as various products for daily usage like bags, shoes, and clothing.

**Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital & “Silent Mentors”**

Tzu Chi also runs a large hospital in Taipei City, and amongst a variety of unique activities, we will learn about their Silent Mentors program. Around the world, it is common for surgeons-in-training to practice on actual cadavers, yet these bodies are usually handled like disposable items—cut up, tossed to the side, and thrown away with no regard to the human beings they once were. The Silent Mentors program connects Tzu Chi Medical University’s surgeons-in-training with the families of people who have voluntarily donated their bodies for this program, so that a practice of honoring their bodies for research and a deeper care for the human being as body and spirit is instilled in their doctors.

**Afternoon:**

After a full morning of seeing Engaged Buddhism on the ground, we will refresh our mood with a visit to the New Taipei City Yingge Ceramics Museum.

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### 2017 INEB Biannual Conference in Taiwan (November 22-29, 2017)

**Transforming Conflict through Compassion**

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<td>2 Days Exposure Tours</td>
<td>Day 1: Symposium on Dying and Hospice Care &amp; Exposure at Dharma Drum Mountain Temple (Jinshan, Northern Taiwan, 1.5 hours from Taipei City) Day 2: Environmental Care and Human Care with the Tzu Chi Buddhist order (Taipei City)</td>
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<td>Nov. 24-26</td>
<td>3 days Main Conference</td>
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<td>Nov. 27-29</td>
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**Hosting**

- Buddhist Hong-Shi College
- Xiang Guang Mountain Temple
Main Conference: Transforming Conflict as Compassion

Nov. 24: Conflict, Compassion, & Taiwanese Buddhism
8:30-9:00 am Opening Ceremony
9:00-10:00 am Keynote Talks
  - Ven. Chao Hwei (INEB Patron): Welcome & Transforming Conflict as Compassion in Taiwan/East Asia
  - Harsha Navaratne (INEB Chair): Transforming Conflict as Compassion in South Asia
  - Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa (INEB Founder): Transforming Conflict as Compassion Globally
10:00-10:30 am Group Photo & Tea Time
10:30-11:30 am Engaged Buddhism: The Taiwan Experience
  - Dr. Hsiang-Chou Yo (INEB Advisor): The Historical Development of Engaged Buddhism in Taiwan
  - Ven. Wuyin (Luminary Temple Founder): The Domain of Bhikkhunis in Taiwan
1:30-3:00 pm Group Discussions on INEB Action Themes
  - Buddhism & Interfaith Work for the Environment
  - Buddhism & Interfaith Work for Conflict Resolution
  - Buddhist Economics
  - Gender & Women’s Issues in Buddhism
  - Marginalized Buddhist Communities & Peoples
  - Buddhist Education
  - Buddhist Chaplaincy & Monks and Nuns Capacity Building
  - Aging Society & Hospice Care
  - Buddhist Psychology & Mental Illness
3:00-3:30 pm Tea Time
3:30-5:00 pm Optional Group Shift
5:30-6:30 pm Dinner
6:30-9:00 pm Free-time

Nov. 25: Social Welfare and Social Justice in Taiwanese Engaged Buddhism
8:30-9:45 am Taiwan’s Buddhist Social Welfare Movement
  - Dr. Rey-Sheng Her (Professor of Religious Studies, Tzu Chi University): The Experience of Social Welfare in Tzu-Chi
  - Ven. Zong Dun (Director of the Great Compassion Institute): Community Hospice & Spiritual Care
  - Ven. Zi Sheng (Director of Zizhulin Dharma Center): The Mental Training Program for Elementary Schools.
9:45-10:15 am Tea Time
10-11:30 am The Challenge of Social Justice Work in Taiwanese Buddhism
  Panel Discussion on “How Can Generosity (dana) Lead to Social Change & Social Justice?” with
  Prof. Yi-Xiong Lin (former Chairman of Democratic Progressive Party) Professor Chao-Chen Lin
  Harsha & Ven. Chao Hwei? Others?
1:30-3:00 pm Group Discussions on INEB Programs & Activities
  - ICE-Interfaith Climate & Ecology Network (Jung Hee Min)
  - Eco-Temple Community Development Project (Jonathan Watts)
  - International Forum on Buddhist-Muslim Relations (Vidya KV Soon)
• INEB Institute for Buddhist Higher Learning (Ted Mayer)
• Right Livelihood Fund (Vidyā KV Soon)
• Hospice Care and Buddhist Chaplaincy (Ven. Zinai)
• Other group meetings will be announced later or could form from the previous day’s discussions

3:00-3:30 pm  Tea Time
3:30-5:00 pm  Optional Group Shift
5:30-6:30 pm  Dinner
6:30-9:00 pm  Culture Events

Nov. 26: Going Forth as Compassion
8:00  Departure of INEB Representatives for Press Conference in Downtown Taipei
Conclusion
8:30-9:30 am  Action Reports from INEB Focus Groups
9:30-10:00 am  Tea Break
10:00-10:30 am  Report on INEB 10 Year Road Map for Socially Engaged Buddhism
10:30-11:00 am  Reflections from Taiwanese Hosts and Closing Ceremony
12:00  Lunch
1:30 pm  Departure for Xiang Guang Shan Temple for Retreat Days
2:30 pm  Arrive at Xiang Guang Mountain Temple

Retreat on Mindfulness, Compassion, and Transformation

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<th>11/26</th>
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<td>4:45-5:15</td>
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<td>Wake Up</td>
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<td>Sitting Meditation</td>
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<td>Breakfast</td>
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<td>Cleaning /Service</td>
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<td>8:30-11:00</td>
<td>Dharma Study &amp; Meditation with 4 teachers in separate groups</td>
<td>Dharma Study &amp; Meditation with 4 teachers in separate groups</td>
<td>Whole Group Meditation Sharing &amp; Discussion Applying what we have learned Closing Ceremony</td>
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<td>11:30-14:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>Farewell</td>
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<td>14:00-14:30</td>
<td>Arrival</td>
<td>Tea Ceremony (4 kinds of tea &amp; coffee)</td>
<td>Moving Meditation (Tai Chi, Yoga, etc.)</td>
<td>Packing &amp; Cleaning &amp; Departure</td>
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<td>14:30-17:00</td>
<td>Registration</td>
<td>General Session with 4 Female Dharma Teachers 2 speakers + 2 respondents + Q&amp;A for each day</td>
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<td>17:30-18:00</td>
<td>Supper</td>
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<td>19:00-20:00</td>
<td>Opening ceremony</td>
<td>Sitting Meditation</td>
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<td>20:00-21:00</td>
<td>Self Reflection Time</td>
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The threats of climate change and global warming continue to loom over our planet with ever growing intensity. In response to the potential catastrophic consequences that could occur as a result of the Earth getting warmer, a number of local, regional, national and international organizations are packing their agenda with initiatives and projects that could contribute in some way towards mitigating climate change.

INEB and its Inter-Religious Climate & Ecology (ICE) Network, which was founded primarily to facilitate and promote the involvement of faith-based and religious/spiritual organizations in the environmental movement, continues to move along at a healthy pace towards expanding its participation and contribution for the environmental cause.

The following is a brief update on the key activities that were implemented and the key events that were held in year 2016 in order to advance forward some of the environmental initiatives of the ICE Network.

**ACTIVITIES**

1. ICE and INEB’s engagement at the International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress (WCC) Planet at the Crossroads, 1-10 September, 2016, Honolulu, Hawai’i.

**Overview:**

The ICE Network / INEB participation in the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Hawai’i this past September, 2016, proved to be a valuable engagement, widening circles of discourse across conservation and climate action communities around the planet. This engagement brought to light a spiritually-rooted articulation of inspiring and catalysing values for conservation and climate action. It also found a platform to share models of demonstrated practical applications and collaborative solution building in answer to the vulnerable and loss created by ecological degradation and the greater uncertainties of the Anthropocene epoch. ICE Network affiliates connected to others engaged in
complementary efforts, those interested in ICE Network’s sacred ecology approach to conservation and climate action, and developed new friendships with Hawaiian Sangha, and Hawaiian indigenous sacred earth activists.

A) Knowledge Café Dealing with the Value of Nature Workshop
This workshop facilitated discussions, that launched from the consideration of Dieter Helm’s writing on ‘Nature as Capital’ (upon which a WCC working group and Motion had been founded). From this discussion emerged a panoply of very different perspectives regarding relationship to and valuing of ‘Nature’ from spiritual, religious, and a broad span of culturally- and experientially-grounded beliefs. Nature, it was proposed, is not a commodity to be reduced to capital and economic terms. We humans are a part of nature, and the Living Planet is a great gift to be treasured and protected.

B) Ethics & Ecology “Faith-based Models for Reconnecting with All Sentient Beings.”
The ICE Network, with INEB, organised and facilitated a workshop with panel presentations, small group discussion, and conclusion session with feedback and sharing across the entire workshop.

The second half of the program convened smaller working groups to discuss the ideas and models converging spirituality, ethics, and ecological conservation. Some feedback from these sessions included a young man stating that he was a different person than when he'd entered the room two hours prior, that he had experienced a personal paradigm shift regarding spirituality, faith, and ecology; several people noted they felt inspired to initiate similar activities in their own local communities; education was repeatedly drawn out as a key component to building awareness and supporting pathways to sustainable living on the planet.

C) Voting Membership for IUCN through INEB
The ICE Network representation was able to participate in voting for motions at the end of the IUCN World Conservation Congress. A priority in which ICE Network/ INEB delegates were engaged was Motion 26: ‘No Go’ to mining in Sacred Natural Sites, World Heritage Sites, Indigenous and Community Conserved Territories and Protected Areas. This motion passed.

D) Hawaiian Sangha (Building the Network)
East West Center program: The ICE Network contacted Peter Hershock of the East West Center, and together a panel was drawn together of local communities, including Hawaiian indigenous representation (Shamanic), Hawaiian Buddhist and interfaith Sangha. The ICE Network provided a panel of speakers, and the conversation was hosted and facilitated by Dr. Hershock. Threading together individual stories of awakening and convergences of consciousness and climate change action, the body of the program centered upon the conceptual and ethical processes of coming together, across faiths and cultures, to build interfaith engagement across regions to protect and care for our sacred social-ecologies, to build resilience and sustainability for the long haul.

2. ICE Network Project Proposal – Engaging Asian Religious Leaders in Climate Dialogue and Action
The ICE Network team has developed and completed a proposal for an innovative 3 year project that aims to actively engage religious leaders and institutions throughout Asia in climate education, collective action, and policy change.

This project proposal emerged from The Inter-Religious Dialogue on Climate Change and Biodiversity Conservation, an international conference that was held in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka in September 2012 through the collaborative efforts of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), Sewalanka Foundation, IUCN, and the Commission on Environmental Economics and
Social Policy (CEESP). As a result of this conference, a common understanding of the causes and impacts of climate change was articulated. An emphasis was placed on the urgent need to address inner spiritual values as they relate to our human stewardship and interconnected care and protection for our natural environment. The prevailing attitudes across religious communities which contribute to a failure of our responsibility towards the living world were critically examined. Structural impasses were also cited as an area that also must be urgently rectified, most alarmingly the absence of an international binding agreement for reduction of Green House Gas emissions.

The long-term objective of the project is to bring the wisdom of religious traditions and the moral influence of religious leaders and institutions into climate change dialogue and action. The overall goal of the project is to address the root causes of climate change and respond to the emerging effects of climate change in a peaceful, equitable, and sustainable way.

There are 4 expected result components of this proposal –

**Awareness & Education**
The expected results of this component are that Religious leaders and institutions engage in climate education, increase public awareness, and contribute to behavior change. This component of the project will develop resources and training programs to help religious leaders and practitioners better understand the climate crisis and explain it to others.

**Climate Action**
The expected results of this component are that Religious leaders, institutions and communities catalyse collective action and develop initiatives for climate change mitigation, adaptation, and response. This component of the project will support local initiatives driven by religious institutions for climate change mitigation, adaptation, and response. It will provide opportunities to exchange experiences and best practices.

**Local Networking & Advocacy**
The expected results of this component are that local and national inter-religious networks are developed to exchange experiences, increase collaboration, and influence national programs and policies. This component of the project will strengthen local and national inter-religious networks to increase exchange, collaboration, and advocacy action.

**International Networking & Advocacy**
The expected results of this component are that the Inter-religious Climate and Ecology (ICE) Network is strengthened to promote international exchange and collaboration and to influence international climate change debates. The project will help ICE Network members bring the voice and experience of Asian religious leaders, communities, and institutions to international climate change forums (UN COP, IUCN WCC, UNFCCC)
With a project proposal and budget ready, the ICE Network team is currently contacting potential donor organizations who may be interested to fund and support this project.

**EVENTS**

The following are some of the key events that took place in 2016, and events that are scheduled to take place in 2017 as part of INEB’s and the ICE Network’s environmental initiatives –

**2016 Events**

1. INEB participated in IUCN’s World Conservation Congress (WCC) in Hawai’I in September 2016, organizing 2 workshops, details of which are given in Section 5 of this report.

