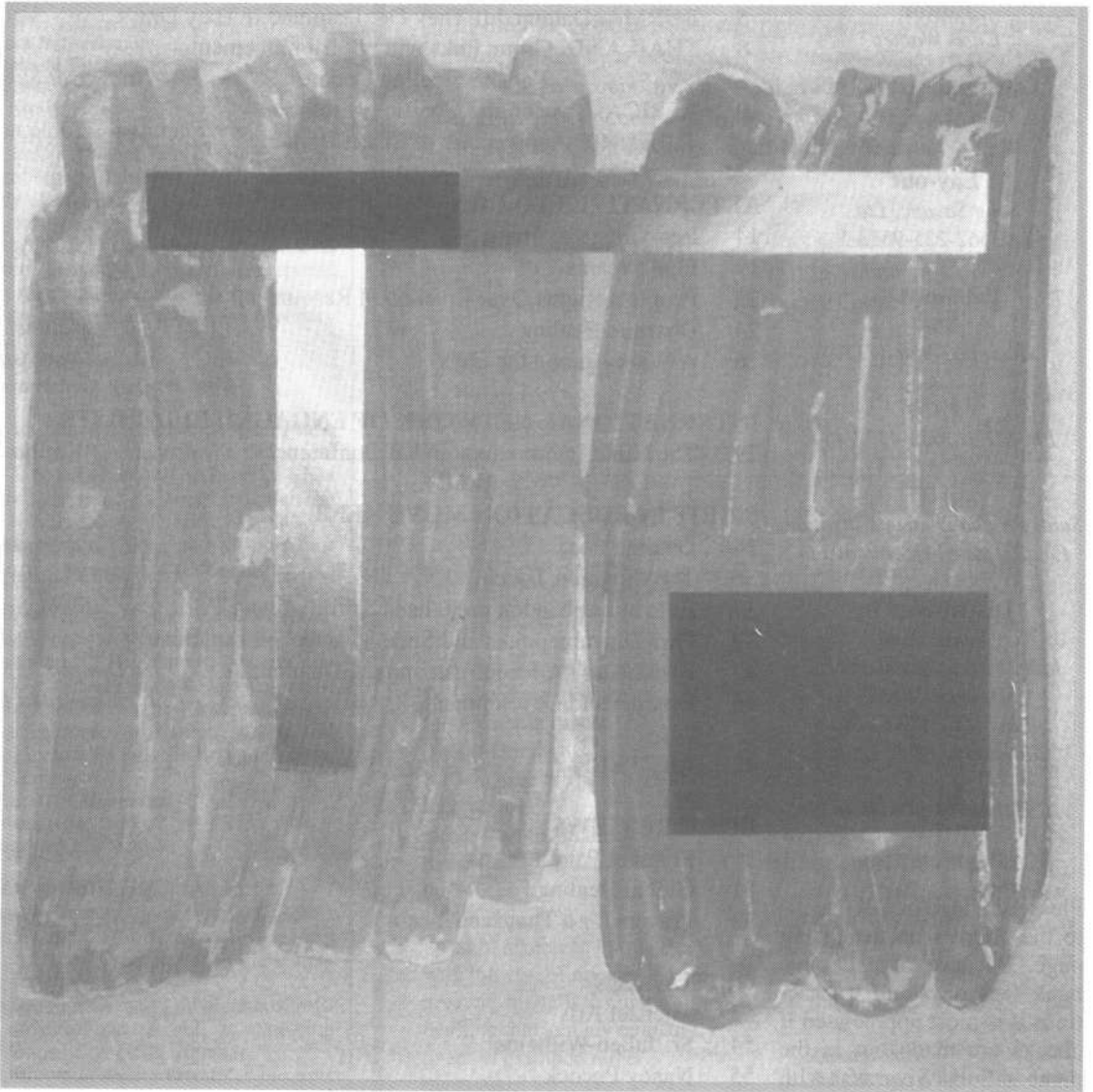


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Dharma and Development



The Role of Spirituality in Human Progress



SEEDS OF

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4 Editorial Notes

COUNTRY REPORTS

- 5 BURMA: Dammed If They Do, Dammed If They Don't *V. Croakly*
8 THAILAND: Group links with global movement
Yadana Pipeline Update *Naowarat Suksamran*
10 AFRICA: Theater and Conflict Resolution *Otieno Ombok*
11 TIBET: 40th Anniversary of Lhasa Uprising

ALTERNATIVES TO CONSUMERISM

- 14 Eco-village Training *Jane Rasbash*
19 Pipe Dreams *Supara Jachitfah*
22 People's Rights Over Livelihood Resources
24 Dharmic Healing *Michael Sheehy*
26 A Walk Among the Hills *Danny Campbell*

INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF ENGAGED BUDDHISTS

- 29 The Ninth International INEB Conference *Venitia Walkey*

SPIRIT IN EDUCATION MOVEMENT

- 34 Dharma Poet *Pravit Rojanaphruk*
36 The Common Touch *Champoo Trakullertsathien*
37 Elite must abandon prejudice and truly honor Pridi *Sulak Sivaraksa*
39 Phra Dhammapitaka and Socially Engaged Buddhism *Ted Mayer*
42 Buddhadasa: Biocentrism and the Dhamma *Donald K. Swearer*
46 Dharma and Development *Sanitsuda Ekachai*

47 LETTERS

BOOK REVIEWS

- 50 Fragrant Palm Leaves *Chris Walker*
51 Global Healing *Adam Simpson*
52 Prayers for a Thousand Years *Kyaw Than*

OBITUARIES

- 53 Michael Aris
54 Sr. Julien Williams
55 Nancy Pocock

11th May is Mr. Pridi Banomyong's 99th birthday anniversary. We intend to publish about him and his works until his centennary.

PEACE

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Seeds of Peace Subscriptions
117 Fuangnakorn Road
Bangkok 10200.

The mission of ATC is to inform and inspire people to seek a way of life based on compassion and sustainability. By collecting stories both of the dangers of rampant consumerism and greed-based development and stories of successful alternatives, ATC and its network members hope to counter the spread of the consumer culture, which is threatening to destroy the environment, cultural diversity and spirituality of our global village.

Alternatives to Consumerism
666 Charearn Nakorn Bangkok 10600.

The Spirit in Education Movement is a new kind of paradigm for education in Siam and the world. The scholars and activists in SEM first seek to understand the ways in which the prevailing social, economic and political systems contribute to suffering and to the dominant culture of violence. The idea is to begin to understand the roots of this culture of violence and through education, to provide an alternate model, which leads to spiritual, physical and mental health as well as promoting social justice. SEM just recently initiated the Southeast Asian Center for Sustainable Communities, a research and educational institute which will hopefully be expanded into the first alternative college in Siam.

Spirit in Education Movement
60/2 Soi Tivanont 34
Muang Nontaburi 11000, Siam

The objectives of TICD are to :

1. Coordinate work among individuals, groups of individuals and various agencies dealing with religions and development in the course of working together.
2. Share experience in and knowledge of religions and development as well as exploring ways and means of working together.
3. Offer training and secure resources in terms of man-power and materials to support and enhance the agencies that need help.

TICD
124 Soi Wat Thongnopakhun Bangkok 10600.

United Nations, New York

10 December 1998

Dear Mr. Arjunka,

I should like to thank you most sincerely for your contribution to the project '*Liberté 98*'. This beautiful book, which I recently distributed to all the participants in the France-Africa Summit in Paris, provides a vivid illustration of art in the service of humanity. With contributions by artists from around the world, it embodies the principle of the universality of human rights more powerfully than words could ever express.

Please accept my profound gratitude for your help in promoting our commemoration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

With my best wishes.

Yours sincerely,
Kofi A. Annan
Secretary General

Mr. Pricha Arjunka
Bangkok
(cover artist)

Benediction

"The hardest part is people.
So Lord, help me face
them without rancor or
disappointment.
Help me see the pain behind
their actions
rather than the malice;
the suffering rather than
the rage."

"And in myself as I struggle
with the vise of my own desire--
give me strength to quiet my
heart, to quicken my empathy,
to act in gratitude rather
than need."

"Remind me that the peace I find
in the slow track of seasons
or an uncurling fern frond,

is married to the despair I feel
in the fade of nuclear war."

"Remind me that each small bird
shares atoms
with anthrax, with tetanus, with
acid rain,
that each time I close my heart
to another, I add to the darkness;
Help me always to follow
kindness."

"Let this be my prayer."

Karen Holden
Frank Lloyd Wright School of
Architecture, Arizona USA

Reprinted from: *Prayers for a
Thousand Years*
(see review on page 52)

EDITORIAL NOTES

When the world seems like a never-ending conundrum of chaos and lack of compassion it can be hard at times to be a social activist. It can also be very hard to be a person born into the regions, which are dominated by violence and lack of human rights, a person well indoctrinated into the creed that money is all. The fact that we all share in this suffering is what might be helpful to notice or meditate on. When I feel depressed about the state of the world as I often do when going over the reports we receive for inclusion in *Seeds of Peace*, I often wonder why we should try to do anything, it seems bleak. But then I think about where it is I might go to escape suffering, think about all of the avenues people may take. None will or can be satisfactory, even on a common sense level they all end up in further misery. So the only thing left is to look with frankness at what is really the root of the craziness we see in the world and how can we help. This is basically what *Seeds of Peace* is about. It may not always be exciting or titillating, perhaps some parts are even depressing on occasion. Nevertheless, if we don't start at the beginning, looking at the problems, and the roots of them, we really can't do much more than try to escape in a conventional sense.

This edition of *Seeds of Peace* continues our steady course toward informing as many people as possible about the true state of the world. That is, we want to show what is under the cover of heavy propaganda and behind glitzy advertisements whenever possible. Secondly, we always want to point out alternatives, positive change that is occurring through the hard work of so many activists, both to give credit for so many jobs well done but also so others in similar predicaments may feel hopeful and be educated about what they can do.

We continue our reporting on the Yadana pipeline here in Thailand as we marked the one-year anniversary of Sulak Sivaraksa and local activists' arrests in the jungle last March. We are publishing an early report on activity in the Salween river basin, in the hopes of stopping another new major development project, one that is potentially very dangerous for the environment and local people in the Salween river watershed. Japanese/Thai and Burmese agencies plan to dam the Salween river inside of Burma and potentially also divert the water throughput into Thailand. In the Alternatives to Consumerism section we have a report on eco-village training in Scotland. An all-important look at what we can do at the community level to live with as gentle a presence on the earth as possible.

We also touch on a theme which is occurring more and more in the area of engaged Buddhism. That is dharma art, the potential healing power of the arts. In some cases, like in the report from Africa, theatre workshops can lead to peaceful reconciliation of conflicts. In others it is the probing mind of the artist who can bring up a jewel out of the mud and show it to us in a way we can readily appreciate, like the great Thai poet, Angkarn, who is also featured.

We also review and preview many books for further reading on these and many other topics in the areas of engaged Buddhism.

As most all of our readers will know Michael V. Aris died on March 27, 1999. He had been in the hospital for cancer and was trying to get a visa to visit his wife Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma. The junta there callously denied his request. There is no way to elaborate on what an outrage it is on the part of the vicious junta in Burma. They have time and time again belied their putatively Buddhist principles in favor of holding onto their power and ill gotten wealth at any cost. It is mindboggling what lengths people and groups of people will go to be deliberately cruel to others in the pursuit of their own aims. We all must truly consider if this does not indeed point out how urgent the issues of human rights, social justice and self-determination are. The selectivity of the world community in addressing issues is another travesty made even more poignant by recent events. NATO is willing to go to all extremes to ostensibly protect the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, (even as it seems they are creating more suffering for all parties in this conflict), the council on war crimes at the Hague puts out indictments against Yugoslav leaders etc. And yet, Burma has been undergoing a serious regression of democracy and ethnic cleansing for decades. Do these world protectors, as they might fancy themselves, do anything to help the cause of democracy in Burma; do they do anything to halt slave labor and plain extermination (extrajudicial executions) as a method of subjugating the ethnic states in Burma? Just as the military junta ratchets up its aggression and slowly but violently eliminates resistance, just as the level of hypocrisy in the western world's foreign policy hits a new high, or low should we say, so too must the people who feel pain in their hearts to live and bring children into such a world become more committed and intense in their nonviolent struggle against these powers.

BURMA:

Dammed If They Do, Dammed If They Don't

Recent reports confirm that surveying for a dam is underway at a site in the southern Shan State along the Salween River. According to an NGO coalition report, a series of teams including Japanese have been travelling with Thai staff from large infrastructure specialists MDX plc Co., from northern Chiang Mai province up to the dam site. Burmese army soldiers have been providing security. This is a civil war area, which is being subjected to military operations and systematized relocation programs resulting in the displacement of thousands of people.

There is speculation that the dam will not only produce electricity for Thailand and Burma, an estimated 3,700 megawatts, but may also entail a water diversion scheme which will bring the water through Mong Ping and across 300 km into Thailand. It would be delivered to the drought crippled Bhumibol reservoir in Northern Thailand. A feasibility study is being carried out by consultants from Thai and Japanese corporations. NGO's anticipate that finance for construction of the dam may come from the Japanese governments 30 billion USD aid package for Asian countries in financial crisis.

The Area

The site where the dam is being surveyed is in the region of the Wan Has La (Ta Sala) river area. There is currently a major bridge being built across the river at Wan Has La near Ta Hsang village. The crossing

links the roads between Mong Pan and Mong Tum townships. This area is a civil war zone, until recently categorized by the military a "black" zone (insurgent dominated area). Due to heavy military offensives since 1996, the area is being reclassified a "brown" zone (government, insurgent shared area). The civilian population continues to be subject to military operations against the main active ethnic resistance group in the area (the Shan United Revolutionary Army [SURA] a faction of the Shan States Army). Systematized relocation and "development" programs under the auspices of the BADP are also widespread. Thousands of people have already been forcibly relocated from the surveying area. The Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF) estimates that 61 villages, 2,031 households (an average household contains at least 5 people), were relocated in Mong Pan township, and 24 villages, 285 households, from Mong Ping between 1997 and 1998.

Who's Involved?

Talk of damming the Salween River and exploiting its hydroelectric potential for the export of electricity to Thailand has been around for nearly twenty years. Five potential dam sites have specifically been proposed within the last ten years. The proponents of the dams include the governments of Thailand and Burma who have formed a joint working commission and signed a memorandum

of understanding in July 1997 regarding the purchase of electricity and, more recently for the use of water from the Salween river. They also include The Asian Development Bank and China. Dam building consultants from Norconsult in Norway, Japan's Electric Power Development Company and Japanese International Cooperation Agency, have been most active in securing bilateral aid contracts from their respective governments to carry out pre-feasibility studies for dams. The Japanese International Cooperation Agency (a government agency) has been working in cooperation with Burma in the areas of irrigation and forestry for ten years. Several Thai companies with bad reputations are also involved. They include Ital-Thai, MDX Plc, and logging company Thai Sawat.

Feasibility Studies

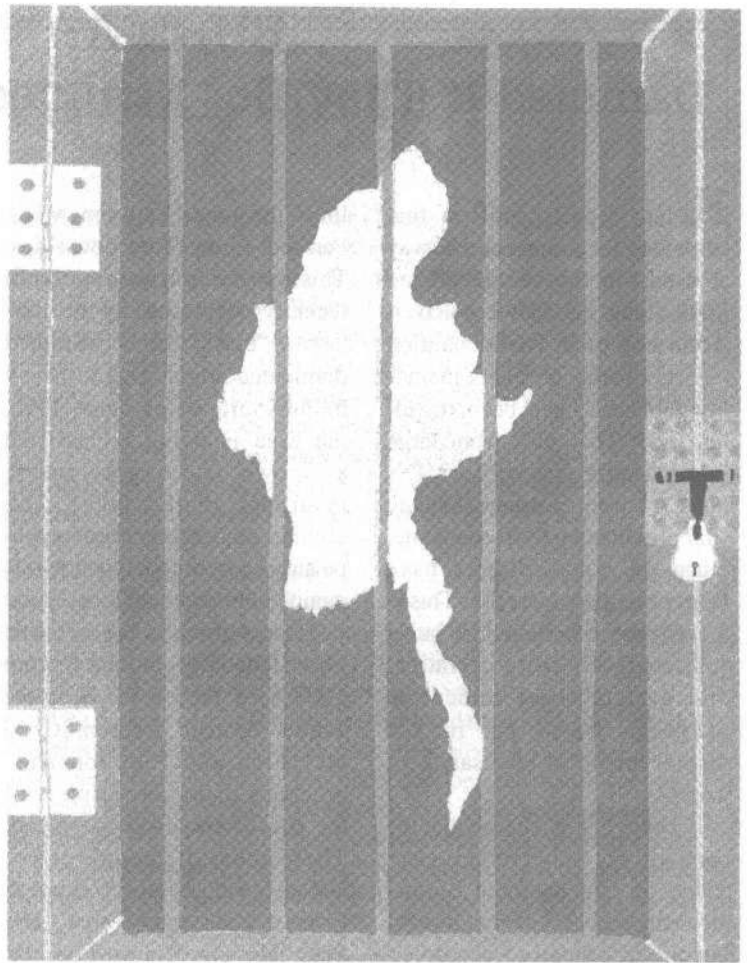
Although a feasibility study is being conducted at the site, proponents of the dam project have not initiated environmental and social impact assessments to address the likely damage to the entire river basin by the proposed dams. Nor have they considered the cumulative effect of the construction of a large number of dams and river diversion schemes on the ecology, biology and local people's means of livelihood. Such studies should be based on the knowledge of potentially affected local people, who understand the rivers, forests and agroecosystems upon which they depend for their

means of livelihood. These should identify the short and long-term harm that the dams will cause to the environment, *before* the dams are begun. As the people who live in this area are targeted as enemies of the SPDC (the Burmese junta), their participation or consultation in such a process is highly unlikely.

Immediate Consequences

There are considerable strategic benefits for the Burmese junta in building the dam in this area. The benefits will be similar to those gained by the Thai and Chinese loggers and the builders of the Yadana gas pipeline in Tenasserim division, an area occupied by Mon and Karen ethnic nationalities. The army can extend its efforts to transform the area into an insurgent-free zone, bring ethnic populations under military control, and cut off support from Thai authorities now wanting to secure their interests. Security fears were used by the junta as a justification for a military buildup in the area of the Yadana pipeline.

Consortium partners Total of France and Unocal of the United States have recently been accused of financing soldiers to suppress ethnic groups along the pipeline route. Both Unocal and Total have denied any direct payment to the junta for security services. Unocal is battling a lawsuit in the U.S. over this issue and responsibility for the effect the project has had on local communities. An U.S. District Court judge has held that the allegations against Unocal, if proven in court, would be tantamount to evidence of their participation in slave trade. The presence of consortium partners legitimizes military activity as the terms of the agree-



ment state that the Burmese junta is responsible for providing security. This furthers the illegitimate regime's military and economic agendas in the region.

Thai authorities who had previously allowed the Mon and Karen insurgent groups to move back and forth across the border have warned them about sabotaging the project. This has led to a cease-fire agreement with the Mon and has severely weakened the Karen insurgency. A senior MDX advisor and former government minister, has already asked the Shan states Army, through intermediaries, not to interfere with the project. Regardless of whether the Shan states Army agrees to construction or not, as it is highly unlikely

that the people will be consulted about the project or even compensated for the resulting loss of lands and livelihoods, they are dammed if they do and dammed if they don't.

Along with a natural corresponding increase in human rights violations due to increased military presence, there is extensive documentation that villagers who become relocated in civil war areas become a readily available labor pool for the military to exploit to their own ends. With increased infrastructure work in the region comes an increased demand on villager to work on these projects, along with forced labor at military bases and logging camps. A recent U.S. embassy report notes that, "people's

contributions, chiefly in the form of uncompensated labor, have been extensively used, not only in local rural development construction projects, but also in larger regional and national physical infrastructure development projects..."

A report issued by the International labor organization last year emphasized:

"There is abundant evidence ...showing the pervasive use of forced labor imposed on the civilian population throughout Myanmar by the authorities and the military for portering, the construction, maintenance and servicing of military camps, other work in support of the military, work on agriculture, logging and other production projects undertaken by the authorities or the military...the construction and maintenance of roads, railways and bridges, other infrastructure work and a range of other tasks."

The regime, in its response to the ILO, denied allegations of forced labor specifically referring to the Yadana gas pipeline project, despite extensive documentation by the ILO Commission to the contrary.

One of the environmental consequences will be deforestation. Forests will be cleared during the construction of access roads to the dam. More areas of forest will also be cleared out of necessity as the local people are evicted from their land, forcibly resettled or flee from areas under military control. Reduction in forest cover destroys or reduces habitat for forest animals and increases the danger of rainy season floods in the downstream areas. This will undermine food security as sustainable agriculture and gathering of forest foods are the primary methods of

subsistence for the ethnic groups living in this area. Local people who suffer physical and environmental damage as a result of the project have no legal avenue for relief in Burma. This also allows the foreign consortium partners to act without accountability.

Foreign Investment Fueling Militarization

Foreign investment should not be used to finance projects sponsored by the Burmese junta. The links between foreign investment and military spending are concrete. Much of the money goes into military buildup and arms procurement. Burma's need for military force appears to be growing smaller due to numerous cease-fires in places with rebel groups, the pacification of some areas following successful offensives and the lack of external threats. However the size of the army continues to expand. Defense spending is estimated to be at least half of the total government expenditure, at eight to ten percent of the recorded GDP, while real expenditure on health and education has been cut.

The consequences of militarization in areas where the Border Areas Development program are active are at least threefold: repression and human rights violations, loss of resources,

and underdevelopment. Repression and human rights violations have already been evidenced in the dam surveying area. This will increase as the military takes responsibility for the security of the development project for the foreign investors. The local population will not benefit from the exploitation of their livelihood resources, as the foreign exchange created will be used almost entirely for military purposes. Ironically the local people will remain "underdeveloped", as the high levels of military spending will sap the resources that could be used for social and economic development. Human and natural resources are expendable commodities for the Burmese junta. The Border Area Development Project is a significant link between the government's efforts to pacify ethnic and indigenous minority populations and resulting human rights violations. Foreign companies should be ashamed to participate in such activities. Until a democratic government is formed in Burma and local peoples have participation in projects affecting their livelihood resources, foreign investors should stay out of Burma.

V. Croakly
Burma Issues
January, 1999



In the fish migration of 1998-1999, each boat could catch about one ton of fish per day — in the 1997-1998 season catches were three to four tonnes per day per boat.

THAILAND: Group links with global movements

The Forum of the Poor is teaming up with international farmer movements to map out collective strategies to solve their problems.

