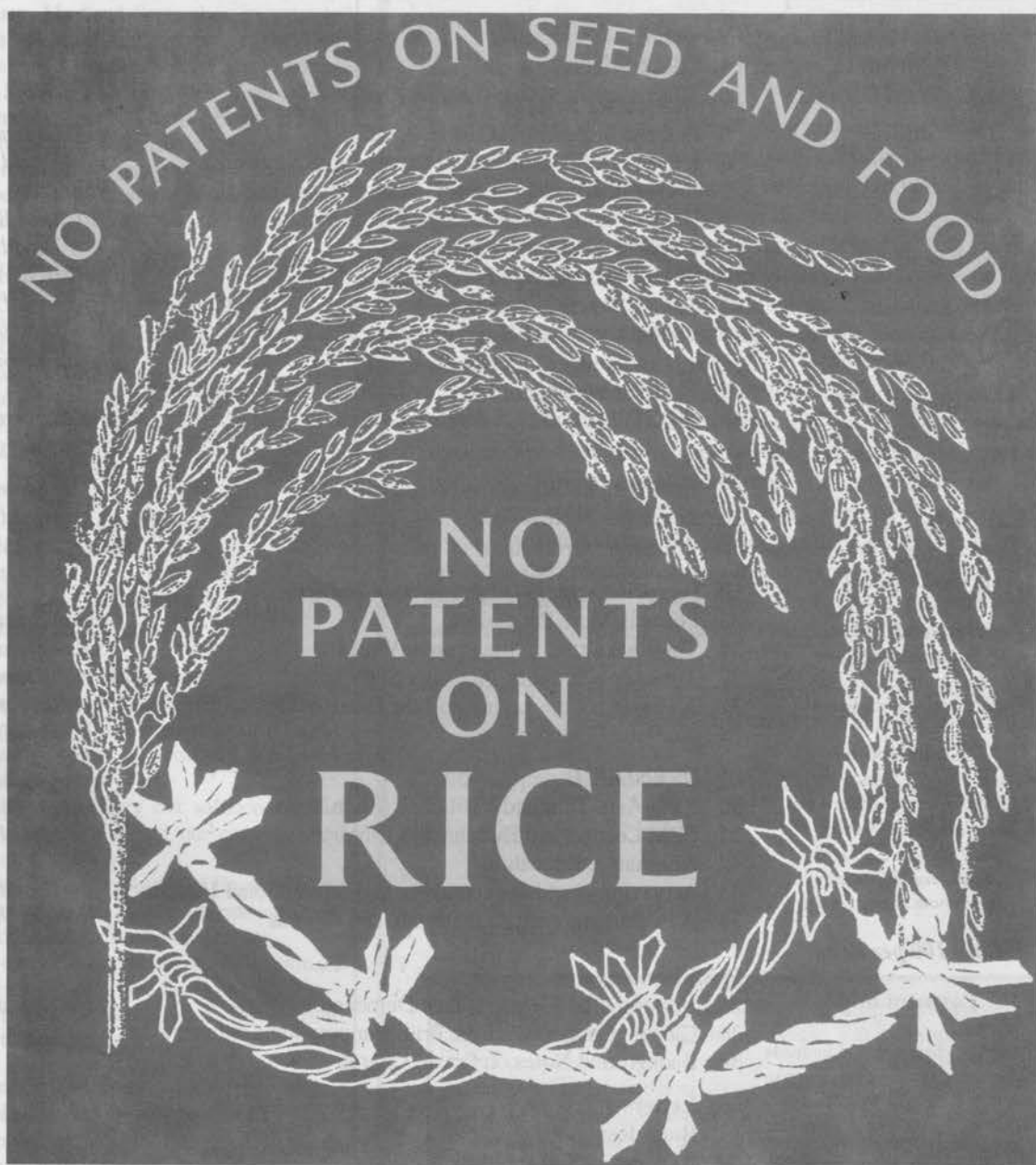


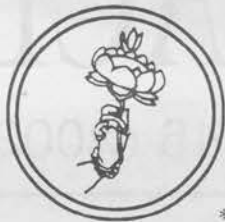
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PEACE

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The goals of INEB are to:

1. Promote understanding and co-operation among Buddhist countries, different Buddhist sects, and socially conscious Buddhist groups.
2. Facilitate and carry out solutions to the many problems facing our communities, societies, and world.
3. Articulate the perspective of Engaged Buddhism regarding these problems and train Buddhist activists accordingly.
4. Serve as a clearing house of information on existing Engaged Buddhist groups.
5. Cooperate with activists from other spiritual traditions.