2. Eco-Temple Project - In June 2016, the International Buddhist Exchange Center (IBEC) at Kodosan in Japan, under INEB Advisory Council member Rev. Masazumi Okano and eco-temple partner Rev. Hidehito Okochi hosted FHSM in Japan for a series of meetings for strategy building for FHSM’s Sukhavati Eco-Temple.

3. Eco-Temple Project - Prof. Kalinga Seneviratne from Chulalongkorn University, Thailand visited the Sukhavati Eco-temple land on 4th of December 2016 to explore the possibility of raising funds in Malaysia, Singapore, and Sri Lanka. He is a good friend of INEB chairman Harsha Navaratne and has good relations with foundations in Sri Lanka that support environmental friendly activities and Buddhist activities. Prof. Kalinga also witnessed the social work projects of FHSM, such as the open well project that provide water access to Dalit villages, sanitary projects that provide individual toilets to women, a skill development program for youths, and a dry land farm project that creates greater economic sustainability and prevent suicides among farmers.

**2017 Events**

1. Eco-Temple Project - INEB founder, Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa visited FHSM’s Sukhavati Eco-Temple in January 2017. A number of programs were organized by FHSM on the revival of Buddhism in Tamil Nadu. FHSM took this opportunity to show Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa the Sukhavati Eco-Temple project site and received his blessings.

2. Eco-Temple Project - Ven. Miao Hai, the Head of Renewable Energy Application at INEB/ICE’s eco-temple partner Zhengjue Temple in China, visited the Sukhavati eco-temple site in February 2017 to explore the possibilities of developing solar based projects and also raise funds for eco-temple project. During the visit, FHSM organized sessions with Buddhist communities and made visits to their farm projects. Ven. Miao Hai also expressed his willingness to support agro-based solar farming projects, as there is a vast availability of land resources surrounding the eco-temple project site. Ven. Miao Hai has invited FHSM to China for this purpose and connect with resource persons.

3. The International Lay Buddhist Organisation (ILBO) has expressed their interest to invite members from FHSM to give presentations at the 15th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women to be held in Hong Kong in June 2017. ILBO has also encouraged FHSM to organise a workshop that would help them connect with Buddhist donors who might be interested to support the eco-temple project. The concept note for the workshop is still underway and shall be submitted soon to the conference organisers.

4. A Conference and Eco-Temple site visit is planned to be hosted by INEB’s partners in China, who are actively involved in the Eco-Temple Community Development Project. The event is still under the planning phase, and may be held towards the end of 2017.
Buddhist leaders from the Mekong region and Sri Lanka gathered in Bangkok on April 7-8, proposing to create a new network in Asia to increase their commitment and action to strengthen child protection in their communities. The two-day consultation in Bangkok focused on the critical role of Buddhist leaders and practitioners in preventing violence against children, in particular the sexual exploitation and abuse of children. The consultation was organized by Arigatou International/Prayer and Action for Children, the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) and ECPAT International. Among the participants were representatives of organizations working in the area of child protection including UNICEF, World Vision, the South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children (SAIEVAC), all of whom endorsed the proposal.

Buddhist monks and community leaders from Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Sri Lanka, heard international experts speak on the many forms of violence against children within the family, schools and community, as well as the commercial sexual exploitation and abuse of children in travel and tourism. It was pointed out that every five minutes, a child dies as a result of violence and every year, at least one billion children are exposed to violence, where four out of five children are subjected to some form of violent discipline in their homes. Girls are particularly vulnerable as one in five girls between the ages of 15-19 have been victims of physical violence. Currently more than 240 million children live in countries affected by violent conflict. Experts from ECPAT informed participants about online child sexual exploitation and abuse, which has quickly become a growing global phenomenon.

Arigatou International is a faith-based organization committed to building a better world for children by maximizing the potential of interfaith dialogue and cooperation. Arigatou partners with UNICEF and also collaborates with other like-minded non-governmental organizations that focus on promoting and protecting children’s rights and well-being. Arigatou International established the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) in 2000, whose members are located in some 45 countries, which continues to grow today as a platform for interfaith cooperation on children’s issues. Ending violence against children is one of the top priorities for the organization, which reaches out to leaders of diverse religions and faith communities in many parts of the world encouraging them to join this cause.
ECPAT International is a global network of organizations dedicated to eliminating the commercial sexual exploitation of children. This includes sexual exploitation of children through prostitution, child abuse images, the trafficking of children for sexual purposes and child sex tourism. With 95 members in 86 countries, ECPAT works to build collaboration among local civil society and the broader child rights community to form a global social movement for the protection of children from sexual exploitation. ECPAT works in partnership with non-governmental organizations, UN agencies, private sector and law enforcement and advocates for a collective response to protect children and put an end to commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Religious leaders and faith communities are essential partners who can take preventive action through their spiritual leadership and moral standing for ending all forms of violence against children. In her keynote speech, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General on Violence against Children, Marta Santos Pais, told the Buddhist leaders, “You are leaders in the process of change needed to build a world of peace, justice, solidarity and joy for every child, a world where violence, in whatever form and under whatever circumstance, finds no justification or excuse.” She gave examples from different faith communities, including Buddhists, of how religious leaders have been able to break the silence surrounding violence against children and provide help and support to its victims. Ms. Santos Pais further noted that religious leaders have used their influential voices to call for increased attention and stronger responses by governments to violence against children, including through law reform, strengthened policies and allocation of resources. Buddhist leaders of the Mekong region and Sri Lanka can help to strengthen norms and values that support non-violent, respectful and nurturing behavior within the family, the school and the community environment where children and adolescents spend their time. It was recognized that Buddhist ideals like moderation, self-discipline and compassion are valuable assets and that these ideals are effective in preventing violence against children.

In a message that was read to the participants, Rev. Keishi Miyamoto, President of Arigatou International and the Spiritual Director of Myochikai, a Japanese Buddhist organization in the Mahayana tradition, stated that while the children of the world experience many kinds of suffering which pain all our hearts, “nothing seems quite as heinous as sexual violence perpetrated against a child.” Rev. Miyamoto pointed out that he believes that one of the factors that have allowed this form of violence to survive has been, “the social reluctance to admit and face the scope of the problem.” He praised the courage and willingness shown by the participants to confront the problem head on and hoped for “concrete and comprehensive partnerships for finding new ways to combat and protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse”.

Among the distinguished speakers were Dr. Saisuree Chutikul, Thailand’s former Representative for Children’s Rights to the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC). Dr. Chutikul was also a member of several international human rights committees within the United Nations including the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the
CEDAW Committee, which oversee the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Venerable Bhikkhuni Dhammananda also spoke who is one of the prestigious Peace Councilors among other prominent religious leaders of the world. In 2004 she was presented an award as an outstanding Buddhist woman by the UN, and nominated for the Nobel Peace prize in 2005. She is well known among Buddhist academics for her involvement in the ordination of women and her concern for the environment. Both women spoke persuasively on the ways in which Buddhist leaders can take action to prevent violence against children.

Another distinguished speaker was Mr. Sanphasit Koompraphant, a leader in the field of children's rights, who has earned many awards for his tireless work to protect children, and was one of the first to expose child trafficking, abduction and commercial sexual exploitation in Thailand and the Mekong region. Dr. Rinchen Chophel, Director General of the South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC), and who has championed the promotion and protection of the rights of women and children with distinction, shared his vast experience and knowledge with the participants.

During the rich discussions, it was recognized in particular that sexual violence against children is a taboo issue in all societies, and there is dire need to address it and raise awareness for its prevention. Buddhist leaders were called upon to work to ensure that all Buddhist temples, monastic schools and communities are safe spaces for children, that can help to heal victims of violence and reintegrate them into society. International experts emphasized the opportunity to accelerate action presented by the Sustainable Development Agenda adopted by the United Nations in 2015 and its target 16.2, which aims to end all forms of violence against children by 2030. A memorable parting message resonated with the participants that “working together we can make a children’s dream of a world free from fear and from violence a reality!”

Venerable U Nayaka, Principal of the Phaung Daw Oo Monastic School in Myanmar, expressed great interest in holding the next regional gathering of Buddhist leaders in Myanmar and offered to host it in Mandalay. Discussions are underway to organize a second consultation on violence against children in late October of this year, which will also lead to the establishment of the Asian Network of Buddhists for Child Protection.

A few of the Buddhist leaders who participated in Bangkok will be meeting again in Panama at the 5th Global Forum of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) to be held on May 9-11, 2017, which has as its theme, “Ending Violence Against Children: Faith Communities in Action.” The GNRC 5th Forum will include plenary sessions, panel discussions, expert presentations and reflections on the three key thematic areas, namely: Protecting Children from Violent Extremism, Gang Violence and Organized Crime; Nurturing Spirituality and Ending Violence in Child Upbringing; and, Ending Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Children. In all these areas the role of faith communities will be addressed.
Awakening Leadership Training

Dear Friends of Sulak,

This is a new initiative under INEB of Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa. Ajarn Sulak recently celebrated his 84th year an auspicious 7 cycles in the Thai tradition. He marks this occasion by starting this initiative to consolidate his lifelong work to strengthen civil society in Asia. This is a contemplative educational programme for empowerment of people who commit themselves to work for a sustainable future. Last year Ajarn and friends supported a pilot six-month course to the tune of US$35,000. It was very successful and there is great demand for scholarships for future civil society leaders to attend the upcoming training. If you are in alignment with Ajarn’s vision and would like to honour his 7th cycle please donate generously to support this programme. Any donations can be made directly through Paypal on the INEB website (http://inebnetwork.org/donation/). For more information on the programme, Awakening Leadership Training, see www.awakeningleadership.net.

In Compassion and Gratitude

Somboon Chungprampree
Executive Secretary INEB

Buddhist Leadership Training

Towards a New Paradigm of Spiritual Growth for Ecology, Sustainability and Social Justice

4 September 2016 - 4 March 2017

The collaborative INEB and ETA Buddhist Leadership Training took place from 4 September 2016 to 4 March 2017. This course was inspired by the experiences of facilitating new paradigm leadership empowerment courses to diverse groups of activists and grassroot community leaders in Southeast Asia, China and UK.

At its core is a vision to provide activists and practitioners with the spiritual energy, perspectives and skills to be able to work for social change, especially by emphasizing the ethical and spiritual dimensions of how to engage in the world and find solutions to questions about how to live together at a time of increasing social and environmental dislocation and degradation.

The training was facilitated through providing space for contemplative reflection, connecting with nature, and cultivating attention in daily life; critical and systematic analytical skills to understand complexities of the modern world, especially the root causes and connections to structural violence; and experiential learning to draw lessons learned from encounters with inspiring examples of wellbeing communities. While the course title denoted a Buddhist focus, the invitation was to practitioners from all religions and beyond, who had a willingness to explore and practice core values of compassion, wisdom, contentment and
non-violence.

Wongsanit Ashram – an eco-spiritual community near Bangkok – was a base for learning, and in some modules, the group went out to see the reality in the field, for example to learn experiences with slum community dwellers, indigenous hill-tribe communities, and other places of practical study outside the Ashram. The course was in itself, an attempt to build a learning community as a lived example of how to create tangible, sustainable alternatives. By fostering critical consciousness and building caring and compassionate relationships among participants that were embedded within a wider understanding of the interconnections between humans and nature, it was an attempt to explore the possibilities of how to live wisely and act to change the damaging cultural, economic and political structures in the world beyond the training space.

In total, 116 participants joined at different times over the 6 months of the course from Southeast Asia, East Asia, Europe, China and US. This was an incredibly diverse and rich learning community in terms of culture and worldviews, life experiences and knowledge, which contributed to the overall learning experience in ways that fostered willingness for dialogue, openness and empathy.

The 6 months of the course was broken into 2 semesters, the first with a focus on personal and interpersonal practices for healing, transformation, and wellbeing, as well as a foundational exploration into the four dimensions of sustainability through ecological, eco-political, social and worldview components, which integrated the Gaia Education Institute.
Ecovillage Design Education (EDE) curriculum.

The second semester focused on exploration of socially engaged Buddhist principles that address root causes of social issues, and complementing theories and practices for social change. In order to deepen the learning experience, participants were also able to explore applications in practice from diverse communities around Thailand, especially community organizing models with marginalized communities, Sangha models of community engagement, and traditional and intentional eco-communities. They were also able to learn the fundamentals of sustainability design, to provide a framework for integrating their learning into their own living situations.

The final module of the course included a Training of Trainers in Participatory Facilitation Skills for Empowerment (accredited under Gaia Education). An important assumption is that contribution to society includes being able to share and facilitate learning processes among others. This module emphasized the skills needed to put learning into practice in ways that empower others to also contribute to changing damaging cultural, economic and political structures.

The training was a deep and meaningful experience for participants, especially the focus on mindfulness as a requisite foundation that enabled an expansion and deepening of the self, and group learning into a holistic process of personal, social and spiritual growth.

“After 10 days I have found that being a facilitator is also the practice of how to be yourself. It’s a practice of becoming yourself.”