The Forum organized a meeting in Maha Sarakham which was attended by farmers' representatives from 11 countries that have been under IMF programs. Designated "chiefs", core members representing Forum-affiliated organizations, and leading advisers namely Bamrung Kayotha, Vanida Tantivithayapitak and Veerapol Sopha, will attend the meeting on the Thai side. Nitirat Sapsomboon, the Forum spokesman, said the "chiefs" represent particular concerns for particular farmer groups and in all there were 121 issues broadly divided into seven problem areas which they would be pursuing. The landmark meeting involves the drawing up of plans to direct farmers' movements at the international level.

One of the strategies would be to protest moves by agencies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank whose policies were deemed detrimental to internal agricultural development. But despite its additional duty in the global arena, the Forum would retain momentum in pressing the government with its demands to alleviate the farmers' plight, Mr. Nitirat said.

The worldwide farmers' networking would mean greater bargaining power. The spokesman said the pact currently comprises 11 countries from East Asia, Asean, and Latin America. Mr. Bamrung is the Forum's appointed representative in the movement. The meeting, a pre-

session ahead of the third major assembly in Delhi, is expected to discuss farmers' grievances stemming from land ownership and natural resources management, to land reform.

Equally important were problems of global and regional significance. These include policies passed by bodies such as the World Trade Organization which adversely affected the lives of farmers. The situation on agricultural biodiversity and food supplies also needed to be assessed and required special attention. Hitting close to home, Mr. Nitirat took the government to task for impeding efforts to tackle farmers' problems, adding that the Forum had decided to abort further talks after the progress made during the previous administration was snubbed.

It was wrong to try to break the gridlock through permanent officials as this effectively rendered the resolutions reached in the previous government null and void. The resolutions required cabinet ministers to take a direct

role over issues which come under their jurisdictions. The bureaucratic approach to problem-solving had caused needless delay, compounding the hardship of the people, he said. He said the government had "adopted as bible" the guidelines from the lending agencies, which have created more problems than they solved.

Many projects initiated as a result of foreign loan conditions had widespread repercussions on farmers, Mr. Nitirat said, citing a case in point being the Asia Development Bank loan which slaps taxes on water for irrigation. He said the Forum would call for parliament's dissolution to pave way for a more transparent and accountable government. Mr. Bamrung said the farmers' representatives would today submit an open letter to the government to protest against all the laws and bills it claims are aimed at "selling Thailand out to foreigners".

Naowarat Suksamran



THAILAND: Yadana Pipeline Update

Environmental and grassroots activists yesterday lambasted the Petroleum Authority of Thailand and the government for failing to fulfil promises made while constructing the Yadana gas pipeline.

The activists yesterday marked the first anniversary of their decision to call off protests against the pipeline project, and branded PTT executives and top energy and government officials as "liars".

"In the past year, Thai society has learned of the lack of truthfulness, the failure to fulfil promises, and the management debacle of Thai government lead-

ers who colluded with the Burmese dictatorship in approving... this shameful gas pipeline project," said a statement issued by the anti-pipeline coalition.

Some 300 people attending the event on March 7 including members of various environmental and grassroots groups, representatives of ethnic minority groups and student groups.

Among the speakers was Sulak Sivaraksa, the social critic who launched a solo sit-in protest at the pipeline site when it was being constructed. He was hauled to jail and charged with trespassing. His case is still pending in court.

Mr Sulak yesterday said the peaceful struggle against the pipeline project had not ended, and that the PTT must be forced to reveal fully what he called its "shameful contract" to buy gas from the Yadana field in Burma. He claimed the PTT had so far refused to reveal 60 clauses in the contract which placed Thailand at a disadvantage in all respects. However, he said the "real enemy" was not the PTT or the Thai government but transnational corporations which were intent on exploiting the region's natural resources.

Speaking on behalf of the anti-pipeline coalition, leading



opponent Pibhop Dhongchai listed the "lies" perpetrated by the PTT and the Thai government.

These included the claim that the Yadana gas was cheaper than gas from other sources; the fact that the Ratchaburi power plant, which was to be the sole user of the gas, was itself not yet completed; the PTT's failure to honour its promise to restore the environment and reforest vast areas; and the PTT's realisation that the contract allowed for the citing of force majeure to postpone the taking of gas deliveries, as the pipeline opponents had

long contended.

Mr Pibhop blamed Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai, PTT Governor Pala Sukhavesch and Piyaswasdi Amranand, secretary-general of the National Energy Policy Office, for damages incurred to the environment and the national economy.

Because the Ratchaburi power plant was not ready to take delivery of the gas, PTT is expected to suffer an unspecified amount of financial penalties.

Mr Pibhop said the problem arose due to lack of public participation in the planning and implementation of the country's

energy policy and he demanded that the public be given that role in the future.

The coalition also demanded that the PTT and Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand postpone all their projects, including the Thai-Malaysian joint development project in the Gulf of Thailand, because it had become clear that there was an oversupply of gas and electricity. It also demanded the cancellation of the three power plant projects in Prachuap Khiri Khan.

[a more extensive look at the pipeline issue is included in the Alternative to Consumerism section]



AFRICA: Theater and Conflict Resolution

Early 1998, we had a workshop with Gasina Girls Secondary School. This school is located in Nyanza Province in Western Kenya. We were basically invited to go and teach some drama techniques and dances to the patron and introduced to some of the drama club members. Without wasting much time, we engaged the students through some theater games to break inhibitions and create an atmosphere of friendship, trust and belonging.

As the group's spirit began to rise, more and more students came to join us. When we asked them to propose something that we could all do, now that we were almost a quarter of the school population. "...Food! Yes meat! Headmistress! Away with our headmistress," came the answer we least expected neither were we invited for! We sensed that something was wrong. And so we had to let the students tell their story. There had been a strike the

previous night. The reason being that they were not given meat for dinner as usual. And so when the students went to the refectory and served food, they poured it all on the tables. The headmistress was totally furious with the act and ordered for an inquiry to get the ringleaders. She said they were going to be expelled.

As they were telling their story dramatically, we were trying to make them release their tension, and excess energies as well as the fear of expulsion so that there was less tension. With time we started to stage the issue and persons mentioned in the strike.

Amazingly with the manner in which we were conducting the session, when we asked somebody to act the role of the headmistress and she was available she promptly volunteered! By then we were not only artists but also peace mediators. We were able to bridge the gap between the

headmistress and her students. They were able to communicate directly with much understanding and in a creative way. As time went by, we were able to get on to how the conflict was created and the key persons involved. We found out that meat was not available because the student in charge for the store had forgotten to get it from the deep freezer. And it was late for the cooks to have it ready for the evening. Upon realizing this, all the students forgave the one in charge and they were promised by the headmistress their share for that evening.

In this session we as artists saw conflict as an opportunity for the students and teachers to re-examine in-depth on their relationships and structures. We had to cool down the individual as well as group emotions to allow room for dialogue.

Amani People's Theater (APT), is an African initiative

founded in late 1994 out of the realization that people needed an effective, creative and redemptive approach to conflict resolution, resolution, transformation and peace building.

APT uses participatory techniques for theater and drama analysis and transformation. It has grown from open-ended skits to include image Theater, traditional African Storytelling techniques, Simulation and Dance.

In using theater for conflict analysis, we avoided becoming spectators and made each person to be a storyteller, be proactive and sensitive to other's feelings and situation. The students and teachers in conflict were empowered to take to the stage to present their stories. With the ownership of the process, they were able to reflect on the root causes of their conflicts and why they experience conflict. In our discussion and analysis, they

were able to reach more desirable solutions and lay down appropriate strategies against conflict.

This form of community based theater provides a means of codifying social reality, and the performance becomes a mirror through which participants can see themselves the causes of conflict and the effects. This, in practice has proven that people of all ages need and appreciate the experience, and that People's Theater is a potent catalyst in transformation of the individual and society.

In dealing with refugees, Youth, Women, Leaders, NGOs and CBOs, APT has realized that theater is an effective communication tool in conflict analysis and transformation. In People's Theater, everyone becomes a participant as members of the Community have a chance to critique and debate on the raised concerns and even stage the

process as well as the outcome.

Our experience suggests that the APT process is very therapeutic. For example, through theater games (Image Theater) we are some psychological counseling. "I have never before experienced a Spiritual healing in a drama performance. One need not see a psychologist but experience the APT process", says a teacher from Central Kenya commenting on this experience.

How great is this process-liberating; redemptive, empowering and with the never dying sense of humor, and above all it brings the ownership of problems and solutions to the Community who begin as spectators to spectators and finally to social actors.

peace love and harmony,

Otieno Ombok

Amani People's Theater

[Ombok is an ATC network member]

TIBET: 40th Anniversary of Lhasa Uprising

Tight security in Tibet to mark 40th anniversary of Lhasa Uprising, 10 March 1999.

There were reports of at least one demonstration in Lhasa to mark the 40th anniversary of the March 1959 Uprising. Two monks are said to have shouted slogans for a few minutes in the Barkor before being arrested by security police but full details of the incident are not yet available.

Security has been intensified in Tibet prior to the anniversary period in March with a continuing wave of temporary

detentions in recent months. There have also been reports of an increase in the deployment of People's Liberation Army troops in areas of Tibet bordering Nepal. In an unusual statement by the Nepalese government, a Home Ministry official said that the number of PLA troops in the border regions had been increased by China in order to prevent pro-independence activities.

The temporary detentions in recent months of at least 80 people in the Lhasa area appear to be connected to the authorities' attempts to discourage any dis-

sent during the period of the 40th anniversary of the Lhasa Uprising, the most significant political anniversary in Tibet for many years. Most of the Tibetans detained since last June have reportedly been held for periods from several weeks to up to six or seven months, many of them in the new Lhasa detention and interrogation facility in the suburbs of the capital.

There were reports this week that additional PLA troops have been moved into Shigatse prefecture and to the Tibetan border with Nepal, particularly near the

town of Dram (Zhangmu in Chinese and Khasa in Nepalese), 700 km southwest of Lhasa. One report claimed that 180 military truckloads of troops had been sighted in the border areas near Dram. The Nepalese Home Ministry in Kathmandu has now confirmed that additional troops do appear to have been stationed on the border in order to forestall possible anti-China protests today. "China is possibly taking precautions against Free Tibet activities on this side of the border," said Srikant Regmi, additional secretary at the Nepalese Home Ministry, reported by Kyodo news agency on 8 March. "For our part, we are equally alert to the need of disallowing any such activities on our soil."

There have been arrests and temporary detentions of Tibetans in Lhasa on political grounds every year since the pro-independence demonstrations in March 1989 that led to the 14 month imposition of martial law. However reports reaching TIN from Tibet say that the number of temporary detentions in recent months has been higher than in previous years and may be linked to the attempt to prevent any protests associated with the anniversary of the Lhasa Uprising. Many of the detainees may not be involved in political activity and have been arrested as a warning to others. One report from Tibet states that the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) State Security Bureau had ordered security personnel to carry out a number of token arrests during the weeks leading up to 10 March, in order to deter others from participating in protests during the anniversary period. The orders reportedly stated that arrests need not necessarily be based on any dissent or wrong-doing.



Control of the Lhasa population, despite today's demonstrations, appears to have been achieved by monitoring and surveillance rather than by an influx of soldiers. According to a Western tourist who has just left Tibet, there were few uniformed police to be seen on the streets of the Barkor, the central Tibetan area of Lhasa, over the past few days. "People are scared and overall Lhasa is now like a prison," the Westerner reported, according to Free Tibet Campaign, a London-based lobby group that has footage of the current situation in Lhasa, "Patrols are out at night of soldiers in full riot gear and men with binoculars are watching the streets from the rooftops." The deployment of troops in riot gear during the night is unusual as most troop

movements of this kind are made during the day.

Last month 800 soldiers gave a display of military strength in Tibet to demonstrate the capacity of the People's Armed Police to deal with "contingencies". A report on Tibet TV on 25 February showed Legchog, chairman of the TAR People's government, inspecting 800-900 police from the Tibet Armed Police Corps during a "mobilization meeting". The police demonstrated the use of various weapons, including semi-automatic rifles, batons and shields, sub-machine guns, pressurized water-cannons and "anti-riot armored vehicles" (protected police vans). The Tibet TV footage showed police demonstrating unarmed combat, firing live ammunition, and using police

dogs to arrest suspects. The use of dogs in this way has not been demonstrated openly before, although there are unofficial reports that dogs have been set on Tibetan prisoners as a form of punishment. The display of military prowess and anti-riot procedures, which took place just two weeks before the 10 March anniversary, was clearly intended as a further and more direct warning than usual to Tibetans that dissent will not be tolerated.

The Political Commissar of the People's Armed Police Major General Zhang Zhu emphasized the role of the armed police in the suppression of unrest when he said during the "troop mobilization" meeting: "The mobilized troops directly under the corps are our fists and bayonets to deal with contingencies. To toughen the fists and sharpen the bayonets, we must conduct effective political work, as well as strict, regular and scientific military training."

During the same meeting, Legchog, chairman of the TAR government, described the Dalai Lama's activities as the main cause of instability in Tibet. "The current social situation in Tibet as a whole is good," he stated to an audience including regional Party, government and military leaders. "However, there are still factors of instability which are caused mainly by the Dalai clique's separatist activities. With support from hostile forces abroad, the Dalai clique has flaunted the banner of peace talks, but has actually engaged in new political fraud and offensive strategy." The phrase "hostile forces" is likely to be a reference to the meeting between the Dalai Lama and US President Clinton last year. The statement that the Dalai Lama and the government in exile have

"engaged in new political fraud" indicates that the authorities in Tibet continue to take a hard-line stance on the issue of possible dialogue between the Dalai Lama and Beijing. Legchog also urged police officers to "unswervingly uphold the Party's absolute leadership over troops".

The TAR chairman referred two months ago to the need to maintain stability at the time of the March anniversaries. "We must deal with splitting and sabotaging activities found anywhere and under any circumstance at their embryonic stage," Legchog stated during a regional meeting on political and legal work on 24 January, reported by Tibet TV on 25 January. "There are more important festivals and sensitive occasions this year, and the task of safeguarding social and political stability is quite arduous." Legchog appeared to confirm that the political activities of Tibetan exiles abroad are monitored when he stated in the same speech: "We must find out exactly about secessionist activities conducted at home and abroad and about the trends of such activities."

Thousands of Tibetans were killed and thousands more imprisoned following the Lhasa Uprising in March 1959, when Tibetans took to the streets in an unprecedented show of unity against the Chinese authorities, sparked by fears that the Dalai Lama might be detained by the Chinese. The uprising, which lasted for almost two weeks, brought to an end the attempt of the Chinese central government to win over the ruling elite in Tibet and bring about gradual socialist reform. The Dalai Lama and his retinue managed to escape before the People's Liberation Army regained con-

trol of Lhasa. Although China had annexed Tibet nine years earlier it had maintained a low profile in the capital until that time. The red flag of the People's Republic of China was raised above the Potala palace for the first time on 23 March 1959.

Last week the official Chinese news agency Xinhua released a statement giving the Chinese response to the 40th anniversary of the Lhasa Uprising. "The democratic reform in Tibet started in March 1959 after the People's Liberation Army put down an armed rebellion launched by the Tibetan local upper class reactionary clique," Xinhua stated on 1 March. "The reform put an end to the clerical-aristocratic dictatorship combining political and religious rule that had long plagued Tibet, and rendered freedom to the serfs and slaves that made up 95% of the region's population."

Xinhua also reported the opening of "China's largest exhibition on Tibet since the founding of the People's Republic of China" at Beijing Exhibition Center to commemorate the 40th anniversary of "democratic reform". According to Xinhua, the exhibition highlights the achievements of the Tibet Autonomous Region, including the display of "generations of historical archives and gifts given to the central government by successive holders of the position of Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama". Zhao Qizheng, director of the Information Office of the State Council stated that the exhibition will be shown overseas "in order to let the world know more about Tibet and appreciate Tibetan culture as a precious legacy of the world cultural heritage".

Tibet Information Service

Eco-village Training

What do a Sufi center technical manager, a property developer, a Grecian geomancy enthusiast and grassroots development workers have in common? In February 1999 I found myself in snowy Scotland with a vastly dissimilar group of people all of whom had the good intention to strive for a more sustainable way of life. There were permaculture and biodynamic farming enthusiasts, organic retailers, a psychotherapist, a young man from a Russian Children's Village, eco-feminists from Brazil and several architects interested in ecological building techniques. Newly founded eco-villages in the Czech republic, Turkey and Finland sent representatives and young people came from Ladakh, Bulgaria, Venezuela and Australia. To add further spice were a Portuguese woman working with grassroots women's groups, a disillusioned medical doctor and a city farm worker from Glasgow, all contemplating how to live a useful and meaningful life in this modern age. A young Thai colleague hailed from Wongsanit Ashram in Thailand where we live in an intentional community with a focus on spiritual development and social change work. Economic circumstances were very different, an exercise revealed that the incomes of around thirty participants ranged from US\$ 420 per year to over US\$ 80,000. I was amazed at the diversity of the group and although I did not share the views of all, it struck me as very hopeful for our planet that people from so many backgrounds were really concerned with living in a more sustainable way.

We had been drawn together

to attend a one month Eco-village training at the Findhorn Foundation, a spiritual community internationally known for its work involving co-creation with nature, holistic education and sustainable living. Set amongst sand dunes and pine woods on the windswept Moray Firth, the Foundation started out 35 years ago on a caravan park and is a curious mix of old caravans, chalets and state of the art ecological buildings. As the community matures and grows it is taking on multi-faceted challenges as it moves towards becoming an eco-village. In the early days all community members were "temple slaves" working for the higher good of the community and whilst this is still embedded in the culture some members are now choosing to set up small sustainable businesses and work outside the community. Findhorn is a major education center with a huge program of courses that attract people from around the globe. There is a thriving community shop and extensive organic gardens that supply the kitchens for the wholesome vegetarian food.

Long time Findhorn members Craig Gibsone and May East were wonderful hosts and with us throughout the journey. They had a huge supply of rituals, dances and songs which transformed our energy at the start and end of sessions or when things got heavy going. May took on the persona of a warrior queen when she held a drum and the whining noise of Craig's didgeridoo touched some primitive chord deep inside my psyche. They were our link to the heart of the community and our good friends throughout the course. Other re-

source people were drawn from the community so we were given a wonderful insight into the strengths and challenges of the Findhorn experiment. A broader picture was obtained through examples from other eco villages, presentations of our own communities and exchanging stories amongst ourselves. The training was split into ten modules that related to eco-village living including permaculture, healing power of community, deep democracy, harvesting and cooking, sustainable economics, eco-building techniques and eco-restoration. This article gives a taste of some of the ground covered and a glimpse of hope for a more sustainable 21st century.

Eco-villages & the Emerging Paradigm

During the first few days Craig and May explained why there are eco-villages and to what they are responding. The eco-village movement is a conscious response to the ecological, social and spiritual crises that are the down side of modernization, globalization and consumerism. These complex problems stem from a world view that promotes the benefits of modernization but is based on unbridled economic growth and underpinned by technology and a reductionist scientific ethos. Many people are starting to recognize that the desirable modern lifestyle carries with it what is being termed as a huge "ecological footprint" manifesting itself in the symptoms of pollution and environmental degradation. In questioning the root causes of these phenomena what is referred to as a new holistic paradigm emerges.

The eco-village movement is particularly concerned with moving towards a society of sustainable communities. There is no fixed formula for an eco-village but it is generally a group of people living and working together towards a common goal, usually based on a shared ecological, social or spiritual perspective often with elements of all three. This is referred to as the "glue" that sticks the group together! In our ashram the glue would be concern for social problems, simple living and personal spiritual development. The glue for the geomancy community in the Greek Isles might be to reflect and balance the energies of the natural environment with the individual energies. The glue for the Russian Children's village of Kitezh centres around providing a family atmosphere for orphan children whilst living in a simple and environmental community. As we learned about each other I noticed the differences and commonalities in the glue of the initiatives we represented and at first was challenged by people responding to the crisis in a other ways. Later I realized that this is the diversity within the eco-village movement and a cause for celebration!

There seems to be a spontaneous arising of eco-village type initiatives around the world and the Global Eco-village Network (GEN) provides a useful link. I was intrigued to hear that rural initiatives from Asia are involved in GEN. Around one hundred villages in Ladakh are striving to keep their traditional, sustainable way of living and introducing appropriate technology at local level as an alternative to becoming dependent on large scale infrastructure projects. The Sarvodaya movement works with a

Buddhist approach to empower ordinary people in hundreds of Sri Lankan villages, they have also taken the role as regional co-ordinators for the GEN network in South Asia. The GEN website* has a wealth of information about the movement including a useful self audit for an eco-village. The audit has detailed categories for culture, physical environment, physical infrastructure, social/economic environment and community vision. I read through the audit thinking of our Ashram community and was surprised how much we had already achieved in each area. The audit is a good starting point for communities to assess current status and review goals for environmental, cultural & social sustainability.

Several burning questions came up during the first few days that we revisited throughout the training and became a learning exercise for us all.

Why are the vast majority who live in the so called first world using far more than a fair share of resources and living an unsustainable lifestyle? Communities such as Findhorn are exemplary and forward thinking. Would their eco-village standards be appropriate in other cultures and environments? If so how could these innovative but expensive eco-technologies be shared by the two thirds world? Why has the process of modernization and development almost totally obliterated the culturally, spiritually and economically sustainable way of living of the indigenous groups and tribes around the



world? There are no easy answers to these questions and the heated debate around them highlighted the nature of the global crises and connections between thinking and acting at both global and local levels that seem a natural path for most eco-villagers.

Living Machines & Whisky Barrel Houses

Findhorn uses a "living machine" that treats the sewage of the 300 plus residents using biologically and environmentally sound methods. Based on the principles of a reed bed system the sewage travels through a series of tanks in a green house full of colorful plants and comes out far cleaner than if treated by chemicals as is the usual way in Scotland. Findhorn is in the process of evolving from a community living in cold and draughty caravans to one with state of the art ecological buildings. We visited several of these beautiful houses including a group made of recycled whisky barrels. The ecological houses have innovative

technology such as breathing walls and are extremely well insulated, some with a grass roof. Around 30% of electricity is supplied by an onsite windmill. Findhorn is presently developing thirty ecological houses and these are being offered to anyone who has money to buy them in or out of the community albeit some rather stringent conditions apply to the title deeds to ensure that occupants are in sympathy with the ethos of Findhorn. However, it appeared that little or no community housing was being built for those with low incomes including many of the "temple slaves" working for the Foundation. I contemplated on how the house I live in at the ashram has recently undergone some renovation that many other ashram residents would not be able to afford and although this would return to the community if I left the fact is I am living in more comfortable surroundings. Eco-villages and intentional communities often have a transient population and I wonder how necessary it is to improve living conditions for longer term residents to want to stay. I am sure many communities struggle with issues of inequality and I am curious of the direction eco-villages from other roots like a Kibbutz or an indigenous group are taking.