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The Dalai Lama's letter to the President of the United States of America

Your Excellency,

I am deeply shocked by the terrorist attacks that took place involving four apparently hijacked aircrafts and the immense devastation these caused. It is a terrible tragedy that so many innocent lives have been lost and it seems unbelievable that anyone would choose to target the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington D.C. We are deeply saddened. On behalf of the Tibetan people I would like to convey our deepest condolence and solidarity with the American people during this painful time. Our prayers go out to the many who have lost their lives, those who have been injured and the many more who have been traumatized by this senseless act of violence. I am attending a special prayer for the United States and its people at our main temple today.

I am confident that the United States as a great and powerful nation will be able to overcome this present tragedy. The American people have shown their resilience, courage and determination when faced with such difficult and sad situation.

It may seem presumptuous on my part, but I personally believe we need to think seriously whether a violent action is the right thing to do and in the greater interest of the nation and people in the long run. I believe violence will only increase the cycle of violence. But how do we deal with hatred and anger, which are often the root causes of such senseless violence? This is a very difficult question, especially when it concerns a nation and we have certain fixed conceptions of how to deal with such attacks. I am sure that you will make the right decision.

With my prayers and good wishes

The Dalai Lama

September 12, 2001
Dharamsala, India

Rice is the heritage of Asian farmers who have evolved hundreds of thousands of varieties over millennia, and Asian consumers who have developed a million ways of storing, saving and processing rice and rice products to provide nourishment to over half the planet's people.

Now a handful of giant corporations are trying to own and control rice through patents and IPRs claims based on piracy and trivial tinkering — Golden Rice, Basmati Rice, Jasmine Rice, Basmati Rice powder to coat other rice, parboiling techniques, biryani, masala dosa, etc.

Monsanto and Syngenta have taken patents on the entire genome of rice.

Rice cannot be allowed to become a Corporate Monopoly.

Stop Rice Biopiracy.

Editorial Notes

Having defied the writ of the United States, Afghanistan is being pounded into pieces. Violence, not the UN or the international legal system, was relied on to help settle the problem. Afghanistan must be destroyed in order to save itself from the ruling Taliban regime, the convoluted logic seems to suggest. The American-led 'war against terrorism' in Afghanistan marks another highpoint in international deception and hypocrisy. Thus far no terrorist has been captured. The US Secretary of Defense has even admitted—probably with a straight face—that Osama bin Laden, the alleged mastermind of the 11 September attacks against the US, may never be captured. No 'hard' evidence against bin Laden has been reproduced and broadcast as if to say that the moment of execution/retaliation is synonymous with the moment of truth. Worse, the 'war against terrorism' is being sponsored by none other than the greatest "mafia don" in the rogues' gallery (see the review of Noam Chomsky's book in this issue). The gashing marks on "the body of the condemned" (to borrow a phrase from Foucault) are of course not televised. They remain hidden behind the antiseptic graphic images of aerial bombardment. Otherwise the bloody hands of the American leaders and their international allies will be exposed, forcing them to stand on the same moral plateau as the savage Taliban and bin Laden. The bulk of the victims of the US-led assault on Afghanistan fall in the same category as those of the 11 September attacks: innocent people. Thus 'justice' and punishment must be conducted behind closed doors. Further, it must be pointed out that prior to the US-led attack Afghanistan already has a massive number of internally displaced people and refugees. It seems that the war against Afghanistan is being carried out with full knowledge (even anticipation) that the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan will worsen because of it. This criminal negligence cannot be condoned. The pretense of humanitarian concern for the people of Afghanistan is thus a disingenuous PR stunt. The message of the American attack on Afghanistan is not only intended for the Taliban and terrorist organizations in the world but also to anyone (a state or otherwise) entertaining the odd idea of defying the American writ. The message on the wall is big and clear: Big Brother, who is armed to the teeth, is watching you.

The view from below is like gazing into a different mirror. Grassroots groups worldwide, including American ones, have protested against and called an end to the American war in Afghanistan. Sulak's article in this issue is a forceful expression of this sentiment. The international coalition against terrorism may well be predominantly an elitist affair as Walden Bello has suggested. Each 'member' of the coalition has its own hidden agenda to pursue. Russia, for instance, is banking on international support to crush the terrorists in Chechnya. And so on.