“I remember speaking about ego, and I am reflecting now that as a facilitator it is easy to get trapped in that space of ego. And I am guilty of that, I have stood in front of the class and told my opinions and my judgements, so I have appreciated this opportunity to release that, and I know I won’t be doing that again. I have learned a lot about harvesting the wisdom from the group, and releasing myself from that process, but at the same time bringing myself back in to the role of holding space and nurturing people. I am appreciative of the fact that we got to live in this community of practice together.”

“What I take away from this time here, is this mindfulness practice; how to bring this into my facilitating. And how to trust my intuition, how to trust it and allow it to take me to wherever it needs to go.”

OUTCOMES

Overall, the training has resulted in participants with increasing self-awareness, qualities of compassion, wisdom and generosity, and a clearer understanding of present structural violence -both at macro and micro levels. Participants have become better informed and have increased sensitivity to the root causes of the state of ecological and social destruction that is happening across the globe, along with serious learning on skills and methods to make the world a better place to live for all beings through community organizing and creating social movements.

The learning outcomes of the course were displayed in the journeys of personal transformation and the commitment to social transformation of the participants, inspired by the flow, interconnections and breadth of learning within the training.

“The course in Wongsanit was such a perfect learning experience. I really valued everything about it. The learning we achieved was so deep that I regularly experience moments in my life where I can pinpoint a new positive behaviour or insight to a particular module of the BLT course. The parts I would like to especially thank you for are the modules of the course you put together and the fantastic facilitators you got to come and teach them, your technique of facilitation which I value so highly and your ability to envelope us all in a field of support so that we could explore and discover things that would otherwise be too far out of our comfort zones. Thank you” - Daniel Shienwald, UK

The INEB Institute’s English for Engaged Social Service 2017 program ended on April 4th of this year. At the graduation ceremony, our eight full-time students spoke about the impact of the course, and about the goals they had set for themselves. We share excerpts from the students’ presentations as a way of offering a brief initial report on this program. We wish to join the students in expressing our deep gratitude to the sponsors and to all who helped make this year’s program one that exceeded our expectations.

Wijitra Tretrakul (Thailand)
Three months ago, I told my mom I was coming here to learn English. But in fact, I got to learn important truths about myself and the world through English. Those truths challenged me to design my life in a new way. I would like to share 5 things I discovered during this program.

1. What do I really want? The teachers gave me this powerful question. After I really thought about it, I found my goal: I want to live a harmless and simple life.

2. The social structure that I’m living in does not allow me to live simply, without harming others, or even myself. Oppression and exploitation occur every day, not only outside but also in my mind as patterns. To stop creating more suffering, I decided to stop blaming others or myself.

3. What I need to solve the problem is “understanding” and “connection”. To connect with myself, I will keep meditating. With my close ones, I will use co-counseling to free our minds from patterns. Through art, I connect with different groups of people in my society. And I want to practice mindful consumption to respect the environment.

4. English is power. With good English I can understand and connect to the world. To access knowledge and resources, be ready for cooperation, and contribute to my friends’ movements around the world, I will keep improving my English with joy.

5. Every time I feel discouraged, I will think of the fifth one that the teachers kept telling us: I’m important. What I do affects the world in some way.
I can decide to be happy and begin anew every day. This is enough for changing my whole life. Thank you, all of you.

Phonesavanh Chindamany (Laos)
Attending this program was one of my goals. I wanted to be an English student abroad and now my dream has come true. I have learnt a lot from this program. For example: my English skills are improving, I can understand more easily when people talk to me, and I speak and read English more clearly. Besides that, I have learnt about social structure, climate change, gender equality, and community actions through field trips and workshops.

During this program my life has become more clear to me and I feel confident about what I want to do next. Here is one of my goals.

Within ten years, I want to open a learning center that will teach English, volunteerism, Lao traditional dance, and social activism. I will open it in my hometown to help the younger generation in my village to have a chance to learn English.

Khudoh (Myanmar)
During this three-month course, I learnt many skills and subject areas; including meditation, power analysis, climate change and co-counseling. Co-counseling is a kind of deep listening that we practiced with each other almost every day. In the beginning, I didn’t like co-counseling, but after doing it more often, I realized that if we are honest and share our feelings with others, it is a way of being true to ourselves. And if we do that, we can understand other people more, and it helps us to have a clear mind. If everybody has a clear mind, our societies will be more beautiful and peaceful. From this course, I was able to learn many tools of co-counseling, and it stimulated me to help my people to have a clear mind and a peaceful society. Furthermore, co-counseling is a powerful tool for improving our thinking and understanding of our world.

In our culture, if we have a problem or get depressed, we try to control it by ourselves and keep it contained in our mind. We are embarrassed to show our emotions to other people because if we share our story with them, they usually don’t keep confidentiality. In some cases, it can even lead to suicide, or we may take it out on other people. Often it seems as if we are in pain and feel depressed because of what other people do. Actually, this is not a correct assumption.

Therefore, I have decided to practice co-counseling in my environment because I know myself, and I know that I also need a person who’ll listen to me carefully.

Ven. Dhammavanna (Thailand)
This course let me dare to dream of the high potentials that I could reach and showed me how to start step by step to make my goals come true.

For the next 3 years, my goal is to apply for a scholarship for the study of Buddhism. My first concrete step to attain this goal is to write in English on the Facebook page of my monastery every day to make it bilingual in Thai and in English.

My second step will be to focus on Buddhist teachings by reading several pages from a Dhamma book out loud every morning and recording it to listen to at night before I go to sleep.

For my third step, I will search on YouTube for Dhamma talks from Buddhist monks and nuns who are English speakers from different sects.

The fourth step is that I will take an online TOEIC test every week to check my progress.

Over the next 5 years I will work to receive a scholarship in Buddhist Studies for my PhD. I also plan to give Dhamma talks in English and make them available to all those interested. My goal is to teach Buddhism in a university and to publish my English Dhamma talks online, on YouTube, and on our website.

Within 10 years my goal is to open a Bhikkhuni International University in Thailand to assist the Bhikkhuni sangha not only in Thailand.
but also around the world. Bhikkhunis’ education and self-improvement requires studying what the Buddha taught and developing the ability to spread the Dhamma so as to heal the suffering of human beings in this world.

Khar Nan (Myanmar)
I learned a lot in this program, not just English. We were provided many workshops related to various social issues. We went on field trips to many places and we met with famous Buddhist monks and leaders. This was a great opportunity for me. From the field trips I got knowledge related to Buddhism and leadership skills. This program was very effective for me because it provided knowledge and experiences that are useful and that I can apply to my humanitarian response work.

Before this program, I had many goals and I wanted to do many things but I didn’t know how to start or how to achieve my goals. Now, from this program, I got ideas about how to start on my personal goals. When I go back home I want to continue my English learning. And then I’m going to share experiences from this program with my colleagues, especially related to power structures, co-counseling, and climate change. I want to start to do counseling for Internally Displaced Persons (IDP), because now they face deep suffering and have psychological pain because of the civil war in my area, Kachin State. During these three months, the level of my self- confidence has gone up. My English skills have also improved. So, I can say this program is a part of my life. Thank you very much.

Darwin Ilango (India)
I came here to develop my English skills. But in this course I not only learnt English but also about society, climate change and Buddhist social action. This course inspired me a lot. When I go back to India, first I will share my experience and teach about global warming in my NGO institute.

When I came to this program my thought was that I wanted to earn more money, I wanted to buy a car. I also wanted to help poor people’s education and health. These were my aims. When I came here I learnt about racism, gender inequality, casteism, co-counseling, meditation, Tai Chi, global warming, and other areas.

But global warming made the most impact on me, because the world will soon be in a danger zone. Due to the effects of global temperature change we may face a lot of natural disasters, like cyclones, floods, and drought. I decided that I have to work to protect the environment by protecting natural resources.

First I want to develop my village by planting trees and raising awareness about solar energy and climate change. Then I plan to form a group of friends to start a campaign about global warming and planting plants along the roadsides. We also need to help protect agriculture and the diversity of livestock for future generations.

Other Students
We have chosen to protect the identity of two of our students, given the sensitive political situations they come from. They both wrote strong statements about their goals. One of these students wants to start a school that will educate the local community both in English and in the traditional language. The other has already begun translating texts in English into the local language and vice versa, creating new avenues for language study. Both see English as a tool of empowerment that facilitates a broader connection with the wider world.
Dear Ajahn Sulak,

I understand that your birthday this year on 27th March, when you will be 84 years old, will also be your auspicious Seventh Cycle Birth Anniversary. I would like to offer my congratulations and pray that you may continue to live long and in good health.

As I have mentioned to you several times before, I admire your work with the International Network of Engaged Buddhists. I appreciate the courage and steadfastness with which you have sought to foster a broader understanding that the Buddha’s teachings remain relevant today, that kindness and compassion are essential in all our human relations and that we all have a responsibility to protect our natural environment. I also value your unwavering support for the just cause of Tibet.

As a token of our friendship, I am sending you a consecrated Vajra and Bell under a separate cover.

With my prayers and good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Dalai Lama
The Roar of a Buddhist Lion
Sulak Sivaraksa’s 84th birthday - on his path as a Socially Engaged Buddhist
17th March 2017 at Siam Society, Bangkok
26th March 2017
at Wat Thong Noppa Khun, Thonburi
My kalyanamitta (virtuous companions) are going to celebrate my birthday at The Siam Society under Royal Patronage on 17th March and at Wat Thong Nopakul on 26th March. The former will be ‘worldly’ while the latter Dhammic. On both days, there will be musical recitals by Burmese artists. This is a gift from my Burmese and Thai friends. The former provided the musicians while the latter plane tickets. The musicians will also be performing in Ayutthaya as part of the “250 years of the fall of Ayutthaya and the rise of Thonburi” cultural program.

It is therefore obligatory for me to give a short speech expressing gratitude to all those who have showered me with loving-kindness. Here I mean not only those who are organizing birthday celebrations for me but also everyone who has supported me throughout my life. I will not waste the precious time of our guests by giving a lengthy talk.

Based on the Thai solar calendar, my real birthday is on 27th March. I will spend that day with my family. On 29th March, or my birthday according to the lunar calendar, I will travel to Austria to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the World Future Council in which I am one of the founding members. After that, my Thai friends will take me around Europe. If nothing unfortunate happens such as sudden illness, I plan to return to Bangkok during the Songkran festival.

I have lived a long life, much longer than my parents and masters. I have always recognized the importance of being heedful and mindful. At least, I try to be heedful. To others, I may look healthy, especially for my age. But old age and sickness have worn me down. Death can strike me at any moment. As such, I have depended on the expertise and goodwill of numerous health professionals—masseuse, acupuncturist, dentist, ophthalmologist, otolaryngologist…you name it. They are helping to maintain and monitor my health. They are helping to keep me alive. I have had near death experiences before such as in 2010 and 2016. According to one of my doctors, I am almost deaf and in need of hearing aids. Fortunately, my brain is still functioning properly. Therefore, I can continue speaking and writing.

Aside from physicians, I also depend on lawyers and legal experts. They are protecting me from the powers-that-be, more specifically, from their threats, arrests, and long trials. They are keeping me alive outside of prison. The powers-that-be have not lessened their attacks on me despite my old age. My lawyers also provide me with moral support. Moreover, they have never demanded a single penny for their work.

I have encountered some successes in my life. But on the whole my life is characterized by failure. I have failed much more than succeeded. Why? If I were successful, we Thais would not still be living under a military dictatorship. We would have a truly constitutional monarchy; that is, one in which the monarch is under the constitution. We would have a transparent and accountable monarchy. The Crown Property Bureau would be owned by the people. The military would not be a deep state. Farmers and manual workers would have equal social dignity.
Businesses would be guided by Right Livelihood. (Some of the businesspeople I have known give me hope in this respect.) The rivers and canals would be clean, and fish would return to them. And so on.

I have long been involved with university education in the country, I have taught at many universities. I feel that university education in this country is quite hopeless. None of the universities could teach students about Goodness, Beauty and Truth. This is not to say that there is not any good professor in the country. There are also promising students every now and then, but they still lack moral courage. They still need to find the time to learn from the poor, rural as well as the urban.

I believe that the hope for the country is with the rural people. This is because they have not been completely uprooted from this is traditional culture and wisdom—unlike our middle class who are indoctrinated by the education system and mainstream mass media. If our middle class gravitate toward Santi Pracha Dhamma, they will be willing to learn from the poor and lower classes—as Wanida Tantiwithayapitak had done with the Assembly of the Poor. If this happens, there might be a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel.

The situation in neighboring countries is not fundamentally different. The Burmese Sangha however appears to be stronger than their Thai counterpart. Moreover, the Thai Sangha is a highly centralized institution that caters to the interests of capitalism, militarism, feudalism and absolutism. Nevertheless, the younger generation of monks do offer some hope—for instance, the Sekhiyadhamma group. They will become a more prominent force in society if they are willing to learn from the ordained elsewhere such as in Taiwan, where there are six times more Bhikksunis than Bhikkhus.

My highest aim in life is to serve the Buddha’s Dhamma. I have also followed Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s footsteps in equally honoring other religious traditions. Religious people should cooperate with one another and even with non-believers. Together we can help undermine and overcome greed (capitalism and consumerism), hatred (militarism) and delusion (mainstream education and mass media) in the world.