Sustainable Economics

The module on sustainable economics kicked off with some shocking facts about what is happening in the conventional business world. Apparently US\$ 2000 billion is traded every day on exchange markets, that is the buying and selling of money. This is part of the reason why some 97% of business transactions in 1998 were speculative compared

to 20% in 1976. Multi-lateral agreements have been proposed that would make speculative trading illegal to reduce the profits of transnational corporations which apparently have 70% of world trade, 80% of resources and investments yet employ only 10% of the labor force. All this gave a frightening insight into the speculative nature of the phenomenon of globalization and we were informed that we support this by using banks and insurance companies that are part of the huge, complex and controlling structures. I was harshly reminded that all of us working for a more sustainable and healthy planet must struggle to understand, acknowledge and challenge the oppression of these structures as well as working at local level. After being stunned by these disturbing facts we were treated to a delightful brunch made up of local fare such as warm oatcakes, crusty rolls, fresh butter and cheese - all organic of course - courtesy of the Phoenix shop that supplies the Findhorn community with such healthy local products as well as a huge range of exciting, organic tidbits from around the world. We visited a local organic farm and met the people behind the Phoenix, the community bakery and other community businesses being pioneered by Findhorn members. With an emphasis on co-operation rather than competition these initiatives are motivated by right livelihood as well as monetary reward. They are all involved with the LETS local currency system that facilitates exchanging goods for labor or exchange rather than money. I pondered that although they were inspiring examples, with the exception of the imported produce, they were probably very similar to the shops and farms

that existed in all small Scottish towns in the days before the industrial revolution. All in all this well rounded module gave us a good insight into both local and global levels although we did not venture into why, in the modern world, we desire so many consumer goods. I felt my commitment strengthen to the work I have been involved with on alternatives to consumerism over the last few years.

Earthshare

The Findhorn organic gardens operate an earthshare scheme. This entails local people who are interested in eating seasonal, organic vegetables paying for these in advance and having a box each week from the gardens, thus missing out the middle man and ensuring fresh produce. Earthshare also supply the Findhorn kitchens where our group spent two afternoons turning the vegetables into a tasty dinner for around one hundred people.

Jane Hera's friendly and down to earth leadership was greatly appreciated during the permaculture module. She explained how most cultures are deeply rooted in agriculture systems, thus permaculture can relate to anything. I had a little chuckle with others in the group who were familiar with the Buddhist teachings when it was mentioned that the word permaculture had derived from "permanent". In the Buddhist tradition everything is seen as impermanent. Jane explained that permaculture was an ethical discipline that advocates caring, sharing and repairing the earth. Permaculture involves observing and learning to look at the world, landscape and natural systems. The principles outlined included

looking for multiple functions for single elements, finding beneficial functional relationships and using energy efficient planning thus advocating inter-connection and sustainable use of resources. To start with, Jane suggested looking at the land for one year and observing what happens in different seasons. How does the land change, what plants grow and how do they relate to each other, what about the effects of the wind, the frost, the snow and the sun. Of course if you are local or indigenous you would have a huge start and it makes sense to learn from residents if you are new to an area. Then comes the permaculture design where a pictorial vision is created. The vision is an overview of a long term plan and the process for this includes zoning the land with different functions for each zone. Great thought is given to how the land will be in many years to come and long term planting with a succession of plants to create a healthy eco-system is used. Then you work out what the first achievable steps are rather than get overwhelmed with detailed planning at an early stage. I was inspired by this approach that seems very relevant to our work with participatory development, indigenous values, sustainable agriculture and social justice and my imagination ran riot with the possibilities of a synthesis of all these aspects - perhaps it really is a revolutionary approach!

Deep Democracy

About half way through the journey there was a challenging module entitled Deep Democracy that used a process oriented psychology approach. Led by Ben Fuchs and Andrew Murray we were assured the purpose was to learn how to listen to all the voices

present. On the first evening we were instructed to tell lies to a partner for five minutes. I found myself talking from my perception of the viewpoint of a murderer and rapist. Later we were told that this was to help us bring in the parts of a group that we would not usually identify with. It was also inferred that the persona we took on was part of ourselves which was a little scary in my case! This placed our group into a state of disarray and it seemed that the facilitators were trying to instigate a conflict situation. It was rather an uncomfortable start. The next day things improved and we did some revealing exercises regarding rank and privilege. We learned that rank changes in different situations and we completed an exercise to get us thinking about these changes in our own work when relating to different areas such as mental health, physical health, nationality, seniority etc. I gained considerable insight into how my perceptions varied when relating to the Thai and Western cultural contexts I work in. For example in a Western context one might lose rank as one got older yet in the Thai context age gives higher rank and respect. Confusing - but revealing! Another thought provoking exercise was on Emotional Allergies - we had to think about a behavior, attitude or personality trait in another person that we over-reacted to. Then we had to relate this to ourselves and try to observe what it was within us that caused such a strong reaction. The module intrigued and irritated many of us although those with psychotherapy backgrounds loved it. It seemed to be inferred that conflict and criticism of others was a result of a dark and emotional side lurking within - so many of us bit our tongues

and kept our mouths shut! A telling comment from a bemused Ladakhi came during a "living" poem we all contributed to in the following module -

"A spring of healing after a winter of deep democracy may not be the same for all."

After the rather taxing Deep Democracy we were treated to a very different approach when alternative therapists, Durten Lau and Lori Forsyth led a module on the healing power of community. They went with the flow rather than the process and we enjoyed bodywork, artwork and a curious session on holographic repatterning. This is a method of transforming the unconscious energy patterns and Lori experimented with us in an effort to ensure our group vibrations were in the best shape for us to fulfil our community visions. Using a dousing approach she eventually came up with some adjustments and the advice that we all practice - silence in nature - I fell asleep for three hours in the middle of the afternoon although others felt a marvelous effect and one American woman booked a private session and left the group shortly afterwards telling me this was what she had come to Findhorn for! Perhaps one of my favorite parts of the course was a discussion on manifestation - Findhorn wisdom has it that if we think positively in the right manner we can make things happen. I started doing this with small things and was amazed at the results. It was wonderful to have two such relaxing days when we rested our intellects and opened up our hearts to the Findhorn magic!

Ecological Restoration — Helping the Earth to Heal

The final module took us out of the Foundation and into the

Highlands where we learned about wilderness, conservation and eco-restoration. *Trees for Life*, were our hosts and they state in their newsletter, "at a time when deforestation is a critical global problem we see the return of natural tree cover to more of the world's land surface as a vital step in creating a sustainable future for humanity, and for all the other species we share the planet with". Coming from Thailand where deforestation is a current problem we were surprised to learn that the barren hills of Scotland were deforested hundreds of years ago in part during the highland clearances when the indigenous Scots (as well as the trees) were moved off the land to make way for sheep on the estates of wealthy incomers! Apparently there is only 1% of the Caledonian forest left that once covered Scotland. With help from many volunteers *Trees for Life* are working in areas like Glen Affric to replant the traditional forest. Eco-restoration is a long term process that mimics nature where possible.

Eco-villages and our own communities

The above accounts are only some of the aspects we visited in our eco-village journey. The training inspired different things to different people and the whole was larger than the individual parts. It would take time to absorb the knowledge and our communities would benefit in many ways. An Argentinean architect from Buenos Aires commented that she lived in a city and would work on the eco-village within herself. Organic retailers from Turkey, the Czech republic and the Phoenix shop discussed the possibility of a series of organic products from eco-villages. Several of the

eco-villages mentioned they would adopt the Earthshare plan and start up LETS systems. A woman from Portland, Oregon with an intention to build traditional English cottages became conscientized to the injustice in the world and went back with a resolution to inform her friends that North Americans consume far too much of the Earth's resources. From our own perspective we saw good possibilities of integrating the principles of permaculture into our grassroots leadership training program for Forum of the Poor and our work with the Karen villagers in Northern Thailand. We are also thinking of using a permaculture design as an aid for project planning and fund-raising in particular for a new center for sustainable communities at Fang in Northern Thailand. It was useful and a luxury to be a student in such a nurturing environment and we will certainly draw upon this experience for both the process and content of the development of a curriculum on Alternatives to Consumerism. The eco-village training with people from so many backgrounds was a fertile ground to share and learn from different perspectives. I recommend future courses further endeavor to draw from the wealth of the participants especially relating to how the eco-village model manifests in different cultural contexts. I found it a great learning experience to reflect any criticisms back to our own community where we face similar challenges or are likely to in the future.

Holistic Thinkers — New Age & Indigenous

I am often struck by the curious parallels of the "new" holistic thinkers and activists and

the world view of many groups of indigenous people who are struggling to keep their traditional way of living in the face of modernization. A striking parallel, albeit in different stages of the life circle, is coming to terms with the desires and greed that seem to be over-stimulated by modern life. Why, if their lives are so holistic do they fall victim to the lures of modernization. There is no simple answer to this but I do understand that development seems to feed on making people feel inferior and that the trusting and loving nature of many indigenous peoples makes them easy victims to greedy outsiders with a different mindset - that of the business world. Generally indigenous people do not consider themselves "poor" or "backward" until outsiders, often with the aid of sophisticated marketing techniques, tell them they are. And now when it is almost too late we are starting to recognize the beauty and wisdom that is dominated, squashed and lost in the processes of colonialisation, modernization and development. I greatly encourage GEN to be inclusive and open minded to initiatives from all cultures and whilst applauding the wonderful New Age eco-experiments. I issue a gentle reminder to look back with respect and honour to what many of our societies have lost and destroyed.

*Jane Rasbash attended the Eco-village training at Findhorn Foundation. A second training is planned for February 2000. If you are interested in attending the training please contact May East at Findhorn on eastgibsone@findhorn.org. *The Global Eco-village audit is found at: http://www.gaia.org/international/projects/evaudit/pdf_text.html*

Pipe Dreams

The Yadana gas pipeline is now a year old, and a re-examination of the controversial issues surrounding the project shows the Petroleum Authority of Thailand (PTT) laid many empty promises and their credibility on the line.

To mark the first anniversary of the protest against the Yadana gas pipeline project, SEAWrite award writer Naowarat Pongpaiboon penned a poem which begins: *Put a flag at the pipe's end, laid across the forest, across eyes, across hearts. The longer the pipe grows, the more evil the truths.*

The Yadana gas pipeline project connecting Thailand to Burmese gas fields was completed in July 1998 after numerous protests against the destruction of virgin forests, financial support for the Burmese junta, a lack of safety, as well as questions about the quality of gas and the feasibility of the entire venture.

Before completing the project, PTT testified before a public hearing that Burmese gas is cheaper and better than other available energy sources, that the Thai government will be heavily fined if the project is delayed, that PTT would return denuded forests to their original condition, and that Thailand's industries would be seriously affected if the Yadana gas pipeline was stopped. Now, one year later, a journey along the length of the completed pipeline and a re-examination of PTT's claims show they're all gas.

How Cheap is Gas?

Last year, various agencies proclaimed the merits of Burmese natural gas and of destroy-

ing forests to lay a pipeline between Burma and Thailand without delay. "The Yadana gas pipeline project," said Mr. Piti Yimprasert, PTT Gas project president, "is the lifeline of the country. It will save us a lot of foreign currency." Egat Governor Veerawat Charayon said, "If we don't have enough energy, foreign investors will lose confidence." Other officials also proclaimed the urgent need for gas. Mr. Piyasawat Ammaranun, secretary-general of the National Energy Policy Office (NEPO), was quoted in newspapers to the effect that natural gas will never run out, that it is a good choice to replace oil. "More importantly," he said, "gas is clean and cheap. It is the best alternative at the moment. If we don't receive gas from Burma, the cost of industrial production will increase." Today, Egat says Yadana gas costs US\$3.48 per million BTUs, while the same amount of Thai gas costs only US\$2.5. Protests urging the quick completion of the project arose due to concerns about the fine Thailand would have to pay should the project be delayed. Pipeline supporters claimed the Thai government would be fined 40 million baht each day the project was held back. To date, no fines have been levied and none paid.

Legal experts outside the PTT concluded that no penalties could be handed down if the project was shelved indefinitely. PTT dismissed these claims.

Despite earlier campaigns promoting gas as a cheap power source, authorities have since pointed out several drawbacks. On February 6 last year, Mr. Piyasawat was quoted in Krungthep

Thurakit newspaper as saying: "If Egat changes its fuel to more natural gas, its capital cost will increase. As a result, the cost of electricity will increase, more so if the Petroleum Authority of Thailand (PTT) buys the gas from Yadana." The project went ahead despite these warnings.

How Much Gas is Being Used?

According to the contract, commercial delivery of gas started August 1 last year. However, much of the gas has been wasted, since Egat does not have the equipment to convert all the gas it receives into electricity. At kilometer post (KP) 238 in Ratchaburi province, a gigantic Egat power plant stands unfinished on a hundred-rai plot of land. It was supposed to have started operations in July 1998.

Egat says the supplier is unable to deliver the necessary machinery to complete the plant. Others say Egat itself is simply out of money and lacks the funds to pay for the required equipment. Thailand currently has 25 MW gas burners to convert gas into electricity. However, the project requires at least 700 MW gas burners for the first year alone. More will be needed as the gas supply increases later on. For its part, PTT has been encouraging agencies involved to use more gas. Egat now has what it calls a "luxury reserved margin" in electricity—in other words, a huge oversupply of gas. Not only is the country unable to use the amount of gas it bought, but it also cannot pay for it. Although PTT denies it, PTT officials are said to be renegotiating with Rangoon to change its schedule of payments.

The 16.5 billion baht Yadana gas pipeline project was designed solely to serve a 2,800 MW power plant.

And the Environment?

At KP 152, those who pass by Baan Jarakae Puak wouldn't know a gas pipeline runs under the village, if not for the yellow billboards along the road. Life is slow and the farmers follow the age-old rhythm of the seasons. Belying the outward serenity of the village is a pervasive atmosphere of discontent. "The gas pipeline has not only destroyed our forest, it has also damaged the quality of our spirits," said Mrs. Duangjai Navathampichet of Baan Jarakae Pauk in the Dan Makham Tia district of Kanchanaburi.

"We cannot look each other in the face anymore. The pipe has divided our village," said Duangjai.

However, the locals have learned the skills of peaceful protest. Dr Chaiwat Satha-Anand of Thammasat University said their struggle has resulted in a new form of maturity for the people. "The growth of popular movements is a positive side of the non-violent struggle." Mrs. Duangjai is a case in point. She admits that when she first joined the protest, she only wanted to protect her rights. The gas pipeline was on her land and it drove away prospective buyers.

After participating in the Kanchanaburi Environmental Group movement, she realized that her protection must extend to the forest and wildlife. She continues to be active in the group, and has yet to receive a single cent of compensation from PTT for her land.

The safety of the pipe itself was an issue during the con-

struction stage. In the last rainy season at Jarakae Puak there were reports that the gas pipeline leaked. Again, PTT denied this.

At KP 150 in Kanchanaburi on Mr. Prasert Chantha's land, the quiet and unassuming farmer says his fertile land has been ruined. During the construction of the pipeline which now lies under his farm, workers dug deep and brought up underground rock and soil. His farm is now rocky, yields have plummeted, and he's facing financial problems. "My fingers bleed," said the farmer.

From KP 100 to KP 150 in Kanchanaburi only some five percent of the trees Egat planted survived. The rest are leafless dry sticks in the ground.

From KP 72 to KP 99 in Kanchanaburi, tree planting initiatives are evident along the road, as Egat had promised. However, evidence of cosmetic activity-or possible corruption-is also evident. Only the roadside has been replanted. Farther inland, the soil remains bare.

The tree seedlings are left at the mercy of the elements, and many have died from the recent road expansion. At KP 108 at Ban Wang Krajae in the Sai Yok district, Mrs. Kanyawan Tonprasert fears her house will fall in on her one day. KP 108 rests on a rock base. Mrs. Kanyawan's house cracked during the project's rock blasting activities. She filed a complaint but failed to receive compensation from either PTT or Egat.

PTT's PR director Songkeirt Tansamrit says that failed compensation claims can be elevated to the provincial level. As a last resort, he said, claimants could go to court.

But few ordinary citizens can suspend their lives to devote

time and energy to a lengthy and expensive court battle. In most cases, big offenders know they will get off scot-free.

Continuing PTT Campaign

PTT press release last October declared: "PTT has successfully rehabilitated the forest." In a recent interview, Mr. Songkeirt said PTT has fulfilled all its promises. "We rehabilitated the area, we have replanted elephant grass and saw legumes." At KP 28 to 4, tree-planting is evident, but withered and dead tree seedlings are also scattered throughout the area.

At KP 27 to 28, fruit trees such as mangoes and sweet tamarind have been planted. The area used to be a bamboo forest with a diversity of wetland plants. The large plain used to be an elephant feeding area, who favor bamboo. The loss of the bamboo grove is said to be the reason why groups of elephants have recently raided banana plantations and nearby farms. Farmers and authorities are looking for ways to stop the raids. Mr. Songkeirt says the fruit trees will yield fruit for the animals. Mrs. Pinun Chotiroserani, leader of Kanchanaburi Environmental Group, said the native eco-system has been disrupted by the fruit trees. She is also concerned that the new road access will encourage forest encroachment.

At KP 20 to 26 in Kho Takua, an area of steep mountainside, there is no reforestation. Mr. Songkeirt said that this stretch of land was completed just before the rainy season, so there were no reforestation initiatives. PTT plans to replant trees in this area in the near future.

Critics argue that PTT cut a wider pipeline route than prom-

ised. In defense, Mr. Songkeirt said he told project workers not to cut trees beyond 12 meters from the pipe's route. The route itself is about 20 or more meters wide. As a result of tree felling, landslides and soil erosion occur in many areas. PTT put up sand bags to hold the soil, but the topographic deterioration continues. Many of the sand bags have already broken.

At KP 3 to 20, the original elephant grass has not been replaced. Mr. Songkeirt said PTT will replant, but bare soil is everywhere, except some parts near the road.

At KP 3, a natural creek is blocked by a mud slide. At KP 0, a vantage point looking towards Burma, a road is being built along the pipeline route.

Thai Karen residents tell of continuing hardship, not only among ethnic groups, but also among ordinary folk on the Burmese side. Elephants are raiding banana farms, and farmers such as Mr. Ruengchai sae-Chai of Ban Hui Pak Kok foresee little earnings this year. "This is an indicator of ecological disturbance. Wildlife cannot find their own food. Their old routes are now destroyed by the pipe," said former forest ranger Mr. Harue-thai Kongkuan. Water courses have also run dry. Hui Nam Sai was healthy last March. Today, it is dead.

What about Accountability?

Mrs. Rataya Chantien of Seub Nakhasatien Foundation says the public rarely pressures state agencies to live up to their promises. Thus, many state agencies get away with irresponsible behavior.

"This time when we followed up, we learned the lies and

the broken promises are part of the game." The Seub Nakhasatien Foundation has been actively studying and monitoring the pipeline project.

Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa's peaceful solo protest ended with him being charged as a forest encroacher. His case remains pending in court. Mr. Sulak said he admired the ordinary citizens and the gentle village folk who fought against this multinational project in a non-violent way. "Don't be discouraged, don't think that we lost," he said. "One day, they will realize that the power lies with the small people, not with the bureaucracy. They will see how state power is lesser than the truth." The way to improve Thai society, said Mr. Pibbob Dongchai, an adviser to Kanchanaburi Environmental Group, is to learn from such events. "Thai society finds it hard to discern between truths and lies. We easily forget who said what and who promised to do what.

"When we opposed this project, we were blamed as opposing development and progress for Thailand, that our protest will mean huge fines for Thailand. Now, the truth is emerging," said Mr. Pibbob.

Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa continues to underscore interrelated issues. He points out that profits from the project support the Burmese government's activities, which include human rights abuses and cracking down on ethnic groups.

And what Next?

PTT continues to promise it will rehabilitate the environment it destroyed, as environmental groups continue to monitor the company's activities.

Gas has proved more costly

than other fuel sources, and until this changes no conversions will occur. And Burmese gas will remain largely unused.

Until PTT is able to finish its power plant, the Thai government-and the Thai people-will continue to pay for gas it neither uses nor needs.

Families affected by the pipe route have had little compensation for their losses, and entire villages have yet to heal emotional as well as topographic scars.

Ecological damage continues with unseen and ripple effects. As waterways are diverted, soil erosion and landslides have increased, while farms are ravaged by hungry animals.

There has been no serious move to hold PTT bosses or the National Energy Policy Office accountable for what they have done.

However, the pipeline stands as a supine monument to the suffering that the public continues to endure. It spans two countries. Mr. Naowarat's poem says it best: *The gas pipeline in Kanchanaburi, will forever scream out who are of nobility, who are plunderers who are looters or saviors who loots the country who saves the land.*

Supara Janchitfah

Sulak Sivaraksa is scheduled to appear at the Criminal Court in Bangkok as a defendant against the charge of obstructing the Yadana gas pipeline resulting from his arrest on March 7, 1998. He will be in court on May 11, June 3, and June 29, 1999.

People's Rights Over Livelihood Resources

A gathering was held in Bhopal from December 4-8 to discuss issues affecting people's rights over livelihood resources and promote solidarity among the groups in the Asian region who are actively campaigning to see that these resources and rights are protected.

Members of INASIA, a network of NGOs who are involved in people centered development strategies attended the first two days. The purpose of the conference was to allow these representatives to gather and discuss the difficulties and problems they face. In follow-up sessions, they discussed strategies to actively promote grassroots development, which respects local people's rights over their livelihood resources. Finally, all of the participants tried to learn from each other and formulate a plan of action which is relevant to the issues, coherent within the philosophy of people-centered development and sympathetic to region-wide issues as well. People's movements must work together to have any hope at all of influencing giant multinational companies and agencies to respect their rights.

The first day of the INASIA meeting consisted of reports from each representative, about the state of people's right over livelihood resources in their respective regions. Some reports were rather grim and others quite hopeful. We heard how shrimp farming, financed and encouraged by the multinationals has destroyed valuable land along India's coastline. The result of these projects is ultimately to



render the land barren and the farmer who was enticed to switch from rice farming to shrimp farming, destitute. We heard about a widely successful small enterprise in which villagers pooled their money to establish a community buffalo bank. Each member contributes a little bit and may use the community owned animals for plowing. The milk is also shared among the members. Each member also bears the responsibility for taking care of the animals and assisting in breeding. Beginning with one buffalo, shared among many people, now, several years on, the herd has expanded so each member now has one animal for their own use. And they also have no debt to any outside agency.