S.J.

On Tuesday 20 November I went to the US Embassy to participate in a meeting on "International Cooperation for Global Security and Peace". It was interesting that the US Embassy, as representative of the country that has for the past six weeks so relentlessly bombed Afghanistan, held this meeting to talk about peace and nonviolence and tolerated many strong voices of dissent. The meeting may have been something of a PR exercise but it included many representatives of NGOs and the Thai Muslim community, all of whom expressed strong opposition to the war in Afghanistan. Yet with Afghanistan having been bombed so mercilessly and many innocent civilians having lost their lives it all seems like too little too late. Mr Jarun Ditthapichai said the conflict in Afghanistan is like "a giant crushing an ant." Everyone in the world knows the USA has enormous military power. However, the tragic events of September 11 exposed a vulnerability for which no military technology can serve as protection. So why did the USA respond to September 11 with a brutal display of military force? Simply because it was unprepared to respond in any other way. The meeting at the US Embassy won't do anything to end the suffering in Afghanistan. However, by beginning to talk about peace, nonviolence and alternatives to war it may plant some seeds of peace to help to stop another conflict at some time in the future.

In August Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa travelled to Australia. John Seed hosted his visit to Brisbane and Lismore. John raised A\$1,200 to help support the former Phra Prajak. Many thanks to John for his generosity and support. Finally, congratulations to Ajarn Sulak for receiving the Millennium Gandhi Award.

David Reid

INDIA: Millennium Gandhi Award for Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa

On 2nd October 2001 (Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi) Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa was honoured with the Millennium Gandhi Award by the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, New Delhi. This award was given to Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa (along with Edward Goldsmith, Satish Kumar, Mohammad Idris, Sunderlal Bahaguna and Krishnammal & Jaganathan; see below for more details) in recognition of his outstanding contribution towards building critical consciousness and human awareness related to development and democracy in Siam as well as in other parts of Asia. The distribution of Millennium Gandhi Award(s) was held as an extension of a three-day conference on "Globalisation, Environment and People's Survival" between 29th September 2001 and 1st Octo-



ber 2001 at the India International Centre, New Delhi.

On 1st October 2001 Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa participated in the morning session on "Water Privatisation" and later in the afternoon made a highly insightful presentation on "Earth Democracy". A more significant

development during this period was the inauguration of Bija Vidyapeeth (International College for Sustainable Living) which is located at the foothills of the Himalayas and the Shivaliks, about ten miles from Dehra Dun, Uttaranchal. After a special inauguration ceremony Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa addressed the community of international students, faculty and other guests on the problems and challenges facing humanity as well as the responses from the people. He emphasised the need for cultivation of mindfulness and ability to listen to the voices of people. This inaugural address was followed by the planting of a "forest of diversity" (Vividhta Van). Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa planted a *camphor* sapling with a wish that the International College of Sustainable Living would soon grow into an



institution that spreads the message of peace and harmony throughout the world.

Ramu Manivannan

Satish Kumar is the founding director of Schumacher College and editor of *Resurgence*. He is a leading figure in the spiritual and environmental fields in Britain. He is a former Jain monk and was involved in the land reform movement with Vinoba Bhave in India. He has also walked 8,000 miles from India to the

USA, without money, for peace and nuclear disarmament.

Edward Goldsmith is the founding editor of *The Ecologist*. Since the 1960s Goldsmith has been making an enormous contribution to raising awareness of the ecological crisis and proposing solutions to it. He has written many articles and books that are critical of modern industrial society and point out alternative, ecological approaches.

Mohammad Idris founded the Consumer Association of Pe-

nang in 1969, SAM (Friends of the Earth Malaysia) in 1978 and the Third World Network in 1984.

Krishnammal & Jaganathan, are a Gandhian couple who have led the land reform movement and the satyagraha campaign against shrimp farming. Krishnammal is the secretary of LAFTI (Land for the Tiller's Freedom).

Sunderlal Bahaguna is the Gandhian leader of the Chipko movement and the movement against the Tehri dam on the sacred Ganges.

INDIA:

Dalits Continue to Convert to Buddhism

The planned conversion of one million Dalits to Buddhism on October 14 did not occur. However, the movement for conversion of Dalit Indians, those from the so-called untouchable castes, to Buddhism continues. The movement began on 14 October 1956 when Dr Ambedkar embraced Buddhism along with 400,000 other Dalits. Since then millions have followed him.