I am proud to have founded the International network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) in 1989, the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) in 1995, and a university for socially engaged Buddhism last year. I will not go into details about them, nor will I talk much about the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation, which was established in 1969, and which serves as an umbrella organization for a number of NGOs. SNF has also helped to build an international network of kalyanamitta.

My business is almost a complete failure too, except that our publishing activities produced books that challenge the mainstream, and offered spirituality appropriate to the modern world, but I am fortunate to have found several kalyanamitta among my colleagues. It is also heartening to see my children being involved in it.

My most important kalyanamitta are my wife and children. My wife has always been supportive and caring, she has warmly welcomed every visitor or guest into our house. My two daughters have been most thoughtful and helpful. As a Thai saying goes, it is more desirable to have a daughter than a son. This is because the only good thing a son can do is to be ordained and wear a yellow robe.

I attribute any success in my life to having virtuous companions, ranging from the international to the familial levels. They have regularly made me listen to criticisms that I’d rather not hear. They have made me a stronger person. My ability to engage in critical self-reflection may lapse at times, but I am
Admittedly, I have also been too idealistic. I have inadvertently devalued the importance of some individuals such as Sanya Dharmasakti. As for Kukrit Pramoch and Luang Wichitwathakan, I maintain that they deserved my disrespect and harsh criticisms. Of course, Kukrit was much more talented than and wasn’t as two-faced as Luang Wichit. But he was a leading exponent of absolutism and a dangerous enemy of the democratic forces in the country—and hence of the people.

On the whole, Seni Pramoch was not a bad person, he was simply too weak and severely lacked leadership qualities. Khuang Aphaiwong on the other hand possessed some leadership qualities, but he was not faithful to the democratic forces.

Many soldiers have seen me as their enemy or have turned me into a public enemy. Some generals such as Arthit Kamlang-ek and Suchinda Kraprayoon had even ordered my arrest. I forgive them. Not long ago, the son of General Arthit—himself a soldier—came to ask for my forgiveness for the wrong that his father had done to me. This shows that Buddhism is still a positive force in Thai society. Even young soldiers understand the essence of Buddhism.

My books and speeches may not be particularly profound and original. When I leave this world, they may be quickly forgotten, but my work has stressed the importance of truth. Today, it’s not even possible to criticize King Naresuan. How can we live in such a society as ours? How is it even possible to teach history in such a society? Many people already know some of the things that I have raised. They simply lacked the courage to express them publicly.

III

I have spoken and written about many venerable individuals because I believe in the Buddha, who stated that venerating the venerable is an auspicious act. However, the best form of veneration is attempting to realize an individual’s unfulfilled hope or promise.

Thus the best way to venerate MC Sithiporn Kridakara is to make farmers and their families have equal social dignity.

The best way to venerate Pridi Banomyong is to make the people truly sovereign in the country, develop meaningful democracy based on egalitarianism, minimize and overcome class inequality, and provide free education for all.

The best way to venerate Puey Ungphakorn is to realize Santi Pracha Dhamma, and empower and develop local communities.

The best way to venerate His Holiness the Dalai Lama is to transform hatred into love and find ways to institutionalize Buddhist economics and political science.
Sulak Sivaraksa

wouldn’t name a building or foundation after me when I am gone.

My books have appeared in many foreign languages, this is largely because of the good-will of my foreign kalyanamitta. They have promoted my work wherever they are. It is incorrect to assume that I am where I am simply because of my capabilities. Even when I was invited to teach abroad, it is because of my friends’ support. In particular, I am thinking of the time I was forced to flee the country for my safety, and served as Distinguished Visiting Professor of Social Change at Swarthmore College. Donald Swearer was primarily responsible for this move. I am still very proud to have taught at Swarthmore. To cite another example, David Chappell made it possible for me to teach at the University of Toronto. Not only that, he supported my English publications and was the driving force behind the book Socially Engaged Spirituality, a present for my 70th birthday.

To celebrate my 84th birthday, Matthew Pistono published The Roar of a Buddhist Lion, my biography in English. A Thai book will also be released. It is a collection of interviews that Pracha Hutuwanwrat did with me over many years. It was made possible by the assistance of Nipon Chamduang and Preeda Ruangwichathon. It will also be translated into English.

My Burmese friends who held a birthday party for me in Rangoon last year had also published the Burmese translation of The Wisdom of Sustainability: Buddhist Economics for the 21st Century. This year, I am informed that they will publish a volume consisting of materials by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Pridi Banomyong, Puey Ungphakorn, and myself translated into Burmese.

I feel deep gratitude for all my kalyanamitta inside and outside of Siam.

Lastly, I would like to stress again that having kalyanamitta is most important to me. If we are able to link our kalyanamitta into a broad, international network that confronts systemic injustices without oppressing others, we will be able to defeat Evil (mara) with nonviolence.

Recommended Readings

Voices from Religions on Sustainable Development
Editor: Khushwant Singh and Judith Steinau Clark
Publisher: German Federal Ministry For Economic Development and cooperation (BMZ)

The Guru Drinks Bourbon
Author: Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse
Editor: Amira Ben-Yehuda
Publisher: Centre for Peace and conflict Studies, 2016

Building Relationships Across Divides
Author: Dr. Laurens J. Visser
Editor: Teresa Ma
Publisher: Centre for Peace and conflict Studies, 2016
The latest charge of lese majeste against me

I received a summons from the police to report myself to the Chanasongkram police station on 7 March 2017. Someone had accused me of perpetrating lese majeste. It is a serious offense in Siam—with a punishment of 3 to 15 years’ imprisonment. I was also informed that since the country is still under a military junta, the police would transfer my case to the military court. This meant that I would be arrested immediately—with little chance of receiving bail. Fortunately, my lawyer had connections with the upper authorities. As such, the Chanasongkram police granted me bail of 300,000 baht.

At the police station, I had an opportunity to read the allegation against me. The police then asked me to report my side of the story, which is excerpted below.

***

Pittaya Wimalin has accused me of defaming, insulting or threatening the king, queen, or the heir-apparent. To this accusation, I would like to make the following remarks.

1) Article 112 is intended for the protection of the current monarch only—so that the people would respect him or her. It does not cover the protection of past or deceased monarchs. There’s a legal precedent. In the Reign of King Rama VIII, a newspaper headlined that a female nurse slept on the king’s bed, implying that something salacious was taking place in Boromphiman Throne Hall. The police wanted the attorney to charge the newspaper’s editor with Article 112. By the time the case reached the Chief Attorney, the king had suddenly passed away. The Chief Attorney said that the case had to be dropped because Article 112 no longer applied to the protection of the late king.

2) I was likewise accused of defaming and disrespecting King Naresuan the Great, who ruled Ayutthaya between 1590 and 1605 (or more precisely for 14 years and 271 days). Clearly, this falls outside the purview of Article 112. And my talk at a conference on the revision and rewriting of history, held at Thammasat University on 5 October 2014, was purely for academic purposes. I encouraged students to learn from history, to think and read critically when studying history. I pointed out the importance of reading various, even conflicting historical sources, before upholding a certain story of the past.

I claimed that politicians and military figures have transformed King Naresuan into a superhuman entity in order to indoctrinate the people in various ways. Thus, students should learn to interrogate critically the historical sources on King Naresuan, questioning to what extent they are accurate or plausible. For instance, did King Naresuan strike a fatal blow to Prince Minchit Sra of Burma in the epic elephant battle (according to Thai sources), or was the Burmese Prince killed by a bullet (according to Burmese sources)? Both Thai and Burmese sources agreed that the Burmese Prince was killed on that day.
But how did it happen?

According to the chronicles of the Persian Ambassador who was close to King Naresuan, the king and his brother rode two elephants charging straight into the enemy line. Apparently, the other generals and soldiers could not keep up with them. The king was terrified and fired a bullet at the Burmese Prince, killing him. The English translation of this account appears in the *Journal of the Siam Society* (under Royal Patronage), vol. 101 (2013). It was translated into Thai and published in the *Pacarayasara* magazine, vol. 38, no. 1 (December 2013- December 2014).

The story Somdet Vanarat of Wat Pa Kaew heard from King Naresuan essentially corroborates the Persian Ambassador’s account. The king also revealed to the monk that he would sentence to all the generals and soldiers who had failed to catch up with him on that battle day to death. The monk then intervened to ask for their pardon instead. Their lives were thus spared.

The Dutch had a trading post in Ayutthaya during the time of King Naresuan. Dutch sources confirmed that the king regularly punished and tortured military subordinates who got on his nerves. From the Dutch account, the king also appeared to be interested in war-making above all other matters. Again, consult the *Journal of the Siam Society* for this historical insight.

Ekathotsarat succeeded King Naresuan. His reign was more peaceful. He stopped all wars. He issued laws that truly benefited the people. Why don't the Thai ruling elites today see his virtues and use him as a role model (perhaps instead of King Naresuan)?

This was the gist of my speech. Some individuals pathetically failed to understand or hear what I had tried to say. I was thus charged with Article 112.

3) As for the case of King Mongkut, I argued that he really discovered the famous Ramkamhaeng stele with the inscription from the Sukhothai period. He didn't fabricate it, as many international and even Thai experts such as Piriya Krairiksh have alleged. In other words, I fully supported King Mongkut on this matter. Yet, I was still accused of disrespecting him. The police simply believed the accusation, they did not seek to verify the allegation by examining the record of my talk. They did not even interrogate the other conference speakers to examine what happened on that day.

   Many have called me a ‘Siamese intellectual.’ An intellectual is someone who has courage to speak the truth and to challenge lies and mediocrity. I have not received any monetary reward for assuming this role. Nevertheless, I feel great pride that many people have entrusted me with it. I have always been interested in Beauty, Goodness, and Truth, and I have assumed the responsibility of the intellectual since I was young; that is, for almost five decades. Unsurprisingly, every military dictatorship in the kingdom could not tolerate me because they wanted to distort the truth, totalize power, and destroy democracy. For instance, in 1984 General Arthit Kamlang-ek got me arrested and sent to the military court for allegedly breaching Article 112. Fortunately, the attorney decided to drop the case at a very early stage. Likewise, when Suchinda Kraprayoon was in power, I was charged with lese majeste. I fought the case in the court for more than four years, and I won. Fortunately, the lawyers did not charge me a single penny. Nevertheless, my family was negatively impacted in various ways during the long trial. I quote parts of the Court’s decision below:

   *When considering the first and the second phrases that the prosecution charged as lese*
majeste within the context of the complete talk, it is clear that the defendant sought to teach the students to be conscious of the essence of democracy which has the King as head of state. He warned the students not to live a luxurious, consumer-oriented lifestyle, not to worship being rich, not to admire people in power, and to be concerned about justice and righteousness...

...[The words he used] have no connotation of indicating that there is anything wrong with the monarchy. Moreover, there are many places in the talk where the defendant tried to protect and express loyalty to the monarchy....

...The wording in the disputed sentences is strong, impolite, and inappropriate. However, when we look at the whole context of the talk and not only parts of it, we can clearly see the intention of the defendant was to give a talk that was respectful and loyal to the monarchy. He did not want any group of people to use the monarchy for political purposes. Accordingly, what the prosecution refers to as constituting lese majeste is not reasonable and contradicts the truth. The evidence is not strong enough to find the defendant guilty of lese majeste.

Another case is related to a talk I gave at Khon Kaen University on 11 December 2007. My talk was on local philosophy. Having obtained an arrest warrant from the court, the Khon Kaen police came to arrest me in Bangkok. On 6 November 2008, at approximately 2am, I was released on bail. Subsequently, I had to appear before the Khon Kaen court every month. In the end, the police couldn't find any evidence. They did not even have a record of my talk. The case was simply withdrawn from the system.

From my experience, the police have been less a force of law and order than of disruption and abuse. However, I went sympathize with the police, they are just doing what they are being told to do by the powers-that-be manipulating behind the scene. I noticed this every time I go to the police station. All the police investigation officers I met over the years have been friendly and courteous. I thereby express my gratitude to them.

Recommended Readings

Awakening of the Heart
essential buddhist sutras and commentaries
Author: Thich Nhat Hanh
Publisher: Parallax Press

Opening the Heart of the Cosmos
insights on the lotus sutra
Author: Thich Nhat Hanh
Publisher: Parallax Press

The Buddhist Discipline in relation to Bhikkhunis
Author: Phra Brahmagunabhorn
Publisher: Phlidhamm Publishing
From the perspective of a Practitioner & Management Level

Original article by: Chao-hwei Shih, Bhiksuni, Taiwan
Translated by: Chen Hsiongcai, Dharmacharya, Singapore

I just saw a posting from a friend of the religious faculty on my Facebook page which said:

"A child who knows how to make noise will have sweets to eat, why will this child only argue and not do it!!"

I couldn't resist and replied:

"I want to ask a question: why would you give a sweet? Without a sweet, a crying child would then eventually grow up!"

The above conversation reflects the different perspective of peer pressure versus the management level.