During these sessions three major areas of action emerged. These are safeguarding livelihood resources; this includes forests, rivers, agricultural land and local knowledge. Another area of action is organizing and strengthening the influence of people when it comes to legisla-

tion affecting these resources. Finally, constitutional guarantees of the protection of people's rights over their means of livelihood are needed.

In the final session the direction of the INASIA network was discussed. The participants shared their ideas about the possibilities for cooperation and continued open lines of communication.

In the days following the INASIA meeting a rally was held in Bhopal. Tens of thousands of people traveled from around India to participate. Each day there were inspirational speeches and true stories of misguided development and its effects on people and their livelihoods. The last day of the rally, twenty-five thousand people marched through the streets of Bhopal to demonstrate their solidarity and commitment to the cause of protecting resources and respecting people's, even poor people's, way of life.

The Bhopal Declaration of the people has emerged out of such participatory group discussions and reflects the political

will of the people to launch a nation and region-wide struggle to ensure People's Right over Livelihood Resources.

The representatives of INASIA from different parts of South Asia and Thailand participated in these discussions. The Bhopal declaration was endorsed by all the participants of the National Convention and was reiterated during a mass rally of around 25,000 people on December 10 in Bhopal.

The Bhopal Declaration

Representatives of the activists and activist organizations from various parts of India who met for the National Convention on People's Rights on Livelihood Resources (organized by the Ekta Parishad and INASIA at Gandhi Bhavan, Bhopal, December 8-10 1998) adopt this declaration and pledge ourselves to work on the issues of Water, Forest, Land, Mineral Resources and people's right over these livelihood resources.

We the participants in the National Conference on People's Rights Over Livelihood Resources, view with grave concern the following issues:

1. The ongoing erosion of people's rights of natural resources, labor and indigenous knowledge systems.

2. The increasing instances of the mortgaging of natural resources such as land, forest, water and minerals to vested interests and transnational corporations.

3. The policies of "liberalization", "structural adjustment" and "globalization" dictated by World Bank, IMF, and WTO, which further the alienation of the livelihood resources from those who depend on them for

sustenance. This undermines the way of life of the underprivileged sections such as Adivasis, Dalits, Women, and laborers in the unorganized sector and the rural poor.

4. The food security of the poor is under an unprecedented threat due to inflation, single cash-crop farming (monoculture), captive plantations and unequal distribution of resources.

5. The indigenous knowledge systems of the poor have been appropriated by the IPR regime and are being crushed by the dominant development model perpetuated by International Financial Institutions and the lopsided Government policies.

We the participants in the National Conference on People's Rights Over Livelihood Resources, call for some positive developments that can help advance the course of People's Right over Livelihood Resources such as:

1. The National Forest Policy 1988 adopted unanimously by the Indian Parliament which recognizes the rights of people living in and around the forest as the first charge on forest produce and the need for central involve-

ment of the tribals and rural poor in the conservation, development and management of forest.

2. The Convention in Biological Diversity (CBD) adopted by over 140 countries at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 recognizes the Indigenous People's Knowledge Systems, Equitable distribution of forest produce.

3. The Provisions of Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act 1996 (PESA 1996) which recognizes the Gram Sabha as the Supreme Body in the Scheduled Areas and the right of local community on the water, forest and land resources - which has been further reconfirmed in the form of Ownership Rights over Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) by the Gram Sabha as reiteration the letter of the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MOEF), Government of India.

We firmly recognize the People's Right over Livelihood Resources as a basic and inalienable right.

With the political perspective of, distributive justice, people centered development, and responsive, transparent and an accountable governance.

1. There is an urgent need to



build people to people alliances and in doing so develop issue-based solidarity across the country and region.

2. We need to work towards a need based distribution of resources to the marginalised, rather than the greed based growth of the few.

3. We need to recognize our common humanity and compassion over rationalization and take actions that link social justice initiatives of people's groups and develop solidarity on a larger scale among the social action groups all over India and other parts of Asia.

4. We need to integrate initiatives of struggle and constructive social action for positive social change and policy initiatives. In consonance with the felt need expressed by the people and the spirit of Ganaswaraj (Community Self Rule).

We Demand:

1. The Policy Makers both at the State and Central level to initiate comprehensive policy framework to ensure, protect and strengthen People's Right over Livelihood Resources.

2. Accountability and trans-

parency at all levels of governance from Center to State to Gram Panchayat and enactment of Right to Information Bill and provisions for Citizen's Access to Legislative and Parliamentary Committees.

3. The devolution of decision making to the community levels and peoples Participation in the micro planning from Gram Sabha to Lok Sabha.

4. The State and Central Governments to withstand the pressure tactics and coercion by the World Bank, IMF, WTO and MNCs to take over Natural Resource base and consumer market.

5. Free and compulsory elementary education to all.

6. Primary health care for all and particularly reproductive health care to women.

7. Effective implementation of PESA - 96 for the tribal self rule in letter and spirit.

8. Revamping of public distribution system (PDS) to serve the real needs of the poor people and food security for all.

9. Immediate implementation of social legislation such as Minimum Wage, Equal Remuneration Act, Dowry Prohibition

Act, and Atrocities against SC/ST Act

10. Urgent and effective implementation of National Forest Policy (NFP)'88 by: i. Enacting a Forest Act to replace the colonial India Forest Act of 1927 by incorporating the key features of NGO (Amended) Draft Forest Bill 1995 already given to the Government of India. ii. Amending the Wildlife (Conservation) Act 1972 in live the spirit of NFP'88 and making people's participation through joint Protected Area Management (JPAM) and

11. Enactment of PESA - 76 type legislation to non-tribal and land acquisition to be included in such legislation.

12. Adoption of New Draft of National Resettlement and Rehabilitation Policy 98 and the comprehensive review of Land Acquisition Act, to make it people centered.

13. Comprehensive review of the M.P. World Bank Forestry Project.

Representatives of NGOs from India, Nepal, Thailand, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka signed this Declaration.

Dharmic Healing: An Experiment with the Transformational Power of the Mind

During the last weeks of January at Wongsanit ashram, more than twenty friends and strangers gathered to spend time in introspection. As we sat cross-legged on the floor in an open-air laboratory designed as our laboratory for spiritual experimentation; each person began to reveal his or her

experiences with illness and health. We had been drawn together for three days with the common intention to become our own doctors, to explore our inner anatomy as spiritual researchers.

As we sat and spoke about our experiences, it became apparent that we shared different

paths but that we also shared one common interest: to heal ourselves. Some of us were attracted to spiritual techniques of healing and transformation because they were displeased by conventional modern medicine while others were drawn out of curiosity. There were participants who had

been living with a chronic illness for years and there were others who were disturbed by headaches or occasional coughs. Whatever ailment or inner motivation drew us together, we were mindful and aware of suffering, and confident in the power of the dharma to heal.

We gathered thrice daily to investigate how to apply the dharma to our lives. The Buddha's teaching of the Four Noble Truths was viewed as a medical model and the dharma as a medicine. The Buddha's ultimate diagnosis of our afflictions is that we all suffer because of ignorance. We are ignorant of the causal links between desire and suffering, which leads us to act out the three poisons of passion, aggression and ignorance. These afflictive acts can cause physical, mental and spiritual illness. The Buddha's prescription for this 'ultimate' illness is to examine and recognize the causal links between ignorance, suffering, desire, illness etc. and to put this awareness of the causal links into action by following the Noble Eight-fold Path of virtuous action. These Four Noble Truths are also four steps toward lessening or eliminating spiritual and physical illness. We first must recognize suffering for what it is. Second we see the roots of our suffering in desire and its components: passion, aggression and ignorance. Third we have faith that there is a way out, a way to see and act out the truth. Finally, we must actually exert ourselves to follow the path that leads to wisdom, compassion and freedom from suffering. This four-step model is both descriptive of the nature of the condition of suffering as well as prescriptive about a means to transform suffering. By using this model,

we became aware that there were physical, psychological and spiritual factors that caused our personal condition and that these causes could be alleviated. This view allowed individuals to consider their illness and phenomena interrelated to their whole person rather than a fragmentary aspect of their self, that self needed separate treatment.

Throughout the process of discovering the relevancy of the Buddha's teachings to our lives, John McConnell and Supaporn Pangpruk shared their experiences of Dharmic healing. John had suffered from an eye disease that afflicted the capillaries of his eyes. He had taken conventional medicine until the doctors accidentally burned the pupil of his eye with a laser, and also told him that the medication he needed to take would eventually cause extreme liver damage. After hearing this news, John abandoned the Western approach and in spite of his doctor who told him that without treatment he would go blind he began an intensive meditation routine. He meditated in the Zen style and at the close of each session, he visualized a pure and powerful waterfall falling over his eyes, washing away all of the infected blood cells. The infected capillaries in John's eyes gradually dissipated his eyesight returned to normal.

Supaporn's story was equally inspirational. She was dressing one day and felt a lump in her breast. After consulting her doctor, she discovered that she had breast cancer. Supaporn decided to follow a routine of western medicine and chemotherapy prescribed by her doctor. After experimenting with the conventional approach, she found that the medicine and

therapy was not addressing the cause of her cancer but only treating the symptoms. She then renounced the advice of her doctor and decided to try and redesign her life around healing her illness. She moved into a quiet and natural environment, cooked macrobiotic foods for herself and began a daily meditation practice. Within a few months the lump in her breast had considerably decreased, after a half year it was almost gone and after a year it had disappeared entirely. Once her cancer had gone away, she returned to her earlier lifestyle of a fast paced job, an inconsiderate diet and no meditation.

Along with this lifestyle came the return of the lump in her breast. She is now living a holistic lifestyle and has dedicated her life to teaching others about the transformational powers of the mind.

These teachers offered us glimpses into the healing potential of the mind by sharing their stories of illness and their paths to health. By incorporating the Buddha's teachings into their healing process, they exemplified the necessity of experimentation and the practicality of spirituality. Throughout the three-day workshop of group discussions, teachings, and creative activities, John and Supaporn's guidance through different meditative and visual techniques was most beneficial. By considering their experiences and experimenting with meditation, within those few days it became apparent that the mind has the ability to create or destroy and that it is our responsibility to choose a path that heals.

Michael Sheehy

A Walk Among the Hills

This is a story of an interesting and moving scenario of human life that I observed in the hill areas surrounding the city of Chiang Mai, in Northern Thailand. The Karen are a tribal group of people whose homeland is spread over the borderlands of Siam and Burma. They live a traditional existence of swidden agriculture, producing rice and other vegetables for their own consumption, as well as keeping pigs and other livestock. As a distinct ethnic group, with a definite cultural identity, they face a number of problems. Their geographical position places them between two large nation states, and their situation could be compared to the Kurds of the Middle East. On the Burmese side of the border they have been fighting for a homeland for more than fifty years. This is accompanied by rapid deforestation due to the usually unscrupulous, and more often than not, corrupt trade agreements between the Thai and Burmese governments, by way of logging concessions. On the Thai side of the border this has led to disputes and hot tempers on the part of locals living in the lowlands Chiang Mai, who work on, or own the monotonous plantations that are their livelihood. There is a general accusation that the Karen hill people are destroying the watershed forests, thus diminishing the supply of water to the lowlands, and subsequently damaging crops and therefore the potential for income. In the middle of these serious problems, the Karen go about their traditional way of life in the way they always have, and I had the opportunity to observe that way of life.

After attending an international conference on the theme 'Alternative To Consumerism' at Buddamonton Park near Bangkok, twenty people and I embarked on solidarity walk to visit those very hills as a kind of Dhammayietra in the Buddhist tradition. Our purpose was self education, to familiarize ourselves with the culture, and to experience their way of life, and to observe with our own eyes the truth and extent of forest destruction. As a group we consisted of Koreans, Indians, Thais, Native Americans, Europeans and Americans. The Karen headman Pawluang Jorni was our guide.

Life out there is certainly tough; it is hilly rugged terrain for the most part covered in forest. We are required to walk several kilometers to reach the village, a continuous up and down walking that takes a toll on the strongest of legs, except of course to the Karen who, being born to it, hardly notice it at all. Eventually we reach the first village, and are greeted by everyone there. Lengthy discussions take place, from English to Thai, from Thai to Karen, translated artfully by Pracha Hutauwatr, our Thai friend who has been concerned with similar endeavors for many years, and Pulow Joni, who is a Karen chief. It is a slow process, but one that is rewarding as we learn names and places of origin from each other.

It is as far away from modern life as one can be; this is no 'show' village as favored by the tour operators in Chiang Mai. There is no electricity here, indeed there are none of the trappings of 20th century existence apparent here. Bamboo huts

adorn a clearing carved out of the jungle, which like the omnipresent wilderness that it is, stands ready to swallow us up if it should be given the chance. The various machinery used for pounding rice from its husk stand as if borrowed from a museum, yet these are implements of everyday life. A group of children are playing *sepak takraw* (a traditional sport) and invite me to join in, ever the clown, I accept their invitation and soon forge a bond of friendship with my clumsy attempts to imitate their skill and dexterity at the game. I am ushered to a bamboo hut where I will be staying while at this village; it is the home of a woman and her three children, her Karen heritage showing in her beautiful and striking face. I wonder about her husband only to discover that he committed suicide some years ago.

My night spent in that hut is comfortable, much cooler than the ashram in Nakorn Nayok where I live. There are no mosquitoes as it is not the season, although further south the mosquito season is every day, they are constantly present. At around four in the morning I hear the stirrings of the family, a fire being lit, rice put on to boil. I venture outside to where the children have lit a fire. We sit around that fire warming ourselves against the morning chill. The children are roasting tubers over the fire, and the piglets and puppies clamber for warmth. I watch the morning mist rise slowly and dissipate over the forest canopy. When the light finally creeps in over the horizon there is a burst of life as a cacophony of roosters crowing, chicks chirping, pigs squealing and puppies yelping

greet the new day.

A large percentage of the Karen are Christian but the people we are staying with are Buddhist. The villagers, in the ritual of almsgiving attend to the Buddhist monks who traveled with us. Almsgiving happens all over Thailand in the early morning though in this village it is rare as there are no monks nearby. When the monks have received their alms and the villagers their blessing, we all sit down to a meal of rice, chili paste and local vegetables. After I have finished eating, I wander over to where Pracha and Phra Somneuk are sitting. Through Pracha I ask Phra Somneuk about Buddhism. He replies that I must ask myself what is the ultimate purpose in life. It is wise advice, not a dogma or proclamation, but a guideline as to what is really important.

An American friend asks how I would improve the village. I think that this question misses the point, I wouldn't change any of it. "What about stairs" she says, "wouldn't that make life easier?" "What about escalators," I reply. I think that she understood what I was trying to say. This is one of the reasons that we are here. Once upon a time we all lived like this, and the majority of us now would not have the least idea how to exist in such an environment. The Karen and their traditional way of life are under siege. From the western world is the modernizing influence, it tells them that they are inferior because they live a simple way of life. From the east they endure war and persecution in Burma, and discrimination in their adopted homeland of Thailand. So many Karen know only life in refugee camps as they have fled from Burma. So many young flee to the bright lights of Chiang

Mai or even further to Bangkok, with all of the misery it has to offer exploited people. They flee there, only to encounter greater adversity.

After spending a couple of days in that village we continue our odyssey, further and further into the forest and its green abundance. We walk for several hours, legs got used to the strenuous demands. Occasionally Phra Somneuk or Jorni bend over and show us a plant or a root, "you can eat this" or "this will help you if you have a bad stomach." Their knowledge of the plants in the forest is so deep and ours almost non-existent. Reaching the second village where we will be spending some time, we meet the villagers, and accepted the invitation to help in gathering the rice. We walk to the fields. On the way we learn about and observe first hand the system for rotating the use of the fields. In a seven-year cycle, each field is used once, which leaves time for them to recoup their nutrients. We saw all seven stages of the cycle as we walked out to the field, which was to be harvested. It was an interesting illustration of the Buddhist teaching on impermanence, seeing the fields in the different stages, from a burned clearing ready for planting all the way to a seven year old mini-forest, ready to be cut, burned and planted again. All around was virgin forest. Some of our group helped to thresh the rice seeds from the husk, while an American gentleman and I agreed to carry rice sacks back to the village. We struggle the two-kilometer distance back to the village, and collapse in a pool of sweat, only to see a fourteen-year old girl place a similar sack down with no apparent effort!

This village is larger than

the first, and nearby is a waterfall. Some villagers lead us there and we use the opportunity to cool off after our exertions. The cool, crystal-clear water follows its impatient journey downstream. The water spirit is pleased, and eager to give its bounty to the people who are her careful stewards. If not too much is taken, then there is always plenty to give. That evening in the village, we learn some of the stories of Karen folklore and legend. We are told how a person has three ceremonies in life, those of birth, marriage and death. We are told the story of how once in the distant past, the men and women of the Karen had a terrible quarrel, and how they stayed in separate camps. But the men discovered that they did not know how to cook and clean and hunt. Now, when a Karen man gets married, he goes to live in her house, in remembrance of the time when the men had to go to the female camp and ask for forgiveness so that they could live with the women again. The Karen carry a traditional bag, hand fashioned from dyed cotton, in which they carry their essential items. Upon their death, the bag takes on a new significance. When their body is burned, as is the custom, their ashes are placed into the bag, carried into the jungle, and placed on a branch of a dead tree. It is the final symbolic act of belonging to the beautiful and generous jungle.

Opium and heroin abuse exist among the Karen, but not in this particular place. Now there is an even greater problem with amphetamine abuse among the young, just as this drug is ravaging communities all over Thailand. The Thai Karen want to be a part of Thailand, as they were once citizens of Siam, an ethnically diverse kingdom. They

want to be citizens of their adopted homeland, Thailand, but even more they want to retain their traditions and cultural identity, their way of life. This is a story one of our group, Victor, a Native American knows all too well. That night we attended a rice wine drinking ceremony. We were impressed that this is really how alcohol should be consumed, mindfully and in the spirit of togetherness. A trio of headmen gives a chant as they pass around the small cups of fiery, potent liquid. Our sense of inebriation is slow and never out of control, it only serves to strengthen our bonds of friendship.

The culmination of our walk is a twenty-four hour fast and solo meditation retreat on top of the highest peak in the area, where we can contemplate on our surroundings. We begin our climb and the stronger members of the group spontaneously take the role of looking after those for whom the climb is especially difficult. Pawluang Jorni expresses his admiration for the bravery shown by our friend from Chicago, who although having difficulty, digs into her reserves of strength and shows her determination. The view at the summit is quite magnificent, we can see Doi Inthanon (Thailand's highest peak) looming in the distance. The valley below is a green sea of monsoon jungle, unlike the pine trees here, above two thousand meters. Around a fire at night the conversation centers on the anxieties of spending a night in the jungle alone, and the techniques for successful meditation. Phra Somneuk gives a brief discourse on samadhi, mindful meditation. As Pracha translates his teachings, his gentle countenance inspires trust and confidence.

The next morning we awaken and without saying a

word, head to the spots that we had previously chosen for our solo contemplation. I have a room with a view. I am sitting in a break in the pine trees that looks out onto the valley below. I sit in silence looking down into the valley and across the gentle rise and fall of the slopes in the distance. The sun goes on its steady course, rising above me, increasing the temperature, increasing the light. The warmth of the day attracts insects to my scent. Like inquisitive, sentient beings, they hover and land on my skin tasting it with their proboscis. My relationship with them teaches me patience. I notice the ants, the sheer volume of them, the diversity of their shapes and sizes, colors and actions, as they swarm through the leafy brown carpet of the forest floor, building nests, finding food, and perpetuating the ant cosmos. When the sun is at its zenith I take shade beneath the canopy of huge jungle plants and as it begins its descent I walk around and explore the area of my contemplation. Perched on the spine of this knoll I see a large snake's skin, shed to accommodate this season's growth. I see birds flitting in the trees and hear the humming of winged insects. The trees are rustling with the movements of their myriad inhabitants. I can feel that I have not eaten but I am not hungry, instead I feel a heightening of my senses.

The sun sets slowly over the hills, and over the melancholy feelings of those who feel alone. I feel as if I belong to this forest, and that is enough. A small fire in the early night soothes the enveloping dark chill. I feel no fear and sleep the deepest of sleeps.

Awakening around four o'clock and rekindling the flames I sit and enjoy the silence, gazing at the flickering flames, and lis-

tening to the gentle crackling of the wood. Over the valley to the east, the sky is already red as the light grows a scene of beauty unfolds. A dark green sea shrouded in mist, reflecting the pale light, this is what the artist tries to see and capture on canvas, surely beauty like this is elusive. With the light increasing comes a sound my urban ears have never heard, the long, slow whooping of gibbons as they express themselves to the jungle with eloquence beyond words. It seems as if they are friends whose song of reassurance can lift the heaviest of hearts.

At eight o'clock we find ourselves back in base camp, breaking our fast, free from our self imposed exile. Telling stories to each other we smile at the tales of bliss and discomfort. I for one, admit that I had a wonderful nights sleep, and this makes Pawluang Jorni happy. I think that the experienced made me more alive in a way, and for that I will be always grateful to the Karen.

The Karen are described as a peace loving people. I think that this is a very appropriate description of them. The war in Burma has wrecked havoc on their lifestyle. The greed of commercialism is steadily robbing them of their home, the forest. The eyes of the world are certainly not looking at the Karen, only a few whispers of protest trickle into the ears of those caught in the dog eat dog world. From the hills of Chiang Mai, to Africa, to Latin America, there are so many similar stories. In those stories are valuable lessons to be learned, about the nature of our human race, and where we are going.

Danny Campbell

THE NINTH INTERNATIONAL INEB CONFERENCE -
MARCH 1ST - 5TH 1999.

THEME - Towards a Culture of Non Violence

VENUE - The Sarvodaya Shramadana Headquarters -
Moratuwa - Sri Lanka.



The French Impressionist painter Claude Monet, advised aspiring artists "never to lose sight of the first impression." If the spark which ignites the inspiration to create a work of art can be retained, its freshness and vitality will always be maintained during the often laborious process of production. This axiom can be applied to most worthwhile human endeavor.

Our first impression on arrival at the Sarvodaya Center, twenty kilometers South of Colombo, was created by the bright yellow banner, clearly printed with the theme of the conference, strung high above

the white wrought iron gates, illuminated by the headlights of the minibus which brought us from the airport in the early hours of the morning. Welcomed by the housekeeper at International House, bedrolls were superfluous as we were ushered in to freshly painted bedrooms furnished with simple four poster beds elegantly draped with mosquito nets.