Dalits make up about a quarter of India's population of more than one billion people. Although Indian law prohibits discrimination based on caste it is still widespread. For Dalits conversion to Buddhism offers a way out of the caste system.

Activists at the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) in South Africa sought to highlight the issue of caste discrimination in India. However, the Indian government successfully lobbied to keep any mention of caste out of the con-

ference declaration.

In protest against India's failure to acknowledge caste discrimination at the WCAR 6,000 Dalits converted to Buddhism in Kanpur, 240 miles southeast of New Delhi, on September 8. "The Government of India misguided all at the Durban meet," Dalit leader Ram Prasad Rashik told Associated Press after the event.

Further mass conversions have taken place in recent months. Two hundred Hindus converted to Buddhism in the Gaya district of Bihar on November 18. According to Abhay Kumar of the All India Buddhist Federation there was no tension in Gaya, nearby the site where the Buddha attained enlightenment 2,500 years ago. "They have changed their religion because they felt suffocated and discriminated against in the caste ridden Hindu society," Kumar said.

The following day thousands took part in a mass conversion in New Delhi. A *Times of India* report raised concerns that there may be political motives behind the conversions. Dalits constitute a large number of voters and Professor J.S. Gandhi of Jawaharlal Nehru University said the mass conversions to Buddhism are part of several trends. One of these is the "growing personal political ambitions of some people claiming to be mere social Dalit leaders," he said. He also asks, "Is it any coincidence that the Uttar Pradesh elections are round the corner?" Professor Gandhi believes the conversions are largely symbolic rather than religious.

Until India begins to seriously address the issue of caste discrimination it is likely that mass conversions to Buddhism will continue.

David Reid

INDONESIA: Meeting at Gandhi Ashram in Bali 4-5 August 2001

"If capital is power so is work" – M.K. Gandhi

A cool seashore breeze, delicious vegetarian food and Hindu hymns chanted by young volunteers provided an inspiring environment for a small meeting to draft the outlines of a process that will culminate in the "Bandung II" meeting in the year 2005. The first Bandung meeting was held in Indonesia in 1955, briefly after victory over Dutch colonial rule, and the purpose of the 1955 Bandung meeting was to bring developing countries together to form a "third force" vis-a-vis the Cold War blocs

led by the USA and USSR. The dream of the first President of independent Indonesia, Sukarno, was to create a "non-aligned movement".

What can the meaning of "non-alignment" be, half a century later? At the moment of the meeting in Bali, early August 2001, President Wahid (Gus Dur), the initiator of Bandung II had just lost his seat in favour of the eldest daughter of President Sukarno and the world was holding its breath. Our host Mrs ("Ibu") Gedong Bagoes Oka, a former activist for independence, taught the participants in the small meeting that amidst

all turbulence it is the force of 'Ahimsa' (non-violence) which should be the core of any attempts to constitute a "Third Way". The now 80 years old founder of Ashram Gandhi later stated, in her address to the Indonesian Parliament at Independence Day "I hope this Independence Day can mark our second independence. Our independence from bad habits such as corruption and human rights abuses" (Jakarta, Reuters). Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa who was asked by Gus Dur to implement the "Bandung II process", was consulted by his old friend and together they decided that



Bandung II should be pursued under all circumstances. A broad partnership is envisioned, as long as creativity and freedom of mind can be the impetus for this intended contribution to global transformation so urgently needed.

In addition to Ibu Gedong and Ajarn Sulak the Quaker International Affairs representatives for Southeast Asia cooperated with the Bali meeting. Jeffery Sng, from Singapore—now based in Bangkok and with strong Indonesian ties—will cofacilitate the preparations for future meetings. A first preparatory meeting will be held in February 2002 hosted at the campus of the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) near Bangkok. The meeting will have the working title “Peacemaking and International Insecurity in the 21st Century”.

One of the issues for debate is whether a “Third Way” between capitalist and communist economic systems can emerge in order to truly address the gap between the rich and the poor. Neither European socio-democratic approaches nor modernized communism seem to provide genuine alternatives to neoliberal capitalism applicable to the pressing need for global

economic justice. In a later consultation with Elias Amidon, a leading teacher of Sufism, and Rabia Roberts emphasis was given to the ethnic background of so many conflicts in the world today. Are our worldviews still patterned by ethnic and nationalistic chauvinism, or even racist conceptions of human development?