I have always encouraged my students:

There are three categories of people in this world: The third category are those who likes to take advantage of others, the second category are those who insist on obligations measured with authoritative powers, while the top category of people are those whom are able to give without attachment to forms, (meaning those who can contribute to sentient beings without seeking anything in return)

The Sangha monastic order also has the presence of these three categories of people. Those who takes advantages will always say that they are here to cultivate and practise the Dharma, and not here to work, this do social category usually portray an image that they are all for cultivation and everyone is obliged to help them in their everyday mundane aspects of living!

As a Dharma practitioner, one should have the virtue of true sincerity of contributing without attachment to forms, and contribute to the masses without a heart of selfishness. However as the functioning part of the Sangha Monastic order's management level, one has the responsibility to maintain the operation of the Sangha order in order to strike a balance between powers & obligations. Thus when I lead the masses, I always make it a point to remind my students:

The group's system must strike a balance between powers & obligations, with such foundational basis, it will allow fellow cultivators to march towards being the top category of human being; which is the high standard of contributing without attachment to forms.

As for the third category of people who likes to take advantages, I would sincerely advice they, and if they do not respond nor change oneself after this advice, I will ask them to leave the Sangha Monastic Order.

A Dharma friend told me: “Venerable, you are overly strict! You showed care for homeless wanderers and even concern for animals, but why with almost no tolerance towards such small problems with fellow cultivators?”

Yes, as part of the management level of the Sangha Monastic Order, I am head-hearted. The team of the Bodhisattva learners must be attributed...
with high standards of psychological quality, only then will they have the virtues of one who practices the Bodhisattva Path - attributes, capability & trust. If the third category of people who takes advantages continues to stays in the order, those on the second category of power-obligation people will retrogress and start to suspect, why do the kids who make noise eat sweets to eat?

I have always heard people saying: “One would rather lead a troupe of soldiers than lead a troupe of Sangha Monastics”. The reason for this statement is because Sangha Monastics are all equal in rank and not divided into ranks like the army, where the superior has strong authoritative power over the lower ranks. In addition this order complimented by a system of rewards and punishment for the soldiers.

But, if we make reference from the Vinayas (Buddhist Book of disciplinary codes), even though monastics are equal in rank, there is still a presence of a system of reward and punishment. There are many instances in the Vinayas whereby punishment is given on the basis & spirit of non-violence as the bottom line. The most serious form punishment is to expel a person out of the Sangha Order, while the secondary form of punishment includes expulsion from area tentatively, and does not permit cohabiting, conversations with others until one has confessed to be relieved from the punishment of being ignored. I discovered that when a leader faces a bad monastic, one is not swift to make a precise decision and action to expel or ignore this person, which results in a mixture of both good & bad people, and even results in the formation of cahoots with gangs of the bad ones!

To be honest, to lead a troupe of Monastics is not necessarily harder than leading a troupe of soldiers. The key to leading a Sangha order is to maintain fairness & discipline, as long as one holds true to this key, by establishing the practice of observation to disciplinary codes, those whom are lazy and undetermined will naturally back out knowing their own limits.

The problem is that the Sangha order is often mixed with “cultivator” and “management”, facing the third category of people who likes to take advantages and very often it is hard to strictly restrict the bad habits of those who take advantage, but to ask the 2nd category of people and not to be not to be concerned for personal gains or losses. This will let those “kids who makes noises” to eventually get weaker. The 2nd category of people will become more confused because of the bad virtues of the 3rd category of people, which may also affect the 2nd category people to retrogress, making it harder for them to march towards the aim of becoming the top category. Lastly, an ideal buddhist organisation often unknowingly creates the notion of “those who dare will win” attitude, which eventually degenerates into a Buddhist organisation with no codes of precepts and discipline.

The responsibilities of a leader of a Sangha order is tremendous, he or she needs to draw a clear lines between the roles of the “cultivator” and the “management”, and quickly inter-grasp between the two roles with a single identity. From a personal perspective, one can be forgiving and embracing, but from the view at the management level, one must be clear minded, quick to clear disputes, divide resources and responsibilities.

To conclude, it is only by rejecting the third category of people whom like to take advantages, that it is possible to follow the footsteps of those in the 2nd category, and eventually grow into being part of them. The leader should and must rely on a good system of governance, such as the Pratimoksa as the teacher, leading the people in the 2nd category to help them march towards being part of the category of people who contribute without attachment to forms.
What should we do to fight these problems while maintaining our inner peace?

International Women's Day 2017,
National Human Rights Commission of Thailand

There are problems involving children, women, violence, people's suffering and injustice, which are clearly visible and should be solved. What should we do to fight these problems while maintaining our inner peace, this is a big challenge.

“The Buddha was magnificent. He clearly stated that women could achieve dharma as well as enlightenment in the same way as men. The Buddha did not only challenge the caste system, but also the capacity of human beings which created opportunity for women to practice the dharma systematically,” said Dhammananda Bhikkuni from Songdhammakalyani Monastery, a former associate professor from Thammasat University, Associate Professor Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh or “Luang Mae”. She pioneered the path of Bhikkuni in Thailand, completing the 4 assemblies of the Buddhist community. Her Buddhist path started in 2001, when she took her “samaneri” ordination named “Dhammananda.” She was the first Thai woman to be ordained in a Theravada monastic lineage. Than, she received full monastic ordination as a Bhikkhuni in the Theravada tradition in Sri Lanka, 2003.

In terms of education, Luang Mae graduated with a Ph.D. in Buddhism from Magadh University in India. She is considered the first Thai woman who graduated with a Ph.D. in Buddhism. She is a well-known religious scholar, especially at the international level in relation to issues of women’s participation in ordination.

The topic of her Ph.D. thesis discusses about “a comparative study of Patimokkha Rules for Bhikkuni in 6 sects,” which confirms that she is one of the people who are well informed about Bhikkuni. Her knowledge is deeply rooted, in terms of Theravada Buddhism as well as other sects. From the beginning, academic strength has helped her overcome the challenge of becoming Bhikkuni through ordination, which has lead her to the understand her personal rights and responsibilities. As a result, she is able to protect women's rights and responsibilities on the Bhikkuni road with stability.

In 2014, after over 12 years of ordination, “Luang Mae” was appointed by Mahintawangsa, the patriarch from Sri Lanka, among both Sanghas “Pawattini”, or the first female preceptor of Thailand. Until today, “Luang Mae” still focuses on building quality and knowledge for Theravada Bhikkhuni in Thailand, as well as establishing a network of Bhikkhuni and Bhikku in Asia.

In addition, Thailand is still part of the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. It is an agreement
which involves promoting gender equality, eliminating rules, laws, traditions, customs, and values that appear to discriminate women. Thailand has also joined the international convention on civil and political rights since 1996. Thus, Thailand must protect the fundamental rights of every citizen, which translates into meaning that people possess freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. If these rights are violated, the freedom of choosing or having religion will no longer be available. Similarly, freedom of expressing the religious practices or personal beliefs may be restricted by particular conditions enforced by the law to maintain safety, peace, hygiene, or morality, or only to protect the fundamental rights and freedom of others.

Recommended Readings

The Soldier, Above All Others, Prays For Peace
Author: Sarah L. Clarke
Editor: Karen Simbulan and Helen Jeanks Clarke
Publisher: Centre for Peace and conflict Studies, 2016

A Homegrown Approach To Accompaniment In The Face of Violence
Author: K M Teresa Ma
Publisher: Centre for Peace and conflict Studies, 2017

Religions for Peace
Asian Conference of Religions for Peace (ACRP)
Publisher: Centre for Peace and conflict

Soothing In 3 Minutes
Publisher: 香光尼僧團

I have arrived
I am home
Author: Thich Nhat Hanh
Publisher: Parallax Press

Buddha Mind, Buddha Body
Walking Toward Enlightenment
Author: Thich Nhat Hanh
Publisher: Parallax Press
began to meditate and study Buddhism as a last recourse when what I’d been striving to achieve in my life failed to bring me inner peace. I was ready to try something radically new: to sit on a cushion, and look at what was inside me. With the guidance of my teacher, I sat in stillness with my own inner situation. I also studied Buddhist ethics to guide my actions, and to live more skilfully with life’s happenings. With time, I grew to wonder how I could be of service to others. It was a ripple that reached out from the centre of my own practice.

That’s the experience I had reading Seeds of Peace: stillness and the observation that a committed practice of Buddhism by some individuals can evolve into a global social action movement. I describe reading this journal as stillness because it is a deep slow read. You are invited to contemplate. The quick fixes and entertainment focus of the mainstream media are notably absent.

Seeds of Peace is the quarterly journal of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) - an organization with Buddhist and non-Buddhist members in 20 countries. INEB was founded by Sulak Sivaraksa, a distinguished Thai Buddhist and human rights activist, and other luminaries including the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh. What this global community aims for is the creation of a more ethical, moral and peaceful world through social action.

Sivaraksa is the author of several pieces in the issue I reviewed. In “What It Means to Be a Buddhist in a Nutshell”, he writes: “A point that cannot be over-emphasized is that suffering is not only personal but also social and environmental. In fact, personal, social and environmental sufferings are interconnected in the web of life. It may be readily apparent but capitalism and consumerism are the leading causes of suffering in the present world. We must learn to see systemic or structural violence. When we can see through all these, a possibility to end suffering with wisdom may emerge.”

The journal combines news and opinions ranging from finding inter-religious peace, and global warming to social justice, and alternatives to mainstream economics, politics and education. There were also book reviews, remembrances and obituaries.

Reference: the Pacific Rim Review of Books
Issue Twenty-one Vol. 11 No. 1 Publication Mail Agreement Number 41235032
Unveiling Buddhism: The True Essence of Buddhism still shines under the changing world.¹

Thanakorn Juangpanich (tr. Teerawat Atikankowit)

“Is this really the Land of Buddhism?” is the most popular question frequently raised by Thai people when things in society do not go in the right way as they ought to be. However, when further examine the question, that is, what is the real definition of their “Land of Buddhism”, it always ends up with unclear and paradoxical answers. For instance, ironically, although the titles of many Buddhist temples in Thailand mean “peace” or “quietness”, these places are always noisier than the department stores. Many netizens head off to the internet war by making many hate speeches toward one another. Many of them, the internet users, make cyber wars against others. As there is the “Buddhapuja”– the worship or honoring with merit and cultivating oneself to be a better person by paying homage to the Buddha–many now turn to the worship or honoring of “material things” instead of their enlightened one. It seems that all the architectures in the temples and the sacred Kasaya robes worn by the venerable monks which are supposed to signify the meaning of the true way of dharma, now can be seen as both “preserving” and “destroying” Buddhism.

Nonetheless, someone who can answer our question about the "Land of Buddhism", Thailand’s myth of its own pride, is Jayasaro Bhikkhu. Ajahn Jayasaro, on one hand, is a “Mahathera” (Elder monk) who has been ordained for more than 37 years. He was a former Abbot of Wat Pah Nanachat –The International Forest Monastery in Ubon Ratchathani province, in which a part of the Forest Monks School of Theravada Buddhism, once led by Ajahn Chah Subhaddo, and supposedly the school that never went astray from the original way of the Buddha, was established. On the other, he is just Shaun Chiverton, a “Farang” (Thai slang for a “western guys”) from England who was born and raised in a society that is far away from Buddhism. Many think that maybe Shaun can diagnose this disease in this so-called land of Buddhism, looking at it from an outsider’s point of view.

Throughout the world’s political and economic situations, and with the development of technologies, which have come with many tragic-and-sorrowful incidences, perhaps it is time to reconsider Buddhism in Thailand and find the road that we can take to overcome the obstacles that we are facing.

Species of Religions
In Jayasaro’s opinion, before we talk about the situation of Buddhism in Thailand, we have to understand the nature of Buddhism itself in the first place. Jayasaro was born and raised in a Christian society before he came to know

about Buddhism, and before he was ordained as a monk in Thailand. In his teenage years, he strongly sought for his own meaning of life. He read many books about spirituality that could be found in Cambridge. He traveled as a wanderer to many places, from England to Belgium, Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia, Greece, Turkey, Iran; Afghanistan; Pakistan; and, finally, to India. His experiences, in his perspective, led to the conclusion that although Buddhism is called by people a "Religion", its nature is significantly different from other religions, including Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.

"I think those religions that originated in the Middle East are different from Buddhism. We can say that there are different species. The Monotheistic religions, which I call a belief system, emphasize on Faith, such as Christianity. Western people usually call it 'Christian faith' instead of 'Christian religion'. But Buddhism does not emphasize on faith, its ultimate goal is reason. As a human, one ought to live his or her own life rationally. Therefore, for me, Buddhism is not a faith but rather an 'Education System'. As a result, those that emphasize on faith could easily propagate themselves. What they have to do is just telling their believers to keep faith. They can only walk by faith. But the one that I call 'Education System'—Buddhism—its people can only walk on the rational way of life. The more teachers are qualitative, the more students get rational. In Thailand, our Bhikkhus establishment, the one that has its own duty to protect and spread dharma, is so weak. As a result, it affects the whole social structure.