At breakfast early next morning, the bright yellow woolly cap of Somdet Phra Maha Ghosananda, a Patriarch of Cambodia and greatly loved patron and kalyanamitra of INEB, immediately attracted our

attention. The famous headgear, protecting Somdet from early morning and evening chills, has become something of a mascot for us all, a beacon in a darkening world, reminding us to walk peacefully, step by step, towards our desired goal - to help create a global infrastructure for a culture of Peace and nonviolence in the decade 2000-2010. Keep an eye on the woolly cap. Never lose sight of the first impression. We were privileged to be hosted by another great hero of the 20th Century, a truly noble guide and spiritual friend, Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne, the founder of Sarvodaya, a grassroots humanitarian or-

ganization that is active all over Sri Lanka

Our tour began at the Vishva Niketan (Universal Abode) Peace Center which had been opened ceremoniously the previous day. It has been established for people of all nations to pursue the ideal of inner and outer Peace by awakening inner spirituality in an atmosphere of tranquillity and serenity, close to Nature. Twenty stepping stones of uneven height and width must be navigated across a sculptured pool, leading to the Pavilion of Concentration. Invoking the quality of mindfulness if our concentration wobbles. Later this peaceful place was to ring with the laughter of the Tibetan Nuns who were a powerful presence at the conference, as they were introduced to consciousness raising exercises, Western style, which began with making funny noises.

Three sculptured ponds bordered the pavilion, symbolizing the three poisons of passion, hatred and ignorance. Four hills, a waterfall and nature-merging. Eight pathways lead to the circular meditation area which holds two hundred people and encompasses a Bodhi tree sapling planted in the center. A large white Buddha is seated in meditation on the perimeter wall. Four granite pillars, rough hewn, symbolizing the four foundations of mindfulness, flank his imposing figure. Lotus pools and herbs palm trees and lush vegetation shield the garden of peace from the world, howling and growling beyond its boundaries. Soon there will be a Peace Museum and library for the archives of Sarvodaya and an art gallery.

It was a fitting introduction to the conference to walk in the garden of Peace, so newly cre-

ated and maintained as yet by only two full time gardeners, inspiring us to create our own gardens of peace within, to cultivate the human heart.

Later that evening Somdet presided over the opening ceremony in the Pavilion of Peace.

Next day the conference got off to a lively start with a dialogue between Dr. Ariyaratne and Acharn Sulak Sivaraksa on the subject of Buddhism and non-violence, in an era of globalization from a Sri Lankan and Siamese perspective. The consensus was that self sufficiency in both countries has been heavily undermined by the propaganda which is powered by the multinational corporations, via the media, to laud the merits of globalization and by the Government and private sector whose vested interests are being served. This leaves the people little power to resist the onslaught of globalization, either morally or economically.

Recently Dr. Ariyaratne spoke up at the UN requesting help for the NGOs who are working unsupported. Sarvodaya is re-enforcing security at the level of the community, building a new society in 12,000 clusters of ten communities. They are defending themselves against the inroads of materialism and consumerism, using electronic media to network and link, to counteract the methodological and structural order.

Acharn Sulak's stance was that Buddhists cannot compromise when confronting gender discrimination, the polarities of the rich and poor the strong and the weak and the ever present dangers of Nationalism, the violence of economic and cultural globalization. The new religion of materialism, fuelled by the three

poisons, passion, hatred and ignorance are poisoning the world.

Dr. Ariyaratne favored the holistic approach, to promote the concept of sharing and to dialogue and approach the oppressors with loving kindness. Acharn Sulak informed us that he has formed a working committee to challenge the World Bank and befriend the arrogance of those who are promoting structural violence. This is cultivating the principles of Right Living by living in the world while working to change it.

Following that, the tragic subject of "Women under armed Conflict" was moderated by Shelley Anderson (IFOR). The subject was put squarely on the table, but as the familiar litany of sorrows unfolded, also the heroism and transformation of women's suffering shone through the dark history of their encounters against almost impossible odds. It is now becoming more widely realized that women are a resource for Peace. In summarizing, Paula Green said that the International Women's movement has empowered women to speak out, women who traditionally have kept silent. Women bear the brunt of civilian casualties during conflict. They lose their menfolk, endure fuel, food and water shortages and the social collapse of education and community. Women are the nurturers who listen and understand, they have a valuable contribution to make.

DAY 2

The afternoon session, was of great interest, focussing on our host country's "Path to Peace, a Political Perspective," Presented by Professor Tissa Vitarana and Dr. Jehan Perera



(Nat National Peace Council).

Professor Tissa outlined the history of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, which can be traced back to the jealousy which was engendered by the colonial policy of divide and rule when some of the Tamil population were granted privileges. This minority consequently caused the Sinhala majority to develop a "minority complex." Under British rule, English was imposed on the people as a first language but Sinhala was soon restored, however Tamil was not. Worse still Tamil and Sinhala education was segregated, so allowing no interaction and creating breeding grounds for suspicion and hostility.

The nuns from Ladakh spoke of the very bad conditions which existed for the Nuns in their country where there are no facilities for religious practice and where they are exploited

both by their families and the Monks as servants, giving them no time or opportunities for study. However things are slowly changing and the Ladakhi Nuns have formed the Ladakh Nuns Association (LNA), an ancient nunnery is being restored with the help of a highly respected Rinpoche and the wholehearted support of HH the Dalai Lama for improving the conditions of Nuns in general which have fallen into such a lamentable state.

Cambodian nuns, told us that there is only one training center which can take them for periods of one to two weeks or a maximum of one month. The nuns are mostly elderly and find it hard to study. They want to open the way for younger women but they are mostly supporting their families and unable to do this.

Light relief followed at the Nuns Conflict resolution work-

shop led by Ouyporn Khuan-kaew and Jill Jameson, where everyone let off steam by joining in a boisterous game involving Nuns, Nunneries and earthquakes. After this we settled down to swap stories illustrating some real life experiences of defusing potentially dangerous situations, peacefully.

A Cambodian nun kept us spellbound with her account of acting as an intermediary between a farmer whose cow had wandered into a neighbors rice field and was arrested by the owner who demanded an exorbitant ransom of rice for its return. The owner could not afford to pay, and the police refused to look after the cow, which remained in the custody of the injured party.

The nun continued to pacify both sides until the owner of the field tired of his prize and the cost of maintaining it and then returned



to its owner. Jill Jameson ended the session by giving us some useful tips when in conflict situations. Paramount was the ability not only to listen but to keep silent and not to pursue any argument when the other side is not listening. Not to blame and to practice patience under provocation.

DAY 3

Morning meditation at the Vishva Niketan Peace Center, I take a longish walk at 5:00 am. The moon was still up and the dogs were sleeping in the shadows. The white Buddha was glimmering at the end of the pathway, a few handfuls of fallen flowers at his feet to welcome us, still weary from the intensive activity of the previous day and footsore from the laterite path.

Chanting that morning was led by the Tibetan Nuns. Tibetan, Theravadan and Mahayana Buddhists, Christians and Muslims, were sitting peacefully together around around the young Bodhi tree.

Birds are waking up, crows admonishing us. A delicate ribbon of birdsong unfurls, graceful as the scarf of a Korean dancer. The light begins to filter through the darkness, we rise, refreshed, with the sun.

AFTERNOON - DAY 3

Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne gave us an account of "40 years of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka." For all that time, they have worked together with the Buddhist Monks to bring together the temple and the community for their mutual benefit.

Sarvodaya celebrated their 40th anniversary in 1998 by living in very poor villages to learn how to help their needs. Buddhist High School teachers and students develop an ecumenical philosophy based on Buddhist principles.

Today Sarvodaya is trying to establish a micro economic program to improve economic status based on Right Liveli-

hood. It is active in 2,500 villages. The aim is to organize Community Based Development Banks and spiritual, moral and economic values on which to base social and political structures.

DAY 4

Once again the Nuns came to the fore, as they told us what it was like to live as a Buddhist Nun in Ladakh, Thailand and Sri Lanka.

Bikkhuni Wekada M. Bhadrara said that until comparatively recently the nuns in Sri Lanka were not respected. A breakthrough came when one well educated Buddhist laywoman took Bikkhuni ordination in Burma. When she returned to Sri Lanka she attracted a following, land was donated and a Nunnery was built. In 1972, three nuns went to see Prime Minister Bandaranika to explain the problems of Nuns, especially their education. The Prime Minister donated land and Germany helped financially. An institute

for the education of Nuns was built. In 1986 there was a move to restore the full Bikkhuni Order and six Nuns were ordained in Los Angeles. Twenty two were ordained in Bodhgaya in 1998. Their future hope is that all Sri Lankan Nuns will be able to obtain higher ordination in order to be useful to society. Some of the Monks supported the higher ordination of the Nuns but they could not do so openly because the hierarchy is conservative. The lay people have to follow the Monks traditionally so they are confused on these issues, but by setting a good example the people will be reassured.

The consent of Theravada Bikkhus was necessary at the time of their higher ordination by Korean Bikkhus (Mahayana tradition). They recited the Eight rules and gave their consent.

This event made headlines in Sri Lanka, "BIKKHUNI ORDER RESTORED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 1000 YEARS." Bikkhuni Kusuma is a University Professor and well respected. In the South, Bikkhuni Varunee and her Nuns are accorded equal respect by the Monks in 20 Temples in the area so much progress has been made.

Closing Ceremony

Shelley Anderson thanked Martin Petrich for his time as Executive Secretary of INEB, inviting him to "stay with us" and to hand on his ever ready smile. He has combined efficiency with a human face and done a great deal to improve the quality of its operations.

After dinner we were entertained by a troupe of Traditional dancers who appeared out of the night and enticed us to follow them to the well appointed theater, opposite the building.

Poised on the steps, they vanished inside and proceeded to the stage, as we straggled in, somewhat bemused. We were treated to some spectacular dancing and the memory of a particularly dreadful Demon who would have scared Dracula, gyrating endlessly from the waist. His long straw like hair almost covered his body, as he was gradually conquered by the forces of good, lives on in the memory.

Conclusion

In the minibus, travelling back from Sarvodaya to the Airport, through the streets of Colombo, a misty moon overhead, the road was punctuated with palm trees, shuttered shops, and the churches with illuminated crosses, brightly painted statues of Christ and the Virgin Mary enclosed in glass, these wayside shrines. A huge Buddha image sat in front of a Temple, Buddhism and Christianity, peace-

fully co-existing.

Inside the bus, Somdet Phra Maha Ghosananda was in the front seat, wearing his woolly cap, peacefully co-existing with Elvis Presley and "Jail House Rock," and "Babe you're mine," beating out on the car radio.

At the airport, the Nuns, in dignified white simplicity, waited for the flight as the Sri Lankan Air hostesses, flitted past like gauzy dragon flies in their colorful dresses. Soon we were all on the wing, carrying with us many impressions, but hopefully we will not lose sight of the first one in our aspirations, to cultivate a culture of Peace and Non Violence for the next decade.

Venitia Walkey

This article is a condensation of a comprehensive report. Readers may request the full-length report to be sent by email or post.

Email requests to: sop@ffc.org.th

The Thai New Year in April brought a new INEB Executive Secretary. I am very happy that Ms. Panadda Kosakarn accepted this distinct but challenging position. So it is time for me to say farewell to the Readers of *Seeds of Peace* and to all INEB friends. Thanks to all of you who gave me and the Secretariat your support, be it materially, morally or spiritually. For 2 years I served in the INEB Secretariat and tried to build bridges within this diverse and colorful network. It has been not an easy task to respond to all the various needs and requests and often I had to painfully realize my own and INEB's shortcomings. But working with INEB gave me the unique chance to get to know so many and different people from all over the world. Be it the Buddhist nun from Ladakh, the monk from Viet Nam, the student from Indonesia or the Human Rights activist from Bangladesh. This is what keeps me grateful and I am sure that I will be in touch with many of you also in the future.

Martin H. Petrich (My email: haeupet@loxinfo.co.th)

Dear Readers and Friends,

Greetings to all of you from me as a new Executive Secretary of INEB.

INEB hopes to be able to set up a new publication of its own some time in the future, at which time there will be an announcement for INEB's new publication in *Seeds of Peace*. However, in the interim, we will still continue to have a voice through *Seeds of Peace* in order to share with you and to keep you all updated on concerns and activities of INEB. For this, we appreciate TICD for its kind assistance and support.

As the new Executive Secretary, I hope to continue to receive your kind support as well as to carry on the work that Martin and my other predecessors have started. I also hope to learn from you and to work with you on how to build a stronger network with a clearer direction. This is so that INEB can contribute in addressing some of the existing problems in a constructive Buddhist way.

Yours in Dhamma,
Panadda Kosakarn
INEB Secretariat
Bangkok, Thailand.

Dharma Poet

Thailand's celebrated poet Angkarn Kalyanapong turned 72 on February 12. But while lecturers and students at Silpakorn University, his alma mater, are busy preparing commemorative activities, Angkarn seems unexcited, indifferent even.

Instead, the Southern-born poet who is known for his sharp tongue, is busy writing and re-writing some of his poems. There is little time left. He no longer differentiates between day and night. "In the end," asks the poet, "what will be left of life?" Man lives for less than 100 years, says Angkarn. "Alexander [the Great] is gone. So is the emperor Ashoka. Many geniuses, not even the Lord Buddha, remain with us. The length of our lives cannot be compared to those minuscule pieces of stones and pebbles."

"Even if Ayutthaya has long fallen, poems live on," the poet concludes. For this reason, Angkarn is concentrating whatever time is left to him on this earth to creating poems and drawings. "They must stand the test of time," says Angkarn. He is referring to some of his works. "They must transcend time. They must be immortal like the rays of the sun that have brought us the dawn from time immemorial and yet manage to look new every morning. I've offered my life to art."

"Apart from the poems and prose, life has little meaning for me. We live in a cycle of samsara—birth, old age, sickness and death—and I want to do my best to create works for humanity as well as for peace that will extinguish the fire of hatred and war. And so, we may one day live in



peace." His deep immersion in Siamese arts, says Angkarn, should not pose any problems in achieving the kind of lasting works which can be appreciated the world over.

"The Phra Buddha Chinarat statue [in Pitsanulok province] belongs to humanity. So do poems. In 'Thai-ness', we can find something that transcends national borders. Thainess should not be narrowly confined to blind nationalism as [former prime minister Plaek] Pibulsongkram advocated. It's also not about wearing Thai dress. It's in the spirit, in our consciousness. I cry for the wealth of heritage from our ancestors." Angkarn has always advocated serious study of traditional arts. His poems are filled with flowery words that are not in daily use. Ordinary Thais may find these words and messages hard to understand. Yet he insists that Western civilization must play a role in the present and future of Thai art. After all, Angkarn was a student of the Italian-born Ajarn Silpa Birasri, the founder of Silpakorn University.

But that doesn't mean he is fond of all things Western. He regards the millennia hype that is widespread among educated Thais as a nuisance. "Those who wish to celebrate the new millennium should convert to Christianity. Thais seem to be excited about everything. The whole nation goes into 'spasms' every now and then. Indeed, we are a super colony of the farangs because our submission is deep in our souls. We are, as they say in English 'good for nothing!'. We're fortunate to be near the words of Lord Buddha which allow us to be aware of our humanity, yet many opt to be like toads," says Angkarn, suddenly getting up from his chair.

Despite his occasional angry outbursts, Angkarn wishes to remain a humble servant of the Lord Buddha in his next life. But he's not sure what will happen. He admits that he has not been too serious a practitioner of Dhamma. However, as the autumn gives way to winter, he believes he will succeed in leaving some lasting works behind him. "Oh yes, oh yes... at least some of them," says Angkarn. But he denies that he is competing with Goethe in creating masterpiece like those of Faust. "I was born to create immortal works. And those [poems] that are not quite as good as I would like have to be revised again and again until I can depart this world without worry."

"You write it down," says the poet in a commanding tone, his voice full of emotion. "I am the one who offers my life to poetry. I work every night on my poems and prose, like a soldier offering his life to his mother-

land." Although Angkarn is known for his poetry as well as his drawings, he insists that both are essentially expressions of his heart. "The difference lies in the technique. I am attached to both. Writing poetry or prose is like catching the ray of the sun, like holding a magnifying glass over a match stick. Drawing is a spontaneous act, it radiates from the inside."

And even though Angkarn believes that most Thais are not interested in the delicateness and taste of poems and art, he couldn't care less. "The life of a poet is meaningful. But those able to grasp that concept must have the knowledge to appreciate poems. Our society is geared toward making money. We learn to maximize cash. That's why most hospitals these days can be likened to expensive abattoirs and medical doctors are like 'draculas' sucking our red money. I'm sure that there are some good doctors, but most of those practicing medicine are not. I wish they had been born as printing machine that churn out bank notes. That way, they can make more money! And I declare that there are no longer any heart problems because Thais no longer have hearts."

Not that Angkarn thinks all artists are good. In fact, he is rather sick of the many half-baked and fake artists who emerged during the bubble days. But he also pities those people who are so busy making money. "We ought to frame banknotes and worship them. Most of us are born with our face in the dirt. We are stuck with a routine and repetitive life. And while we have many Thai billionaires, most lack taste. All they do is hold on to and copulate with their money. This is rubbish!"

It would be unfortunate, says Angkarn, if after death, we were asked by God why we spent most of our lives making money. "What shall we leave behind for humanity in order to make it better?" he asks. His heart cries when he sees Thai youngsters waste their lives through aimless pursuits. "They go to pubs and bars. They kill time, and they turn into their own murderers. They do not leave behind creative work for others to appreciate when they're gone. What did most Thais leave behind for humanity besides their dicks? Some tried to make the largest omelet in the world or break other kinds of world records. I think that's pathetic. And what about that abbot of the temple who built the world's largest incense stick which eventually fell over and killed someone? I think the abbot ought to be flogged."

So can these flaws be blamed on education and other aspects of society? Angkarn points out that today's teachers tend to be more concerned about the length of their students' hair rather than what's inside their brains. Soldiers, he adds, seem to be fighting with their minor wives or enjoying getting drunk rather than defending their country.

"When a watch is broken, we have it fixed. But when our humanity is lost, do we even care?" he asks. But Angkarn says he doesn't want to be overly critical of others. After all, each has his or her own life. "It's up to each of us. If you wish to rub your face in dirt, so be it. If you like to eat shit, eat it. If you like to crawl like a reptile, do it. Why should I bother about these mundane matters? Our world resembles the waves of the

oceans. They go up and they come down. The world may be whatever it likes but I will write poems for posterity."

However, the poet has not lost all hope. He still believes in people's ability to learn. Angkarn himself was accused by literary critic Chetana Nagavajara nearly three decades ago for being too dichotic in his views on society. "I have changed. I have widened my outlook on life. But unlike others, I welcome criticism. My views and understanding may be too narrow but we must give people a chance to grow." Seven decades have passed and despite all the talk about his immortal works, Angkarn also has a humble side to his nature. "After 70 years of learning I have realized that I am still a young pupil in this vast world. I may be smart at times but silly at others. We ought to listen to the words of children. We ought to respect grasshoppers. A fast-running canine deserves a gold medal as much as any other athlete."

"We must listen, even to the voice of a little boy. One day, I heard a boy asking his parents to pull over a chair so he could sit near the moon and reach out for it. That sort of thing exists only in a child's imagination."

Pravit Rojanaphruk

The following is a translation of a poem written by Angkarn for the book *Angkarn Kalyanapong: A Contemporary Siamese Poet*, published by Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation (1986) and edited by Michael Wright.

It Is Late
It is late, life is running down;
What do I desire of the world?
I must awake and use my
intellect.

*Let not this slumber be my death.
I know only eating, sleep and sex,
My soul is exceedingly coarse;
What do I know
Of life's many good things?
No! No! my existence is empty.
How can I—living like a dog
Or pig, devoid of mind—
Claim to be human?
The knowing mind is a light
Revealing the nature of all things;
Examine all before accepting,*

*Shun all forms of ignorance.
Make the mind a magic garden:
Follow high values;
Dream of the unbounded good
Which is itself eternal.
Be ashamed of the four elements,
The arrogant creditors of life:
Set yourself free, by graceful coin,
And sleep not enchained by
ignorance.
Though base, pebbles, dust
and sand,*

*Give the earth dignity,
Have we, the born human and high,
Nothing to contribute?
Is the great gift there,
The ideal of life?
When the immortal works calls,
To what else lend the divine hand?
Though brief, more precious
than a jewel:
May this shine brightly,
By its essence, its aspiration,
And timeless beauty.*

The common touch

THAI TRADITIONAL MEDICINE: *Outlawed a century ago as quackery, Thai traditional medicine is on the road to recovery as patients, disillusioned with western treatments, look to home-grown healers*

Hundreds of patients who suffer from varying degrees of paralysis come to the temple seeking help from practitioners who specialize in massage therapy. They all learned the techniques from Phra Khru Uppakara Pattanakij, the abbot of Wat Nong Yah Nang who started traditional treatment at the temple in 1973. Failing to find relief in western medicine's costly treatments, many patients are turning to indigenous medicine and massage out of sheer desperation. Though some people may still look down on the age-old knowledge as unscientific, 63-year-old patient Preeda Yongyuth is not one of them. "I was about to give up hope, then I sought help from the abbot and tried traditional medicine and massage," said Mr Preeda who was once partially paralyzed. "Now I have regained my health."

As well as performing his religious duties, the temple's abbot has devoted himself to treating the poor free of charge in an effort to revive the traditional



practices. His work won him the 1993 Cultural Outstanding Person Award in the field of local wisdom (herbal treatment) and the 1998 Prem Tinsulanonda Award which honors those who dedicate themselves to their communities. The abbot first learned the science of Thai traditional medicine from his uncle at the age of 13. Sixteen years later as a Buddhist monk, he had his first chance to treat patients in his village. "At first, those who suffered broken bones came to see me. After applying the herbal medicine, many of them got better. Word spread and people have been flocking to my temple ever since," recalled the 55-year-old head monk. To cope with the ever-increasing number of patients and the different diseases they have, the abbot sought

knowledge from his uncle's Thai traditional medicine texts. He has since become something of a specialist in treating paralysis-related illnesses. "Most modern doctors pay no attention to these chronic illnesses. They prefer to specialize in other kinds of sickness that modern medical technology can cure," he said.