Since this consultation the 11 September attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington have revealed how serious the tensions are between “McWorld and Jihad”. And the counter-attacks on Afghanistan have strengthened fears of an escalating “Clash of Civilizations”.

In the first Bandung conference the young independent states came together to find new ways in world politics. In Bandung II we cannot expect the answers from the nation-states. And we should ask ourselves whether the powerful corporate world can transform itself drastically enough to secure universal economic justice in the future. Also the NGO movements tend to institutionalize in such a way that they may not gain enough strength and openness to fully represent the voices of

the grass-roots. Moreover, the education sector tends to be an instrument of governments and corporate interests. Education did not acquire the position of independence inherent in its “mission”.

Much will depend on a creative cross-fertilization between the basic four civil sectors of the world-community: (1) politics, (2) work & business, (3) NGO's (including world religions) and (4) education. This groundbreaking interaction can only materialise through the courage and inspiration of independent individuals from a diversity of cultural backgrounds.

As the initiators of the small August-meeting in Ashram Gandhi in Bali, our new company Suan Nguen Mee Ma or ‘Garden of Fruition’, based in Bangkok, will try to contribute to this quest for genuine independence by publishing books for local exchanges in line with the creative thinking-process towards Bandung II. Our first book from this perspective will be the translation into Thai of *The Post-Corporate World: Life after Capitalism* by David C. Korten.

Wallapa Kuntiranont
Hans van Willenswaard

USA:

World's Newest Stupa Builds Bridge for Peace

Buddhist leaders and more than 2,000 practitioners from 24 countries came together this summer for the consecration of the world's newest stupa.

Hailed as “a living monument to peace, tolerance and

liberation”, The Great Stupa of Dharmakaya rises in the northern Colorado Rockies at a height of 8,500 feet above sea level. It is an architectural marvel and has already been a catalyst for international con-

flict-resolution efforts.

The 10-day consecration, led by high-ranking Tibetan lamas in August, became a world-class event as news media around the world suddenly zoomed in on the story. The final

rituals were covered live by the World Service of the BBC.

"In a broad sense," wrote Gustav Niebuhr, religion editor of *The New York Times*, "the stupa represents a striking example of how the sacred landscape is changing visually as the United States becomes more religiously diverse."

"Watch that stupa in Colorado," advised the prestigious London weekly, *The Economist*. "Attendance at Buddhist retreat centres is growing, as people talk about their need for spiritual fulfillment."

The Times of India told its readers: "The contrast couldn't be more striking. While the bigotry-filled Taliban, wreckers of the Bamiyan Buddha in Afghanistan, continue to hold the world hostage to their whims, a 108-foot tall Buddhist stupa, the largest in the western world, has just arisen in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado."

The Great Stupa is already becoming a major pilgrimage site. In addition to leading Buddhist figures and practitioners, hundreds of people have been arriving each week at the stupa's practice center, Rocky Mountain Shambhala Center. Planning is now underway for an estimated 25,000 people coming this summer alone.

The ornate stupa is an architectural representation of the Buddha seated in meditation. Part of the fascination is that it fuses classical Tibetan art and 21st century technology. It is temperature-controlled, wired for solar energy and made to last 1,000 years—one of four custom-built projects in the world using High Performance Concrete, the same material used in nuclear power plants because of its extreme durability.



Capped by a gilded spire, the stupa holds countless sacred mantras and fragments of sacred objects, many of them preserved in the Himalayas for centuries.

The Great Stupa also houses the relics and commemorates the teachings and life work of Tibetan meditation master, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche. Founder of Naropa University and a worldwide network of Shambhala meditation centers, Trungpa Rinpoche worked tirelessly to translate the spiritual understanding and disciplines of the Buddhist and Shambhala teachings into contemporary terms accessible to westerners—and to emphasize the importance of what he termed "creating enlightened society".

The stupa has already played a role in international peace efforts, particularly in relation to the Buddhist world's longest-running armed conflict. Sri Lanka's veteran peace campaigner, Dr A.T. Ariyaratne, invited a delegation from the Shambhala Buddhist community to visit the country to collect a Buddhist relic to be placed in the heart of The Great Stupa.

A team of six Shambhala Buddhists, from Canada, France, the Netherlands, the United

Kingdom and the United States went to collect the relic in April and took the opportunity to visit leading Buddhists throughout Sri Lanka. The delegation hoped to build bridges with the Theravada tradition and to understand the sangha's response to the island's 18-year-old war—a savage conflict which has claimed over 60,000 lives and displaced vast numbers of the population.