Another difference between species of religions is that Buddhism does not have its main goal to convert people from other religions. You can see that wherever Buddhism went, there was no violence, for we always live in peace and harmony with native people. Buddhism adapted itself into all contexts and cultures that do not directly go against the core of Buddhism. Since the Buddha's era, he lived in the time that many things were not right in his own sight. He knew well that he could not change the whole society. Therefore he only just disagreed with few wrong myths of India that directly went against the dharma. For instance, the fad during his time was that there was a certain reality that you cannot change—the four castes. Buddha thought that we could not judge people by their origins. And, another instance, the sacrifice ritual to the deities that involved killing humans and animals. For Buddhism, all lives must be preserved dearly. Killing others, regardless of their race or species is sinful, and those who committed these bad karmas are essentially going against the core of Buddhism. This is what we always insist.

Nowadays, the paradoxical situation of Buddhism in Thailand is that we do not practice what we always preach and insist. As a consequence, the weakness the Bhikkhu-Sangha establishment in Thailand is clearly the opposite direction of the true Buddhism. The line that separate 'true Buddhism' and 'false Buddhism' has now become indistinct. Its spectrum can be differentiated into many frequencies—100%, 90%, 80%, and so on. This is what I mean by 'indistinct'. For example, many lay people know that they are not supposed to pray or beg anything from the Buddha. Most of them know that this is against Buddhism, but they still want to do it. Due to this they tendency, go and pray to other gods and deities instead. In Thailand, Buddhism and other religions—Brahmanism, and other folk religions—have lived together for a long times. I think, eventually, the quality of Buddhism will have to be protected, in a way that the venerable teachers will have to point out and differentiate that 'this is the true and original Buddhism' and 'this is not the true Buddhism'; 'this is material consumerism, not the Buddha's way'. We have to fight these new heresies that come in the name of our Buddhism. If we do not, you can see what's happening now."

**This is the Land of Buddhism**

Moreover, Jayasaro insists that we have to collect data and evaluate this data with no hurry to arrive at a conclusion. Otherwise, the conclusion may make sense, but may not match with the realities. For instance, we may conclude that western people who turn to study Buddhism frequently seek for wisdom, and can quickly get to the point, while Thai Buddhists have nothing but blind faith. Ajahn Jayasaro thinks that this is a myth.

"When we compare Thailand to Western societies, the Eastern world to the Western world, we have
to be extra careful. We cannot compare an apple to an orange. In the case of western people, when they come here to study Buddhism, many of them are middle class people who are disappointed with their own cultures and want to find something else that can make them happier with their lives. Hence, they make their own decisions about their life, which makes them qualitative. If we assume the same for Thai people, I think it is unfair, and does not show us the reality.

Please do not forget that when we talk about Thai people, we are examining a population of 50-60 million. It is understandable that when we think about them, we may just take them for granted and stereotype them. Of course, most Thai people emphasize on faith, but at the same time, there are a few that seek for wisdom in their lives. The latter also study Buddhism in the way of the Education system. Long time ago, some old people told me ‘Alas! I am anxious about my children and young grandchildren, they are all modern people. They do not care about religion and morality. What should I do, Venerable?’ Nowadays, I encounter the opposite. Many young people come to me and say, ‘Alas! I am anxious about my own parents and grandparents. They do not want to go to temple. What should I do, Venerable?’ This, for me, is weird. But things have already happened.

The world has changed. People's lives do not depend on temples or religion like before. Lay people and monks are just strangers to one another. People nowadays have to struggle for their hard existences and they get tired from their works, there is no way that they can get time to seek for wisdom in their lives from religion. So, has given birth to many ‘fast food dharma’ in media and on the internet, on Facebook or Youtube—this kind of dharma has become popular among the current generation. I think, of course, this fashion of spreading dharma is interesting and valuable. However, I do also feel disappointed.”

When asked the question if ‘fast food dharma’ has been successful in promoting Buddhism to new generations, why does not ‘true and original Buddhism’ take on the same approach to promote itself and spread dharma to the masses? Ajahn Jayasaro pointed out that sometimes ‘increasing the number of the Buddhist followers is not the main goal of true Buddhism.

“Democracy or achieving a majority of people cannot justify the value of things. According to what the Buddha said about Democracy, Autocracy, and Dharmacracy: Autocracy deals with the selfishness of one’s own interest. Dharmacracy is different, it does not depend on what the majority thinks about the truth of life. What the majority values and holds on to so dearly is always inferior. It is the lowest common denominator. For instance, if we put two books on the table—the dharma book written by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and a pornography book—and let people freely decide which one will they pick. Undoubtedly, most of them will pick the latter. Therefore, that which makes it easier to entertain and fulfill people’s desires will be more successful. People always say that what the majority values dearly must be ‘good’. But I think what the majority values dearly can also be ‘bad’.

The outer - inner Buddhism

Despite the myth that Buddhism is a religion that is only concerned about the mind and supramundane spirituality, Jayasaro insists that true and original Buddhism is also concerned about the mundane world, in the sense of preparing the way of dharma for ordinary people.

“The first and original name of Buddhism in the Buddha’s period was called ‘Dharmavinaya’ (discipline or guidance). Dharma is what is ‘inner’. Vinaya is what is outer that surrounds us. Buddha never taught people that if their mind was in a peaceful state, then everything would be alright. Of course not! When he established the Sangha (dharma community) he clearly said that its main purpose was to prepare and nurture the right and suitable that favored mental development. The term ‘vinaya’ is not just a monastic code of monkhood (Pratimoksa), it can also mean law, convention, tradition, and anything that we can manage in our personal or community affairs according to dharma. If we understand this, we must attempt to establish a system that makes people believe that if we ‘do good things, then good things will happen to you. If do bad things, then bad things will happen to you’, or ‘as you sow, so you reap’. If we see the patron-client system if makes people unequal, leading to
social discrimination, we know that this is against the core of Buddhist culture. If such a system is not established, people will say that ‘for people that do bad karma, good karma still happen to them; and for the people that do good karma, bad karma still happens to them. The Good people are always oppressed, and the Bad people are always oppressive. Why does this happen?’ I think this is what happens when we let ‘value’ replace ‘vinaya.’ This is the reason why our Buddhist culture declines.

Vinaya is very important, it keeps us conscious. For instance, how can a mother sit and meditate when her little child is in danger? How can we sit and meditate when we live in a community that is so full of chaos? We have to set our contextual environment to be suitable for our meditation first. Otherwise, one’s own state of mind in meditation does not work in the right and conscious way. Buddha suggested to us that our meditation practice should work in the suitable context, that is, basically, the four external necessities of life (clothing, food, lodging, and medical equipment should be met). You cannot blame the poor or lower class people for avoiding meditation and Dharmic Practice, because they have to struggle for their existence. The Buddha said, the King or the Government is responsible to fulfill the outer basic needs of the people. I do not mean that the Government should make everybody equally rich, what I am saying is that in order to let people cultivate themselves in the dharma, it is important that the Government provides for and fulfills the basic outer needs (good infrastructure, economic livelihood) of the peoples.

In society, we usually have 10% of the population that are good people, and we another 10% of the people that are bad people. The remaining 80% of people exist in between these two groups, we need to be more concerned about them. To provide good public services to these people is very important. If we create favorable situations for them, they will be inclined to be good and will gain motivation to cultivate good Dharmic values within of themselves.

The benefit of one’s own self and of others.

According to the current economic system—the free market economy, man is defined as Homo Economicus. He will do everything for his own advantage and benefit. The supramundane peace, that transcends the worldly economic and society struggles, which all religions teach is misunderstood by people that ‘peace’ can only happen if you yourself accept and are at peace with the material world. Let it go, detach from it, and let your state of mind go beyond it. The more you detach from mundane affairs and keep them out of your mind, the more you can be happy. I totally disagree with this, to be I think this is wrong way to follow if you claim yourself a Buddhist.”

“Self-sacrifice is for the benefit of all creatures”, this is the Mahayana idea. When I went to China, Tibet, and Bhutan, the people there called us ‘Hinayana’ (the small vehicle that carry creatures from suffering to liberation). When I heard this I told them that our Theravada Buddhism never refused to help other people. Our doctrine is that the dharma practice does not work at all, if we do not help others and let ourselves be helpless. We insist in the idea that together, we will both help others and ourselves.

You can also observe that NGOs activists have worked for the benefit of public society. However, it is seen that such activists only work for a short time get tired, and quit. Why? I think it is because they only do it for others, not for themselves. They are kind to others, but not to themselves. They think that ‘good people only do for others’, and that is where I disagree. You have to start thinking that you will do good for yourself first and after that you can go and help others. If you start thinking like what I am suggesting, you are practicing the right dharma. You will know your mind better than before, you will know your own kleshas—the defilements—that caused your suffering. To do good for all creatures, one cannot separate one’s own benefit (in the right way) from the benefit of others. We can say that Buddhism is all about self-interest. But it is self-interest in the sense of ‘self-control in the right way and truly-actually knowing one’s own self’.

People always think that the word ‘self-interest’
is all about seeking for money and power for one’s own selfish gain. But in the Buddhist perspective, we will first ask: How are money and earthly belongings relevant to happiness? This is interesting because if we can get through the basic problem of struggling for our existence, the relationship between money and happiness does not go in the same direction. There is a research stating that if you are in the middle class, if there is a situation where your income is increased, the increased income cannot really make you happier. It is superstitious to believe in the quote ‘the more you’re rich, the more you’re happy’. I would like to say that our conscious effort towards self awareness will be the essential indicator for human qualities of self-interest. If people cannot understand this, they will go astray. As a result, they will know that the more they think they do for themselves, the more they approach their own self-destruction.

In fact, I think there is a significant thought in our known mantra chant. When we chant ‘We will do this for the happiness and benefit of our own selves for eternity.’ This makes it quite clear! ‘for the happiness,’ ‘for the benefit’ of ‘our own selves’ , not only of ‘my own self’ and ‘for eternity’, means that it is in the long run. This is the main goal of Buddhism. It’s clear.”

After I heard this, I felt that Jayasaro means that although the main goal of Buddhism is to eternally liberate one own self from all suffering in Samsara, one can start practicing this through following the basic functions of life. Maybe, I think, the self-cultivation of dharma practice begins with ‘desire’.

Desire and its understanding in Buddhism has been misunderstood by people. Jayasaro said, “we never teach people to get rid of their desire. In fact, we teach people to turn their tanha (desire) into chanda (aspiration/motivation) as much as they can. The difference between desire and aspiration is that, desire emphasizes only on reward aspiration emphasizes on the outcome. The outcome does not demand a reward, such as money. Ever this intention you can imagine the quality of the outcome that results from with aspiration people.

In the western countries, we have the terms ‘intrinsic motivation’ and ‘extrinsic motivation’. What do they mean? ‘extrinsic’ means that our motivation comes from outside. For instance, one will do their best for to gain a job promotion and salary. ‘Intrinsic’ means that the motivation comes from inside. Research shows us that intrinsic motivation is better. One research study demonstrates intrinsic and extrinsic behaviour in children. In the study, there were two sample crops of children. The two groups were given a game to play. They let these two to play. They were given 30 minutes. The children would be rewarded if they followed the rules of the game. However, only one group will be rewarded. It turned out that the first group stopped playing after 30 minutes. The other group continued to play regardless of the time given, as they enjoyed playing the game and did not care about the reward. This is the difference between tanha (desire) and chanda (aspiration/motivation).

Be awakened and learn
No matter how much you talk about Nirvana (Liberation from suffering), or any other hard-to-understand high dharma concept, Jayasaro pointed out that people can fluently chant basic mantra chants in Pali, but cannot understand its meaning. There is no need to talk about the many misunderstandings stigmatized in the name of Buddhism. However, should we not reconsider why we carelessly and frequently say ‘Thailand is the Land of Buddhism’?

“I do not think that Thailand is the Land of Buddhism, not at all. But, of course, I think that Thailand has its own quality to become such the land of Buddhism. However, we have to be more careful here, we have to ask ourselves first that do we want to become the Land of Buddhism? If we do not, it’s fine, no problem. However, if we do, then there are a lot of things that need to be fixed such as education, etc. Most of our children and young generations nowadays lack the skill of thinking and conceptualizing.

Many have analyzed the causes of Thailand’s education problem. For me, in my perspective, the cause is that we imported the western education system during the late 19th century from western people. We took it seriously as a universal doctrine for all mankind to develop. Please observe when we say ‘western’ and ‘universal’. They mean alike. What is ‘western’ is also
'universal'. We imported many Western concepts and ideas to Thailand, without considering adapting them to our own context or our own culture. We took in everything without knowing their origins. As a result, here we are, in a situation where nothing works.

Buddhism is synonymous to an education system. You will see that the practice in Buddhism can be concluded in just one word—Trisikkha (Threefold Learning). Sikkha means “learn”. Trisikkha means the threefold learning, which are Sila (learning in higher morality); Samadhi (learning in higher mentality); and Pañña (learning in higher wisdom). I think that the threefold learning captures all the essence of human life.

Given this I contemplated that if the core of education in the Buddhist sense is to learn about being human, and given that Thailand's culture is based on Buddhism, why don't we just set our education system in accordance with the Buddhist framework? Of course, the whole of Buddhism cannot be the only solution for all problems in the world, but at least we can set the system to be more coherent with Buddhism. If we can execute even a part of this idea, we will have the best education for system the human race. Moreover, this kind of education system will go along with our Thai culture, in contrast to the imported system, where is everything from outside.