Today, Wat Nong Yah Nang has turned into an informal hospital where people throughout the kingdom come to seek help from the abbot and his nine volunteer masseurs, all of whom have been trained by the abbot. Some of the masseurs are former patients or patients' relatives. They get no money for their work which keeps them busy from 6 a.m. until 6 p.m. every day. "I visited the temple 12 years ago and saw a lot of paralyzed patients," said Kanong Muenhan, 53, who has been a volunteer masseur at the temple for 10 years. "I felt sorry for them and wanted to help. So I decided to learn how to help them from the abbot. "My reward is the joy of having a chance to help ease the patients' sufferings. Seeing them able to walk again makes me happy," he said.

To shelter the patients who need long-term treatment, an old wooden *sala*, or open pavilion, is used, although it is in poor con-

ditions. The patients' relatives are also allowed to stay at the temple until the patients recover. The *sala*, which can comfortably accommodate 60 persons at most, is now packed with around 100 patients. A new building is needed, but plans are on hold due to lack of cash. A temporary shelter was built nearby to relieve the congestion but it doesn't help much. As a result, some patients can't stay overnight and must return to the temple every day.

Apart from traditional therapeutic massage, the patients at Wat Nong Yah Nang are treated with herbal medicine and herbal sauna. The daily routine begins with walking practice using a walking stick and with the help of temple volunteers. Next comes a massage session which normally takes about one hour. The patients and the practitioners then rest until 3 p.m. when the patients line up for a herbal sauna. These procedures are repeated until the patients get better. One special method that requires great dedication and stamina from the masseurs is hot massage. After applying oil on their foot, the masseurs place it on a hot steel plate, then stamp the hot foot on the patient's legs and arms. The process takes about half an hour which means that the masseurs must endure extreme heat for a long while.

The sole of their foot is dry and cracked by the heat as a result.

The treatments cost the temple about 5-6,000 baht a day. This includes expenses for herbs and wages for villagers to dry and grind the herbs for a variety of traditional medicinal recipes. The expenses come mostly from public donations but, according to the abbot, the temple still owes payments to many herb stores.

According to the monk, the country is now facing an acute shortage of true "folk doctors" who work out of dedication, as in days of old. He lamented the fact that traditional medicine has become big business and is open to abuse. The expertise of traditional herbal medics has also become too limited. "In the old days, folk doctors normally handled a wide range of diseases. Now, most of them deal only with specific complaints," said the abbot. There is little hope for improvement because few people are interested in learning the science of traditional healing, added folk doctor Kanong. "This is because traditional healers have low status and they have to deal mostly with hopeless cases already turned down by modern doctors." Thai traditional medicine takes a holistic approach, seeing illness as a sign of imbalances in one's body and mind

and seeking to restore harmony.

Traditional medicine, therefore, doesn't separate itself from religious beliefs, human relationships and the environment. "All these factors affect one's health. A physician's understanding must therefore go beyond the patient's symptoms in order to be effective," he added. That is why the abbot asks all his patients, as well as the masseurs, to strictly observe Buddhism's five precepts, namely, no killing, no stealing, no sexual exploitation, no lying and no drinking alcohol. In addition, they have to abstain from unwholesome foods. Stronger patients are expected to help take care of paralyzed ones. With a limited budget and little assistance from the government, Phra Khru Uppakara Pattanakij and his team of folk doctors are struggling to revive the science of traditional medicine and to help those who have lost hope in modern health care.

The abbot said he realized that Thai traditional healing has its limitations. But it also has its strengths. "We want to offer ordinary people more choices in health care. And we can do this by respecting the wisdom of our ancestors and keeping it alive by practicing it," said the abbot.

Chompoo Trakullertsathien



Elite must abandon prejudice and truly honor Pridi

On July 29 our Prime Minister presided over a meeting to make preparations for the birth centenary of Pridi Banomyong, a former premier and one of this country's leading statesmen. Pridi's name has been submitted to UNESCO as a candidate for

inclusion in a list of the world's most important people. On May 11, 2000, major celebrations organized by those who fondly remember Pridi, will take place both at home and abroad.

At that preparatory meeting several people proposed that

postage stamps and coins bearing the likeness of the late senior statesmen be issued to mark the occasion. This type of honor has been bestowed twice before. Once, for Phya Anuman Rajadhon (Yong Anuman-Rajadon), the brilliant historian and educator;

and again for Prince Sitthiporn Kridakara, who founded the agricultural journal *Kasikon* in 1927 as part of a crusade to champion the cause of the Siamese farmer and to urge government support for agricultural research.

But an even greater honor has been suggested for Pridi. A proposal was made at the July meeting that banknotes be printed bearing his image. As head of the Finance Ministry in the early 1930s, Pridi introduced a new incremental tax system under which the rich and poor were taxed at different rates. As Interior Minister, he busied himself with the reformation of the Penal Code and spearheaded a program for the rapid modernization of the whole legal system plus decentralization of local government. Later, as Foreign Minister Pridi renegotiated treaties with foreign countries regaining full sovereign rights for the Kingdom over its whole territory. You may also recall other important contributions Pridi made to Siam: he was head of the civilian faction in the 1932 coup group which brought constitutional monarchy to Siam. He founded Thammasat University and proposed setting up the Central Bank of Thailand. And these are just some of his good deeds — not to mention his role in the Free Thai Movement, which saved this country to be a defeated nation like Japan and Germany.

However some people at the preparatory meeting opposed the banknote proposal on the grounds that it would not be proper to have the image of a commoner on the Kingdom's banknotes. I believe that these opponents have failed to take the historical dimension into consideration. During the Fourth Reign, senior court officials objected to a proposal to

mint coins in the likeness of King Mongkut. They feared that the image of the King might become distorted when the hot metal discs were stamped with the die. So Rama IV compromised by issuing traditional silver coins bearing the Royal seal instead.

It was only during the reign of his son, King Chulalongkorn, (King Rama V) that the image of the sovereign first appeared on the realm's coins. Another change which signaled a break with tradition and a growing desire to be considered "civilized" by the West was the granting of permission for stamps bearing the monarch's head to be post-marked (previously considered very disrespectful). It was also during Chulalongkorn's reign that the first Siamese banknotes were issued. For years now, Japan and the United Kingdom have been honoring citizens who have contributed greatly to their respective societies by printing their images on banknotes. The lack of blue blood does not seem to be an issue.

Why is it then considered to be inappropriate to bestow the same honor on Pridi Banomyong? Pridi dedicated his life to the nation, to religious institutions, the monarchy and the constitution. He was also regent of king Ananda Mahidol, Rama VIII. Corrupt politicians attempted to destroy his reputation by accusing him of "communist" and anti-monarchist leanings and of involvement in the mysterious death of King Rama VIII in 1946. None of these accusations were ever substantiated.

After an abortive counter-coup led by Phibulsongkrham in 1947, Pridi fled into exile, never to return to his homeland. When he died in France in 1983, the Queen of England sent a telegram expressing her condolences and the President of

France sent a wreath. Prem Tinsulanonda, Siam's Prime Minister at the time, said merely that it was a sad event. Nor did parliament acknowledge Pridi's passing; the speaker of the House of Representatives did not request MPs to stand for a moment of silence. Yet Siam might never have had a parliament or MPs if it had not been for the efforts of men like Pridi.

Nowadays we are more aware than ever of the existence of the ultraconservatives in our midst. These dinosaurs are afraid of change. But let them answer these two important questions: over the past century, has there been any commoner more deserving of this honor than the late Pridi Banomyong has? And, has any individual who has made such a huge contribution to his country ever been so maltreated by his compatriots?

If the present government really supports democratic ideals, it will put this matter before MPs in the house, and perhaps consult with the President of the Supreme Court too. Old wounds can be healed only if the country's elite have the will to put their prejudices behind them and do what is undoubtedly the right thing. In this time of economic crisis, truth and dharma provide the only light. If the powers-that-be do not approach this matter in an enlightened way, the government-sponsored commemoration of Pridi's birth centenary will be a waste of money, little more than an exercise in hypocrisy.

I can only hope that the country will move forward with pride; that she will be able to find in herself the generosity of spirit to honor those sons and daughters who are most deserving of her praise.

Sulak Sivaraksa

Phra Dhammapitaka and Socially Engaged Buddhism

The philosophical sources of socially engaged Buddhism as it exists today are rich and diverse. Among those who have carved out paths for contemporary thought and practice are figures as different as Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh, the current Dalai Lama of Tibet, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar of India, and A. T. Ariyaratne of Sri Lanka.

Two Thai monks, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and Phra Dhammapitaka (Prayudh Payutto), have also had a profound impact on the thinking of socially engaged Buddhists, especially in Thailand. Over the years, their interpretations of Buddhist dhamma and its relation to modern society have reached a progressively wider international public through their many lectures and writings available in English, as well as through their students.

This article briefly reviews three talks given at a recent seminar in Bangkok in honor of Phra Dhammapitaka's 60th birthday. The seminar, entitled "Phra Dhammapitaka and Thai Society," was held at Thammasat University on January 30 and 31 of this year. Over these two days the event drew a mixed audience of monks, academics, young activists, and the general public interested in Buddhism. The seminar consisted of three main addresses, each of which was followed by panel presentations and discussions. After the panels there were questions and comments from the audience, which numbered between 125 and 200 people at any given time. The keynote speakers were conser-



vationist monk Phra Phaisal Visalo, former professor of political science Vira Somboon, and activist and critic Sulak Sivaraksa.

In his opening address, "Phra Dhammapitaka and the Development of Buddhism in Thailand," Phra Phaisal Visalo provided a long view of the historical shifts in Buddhist thought and practice that became the context for Phra Dhammapitaka's contributions. One of the focal points of Phra Phaisal's history was a progressive narrowing of the social vision and spiritual depth of Buddhism following the reforms of King Mongkut and Prince Wachirayan. Phra Phaisal argued that

until a little more than 100 years ago, Buddhism provided a cosmology, a comprehensive vision of proper action within the social world, and a steady view of the highest goal for humans, namely, attaining nibbana.

In their attempts to make Buddhism consonant with science, however, King Mongkut, Wachirayan and others progressively deprived Buddhism of any sense of the other-worldly. Phra Phaisal shows that in a relatively short span of time, beliefs in heaven and hell, miracles, bodhisattvas, and finally even the goal of nibbana were set aside as inappropriate subjects of instruction for ordinary people. The Buddhism that emerged in

the curriculum of the new state schools, in Buddhist universities, and in the new centralized sangha administration, was a highly moralistic one, emphasizing right action for the sake of material success in this life. This moralistic Buddhism also became a tool in the process of Thai nation building, such that it ultimately converged with the ethics of being a good citizen.

A sense of the mystery and spiritual depth of Buddhism was kept alive by the Northeastern forest monks, though their influence on doctrine and practice remained relatively local, in Phra Phaisal's view. The role of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and Phra Dhammapitaka was to bring back to mainstream intellectual Buddhism the full depth of the highest goal of Buddhism, nibbana. These two figures described nibbana in terms of "lack of attachment to me and mine" and in terms of successive levels of inner "freedom." Most importantly, nibbana was something that ordinary persons could achieve within this lifetime; it could be attained at different levels and even temporarily through genuine study and practice.

Phra Phaisal says that while Buddhadasa made nibbana clear and unmistakable as the heart of Buddhism, Phra Dhammapitaka's role has been to weave an integrated, holistic Buddhist worldview around that ideal; a worldview that encompasses the interrelationships between individual life, society and nature, and the role of each in leading to nibbana. This worldview, moreover, is one which he uses to interrogate science, its products, and the institutions of contemporary life. He asks, for example, whether science, contemporary

education, or actually existing economics lead to happiness or suffering, whether they are in fact harmonious with the laws of nature, and finally whether they support the human quest for inner spiritual freedom which is defined by the concept of nibbana.

The overall result of this worldview, as Phra Phaisal describes it, is a sense of the profound possibilities of human existence, as well as a sense of active responsibility for changing social institutions so that they cultivate rather than destroy those possibilities. This sense of profound human potential that Phra Dhammapitaka has articulated from within the tradition of Buddhist thought and practice, was strikingly echoed in the talks by Vira Somboon and Sulak Sivaraksa.

Of the three speakers, Vira provided perhaps the bleakest view of contemporary society, yet in some ways he affirmed the creative role of members of a religious tradition most forcefully. In his talk, "Ariyavinaya and the Contemporary Sciences," Vira described the sciences in today's world as "free radicals." Like cells that can affect an organism in the most profound (and destructive) way, yet are free of that organism's control, the contemporary sciences have unleashed immense powers, yet remain directionless. We find ourselves uncertain what to do in the face of our slow but steady transformation of the earth's climate, our increasing ability to restructure life at the level of genes, and our stockpiling of nuclear wastes that take thousands of years to become free of radioactivity. Borrowing an image from Carl Sagan, Vira likened our condition to that of a young child holding a gun. Like

such a child, contemporary humanity lacks the maturity to know how to handle what it has in hand, and even to comprehend the consequences when the trigger goes off.

What is the role of *ariyavinaya* in the face of the actually and potentially destructive power of the contemporary sciences? While *vinaya* is most commonly understood as the monastic code of discipline, Vira suggested the huge scope of the term *ariyavinaya* by saying that all of Phra Dhammapitaka's writings on contemporary Thai society, on globalization, on current ideologies and institutions, are like one great work on *ariyavinaya*.

Vira asked the audience to imagine a kind of diagram with three overlapping circles. At the center is *ariyasacca*, the highest or noblest truth. Around the center is *ariyadhamma*, the path, or practices and principles, that lead to the truth. *Ariyavinaya* is the outermost circle, and the broadest of these three terms. *Ariyavinaya* is an entire way of living life, a way of structuring social relationships, so that they are conducive for walking the path of dhamma.

Vira argued that the Buddha used the term *ariyavinaya* most often in the context of reinterpreting and redirecting existing social and cultural practices, so that they in fact would support a life leading to dhamma and the highest truth as defined by Buddhism. So, for example, the Buddha redefined and gave new content to the practice of paying respects to the 6 directions, a practice which encapsulated a way of understanding the full range of social relationships in northeastern India at the Buddha's time. His approach was to say in effect, "This is how to live

out social relationships according to *ariyavinaya*.”

Likewise, in any historical period *ariyavinaya* must be built on the customs, language, and forms of knowledge of the society in which Buddhists find themselves. This means that like the Buddha, contemporary Buddhists are responsible for the constant reinterpretation and redirection of currently existing forms of thought and social practice so they are conducive to a life following dhamma. On this view, it is impossible to think of *ariyavinaya* as an unchanging code of behavior.

Yet, Vira asks, given the immensity of social and cultural problems of our time, is it any wonder that people seek the refuge of the temple or ashram, where they are promised happiness and peace based on following rules and practices that are usually set in stone? That refuge is good to have, he says. Yet neither bewildered passivity at the complexities of contemporary life, nor simple obedience to the absolute rules of the temple, are *ariyavinaya*. *Ariyavinaya* requires a constant interpretive and creative effort. That effort is not anchorless, because the tradition itself provides stable criteria of discrimination which can lead to mature thought and action.

Sulak Sivaraksa's talk provided a practical example of the kind of social and religious reinterpretation Vira proposed. In his address entitled, "The Revival of the Ordained Sangha in Thailand: A Task for the Entire Buddhist Community," he too stressed faith in the potential of ordinary individuals. Sulak said he rejected theories of the great man or woman. Rather than form cults around great thinkers and

leaders, we should strive to emulate them. Furthermore, we should recognize the unique genius and contribution of each member of the Buddhist community, whether lay or ordained, and whether titled and degreed or not.

Sulak argued that a revival of an ordained sangha in decline required a revival of all Buddhists at the personal and social level. Central to this revival of individual Buddhists, and the Buddhist community as a whole, was the need to face social suffering rather than to ignore it or seek to escape from it. Buddhists also need to understand the social causes of such suffering. It was important for Thai Buddhists, for example, to recognize how Thai thinking and institutions have been influenced by the mainstream Western scientific worldview. Sulak described this worldview as one that denies credibility to anything that cannot be measured in material terms. In tandem with transnational corporations, this worldview creates a society in which humans have only one value, to consume. The mass media cultivate both the enjoyment of violence and a culture that applauds immediate gratification of desires. The ultimate result is a society characterized by lack of human dignity, huge gaps between the rich and poor, and exploitation of those with little power.

The concrete task of Buddhists, in Sulak's view, is to look critically at mainstream values and institutions of all kinds, and to recognize the ways in which they promote greed, anger, and delusion in individuals and in the very structure of social relationships. Concerned Buddhists then need to seek alternatives at every

one of these levels. They should ask how political, educational, health, and other institutions can be structured so that they foster compassion, holistic understanding, and a spiritual orientation that recognizes the wonder and mystery of the world. In Sulak's view, educational institutions in particular should be a primary locus of change, because they so profoundly affect our way of thinking and acting in the world. Both lay and ordained should return to the three trainings; that is, refuse education that is purely intellectual, and set up ways that intellectual development can be joined with moral and contemplative development.

These talks and the seminar of which they were a part raise many interesting questions that cannot be addressed adequately here. For example, does the danger of science lie in its presumed lack of values, or in its monogamous marriage to an unworthy value, such as profitability? How does one balance the authority of personal experiments with truth on the one hand with the authority of public forms of debate and argumentation that have traditionally been part of the scientific method on the other? Finally, how do we resolve differences over the nature of Nature in a multicultural and multireligious world, when our religious and ethical ideals also claim parentage from the laws of nature?

For those readers who also read Thai, the three lectures above, along with a fourth given at a later date by Dr. Prawase Wasi, will be published in their entirety in a volume (not yet titled) by the Komol Kheemthong Foundation later this year.

Ted Mayer

Buddhadasa: Biocentrism and the Dhamma

“The entire cosmos is a cooperative. The sun, the moon and the stars live together as a cooperative. The same is true for humans and animals, trees, and the earth. When we realize that the world is a mutual, interdependent, cooperative enterprise...then we can build a noble environment. If our lives are not based on this truth, then we shall perish.” (Buddhadasa, *Shouts from Nature*)

Buddhadasa and Suan Mokkha

Phra Dhammakosajan, better known by his self-appointed monastic name, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, was one of the modern Thai *sangha*'s most provocative interpreters of Buddhist thought and a noted advocate of reform Buddhism with its roots in the Dhammayut movement founded in the 1820's by Prince Mongkut who later became King Rama IV. Born in 1906 in Chaiya, southern Thailand, Buddhadasa was ordained in 1926. Although he was a member of the traditional Mahanikai monastic fraternity, like Dhammayut teachers Buddhadasa demythologized Buddhist doctrine, although his teaching was less prescribed by Pali texts. His creative departures from standard Theravada commentary led some critics to accuse him of doctrinal views closer to Nagarjuna than to Buddhaghosa who established Theravada orthodoxy.

Buddhadasa began his monastic career in a conventional way but soon grew dissatisfied with the hierarchically structured national *sangha* system of pre-



scribed education, ranks, and titles. In 1928, he went to Bangkok to study but finding the city noisy and dirty and the lifestyle of the monks not to his liking he soon returned to his rural home monastery. He spent most of his monastic life at the Garden of Empowering Liberation Monastery (Wat Suan Mokkhabalarama) which he founded in 1932 in the forests near Chaiya. Like Ajaan Mun, the founder of the modern Thai forest tradition, and other nineteenth century Buddhist reformers in Sri Lanka and Burma, Buddhadasa saw the forest as the place where the Buddha and the early *sangha* pursued the highest aims of the religious life, therefore, authenticating the forest as the ideal environment for spiritual practice for every age.

Even after Buddhadasa's death in 1993, Suan Mokkha—as it is called—continues to be a center of study and practice following the traditions he established rather than the customary ritual observances typical of mainstream Thai Buddhism. Despite the rapid development

of the area surrounding Suan Mokkha, the monastery still embodies the ideals of natural simplicity that motivated its founding. During one of my early visits to the monastery, Buddhadasa led me to the top of a forested hill. There a Buddha image had been installed under a tree at the end of a large clearing. “Here is our temple,” he said, as he pointed to the trees and their leafy, overhanging branches. “Here is where nature teaches us the *dhamma*.” Thirty years later Suan Mokkha's forest still instructs both monks and lay Meditation practitioners in the *dhamma*.

A Wisdom Monk: Overcoming the Meditator/Scholar Dichotomy.

Although Buddhadasa taught for over sixty years in a forest monastery, he was never identified with the modern tradition of wandering forest monks that considers Ajaan Mun Bhuridatto (1871-1949) as its primary source of inspiration. Mun and his associates—Waen, Dun, Fan, Thet, Lee, La, Juan, Wan, and Cha—followed the Theravada custom of wandering *dhutanga* monks. Furthermore, they were known largely for their meditation practice and teachings, not as scholars. By contrast, Buddhadasa's reputation rests primarily on his interpretation of the *buddhadhamma*. While the Thai Theravada tradition often makes a sharp distinction between the way of meditation practice (Thai: *phrapratibat*) and the way of study or scholarship (Thai: *phraprariyat*), Bud-

dhadasa sought to integrate them. This integration is apparent in his life and teachings. For this reason, perhaps, Buddhadasa has been characterized not in terms of the dichotomy of meditation monk and scholar monk but as a "monk of wisdom" (Thai: *phra panyha*).

Following Buddhadasa's return to Chaiya from his studies in Bangkok, he retired to the forest for six years to meditate. Unlike the *dhutaga* monks' nearly exclusive focus on meditation, Buddhadasa took Buddhist scriptures to the forest. Rather than searching for a personal meditation teacher, the common pattern for the forest monk tradition, he meditated on the scriptures and his natural surroundings for answers to his questions about Buddhist doctrine and practice. Returning from his self-imposed exile, Buddhadasa was appointed abbot of one of the most important monasteries in Chaiya but chose, instead, to live and teach at his forest monastery, Suan Mokkhabalarama. Suan Mokkh became a Mecca for Buddhists—lay and clerical, Thai and Western—who went primarily for Buddhadasa's *dhamma* talks. These talks, transcribed and edited, constitute the core of his written work.

Unlike meditation teachers of the forest tradition for whom understanding arises almost exclusively from practice, for Buddhadasa the primary factor in the Noble Eightfold Path is right understanding. Right practice must first be grounded in right understanding. Right understanding does not mean a blind acceptance of scripture or the doctrinal teachings of Buddhism but a thoughtful meditation of the *dhamma* through the prism

of one's own personal experience. Buddhadasa is also as critical of philosophical rationalism as he is of reliance on normative orthodoxy. He criticizes philosophy for its own sake, insisting that the Buddhist approach to knowledge is empirical. Truth can be realized only in the depth of one's personal experience attuned to the dhamma. Such realization requires moving beyond the intellectual and spiritual confinement of formal study, as Buddhadasa himself did, and going forth into the forest to discover the truth of the *dhamma* through the liberating power (*Mokkhabala*) of nature. Referring to the example of the Buddha, Buddhadasa observes that the major junctures of the Buddha's entire life—birth, enlightenment, and death—took place at the foot of trees.