"In the course of 10 days we visited Buddhist temples, centers and leaders of the sangha in Colombo, Kotte, Bellanwilla, Moratuwa, Matara, Kandy, Dambulla, Gokerella and Anuradhapura," said a representative of the delegation. "We were also able to meet the Prime Minister."

"In a world filled with conflict and suffering, the Buddha's teachings are of profound importance. We face many disturbing social problems and violence in our own societies. It was therefore important for us to understand how Buddhists in Sri Lanka view and respond to similar social problems and violence."

The Shambhala Buddhists found considerable concern among the sangha about the way in which the Buddhist clergy has been portrayed in the international news media. Many people the delegation met asked the group to return to Sri Lanka for further discussions. That is now being planned.

Richard Reoch

Shambhala

USA: The Deer Park Initiative

Bill McKeever, who formerly worked with the Asia Society is now working on a new project, the Deer Park Initiative. The initiative is founded on the belief that Buddhist practices can contribute to a more peaceful, spiritually enriched and engaged society. It aims to serve two broad and interrelated groups: the diverse international Buddhist community and the broader public who are interested in or may benefit from elements of Buddhist culture and practice.

The four main areas of the project are: information and media; education dialogue and culture; social action; and philanthropy. The initiative will act as an informational and educational resource on Buddhism in contemporary society and to build

new bridges between Buddhist communities and the secular world. In time it is also hoped the initiative will become a foundation providing philanthropic support for Buddhist initiatives successfully contributing to benefiting society.

The initiative is also committed to supporting social action. It seeks to raise awareness of the potential for Buddhist principles and practices to address contemporary social needs. It will work with existing organisations involved in social and environmental work such as the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. It will also help to facilitate communication among Buddhist-inspired groups that may not be aware of other groups with similar activities. This will help them

to share information about best practices.

In the New York Time's extensive coverage of the consecration of the Great Stupa of Dharmakaya it noted that the Great Stupa represents the deep roots of "convert" Buddhism in the US while the Hsi Lai Temple in Los Angeles represents the flowering of Asian American Buddhism. It is significant that the two people working on the Deer Park Initiative represent these two traditions, Bill McKeever from the Shambhala tradition and Venerable Yifa, a Taiwanese nun, from Fo Guang Shan. Sulak Sivaraksa is one of the founding members of the Deer Park Council.

David Reid

SIAM: Nuke Centre Faces More Trouble

The controversial nuclear-reactor research project in Ongkharak, Pathum Thani faces more trouble following the Nuclear Safety Committee's refusal to allow construction to start. The main reason cited by the panel is that the project's safety analysis report—conducted by the US based construction company, General Atomic—was still unacceptable, its secretary said.

"There has been no assessment of the possible impacts of a disaster, including a seismic one, even though the project is

located in a fault area, or a massive breach of a dam. It also did not evaluate the possible consequences of being in a flight corridor. And its environmental impact assessment was not provided," committee secretary Panjit Thaneephanichsakul said yesterday.

The Ongkharak project has faced a series of hurdles since it was first proposed, and has met stiff opposition from residents living near the site, as well as from environmentalists. However, the Office of Atomic Energy for Peace (OAEP), the

project's proponent, finally signed a contract with General Atomic in 1998 to design, construct and operate the experimental reactor.

Even though a quarter of the project budget—about Bt1 billion out of Bt4.6 billion—has already been spent, the reactor still has not been installed. Only some facilities have been completed. The terms of the contract require General Atomic to pay 0.1 percent (about Bt4.6 million) of the contract value per day in fines if it misses the deadline. But General Atomic has demanded in-

stead that OAEP compensate it Bt900 million for wasting its time, claiming that OAEP was at fault for the delay by not getting the safety report approved.

Panjit said OAEP was now pressuring the committee to en-

dorse the report so that construction can proceed. Any safety problems could be dealt with as they arise. Panjit quoted an OAEP official as saying, "But we cannot put Thais at risk. A nuclear accident could have an

enormous social and economic impact," she said.