Nevertheless, the term 'trisikkha' can make people feel uncomfortable for its religious origin, which does not match with the education system in the modern era. Given this, Jayasaro picked the term 'Four Bhavanas' (the four developments) instead. The Four bhavanas are: kaya-bhavana (development of body); sila-bhavana (development of morality); citta-bhavana (development of mind or development of consciousness); and pañña-bhavana (development of wisdom or understanding). He said that he chose this term to be a part of the ideal philosophy for his schools, the Thawsi School and the Panyaprateep School (the former is a primary school the latter is a secondary and high school). These two schools are Buddhist schools where Jayasaro now serves as advisor.

“I feel this framework is suitable for fixing the education system's problem. This ideal philosophy, its moral foundation, is comprehensive, and can go along with Trisikkha. The term 'bhavana', in fact, means 'development'. To give examples students who study their major in Science-Mathematics, and who get interested in objective realities, they are in the developing way of Kaya-bhavana. Those who study their major in Social Science and get interested in affairs of humanity and society, they are in the developing way of Sila-bhavana. All students can be in the developing way of Citta-bhavana—development of mind or consciousness, preparing to face both happiness and suffering; and, finally, Pañña-bhavana—development of wisdom or understanding from the beginning to the end. Bhavanas can ultimately students lead to the way of knowing the real form of the highest truth. I think that in this framework, we can mix the secular academic curricula with the religious-dharma teachings. They can complement each other. They do not have to refute each other. This is what I propose.”

The Changed World

However, Ajahn Jayasaro told us that the achievement of the Buddhist style of education does not depend on the school curriculum. It depends rather on Kalyanamitra—a good spiritual friendship—between teachers and parents. It is who they have to practice what they preach to the kids, and be good role models for the younger ones. Teachers and parents are responsible for creating a healthy environment that fits with the process of learning of their children. It is the same relation that keeps monks and lay communities together. This is what Jayasaro learned from the time when he was one of the students of venerable Ajahn Chah.

“We, venerable monks, are responsible to be role models for lay people. We must prove ourselves to them our sacred and simple life style. We take less from the world but we can live our happier lives. How can we live the luxurious life and preach to lay people that ‘thou shalt live simply as we do'? It's hypocritical. When I was with my Master, Ajahn Chah, he was a talented person at preaching what he really practiced. Many western people, like me, read his dharma books and heard about his homilies before. But it's different from hearing from himself directly. You can read and think: Wow! This is wonderful. The difference between reading dharma books...
and actually practicing the dharma is this—when we were with Ajahn Chah, he preached what we already read, but it seemed like we just heard it for the first time. It was weird! Many of us felt pleasantly piquant after hearing what he taught, though it was just a simple dharma. Our faith in him is stronger than before. He taught us from his true heart. He practiced what he taught. He did not teach us from the books but from his own life. This was very impressive for us. Nowadays, technology has gradually surrogated us humans. This may impress many of us, but for me, a deep understanding between Master and disciple will never be old-fashioned.”

Yet, Jayasaro never expected anything from Thai society, especially what he proposed on the education system.

“Lucky was I who served and learned from Ajahn Chah. In that time, Ajahn spread his dharma teaching to many western disciples. Many of these disciples thought that good things are going to happen and many western people will know Buddhism. But Ajahn Chah said: Do not think that you can scoop the whole water out of the world’s ocean of suffering in one time. You cannot make it dry. But, yes, of course, you can try to do it just one scoop, day by day. That’s enough. This teaching is still loud in my mind until today. So, I will not expect anything from what I propose. I believe that in the next two or three decades the world will change, whether it is—environment, global warming, or artificial intelligence. We will eventually get to a time where any efforts made by the human race will not make any difference. We cannot imagine now what the world can possibly become in the future. We always say that we have to educate our children to be prepared for the world. I think this is wrong, the fact is that our children are not going to live in this world we know, they would rather live in the world unknown to us. Most of what they learn and study will be thrown away just like what we did when we got computers and the internet.

To this, I think what schools should do is to young children prepare to get ready for ‘the world that is theirs, they will say, ‘OK, I am ready for the challenges!’ In reality, Buddhism supports us to try to understand ourselves; to be consciously aware of all changes, and to know the causality of all things that happen to us. These are the basic teachings of Buddhism. Unfortunately, people nowadays do not pay attention to this.

If you observe the political tensions in the past decade, you will see what I call the weakness of Buddhism in Thailand. Buddhism is the only religion that teaches people to detach even to their own opinion. It teaches people to be humble and to listen to those who rebuke them with wisdom. You cannot find this in any other religion. Many religions teach people that ‘We are right, they are wrong’, or ‘only we know the truth’, or ‘there is no truth outside my religion’. In Buddhism, we have a term ‘Saccanurakkha’—to preserve and defend the Truth, which means that if we believe in something, we do not say that we really know it. There is a difference between belief and knowledge. We may, for instance, believe in the wrong thing, and sometimes totally believe in it. Of course, each of us has their own rights to believe whatever he or she wants to. But please do not say that you really know what you believe. You need to make an allowance for disappointment. Everything is impermanent and not always sure. You have to accept that.

Nowadays it’s getting more dangerous. People believe everything that they read from the internet and social media. People today only accept what they want to accept, they let their biases and prejudices lead their minds. This is not good, to like only those who like you. I rather think that true friendship demands dissent.

Buddhism teaches us that we, all creatures, are friends that have the same nature of uncertainty. All the social myths we know are just artificial ones. It’s just a convention. We always live in two worlds at the same time—the true world and the social-constructed world. When we live in the latter one, we can do nothing but to follow the rules. In the true world, we are all the same, regardless of our social statuses, ethnic races, sexes, etc. This is a basic teaching of Buddhism. However the opposite is happening in Thailand, people just do not want to accept the truth.

Although what Ajahn Jayasaro said sounds
sensible, I cannot help but think that it is also paradoxical. If I believe in what he just said, then it will go against what he has said before. For him, however, the belief or faith itself never harms people. On the contrary, if we can set it right in the cultivated way, this basic ‘faith’ or ‘belief’ could be like a scientific hypothesis to be proved.

"Many use the word ‘blind faith’ to blame anything they think is irrational. But I think otherwise. I think we need a basic faith to be like our first step to take, like a working hypothesis. Do not forget that Buddhism has deep teachings about being human. Sometimes, we cannot comprehend such high teachings. So, faith or belief, in this sense, is necessary. In Buddhism, faith is not an evil thing that we should avoid, we can have it. But we should be aware that it’s just the means we use to get to the end. Ordained as a monk for 40 years, there is not even one part in Buddhism that I can really say is not true. So, I too have a little faith in the teaching of Buddha."

New Year’s break and holidays
Before we bid farewell to venerable Jayasaro, we begged him for some blessing. Ordinarily, monks will bless us for luck and for the new ‘step’ in our lives. Jayasaro, on the contrary, chose to bless us with a ‘stop’.

“In Thai, we have a greeting sentence by asking people ‘where are you going to?’ This is interesting because it always signifies the ‘movement’. I think people should learn to ‘stop’. The complete life has its perfect pitch when it knows when it should move and when it should stop. That’s what we call balance. People nowadays only know how to move, how to run. They do not know how to stop, how to be still and just be with their own selves. People learn how to communicate with others through mobile phones, through Facebook, through LINE, but do not learn how to communicate with their own selves. Therefore, in this New Year’s break and holidays, I bless you to stop. Do not to forget yourself, do not forget to turn off your phones, do not forget to disconnect from others and go back to communicate with yourself.

It is necessary, I know, to take a new step in your life during New Year. But as a Buddhist, you should learn to take a stop and feel some peaceful stillness. Buddha said ‘Stillness is the ultimate peace’. Hence, at least we have to learn to be still, we have to try to prove his teaching, whether it’s right or wrong. I suggest you to sit in meditation after you get up from your bed. In that state of mind, you can feel your mental stillness. You can prove that it’s better to sit in meditation after get up than before going bed. After you meditate, you can observe your mind whether your mind is better or not. Can you now calm your mind? Are you now more merciful to your fellow humans? Do you have more prudence? Are you more conscious? If you can contemplate on these questions in your everyday life, you will get encouraged to find happiness. This is a result of having a clear mind and head.

What do people fear the most? I think we fear our own selves, we are afraid to let ourselves be idle. What if we turn this fear into an opportunity to cultivate ourselves? What if, instead of being idle, we find some time to meditate? We can meditate anywhere and anytime. This includes: when we take a bus, when we are on the BTS sky train, when we are in the elevator, when we walk when we eat, when we breathe. Just be still with yourself here and now. Take a short time to meditate during some moments of your day. All the stress and problems that we are facing in life is not a big deal. They become big because they gradually cumulate, day by day, month by month, year by year. If we continue our lives like this in the long run, it will be dangerous. You can stop sometime. It’s ok to take a break, just a break. It’s ok to reset our mind to be more conscious, which can help us to decease our depressed stress. Then it will also, in a good way, affect people around you. My blessings are: Learn to know when and how to ‘stop’.

In this changeable world, everybody wants to run and run, every one of us feels like we are in an endless competition. And, yes, we are tired. This short and clear suggestion from venerable Jayasaro shows us how to win this competition—to stop and take a break sometime, before we consciously continue our race of life.
Glenn Paige is a man who in midlife re-created himself and his purpose on the planet. At the age of 44, he shifted from being an academic Cold Warrior to a man dedicated to nonkilling. He later described to me his transformation in this way: “It finally just came to me in three silent surprising words: ‘No More Killing!’ Technically it might be called the result of ‘cognitive dissonance’ when values and reality are perceived to clash. But it was nothing rational…and was definitely related to many years of study of Korea and involvement in relations with it, South and North. My book, The Korean Decision, justified war. The results finally sunk in to me – neither peace nor freedom.”

I asked Glenn to describe in a more detailed way what had happened when he experienced the words, “No More Killing.” He replied: “The words/idea ‘No More Killing’ specifically came in an instant from the Korean experience – and was simultaneously generalized to the whole world, not just war, but all forms of killing. The first thing I did was write a book review of my book on the Korean War…. Then I applied the same critique to the entire discipline of political science.” Now he is applying the same critique to the world.

I first knew of Glenn in the late-1960s. He came to the University of Hawaii in 1967 as a professor in the department of political science as I was finishing up my Ph.D. in the department. I would leave Hawaii in 1970, a few years before Glenn would experience his transformation in 1973. At the time, Glenn had the reputation for being a Cold Warrior, having served as a soldier in the Korean War and then writing a book in which he justified the US involvement in the war. I was strongly opposed to the Vietnam War, which was increasing in intensity and body counts at that time, and I had little tolerance for someone who had built his career on justifying any war. I was neither open-minded about war, nor tolerant of those who supported it. I felt that war was a way of misdirecting the lives of young people by propaganda and putting them in the untenable situation of having to kill or be killed. In that regard, I have changed my views very little over the years, but Glenn changed very much.

Glenn is a well educated Ivy Leaguer, who received a B.A. from Princeton and an M.A. from Harvard before being awarded a Ph.D. from Northwestern. He had carved out a place for himself in academia with his study of the political decision of US leaders to enter the Korean War. He had taught for six years at Princeton before accepting a position at the University of Hawaii. He didn't seem like a strong candidate for transformation, but something mysterious happened, perhaps something latent in his character asserted itself with, as he described it, “three silent surprising words: ‘No More Killing!’”

Glenn transformed himself from an established academic who studied political leadership into a man who envisioned a peaceful, nonviolent world and was prepared to lead by example and personal commitment in attaining such a world. He publicly recanted the conclusions he had earlier reached and written in justification of the Korean War, and he went on to renounce killing and to establish a Center for Global Nonkilling.

How rare is that in academia? It is so rare as to have an impossibly small probability of occurring. Glenn's initial path in academia was one that was bringing him considerable academic success. He had been well received by the foreign policy establishment in the United States, and his studies promised a comfortable academic career. However, his work prior to his transformation offered only the conventional “truths” that are deeply embedded in a culture of militarism. It justified one war, which helped build a foundation for the next one. It perpetuated the myth that wars are necessary and therefore glorious, the lies that induce new generations to follow orders and being willing to both kill others and sacrifice their own lives in war. His earlier work, in short, was consistent with adding academia as a third institutional leg to the Military-Industrial Complex that Eisenhower warned against.

Glenn's transformation was so rare, in academia or any other profession, as to appear as a miracle, a change not easily explicable by reference to experience in our society. There are few modern day examples of such transformation. Glenn is walking in the path of champions of nonviolence like Thoreau, Tolstoy, Gandhi, Schweitzer and King. Like
intellectual underbrush to forge a path toward a nonkilling political science and nonkilling societies. Thank you for envisioning and building an institution that will work toward these ends. Thank you for your compassionate and impassioned leadership aimed at achieving a world in which the killing of other human beings is taboo. Thank you for being you.

David Krieger is President of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation (www.wagingpeace.org).