Wild Monk versus City Monk: The Forest and Spiritual Realization.

Buddhadasa's major contribution to the tradition of forest monastic practice in modern Thailand is his integration of teaching and practice exemplified by Suan Mokkh and embodied in his oral teachings transcribed into a literary legacy. For the Ajaan Mun lineage of modern Thai *dhutaga* monks, the forests of north and northeastern Thailand provided the optimal environment to challenge and test both body and mind. Life was harsh. Tigers roamed the forests; food was often scarce and physical illness commonplace. Their sole focus was on the practice and fruits of meditation. Buddhadasa also saw the forest as the ideal place to practice meditation, not primarily because one's mind and body was best tested in wild nature but because spiritual realization requires a simple, natural

lifestyle more compatible with the forest than the city. For Buddhadasa the city represents the superimposition of artifice on the natural. Nature represents authentic existence; the city inauthentic existence.

Nature, in Buddhadasa's view, embodies several levels of meaning. On the literal level nature refers to trees, plants, insects, animals, sand, and dirt. From this perspective, to live naturally means to live *with* nature, not outside of it in an artificially created environment. In a 1976 talk to monks who ordained for one Rains Retreat at Suan Mokkh, Buddhadasa drew a sharp contrast between city monks and forest monks who live in harmony with nature. Forest monks are "nature monks" who adopt a simple lifestyle and practice meditation (*vipassana-dhura*), rather than devoting their time to study for the purpose of earning monastic degrees and high ecclesiastical rank, or who spend their time conducting merit-making rituals. Forest monks are "wild monks" who by their example challenge the routines and customs of conventional Thai monastic life.

Forest monks live simply and meditate not because these are ends in and of themselves, but because they are necessary conditions for calming the mind. Buddhadasa reminds us that we live over stimulated lives, our minds "roasted by desires, doubts, and worries," manipulated and driven by defilement (*kilesa*). The 'methodology' of living in the forest leads to mental calm, peace, and a cooling of the hearth (*citta*). If only monetarily, we overcome attachment to the artificial constructions of "me" and "mine." For Buddhadasa, voidness (*sunyata*) of me



and mine represents the natural state of things that underlies the mind's artificial constructions. To see through these mental constructs leads to true freedom (*nibbana*). Buddhadasa truly values nature in an empirical sense as the best context in which to pursue *nibbana*. Ultimately, however, nature represents for him the natural or true state of things and, hence, the *dhamma*. Buddhadasa's identification of nature with *Dhamma*, then, lies at the heart of what I have characterized as his biocen trism.

Nature as Dhamma

Linguistically, Buddhadasa identifies nature and *dhamma* on the grounds of a Pali exegesis of the Thai term, *Thamachat*, or "nature." From the perspective of the Pali antecedents of *Thamachat*, natural phenomena embody the laws of the *dhamma*, that is, they are "born of the *dhamma*" (Pali: *dhamma-jati*). Beyond observable natural phenomena such as trees, insects, and dirt, the term, nature, refers to the original, natural condition of everything, that is to say, all

things in their *dhammic* nature: "all things arise from the natural order of things, that is the *dhamma*."

Buddhadasa ascribes four aspects to nature that follow the structure of the Four Noble Truths: Nature itself, the Law of Nature, following the Law of Nature, and the Fruit of Following the Law of Nature. Buddhadasa identifies the nature with *dhamma*; he understands nature as "reality" or the "way things really are". All things in the universe reflect the absolute law of causality (*Idappaccayata*), "the fact that everything depends upon and is inter-connected with other things." The Lord Buddha, observes Buddhadasa, taught "the fundamental fact that all things happen because of and through causes and conditions."

Buddhadasa's transformation of the original formulation of the Four Noble Truths as a statement about suffering (*dukkha*), its cause, cessation, and the path to its cessation maybe less radical than appears on the surface. Buddhadasa follows the traditional identification of the *dhamma* with the Law of Interde-

pendent Co-Arising (*paticca-samuppada/idappaccayata*). During the night of his enlightenment, the Buddha's profound insight into the nature of suffering, its cause, and cessation was cognized as the Law of Interdependent Co-Arising. Consequently, the Law of Interdependent Co-Arising represents the Buddha's insight into the nature of suffering, identified by Buddhadasa as the Law of Nature or the natural, *dhammic* state of things. For Buddhadasa, then, for a monk to practice in the forest involves not only a particular lifestyle and practice, but also implies attainment of the *dhamma* because at its deepest level of meaning, nature is the *dhamma*. Ultimately, to live in harmony with nature means to live according to the Law of Nature or in more traditional Buddhist terminology, to live according to the Law of Interdependent Co-Arising. One thereby overcomes suffering and achieves the peace called *Nibbana*.

For Buddhadasa, conserving nature ultimately presupposes overcoming selfishness: "If we understand all aspects of nature

and conserve the law of nature within ourselves, it will then be impossible for selfishness and egoism to arise. When there is no ego or selfishness there is nothing that will destroy nature. Therefore, when selfishness is overcome the world will be naturally pure and beautiful." For the Ajaan Mun *dhutaga* tradition, Buddhadasa's teaching lacks a sufficient emphasis on rigorous meditation training and the testing of one's spiritual mettle in wild nature. Listening to Buddhadasa's talks on dhammic ecology in the park-like atmosphere of Suan Mokkh seems a far cry from the 'warrior tradition' embodied in the spiritual biographies of Ajaan Mun and his disciples.

Listening to Nature at Suan Mokkh

In addition to being a monastery devoted to meditation practice, Suan Mokkh provides the locus of Buddhadasa's teachings. The place and the message are intertwined: "If we don't spend time in places like Suan Mokkh, it will be virtually impossible for us to experience peace and quiet. It is only by being in nature that the trees, rocks, and animals, birds, and insects can teach us the lesson of self-forgetting." Early in his career Buddhadasa accepted invitations to teach in other parts of the country, but as age and failing health problems made travel more problematic, he limited his *dhamma* talks to those seekers, both lay and monastic, who came to his forest monastery, Suan Mokkh became the visible expressing of Buddhadasa's spiritual biocentric identification between nature and the *dhamma* that he characterized in the following manner:

"Trees, rocks, sand, even dirt and insects can speak. This doesn't mean, as some people believe, that there are spirits [Thai, *phi*] or gods [Pali, *devata*]. Rather, if we reside in nature near trees and rocks we'll discover feelings and thoughts arising that are truly out of the ordinary. At first we'll feel a sense of peace and quiet that may eventually move beyond that feeling to a release from the artificial construction of the I. The deep sense of calm that nature provides through separation from the tensions and anxieties that plague us in the day-to-day world functions to protect heart and mind. Indeed, the lessons nature teaches us lead to a new birth beyond suffering that results from attachment to the I. Trees and rocks, then, can speak to us. They help us understand what it means to cool down from the heat of confusion, despair, anxiety, and suffering."

Buddhadasa and the Thai Forest Monk Tradition

The modern Thai forest monk tradition associated with Ajaan Mun and his direct disciples developed into distinct teacher-disciple lineages. For example, Thanissaro Bhikkhu (Geoffrey DeGraff), the abbot of the Metta Forest monastery, a Dhammayut monastery near Valley Center, California, was a student of Ajaan Fuang who was a follower of Ajaan Lee who, in turn, was a disciple of Ajaan Mun. Even though Thanissaro has written extensively on the *vinaya* and the *dhamma*, the majority of his publications are translations of teachings on meditation practice by his monk predecessors in the Thai forest tradition. By way of contrast, there is no such Buddhadasa lineage.

Many people both in Thailand and beyond, including myself have been deeply influenced by Buddhadasa.

Several Thai monasteries identify themselves with his teaching; furthermore Thailand's engaged Buddhist activists in particular Sulak Sivaraksa, Chatsumarn Kabilsingh, and Dr. Prawes Wasee, look to Buddhadasa's interpretation of the *dhamma* as their major source of inspiration. The diffuse nature of Buddhadasa's influence within Thai Buddhism helps to distinguish him from the modern Thai forest monk tradition; it may also account for the breadth of Buddhadasa's importance within contemporary Thai Buddhism and beyond.

Although the expression, 'the Thai forest monk tradition', has assumed a specific meaning, namely, the lineage of monks who wandered the forests of north and northeastern Thailand and their disciples, the place of the forest in Thai Buddhist monastic life has a more diverse history and significance. A contemporary expression of this diversity is Buddhadasa Bhikkhu.

One of Buddhadasa's most enduring contributions is his reconciliation of the traditional Theravada distinction of scholar monk versus meditating monk, and the practice of individual spiritual self-realization versus activist commitment to social transformation. Buddhadasa's dhammic biocentrism offers a powerful example of this integration, a model for a holistic Buddhist environmental activism.

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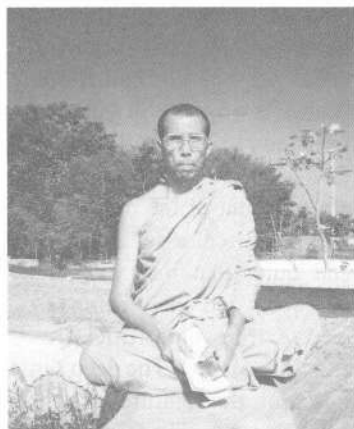
Dharma and Development

In many rural areas across the Kingdom there are monks who have dedicated themselves to helping the poor. Phra Khru Supajaratwat of Wat Tha Laad in Yasothon, is one shining example of monks working in community development.

“ I am a rural monk. What I see around me is the poverty and suffering of rural folk. It’s my duty to help,” says the 59-year-old abbot of Tha Laad Temple in Yasothon’s Kudchum district. The temple is as simple as the abbot in matter-of-fact and self-effacing. There is no grandiose praying hall. No awesome rows of gold-gilded Buddha images. No amulet booths. No ubiquitous donation boxes. Yet, the shady Wat Tha Laad is famous nationally for its non-mainstream development work that focuses on villagers’ well-being and self-reliance instead of money. The work includes encouraging villagers’ self-care through traditional medicine, self-sufficiency farming, chemical-free agriculture and a community rice mill for chemical-free, unpolished rice that is now popular in Thailand.

Amid cynicism following misconduct by some monks, Phra Khru Supajaratwat’s role is living proof that monks-who stay true to Buddhist teachings, can play an important role as community leaders and can help ease the suffering of the poor. Like most rural villages in Thailand, the close-knit Kudchum communities became virtually bankrupt after being wooed by the state’s promotion of single cash crop farming. Many farmers found themselves in debt due to price fluctuations and the rising cost of farm chemicals.

So how is it possible to help? Buddhism, says the abbot, teaches



him to look beyond the surface to the root of the suffering. As he sees it, the problems faced by many rural people do not lie in poverty per se, but in a lack of self-esteem after being systematically brainwashed to believe they are backward hillbillies.

In 1983, he turned the temple into a center of traditional medicine. Initially, the villagers came to the temple for herbal medicines, traditional massage and to use the herbal sauna. Later, they grew their own herb gardens. Then the young people in the village started visiting the temple to learn how to make basic herbal medicines—and to value their ancestors’ wisdom once again. The abbot also helped non-governmental organizations set up a folk doctors group at Tha Laad. Villagers’ acceptance grew when medicinal herbs were later adopted by their community hospital. And one thing led to another. Before long, the community had turned to natural farming which, says the abbot, is both “kind to nature while reducing our greed”. A community mill for pesticide-free rice was set up, cutting out exploitation by middlemen, and ensuring quality control for rice buyers. The mill now has a cash flow of more than 20 million baht. There have been important knock-on effects. Vil-

lage youths now realize there is work and hope back home even during a recession. And the rice project has ushered a broader popularity in brown, organic rice consumption even in Bangkok. In honour of his insight and dedication, the prestigious Komol Kheemthong Address recently featured Phra Khru Supajaratwat as a keynote speaker.

“Monks still command respect in the countryside as community leaders. We can do so much to help if we choose to”, he said. The successful conservation of Don Kaen community forest in Tha Laad is a case in point. Once it was a fast disappearing woodland due to farmland expansion. To keep it as a community wood and a source of medicinal herbs, he worked for a community consensus to turn it into a religious sanctuary. Impressed by his dedication, nearby farmers donated connecting land to the sanctuary which now covers more than 1,000 rai. The wood is now used to teach villagers meditation so they can put their lives into perspective and counter the constant attack from consumer culture.

“Development must be balanced by dharma,” he said. If not, more money will only plunge people deeper into the seas of greed and vice.

For Phra Khru Supajaratwat, it is easy to check if the country has followed the right path of development. “See if families are still together or not,” he said. Any development policies that take parents away from their children cannot be right, he said. “If we want to solve our crisis, we must stop thinking money,” he stressed. “We also must stop depending on outside help. The answer is self-reliance”.

Sanitsuda Ekachai

The Thai Inter-religious Commission for Development (TICD) has been working closely with Phra Khru as well as with other monks and nuns on alternative education for the sangha. Readers may get more information on Phra Khru from an article entitled "Phra Khru Supajjarawat: finding the middle path between the modern and the traditional, by Sherry Yano in *Socially Engaged Buddhism for the New Millennium*. TICD has recently established training programs for monks and nuns to raise their awareness of social ills and to address them nonviolently. They also publish *Seikyadham* journal, which gives a voice to the socially active monks and nuns and spreads their message of a positive contribution to society and overcoming structural violence through peaceful means.

Please make donations to support the monks training and the *Seikyadham* journal:

TICD: 124 Soi wat Thongnoppakun, Somdej Chao Phrya, Klong San, Bangkok 10600.

Savings account name: Thai Inter-religious Commission for Development (Khana Kammakarn Sasana Peur Kam Pattana), acct no: 068-2-58583-8, Thai Farmers Bank, Klong San branch.

Dear Chris,

I should have written earlier but it was not possible due to hectic schedule and need to clear pending work load. It was great to have your company in Thailand. You taught me a lot with your sensitivity, compassion and friendly overtures.

In all it was quite a learning experience while being in Thailand. Thai people are so nice, so soft speaking, and so sensitive that it was for me an introspective encounter. The chaos of my country that I encountered just after disembarking at Delhi made me see Thailand in more appreciative light. But, I must tell you I am more proud of my country and its chaos after I returned from Thailand. Now I see my country with respect to some other. In economic terms Thailand, particularly Bangkok, looked more advanced, more planned, a place where governance seems to exist. But beneath the obvious there was a disturbing element that haunted me. Thailand seemed to me a dependent economy where democracy in all its seeming chaotic ramifications is disturbingly absent. Every car that I saw on the Thai road seemed to be a brand from abroad. In India, while I disembark I witness newspapers reporting a real car war with foreign giants launching their brands. At the same time there is also an indigenous company called TATA who are launching their new make, first time entry in the car segment. And you would be surprised to know it is INDICA, TATA's car, which wins hands down. I feel proud, despite not having much faith in big industries, of not just Indian companies but, more profoundly, of Indian

people. We have faced so much of cultural debates, so much of accusations that we as Indians are selling our culture to the capitalists from abroad that the Indian people's response to TATA's car makes my heart swell. It is good to be global. One must keep one's door and windows open to allow fresh air pass through otherwise the house itself will collapse, this is what Gandhi often repeated. But still it was he who proposed the idea of swadeshi-love for things manufactured in your neighborhood. I believe in Gandhi and he is my hero.

Just to change the topic, some the recent happenings in the country has shown the demonic influence that sometimes seems to cover India. We had some bad anti-Christian actions it was more to do with politics than any anti-Christian sentiments among the population. Moreover the media's intention is always to talk in terms of sensationalism. We have a very kicking democracy and there is competitive politics for power which makes some trivial things very important. But one against a Christian missionary who was there from the sixties onwards has shook the conscience of the nation what with the Prime Minister, whose party is being accused of anti-Christian attitude, going for a day long fast as an act of penance on 30th January, the date of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination. There is big debate currently going on in the country. That's India. You will find some people going for some extreme negative action. But then we don't need sermons from abroad to adopt corrective measures.

Let me write something about the DEEP ECOLOGY WALK that we together went for. Although we began from India with some vague notion of the whole program, it was nice meeting people of different cultural background. But I feel it would have been really good if some prior information was given of what we were expected to do there.

One of the most enduring messages that I came back with was what Elias said about the "reverse imperialism" What he meant was that considering the bane that culture of consumerism is proving to be for the world, it would be real civilization boon if we learn from tribal people rather than teaching them. It's all about living. A people who consume only according to its need and do not have a culture of possession is worth emulating. What an all consuming culture has eventually done to us is to bring to the brink of day to day existence. There is no future enchanting enough which makes us live through. Today it is Y2K, tomorrow it will be the aggravated energy crisis and impending environmental catastrophe due to excess accumulation of the polluted air and rampant felling of rain forest. What with mono-culture spawning all over the world not just in life style and human aspirations but also in human innovations, the picture gets completed.

Tribal culture draws as much as they require, there is no accumulative greed is something accepted by anthropologists of all hue. But it is this very culture of theirs that has made them soft target for

exploitation. I have had experience of being told that cunning businessmen from outside the tribal areas come to the periphery of the forest to establish links with tribal people who require only salt for their survival which they are asked to barter with costly forest produce at the minimal of exchange value.

But capitalism has not survived without any reason. It appeals to our baser instinct. Desire, which was seen here in ancient India as something to be renounced, to not get attached to, suddenly became the ruling god. It made us superficial and restricted our quest for unknown-that of inwardly than outwardly.

It was due to this cultural imperialism that tribal people at Abeh village, thought of building a museum to dedicate their craft. When all their young people are migrating to cities in search of comforts, it is imperative that they now build the museum. For, the fissure between the past, present and future has already become irreparable. East revealed in its continuity of time. Now past has become important only because it is profitable, because tourists who come in search of "Amazing Thailand" evince interest in their crafts which they themselves are respecting no more. Y2K symptom here too. Past suddenly became so overpowering that it brought a seeming end to this make believe world. Otherwise, intoxicated by success, we were roller coasting in present. Yesterday was dirty, no where near us and tomorrow is far off. Time seemed to stand still. Beautiful push button world inhabited by eternally young people on pills of Viagra and lifting their sagging spirit by the plastic surgery. It was all outer. It was so outer that scent of death was profane and therefore sprang up the banks where I would deposit my body after nature caught us for being too arrogant.

What all these arrogance has brought us to? The futile attempt at being happy. And happiness we again thought to be external.

Thank you for all that you did,

Rahul



from
Dr. MICHAEL ARIS
18 Norham Gardens
OXFORD

11 March 1999

My dear Sulak,

I am late, and you must please forgive me, in thanking you for sending me your books. I have been in and out of the hospital with cancer of the prostate, which has already spread quite far to my spine and lungs. But never fear: I am definitely going to beat it and, moreover, I firmly believe that quite soon I shall be given a visa to enable me to join my beloved Suu in Rangoon.

Your autobiography in particular has absolutely fascinated me. At last I began to see the many facets of your multiple activities on so many different fronts, not least those in support and defence of Suu's long struggle. There simply aren't words to thank you properly for this.

By a strange coincidence my niece Kate is now an undergraduate at Lampeter studying Classical Civilization.

Were you really born on March 27th? Do you know it used to be celebrated as Resistance Day in Burma, marking the occasion in 1945 when Burmese Independence Army led by my father-in-law went underground against the Japanese forces. In recent decades the anniversary has been renamed Army Day!

I must ask you to keep my news very much to yourself. The press and public are not aware and matters must remain like that for as long as possible. This is important.

I must close now with all my best wishes and sincere respects.

Michael

Erich W. Reinhold
Bad Honnef
Germany

Dear Sulak,

Thank you for your letter of December 30, 1998 and the enclosed copy of your autobiography.

I am with you in celebrating the anniversary of Pridi.

I have always held him in great esteem as the greatest statesman that Siam ever had. I like him very much and have read his autobiography in French. He left a copy when he visited Ambassador Konti Suphramongkhon in London, during my term in London.

The present economic crisis is in a way a blessing, reminding the Thai people of the Buddha's teaching of สันโดษ... In fact, staunch Buddhists do not seem to be affected by the slump because they have always stuck to สันโดษ...

All of our good wishes for health and success in your humanitarian activities, also to your dear wife Nilchawee.

Your old friend,

Removal from the University of Malaya, an Open Letter from Chandra Muzaffar

24 February 1999

I was informed yesterday (23 February 1999) that the Management of the University of Malaya has decided not to renew my contract as Professor at the Center for Civilizational Dialogue, when it expires on 28th February 1999 (see attached letter). The decision was conveyed in a letter dated 18 February 1999 signed by the Registrar of the University. I was first employed by the University of Malaya on a one year contract in March 1997. The contract was renewed in 1998 for another year. The University Administration made it very clear when I was appointed Professor, and Director of, the Center for Civilizational Dialogue that it would want me to continue for a few years at least since the Center was a new academic unit which needed to be nurtured and nourished carefully in the initial stage. I am therefore surprised that the University Management has chosen not to renew my contract at a time when the Center is showing promising signs of growth and development. The Management cites two reasons for its decision: - economic factors affecting the University of Malaya and a government directive requesting the University to optimize available internal human resources. Both reasons are totally absurd. Though the Center for Civilizational Dialogue is hardly two years old, it is, from a financial point of view, one of the most viable academic entities in the University. It's Master of Civilizational Studies degree, for instance, launched in July 1998 has enrolled 46 students whose fees would potentially bring in 205,087 ringgit to the University coffers. No post-graduate degree program in the entire history of the Arts and Social Science Faculty of the University of Malaya has attracted such a large number of students in its year of inception. For the coming academic session, beginning in May 1999, 90 candidates have applied, - another record breaking figure. This Master program and a compulsory first year University wide course entitled "Islamic and Asian Civilizations" (TITAS) that reaches almost 6,000 students come under the aegis of our Center for Civilizational Dialogue which has, at the moment, only two full-time academic staff. Though the Center has been able to draw supporting staff

from other departments, it is, nonetheless, one of the most under-staffed departments in the University. It is, in fact, an outstanding example of the optimum use of scarce human resources. It should be obvious to anyone that the real reason for the non-renewal of my contract is political. Attempts to conceal and camouflage this simple truth with spurious reasons will only cast the University in a negative light. I know that the ruling elite is uncomfortable with my uncompromising criticism of its stark, sordid abuse of power in the Anwar crisis. Some of the government leaders have also not taken kindly to my role as pro-tem Vice-President of ADIL. As an academic I am not prohibited by any law or policy from expressing my views on the present political crisis or from participating in ADIL. Indeed, as an intellectual with a conscience, I have a moral duty to speak out against injustices. The constant interrogation of power is the sacred responsibility of the intellectual. Unfortunately, the University Management has no understanding of the role of the intellectual in society. It has chosen to be unquestioningly subservient to the unjust dictates of the ruling elite. It is prepared to sacrifice the well-being of the students and academic principles in order to toady up to the elite. As a result of the non-renewal of my contract, the essays and examination scripts of my Master degree students will have to be evaluated by some other lecturer who may not be well-versed in the relevant discipline. A number of post-graduate students will be deprived of academic guidance in the preparation of their dissertations. The TITAS program which is still in its infancy will be left without direction and leadership. Most of all, the Center for Civilizational Dialogue whose founding principles I helped to shape will suffer a severe setback. The Center of Civilizational Dialogue at the University is the only center of its kind in the world. It seeks to promote dialogue at the intellectual level among different civilizations. A brainchild of Professor Osman Bakar, the University's Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic Affairs), it was at his invitation that I joined the University in March 1997 to set up the Center. One of the reasons why Osman wanted me to head the Center was because of my abiding commitment to the promotion of shared values among the different ethnic communities in Malaysia. This is why the Center for Civilizational Dialogue is of particular significance to this multi-ethnic nation of ours. It is one of the few intellectual attempts in this country to build bridges between the various communities. I pray that the Center for Civilizational Dialogue will live on. It is my earnest hope that it will continue to contribute to better understanding among different civilizations in an increasingly globalized world. For my part, I will continue to devote myself to the quest for freedom, justice and unity - a quest which has characterized my intellectual career and my social activism. My removal from the University is a small price to pay for a struggle which is as precious as life itself.

Books Received

1. *A Global Ethic and Global Responsibilities*. Ed. Kung, Hans and Schmidt, Helmut. SCM Press: London, 1999
2. *Love Life Light*. Park, Chung Soo. SamToh Press: Seoul, 1999
3. *Sustainability and Globalization*. Ed. Julio de Santa Anna. World Council of Churches Publications: Geneva, 1998
4. *The Legend of Queen Cama*. Swearer, Donald K. and Premchit, Sommai. SUNY Press: Albany, 1998
5. *The Path to Peace Within: A Guide to Insight*. Jandamit, Helen. Silkworm books: Chiang Mai, 1999
6. *The Gethsemani Encounter: A Dialog on the Spiritual Life by Buddhist and Christian Monastics*. Ed. Mitchell, D.W. and Wiseman, J.. Continuum P.: New York, 1998
7. *Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King jr: The power of nonviolent action*. King, Mary. UNESCO Publishing: Paris, 1999

Fragrant Palm Leaves

Thich Nhat Hanh

Parallax Press: Berkely, 1998

This newest book of Thich Nhat Hanh is a translation of his journal for the years 1962-1966. It begins during the time that he spent in the United States attending Columbia University. The first journal entry finds him in a cabin in the woods of northern New Jersey relaxing and resting before going to New York to begin the fall term. He is staying next to a children's camp and the atmosphere of the woods and the playful carefree nature of the children takes him back to the forest retreat he and his friends built in Vietnam. They called their retreat place Phuong Boi. Phuong means fragrant and Boi is the kind of palm leaves on which the Buddha's teachings were written in ancient times.

Thich Nhat Hanh's writing is simple and elegant, his storytelling ability is enhanced by his straightforward comments on his inner landscape as he relates the events occurring in the phenomenal world. Through his descriptions in his journal the reader is truly transported to Phuong Boi, almost such that one can feel the breeze, or cringe during a huge storm, taste the *sim* fruit or hear the gibbons cry. It is also moving to read this journal with the hindsight on what follows. His deep love for the hermitage is poignant for the fact that most readers will know what happens next. The Vietnam war, repression against Buddhists and especially Nhat Hanh and finally he is torn away from his home and Phuong Boi. He says,

"If only I could spend the rest of my life walking in that beautiful forest...Just reaching Plum Bridge, at

the entrance to Phuong Boi, lifted my spirits. I felt I had arrived...Phuong Boi was a reality! She offered us her untamed hills as an enormous soft cradle, blanketed with wildflowers and forest grasses. Here, for the first time, we were sheltered from the harshness of worldly affairs."

His journal continues the account of his time in the US, interspersing his recollection of the beautiful home he left behind, the friendships forged and deepened during his time away from home and always his reflections on life, suffering, impermanence and compassion. All of these threads are woven together so naturally in his journal that it is impossible to say what is a story or a lesson, a parable etc. It is all an expression of an eloquent teacher with an innate wisdom and gift for expression.

The second half of the book takes place in Vietnam. Here Nhat Hanh is teaching at a small university with a market just outside the gates and puddles on the ground, much to the chagrin of the chancellor. But to Nhat Hanh it is all the stuff of life. He draws out the most profound realizations and lessons from watching ordinary life roll by, in the market place, in the streets, from the weather and all things big or small.

Times are changing though. His friends are being arrested; Phuong Boi is now a dangerous place to go because of fighting and suspicions on the part of the government.

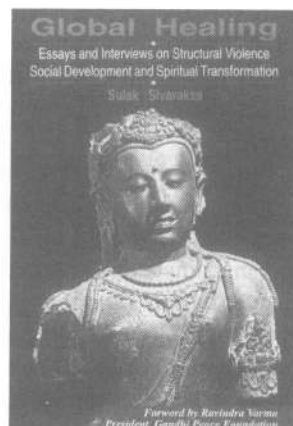
"As I write this, I can visualize the bare wintry trees of Princeton. Vietnam is also passing through a winter of desolation. It is cold and

dark, and there is no end in sight. Are our wings strong enough to carry the faith across the long stretches of ice and snow? We do not want to be forgotten by the human family. We are trees stripped of our leaves, enduring ice and snow, day and night. We desperately await the first warm days of spring."

The final journal entry in the book is the day he leaves Vietnam, this time not knowing if he would ever return. One thing echoes strong in his words and thoughts before leaving. His faith will remain strong and his will to continue the compassionate work he had begun will not waver.

Fragrant Palm Leaves is a powerful book. Part of its magic lies in the fact that it is not a traditional 'dharma book' or meditation text. It is simple, unassuming and at the same time has a very deep message. I couldn't help but wonder at times when I was suddenly gripped by the fact that something profound was just addressed but in such a way that it was a seamless transition from the ordinary to the sublime, if this is how the Buddha taught.

Chris Walker



**Global Healing:
Essays and Interviews
on Structural Violence,
Social Development and
Spiritual Transformation**

Sulak Sivaraksa,
Suksit Siam: Bangkok, 1999

"Buddhists should bring the message of the Buddha home. This has always been the aim of my work: to understand Buddhist teachings in their proper sense and apply them in the complicated system of the modern world."

In *Global Healing: Essays and Interviews on Structural Violence, Social Development and Spiritual Transformation*, Sulak Sivaraksa, Thailand's leading social critic and 1998 UNPO Human Rights Award winner, further outlines his vision to effect global change. In this wide ranging collection of interviews, essays, lectures and reflections, Ajahn Sulak details the root causes of consumerism and suggests reforms that will lead to a sustainable society.

"'I buy therefore I am' is the slogan of the modern age," Sulak explains to his readers. "We must understand consumerism as a new demonic religion and find a spiritual alternative." *Global Healing* is the author's search for alternatives. Within its 160 pages are examples of ordinary people making a difference in their own life and in society.

In the Northeastern Province of Surin, the author celebrates farmers who have sold off their heavy machinery and returned to the water buffalo (kwai) to plow their fields. Gone is their dependence on the Big Brother as well as expensive repair bills, gasoline costs and ear-shattering

noise. Local traditions including song, dance and prayer that accompany the harvest have returned.

In southern Thailand, the Federation of Southern Local Fisherfolk was formed at the village-level to document the practices of those destroying the surrounding reef and offshore environment. In a northern village, farmers have returned to organic methods and have ceased using harmful chemical fertilizers. "Ask me who is shaping the course of history," Ajahn Sulak explains, "and I will tell you that it is the ordinary man in the street."

Key to the author's search for a sustainable and environmentally friendly society is the Buddhist religion. However, unlike the mainstream sangha with old, or no ideas, on how to deal with new problems, Sulak questions his religion in the search for answers. "Buddhism," the author explains, "may not have developed all the answers to our modern situation...In the last fifty years...Buddhist alternatives to development have been largely limited to small communities of forest monks who avoid and ignore the values and violence of mainstream society. That approach presupposes that violence does not reach the forest, that the forest will be protected. But who nowadays can protect the forest? In the old days, the righteous ruler had to protect the animals and the forest as well as the villages... Nowadays, violence, spread by the greed of capitalism and empire, has become the norm."

As such, the author champions a socially engaged Buddhism—one wherein the monk is attuned and responsive to the needs and plight of the villager

who feeds him. As we now live in a global village, Buddhists are encouraged to think globally and to act locally. Structural violence (the exploitation of the masses by those with power or money) is said to be the chief cause of our social and environmental ills. "If Buddhists are going to contribute anything to the modern world," the Ajahn explains, "we must state clearly that violence is inherent in all established societies. That is what it means to confront suffering (Buddhism's First Noble Truth). To examine the causes of suffering (The Second Noble Truth), one cannot talk in the abstract. Consumerism, materialism, and development policies have to be spelled out."

As such, Sulak champions direct action and resistance to projects that line the pockets of the ruling and capitalistic elite. "People in industrial society... fail to realize that their livelihood is itself a form of stealing. It is structural violence for the rich to lead a luxurious, wasteful lifestyle that destroys natural resources, which makes the gap between rich and poor greater."

Global Healing begins with the ideas purported in Ajahn Sulak's latest book. For those unfamiliar with the author's writings or the environmental and social problems facing Siam, it serves as the perfect introduction. Within its pages you will find the recipe on how to be a socially engaged Buddhist. *Global Healing* belongs on the bookshelf of anyone seeking to make the world a better place to live for humans and non-humans alike.

Adam Simpson

Prayers for a Thousand Years

Ed. By *Elizabeth Roberts*

and *Elias Amidon*

Harper Collins: NY, 1999

In an interesting and pioneering venture, the two editors have managed to collect from people of different faith communities, their prayers, affirmations, and statements of hopes and visions, and compiled these for sharing with concerned people around the world.

The Pali word most often associated with prayer is *aditthana*. While prayer are often petitions addressed to a supreme being, *aditthana*, on the other hand, is a solemn declaration of intent or a vow which one follows up as it becomes fulfilled. Hence the term 'prayer' in the title needs to be understood as having a flexible connotation. It is self-evident in the contents themselves. For Thailand the book has an added attraction as it is dedicated to

Sulak Sivaraksa, the Thai advocate for human rights, alongside Oscar Motomura, Brazilian businessman and visionary, and Murshida Sitara Brutnell, the spiritual leader of the Sufi way.

The ten themes under which the various prayers and affirmations are presented, provide relevant foci for the reader, as the themes include visions of hope, prayers of solidarity and justice, and reflections on politics, economics and ethics. The other themes remind us of the need for recognition of the dawning millennium, of the parables of time, for protecting the planet earth, and for the kind of legacy we will leave for the generations yet to be born. They also underline the urgency to develop communities of peace. After all humanity, as stewards of the universe with all its other living beings, mountains, rivers, and forests has the option to mold history.

Albert Einstein's words may be repeated here: "There

lies before us, if we choose, continued progress in happiness, knowledge and wisdom. Shall we instead choose death, because we cannot forget our quarrels? We appeal as human beings, to human beings: remember your humanity and forget the rest." There is an apt admonition from the Old Testament when God reminded humanity of such a choice: "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life...(Deut. 30.19)

Prayers for a Thousand Years provides the readers in all nations, thinkers, statesmen, young and old with not only food for thought, but also the paths to follow, and decisions to make not just for now but for years to come.

Kyaw Than

Komol Keemthong Awardees for 1999

As a part of an ongoing tradition, the Komol Keemthong Foundation presents annual awards to individuals whose works or actions contribute to diversity and improvement in social relations and man's relations with nature.

The four awardees for this year are Jorni Odochao, Father Joseph Henry Meyer, Siriporn Chotichachwarnul and Prajak Petchsingha.

Jorni Odochao is a fifty-three year old grassroots activist from Chiang Mai. Aside from being a leading proponent of equal rights for ethnic minorities in Northern Thailand, he is also an ardent environmentalist and an advisor to the Assembly of the Poor.

Father Joseph Henry Meyer is an American priest who works with the marginalized people of Thailand. For nearly thirty years Father Meyer has dedicated his life to improving the well-being-physical and psychological, of the people who live in the slums of Bangkok's Klong Toey area.

Siriporn Chotichachwarnul is a former government worker who has become a staunch advocate of simple living. She has lived at the Ashram Wongsanit and now is engaged in experimentation into sustainability at Suan Fak Din in Nakornratchasima province. Siriporn has shown that an alternative lifestyle is both physically and spiritually fulfilling.

Prajak Petchsingha has been a forest monk and a champion of the forests in which he spent ten years meditating. Against all odds he fought encroachers who sought to destroy the forest and the peoples way of life near the Dong Yai forest. He has endured persecution for his struggle and yet he continues to spread the message of the sanctity of the forest. He is largely responsible for the now widespread 'ordination' of trees as monks in order to protect them from destruction.

Michael Aris

It was as exotic an offer as a young college graduate could imagine. Michael Aris, freshly out of Durham University with an honors degree in modern history, was invited to become the private tutor of the children of the royal family of the remote Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan. In the six years he was to spend there, he began the intense acquaintance with the languages, history, art, religion and literature of the region that was to make him a leading Western authority on Bhutanese, Tibetan and Himalayan culture.

His death in an Oxford hospital on his 53rd birthday Saturday drew much attention because he was the husband of the Nobel Prize-winning Burmese opposition leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. But the academic achievements of the shy and modest Oxford don over three decades earned him high regard in his own right as a scholar who combined the study of textual sources with the experience of firsthand encounters and extensive travel.

It was during his college years that he met his future wife, who was studying philosophy, politics and economics at Oxford and staying in the home of a classmate of his whose father was Sir Paul Gore-Booth, a former British ambassador to Burma. It was in the Gore-Booth's London home that the couple were married in a Buddhist ceremony on Jan. 1, 1972, after a courtship maintained largely by mail between Bhutan and England.

They spent the first year of their married life in Bhutan where Aris had become, in addition to the royal tutor, the head of the kingdom's translation de-



partment and its official history researcher.

They came to England a year later for Aris to do postgraduate studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London and in 1976 moved on to Oxford where Aris became a junior research fellow at St. John's College and a member of the university faculty. He obtained a Ph.D. in Tibetan literature in 1978 from the University of London.

The first 16 years of their life together were spent in academic pursuits and raising their children, Alexander, born in 1973, and Kim, born in 1977. Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi studied, wrote and worked in the Oriental department at the Bodleian Library.

The daughter of her country's independence hero, Gen. Aung San, who was assassinated in 1947, she expressed a preoccupation with the future in one of the hundreds of letters she wrote to Aris before their marriage. "Sometimes I am beset by fears that circumstances and national considerations might tear us apart just when we are so happy in each other that separation would be a torment," she wrote.

That moment arrived in an understated episode that Aris recalled in a forward to "Freedom

From Fear," a 1991 collection of essays by and about his wife.

"It was a quiet evening in Oxford, like many others, the last day of March 1988," he wrote. "Our sons were in bed and we were reading when the telephone rang. Suu picked up the phone to learn that her mother had suffered a severe stroke. She put the phone down at once and started to pack. I had a premonition that our lives would change for ever."

She returned home to care for her dying mother and became swept up in the pro-democracy protests that brought down the government of the longtime military ruler, Gen. Ne Win. By the time the new National League for Democracy was elected to power in 1990, only to be ousted by a uniformed junta, she had become what her husband called "an icon of popular hope and longing."

Thus began years of house arrest, often with all contact with the outside world cut off, for Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi and strictly controlled visits to Burma, now called Myanmar, by Aris and the couple's two sons. She refused to leave for fear of being permanently exiled by the military authorities.

The last time Aris saw his wife was on a Christmas visit in 1995. Since he discovered two months ago that his prostate cancer was terminal, he had repeatedly asked permission to pay her a last visit, and the Burmese regime had turned down every request.

During the years of separation, Aris continued his teaching and research at Oxford while raising the couple's sons. Both are still students: Alexander doing graduate work in the United States and his younger

brother an undergraduate in Britain. Polly Friedhoff, spokeswoman for St. Antony's College at Oxford, where Aris was a senior research fellow and member of the governing body, said that the family, in keeping with its wishes to maintain privacy, did not want to identify the schools publicly. The funeral also is private.

When Burmese authorities blocked his wife from accepting human rights awards like the Sakharov prize of the European Parliament in 1990 and the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize a year later, Aris and the sons stood in for her.

Aris convened numerous

panels on Himalayan subjects, served in the leadership of various academic societies, supervised students doing master's and doctoral degrees and worked in his last years to set up a specialist Tibetan and Himalayan studies center on a permanent institutional basis at Oxford. From 1990 to 1992 he was a visiting professor at Harvard.

Michael Vaillancourt Aris was born in Havana, Cuba. His mother, Josette, was French Canadian, and his English father, John, was an officer with the British Council, Britain's principal agency for cultural relations overseas. Michael Aris' identical

twin, Anthony, is a publisher whose house specializes in scholarly books on Tibetan culture.

According to close friends, Aris was unflinchingly supportive of his wife's decision and never once complained that she should abandon the mission and come home.

In his forward to "Freedom From Fear," Aris reflected his disciplined Buddhist detachment in assessing the circumstances of his life. "Fate and history never seem to work in orderly ways," he wrote. "Timings are unpredictable and do not wait upon conveniences."

Sr. Julien Williams

Born on August 23, 1934 in Australia, Sr. Julien arrived at Mater Dei school in Bangkok from her homeland on March 3, 1965. She was a dedicated teacher, always well loved by her students. As a person she was kind, energetic and very much fun loving. She helped open new horizons for her students and encouraged them to appreciate the value of simple ordinary work, giving full recognition to

the contributions of a taxi driver as much as a high ranking government official.

When the late governor of the Bank of Thailand, Dr. Puey Ungphakorn initiated the "Back to Rural Development Project," Sr. Julien also took her students to the upcountry to help with development works for local villagers. She was also very active in the "Fields of Crying Crows" development project, a

joint venture of the Thai and Australian governments.

Sr. Julien always appreciated her time in Thailand. She loved the Thai people and enjoyed Thai food. She was very friendly and was held dear by many, many friends, who will cherish her in their memory.

Sr. Julien passed away in her homeland of Australia on February 9, 1999.

Nancy Pocock: Crusader for Social Justice

Loving mother for a troubled world. That is how Nancy Pocock, a peace activist, crusader for social justice, writer and artist will be remembered. Ms. Pocock died at Women's College Hospital on March 4, 1998. The anti-war and refugees advocate was 87. "She was a supportive, patient and loving mother", said her daughter, Judy Pocock.

Even at the end as she waited for hours in a crowded emergency room, Ms. Pocock

remained driven by her altruistic impulses. As she lay on a stretcher, she managed to pen a letter for a refugee, something that she had done hundreds of times in the past.

Ms. Pocock's extensive world travels carried her into Vietnam at the height of the war, El Salvador, where she sat on the committee to oversee voluntary elections and most recently, Peru. She visited Siam twice training young people in the art of

nonviolent struggle.

For twenty years her living room was a barometer on the state of the world. She let anyone into her house and listened to all of them, especially those who had the least. She was not a saint. She was sometimes difficult—pig-headed in the Quaker belief of recognizing the divine in each and every one of us, and in speaking truth to power.

An address to H.H. The Sangharaja

Your Holiness,

SEM or the Spirit in Education Movement operates under the Sathirakoses-Nakgapradipa Foundation on alternative to mainstream education i.e. we use the basic Buddhist principle of *trisikkha* of *sila*, *samadhi* and *panna* as the main criteria to educate people to be aware of themselves, in order to cultivate seeds of peace within, and to foster *yonisomanasikara* or critical reflection of themselves as well as the society to which they belong. Our aim is to build good friendship or *kalayanamitta* among those who teach and those who learn i.e. we learn from each other, as well as from all sentient beings, in order to confront suffering and to find out the cause of suffering in the modern world. Thus we could overcome suffering through the Noble Eightfold Path.

We are happy to be able to offer our humble services—not only to the Thai public, but also to members of our neighbouring countries such as Laos, Cambodia and Sri Lanka.

However, this is the first time that we have *Bhikkhus* as well as *upasaka* and *upasika* from Burma. They will be able to teach us as well as to learn from our experiences in this country. Since both countries are not only neighbours but most of us are followers of the Lord Buddha, it is indeed a privileged to have our Burmese friends with us for some weeks.

Your Holiness has been very gracious to grant us this audience and on behalf of everyone I beg Your Holiness to give us a Buddhist blessing so that our training course will be a success.

Yours most respectfully,

Sulak Sivaraksa
January 23, 2542

Spirit in Education Movement Course Prospectus 1999

Date/time	Trainers	Title/Place	Fee
19-25 May 1999 (7.00-16.30) Sunday Off	Hiroshi - Hideko Aikata Kawee Kongpakdipong	Workshop "Yoga Training for Trainers" at Ashram Sang Arun, Bangkok	3,500 B
19-21 May 1999 (18.00-20.00)	Hiroshi - Hideko Aikata Kawee Kongpakdipong	Workshop "Yoga Breathing for Daily life" at Ashram Sang Arun, Bangkok	600 B
24-25 May 1999 (18.00-20.00)	Hiroshi - Hideko Aikata Kawee Kongpakdipong	Workshop "Yoga for Refreshing" at Ashram Sang Arun, Bangkok	400 B
27-31 May 1999	Hiroshi - Hideko Aikata Supaporn Pongpruk	Workshop "Yoga for Healing" Cancer and Stress persons at Ashram Wong Sanit, Nakorn Nayok	3,300 B
4-6 June 1999	Hiroshi - Hideko Aikata Supaporn Pongpruk	Workshop "Yoga for Healing" HIV persons	HIV Network 2,000 B
June 1999 Every Friday (18.00-20.00)	Phra Pisan Visalo Sulak Sivaraksa And others	Lecture on "Understanding of Buddhism"	Donation
15 June - 20 July 1999 Every Tuesday (18.00-20.00)	Sulak Sivaraksa Kwandee Attawawuttichai And Others	Workshop "The Art of Comprehending"	Donation
June 1999	Team	Workshop "Simplicity of Life"	Will inform
2-9 July 1999	Kittichai Ngamchaipisit Poonchawee Ruangvichathorn	Workshop "Community and Team Building" at Ashram Wong Sanit, Nakorn Nayok	4,600 B