Praku Supa Jarawat

Sulak Sivaraksa

Praku Supa Jarawat, Wat Tha Lat, Kut Chum district, Yasothon province was a monk in the countryside that included the knowledge of the morality for the villagers, difficult for monks in the city to access. Although most monks came from countryside and sons of poor people, the education of the monks in the modern system made many monks change to aspire to be middle class. If compared with modern society, Praku Supa was an outdated man, which in a monk’s ranks was low but he had no sense of inferiority. He supported local herbs and traditional medicine, supportive of younger generation with their initiatives. Even though the groundbreaking, such as local currency, successfully in many countries. If the Thai government understands this, local currency would be groundbreaking from state’s currency.

The central administration has control over everything but the state must be in capitalism and link with multinational corporations. When I had chances to pay respect to Praku Supa, I feel auspicious, whether at his temple or when he came to the city. Now he passed away I feel sad and reminiscent of his contribution. I believe that one day someone will see his goodness more than is evident now.
Reminiscent Phamaha Cherchchai Kwiwangso

Sombat Tharak

Today, Thai clergy lost one Buddhist monk, i.e. the passing away of Phamaha Cherdchai Kwiwangso (Sangsuri) My opinion of Phamaha Cherdchai is that he would go to heaven. As far as one knows, he was a polite man, his temperament was never been in passion, composed. He lived a simple life, was joyful and had a good sense of humor.

Phamaha Cherchchai was a researcher on various subjects. He studied Dharma with Bhuddhadasa Bhikkhu at Suan Mokkh for a long time. Besides, he established Buddhadasa Suksa, coordinating with various monks. He collected books at Suan Mokkh and established in a new Buddhist monastery at Fang district, Chiang Mai province.

I knew him around 2004, when I started “Buddhadasa’s Dhamma Study for Spiritual Health Project.” He always journeyed between Nakhon Nayok and Chiang Mai for 2 years until the end of the project. When I worked with him I had knowledge about Dhamma. When I experienced any problems, he would help me solving those problems. Even though I sometimes did something wrong or felt irritated, he never blamed me. He was a good Buddhist monk. I learned to sip tea and know the techniques about tea drinking, with his advice, drinking tea is my habit until today. At the end of the project, I didn't have contact with him, because he mostly stayed in Fang. I also moved to work in Bangkok. I always listened to the news about him.

When I heard that he established a temple for the villagers in Loei Province, I followed through Facebook to follow up the progress. But he didn't write anything on his Facebook frequently, there would be another news when he was ill and hospitalized at Srinagarind Hospital, Khon Kaen University, hoping that the illness would be healed.

However, he passed away on Wednesday, April 19, 2017 at 03.20 A.M. The moral principle and goodness that Phamaha Cherdchai practiced, is a lamp that shines the way to truth.
Dear Sulak,

As we write to congratulate you on attaining your 7 รอบ we look back to the time when we first arrived in Thailand in 1962 and you were kind enough to take us under your wing. You not only introduced us to many interesting people and places in Bangkok, took us to Wats and taught us about Thai Buddhism, but generously invited us to your home and included us in several family events.

Among other early memories we recall going with you and Nilchawee to Hua Hin where Chim and Nick, then both aged about three played on the beach together. We recall your kind introduction of us to Princess Chongchit who gave us her favorite dish, ปลาทู น้ำพริกกะปิ, telling us that she had once made it for King Chulalongkorn. It was through you, too, that Jane was introduced to the Jayanama family and with your help later published a condensed English edition of Nai Direk’s memoirs.

Long before you founded the Sathirakoses-Nagapradeepa Foundation, fathered the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, or became the editor of Seeds of Peace, we knew you as the founder of a highly respected bookstore, editor of the Social Science Review, as a public intellectual, and as the author of numerous publications.

Above all we already had come to know you as a man who never flinched from showing the courage to speak truth to power. When you felt compelled to leave Thailand in 1976 because you had been charged with lese majesté for the first of what were to become several times, it gave us an opportunity to invite you to our home in Seattle. We later saw you there on other visits made under more fortunate circumstances.

Although our paths diverged in later life, we remain truly grateful for these and other memories. May your turn continue to be positive so you will remain in good health for a long time to come.

ขอแสดงความยินดี
Biff and Jane
Foreword

There is nothing romantic about ethics, it is a muscle, the more you use it, the stronger it gets. And in that process life reveals to each of us how much we can develop and strengthen this quality.

Whenever I write about ethics, I think of Sulak Sivaraksa. I wonder when it was that he—a most conscious person—realized what kind of life he was going to live, what kind of person he really was, what kind of person he was going to become, it can't have been all that clear at first. Training to be a barrister in London would have confused many, particularly an outsider. Empires develop cultures which are both seductive in method and superior in attitude. They aim to draw the outsider in as a way of undermining their sense of themselves. An imperial education is always a constant test for any outsider. A few come out stronger, more independent, pre-maturely conscious of the drama which each of our lives represents.

Sulak was one of those.

There is another particularity about Sulak, he belongs to that rare group of deeply ethical activists who have made themselves. I don't mean that in the conventional sense of economics or ambition. Some people are shoved by birth or career into ethical crises that they cannot escape. They might be reincarnated into a role or born or promoted into it as spiritual leaders or royal figures or political chiefs. Suddenly they find themselves staring into a mirror of ethical choice. All positions of responsibility come equipped with an ethical mirror. They cannot escape it, they have to choose again and again, and the citizenry or worshippers outside the room of responsibility will make of these choices what they can. As will history. You might call this the existentialism of power and responsibility.

Sulak belongs to another breed, a rare breed. Not necessarily better, but rarer. People like him are not trapped into ethical choices by their position. They move towards their ethical soul as if alone, as if propelled by fate or by their own character. And in doing so they become a reference point for others, a model. This is not an easy role. Much of it is played out in full public view, yet you have no institutional cover, you are exposed, always alone.

There are never many of such people among the living. I am lucky enough to know a few, including Sulak. This role, at first glance, seems to contain a contradiction—between the toughness needed for the public place and the modesty needed for spirituality. Someone like Sulak must live on that thin, fragile line. He must speak out, people need him to be seen and heard. This is, in fact, a profound forum of modesty as it involves constantly risking everything. The non-violent movement, of which Sulak is an important part, exemplifies this. It is not about passivity, it is action. It is all about walking up to the line, crossing it if necessary, being there at the heart of a cause. In his address to the courtroom in 1995, at the end of a two and half year legal battle in which the military tried once again to destroy him, he said, “The essence of being a human is having the courage to confront truth without pretension.”

I often think of another moment, when Sulak felt he could only express his opposition to a Myanmar/Thai pipeline by making

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Roar
Sulak Sivaraksa and the Path of Socially Engaged Buddhism

John Ralston Saul

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Roar
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Matteo Pistono

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Book Review
Roar: Sulak Sivaraksa and the Path of Socially Engaged Buddhism
John Ralston Saul
his way into the construction camp in the northern jungle in order to sit down in its path; he, a distinguished, elderly, revered public figure. The police arrived and reluctantly arrested him, but he refused to get into their air-conditioned car, and they certainly didn’t want to put their hands on him. So Sulak walked the many kilometers to the police station, with a police car on either side, doors open, as they tried to cool him with their air conditioning.

Humor is always present in Sulak’s methodology. But so is his sense that action alone can do very little. People must change themselves, they must battle the three poisons of greed, anger/hatred and delusion. And while Buddhism asks a great deal in this way of the individual, Sulak insists that we must also recognize an additional factor of enormous importance: the extent to which social structures block individual change. Yes, we must each find ways to change ourselves, but that is not enough. If we simply walk away to face our personal drama, the injustices of society will remain in place, and our absence will have the effect of indifference before the suffering of others.

I will always remember opening the first page of Seeds of Peace, where the first line read: “Western consumerism is the dominant ethic in the world today.” Sulak is not complaining about the false comfort of public life or waxing romantic about simpler ways. What he is saying is that the Buddhist precepts of not killing, not stealing, not abusing sexually, are all violated by the system of Western consumerism.

The point here is not simple, it is multifaceted. Sulak lives his life in a certain way, as a follower of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa, seeking a simple form of life in the midst of his complex engagement.

However, he also bases his actions on words and arguments. He is a thinker, a wordsmith. His actions must emerge from intellectual and existential realities. This allows him to work out what brings things together. On top of that, he is devoted to the importance of local culture. This is the reality of people’s lives. He follows Buddhadasa’s principles of turning selfishness into the service of others, respecting our friends’ religions as our own, and working with those friends to overcome materialism and the dominance of economics. Why? Because they lie at the heart of selfishness.

These various ideas may seem at first both unrelated and inoffensive. And yet, because Sulak uses real language with real actions of self-engagement, he has been twice driven into exile, has been in prison, has lived a life of risk in opposition to corrupt power and what he would call selfishness. He is a man who uses action to advance words.

Yes, this life of his has provoked anger in those he opposes. Yet that anger merely reveals who they are. There is a persistence in Sulak, a long, long view, and a desire to bring people together. At the Festival of Ideas in Adelaide in 2001, he said, “There must be a spiritual component to reconciliation and this must occur in the individual, family, community and nation.”

We have met repeatedly over the last thirty-five years; first at his house in Bangkok, in perhaps 1980; no air conditioning, screened and open with a fan blowing, as he talked of the need to approach the world differently; In Toronto during his second exile, when PEN Canada made him an honorary member; In Bangkok, in a celebratory mood, the day after the courts acquitted him in 1995; In Yangon celebrating his eighty-third birthday with his friends and admirers. And on and on. Each time, I am struck by his ability to describe reality in an honest, tough way. But also by his wry humor, his persistence, that sense that we must all keep pushing because the cause is good. And in the midst of a world of violence, greed and consumerism, his determination to work for the good is always shaped by a strong sense of restraint. Things must change, but not by giving in to the poisons of those forces and habits and structures he seeks to alter. This requires determined restraint, but also great and constant strength, an intelligent and spiritual strength. Sulak remains, as he has always been, a model for a great number of people. He is certainly a model for the way I try to live my own life. There are many of us around the world who say the same thing.
New Silk Road for Life and No-Nukes

Walking 26 Countries 11,000 km (2.0 years)

Announcement/Action Seminar/Conference
A. 2017.02.03 (Wed) Seoul: World Life Charter (WLC)
B. 2017.07.20 (Mon) Hiroshima: History of Hiroshima
C. 2017.09.02 (Fri) Tel Aviv: Decision of Taiwan
D. 2017.10.07 (Fri) Hanoi: Liberation from Vietnam
E. 2018.02.07 (Mon) Singapore: Concept of WLC Acts
F. 2018.05.07 (Fri) India: Holy witness Dalai Lama and Hindu Leaders
G. 2018.07.17 (Fri) Holy witness Islamic Leaders
H. 2018.07.12 (Istanbul): Holy witness Patriarch Bartholomew
I. 2018.08.20 (Mon) Holy witness Pope Francis
J. 2018.02.03 (Fri) Holy witness Provenzan Leaders
K. 2018.02.03 (Fri) Czech: 3,100th Anniversary Day
L. 2018.02.03 (Fri) Vietnam: Marching by 100,000,000 people, 50th April
M. 2018.02.03 (Fri) Holy witness Papa Francesco
N. 2018.02.03 (Fri) Vatican: Conference of Holy leaders

South Korea
Standing from Japan in Seoul on 3 May, birthday of Buddha

Italy
2019.04.19
Vatican City State
21 April 2019
Easter Day

Austria
2019.02.21
Vienna

Bulgaria
2018.10.30
10.28 (18)
Bulgaria

Czech Republic
2019.01.18
~ 01.24 (7)
Prague

Czechia
2018.12.14
~ 12.21 (18)
Budapest

Germany
2019.01.25
~ 01.28 (5)
Berlin

Romania
2016.10.21
~ 11.13 (24)
Bucharest

Serbia
2018.10.19
~ 12.13 (30)
Belgrade

Slovakia
2019.01.01
~ 01.06 (6)
Bratislava

Romania
2018.09.16
~ 08.09 (25)
Bucharest

Azerbaijan
2016.09.19
~ 09.06 (25)
Baku

Bahrain
2018.09.07
~ 09.30 (20)
Beirut

Djibouti
2018.10.01
~ 12.07 (7)
Djibouti

Iran
2018.09.20
~ 10.18 (25)
Teheran

Nepal
2018.01.19
~ 02.20 (43)
Kathmandu, Lumbini

Myanmar
2017.10.25
~ 11.20 (27)
Yangon

Vietnam
2017.07.29
~ 08.20 (25)
Hanoi, Vinh

Tajikistan
2018.07.20
~ 09.13 (25)
Dushanbe

Lao
2018.06.21
~ 09.13 (25)
Vientiane

India
2017.12.01
~ 12.18 (49)
Kolkata, Bhopal

Thailand
2017.08.14
~ 10.24 (41)
Bangkok

Hong Kong / Macau
2017.07.24
~ 07.27 (4)

Japan
2017.06.09
~ 06.20 (27)
Tokyo, Fukuoka, Nagasaki

South Korea
2017.05.02
~ 05.30 (28)
Seoul, Daegu, Daejeo, Gei NRT, Busan

Integration with the new Silk Road

(Notes: and events may change due to local conditions)

(Translated and simplified)