Sirinart Sirisunthorn

The Nation

16 September 2001

SIAM:

Beyond Education: Students Gain Social Awareness Through Interactive Exchange

ENGAGE (Educational Network for Global and Grassroots Exchange) is an organization that seeks to involve people in cross-cultural communication resulting in grassroots action that works toward global consciousness and social justice. We seek to create an educational network of people who have been abroad on socially conscious programs and people who have been active in local community issues. We seek to facilitate a global and grassroots understanding of the notion that long term solutions come from connecting individuals, local communities, and organizations with other such groups around the world for building solidarity. We seek to lay the foundation for a reciprocal and dynamic exchange of experiences between individuals, groups, organizations, and communities in order to give a face to issues, forge friendships, and link destinies.

ENGAGE USA keeps university students returning from study abroad experiences linked to issues of global injustice and channels them into local issues in the States. The networking capacity of ENGAGE USA is one of its greatest strengths. With people throughout America



they have the capacity to work in many different communities as well as bring awareness of issues in Thailand to varying audiences. Some of the ways they work to raise awareness are through slide shows, talks, letter writing campaigns, reality tours, and involvement with local organizations working at a grassroots level.

ENGAGE Thailand specifically works in communities in Thailand at the local level uniting them with global networks. We seek to enhance the potential of communities to determine their own future by empowering them to clarify problems and implement solutions. We also seek to strengthen grassroots movement

in Thailand by linking with regional and global networks as well as foster an ongoing dialogue and exchange that challenges conventional approaches surrounding development and human rights. This is in an attempt to support global education and research by promoting equal exchange and a common sense of humanity based on mutual respect. Over the last few years, we have produced a "Community History series" of oral histories on the Pak Moon dam (*Voice of the River*), on the small-scale fisherfolk of Pattani in the south (*Empty Seas, Empty Nets*), on the Nam Phong River (*Power of Money*), and on the alternative agriculture network, (*Riches in*

the Soil, Wealth in the Water).

Joint Thai-International Student Pak Moon Conference

28-30 September 2001

One important aspect of ENGAGE Thailand is to serve as continuity between different groups of students, such as international students coming in through the Council International Educational Exchange (CIEE) program at Khon Kaen University and the Student Federation of Isaan (SFI) in the Northeast of Thailand.

Both CIEE and SFI students have been involved in various aspects of the Pak Moon dam conflict over the past three years. In late 2000, the report of the World Commission on Dams (WCD) put to rest any controversy about how much damage the Pak Moon dam had caused to the communities and environment along the banks of the river. However, even with the backing provided by the conclusions of this internationally recognized body, the Thai government has not responded to any great degree in meeting the demands of affected villagers along the Moon River, the largest tributary of the Mekong.

In August 2001 ENGAGE Thailand worked with CIEE and SFI students who wanted to pursue some further action in support of the villagers fighting to keep the gates open at Pak Moon dam. With this interest, CIEE students updated the previously made ENGAGE Pak Moon dam slide show so it could be taken back to their respective homes in America to be distributed through ENGAGE USA as well as Japan. These were accompanied by an informative pamphlet with the purpose of raising aware-

ness as well as gaining support in the international community for the Pak Moon villagers. Also came the plans for a conference that was held by ENGAGE Thailand at Pak Moon Dam during 28-30 September 2001.

By focusing on the bringing together of CIEE and SFI, ENGAGE Thailand has seen our strength develop as an organization as we have had the opportunity to much better understand the internal structures of these groups. Within our organization we have past participants of both CIEE and SFI. We used this understanding to address the problems of each group. The CIEE students needed to be allowed the resources to gain a greater understanding of the issue at Pak Moon Dam so as to be on the same grounds as those already working there. SFI needed a forum in which they could create cohesiveness within their group. The conference was able to provide that for them. The conference was a forum in which those who choose to become involved had both the requisite understanding of the issue and a structure through which action could be realized.

One of the outstanding struggles of our organization is building continuity between groups, whether it is between the three groups of international students coming to Khon Kaen each year to study, or between different groupings of interested Thai students. We understand that long-term social change can only be achieved by structures of continuity that allow each succeeding group to continue and extend previous efforts, rather than starting anew every few months. And although building continuity is what we focus most on, it is also a constant struggle.

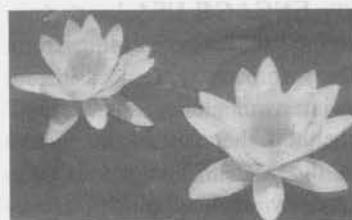
Outcomes of Conference

Within a few days of the conference, EGAT closed the water gates at the dam earlier than promised and villagers began a long march from Ubon to Bangkok, both events serving to stir students into action. Students wrote a letter of protest to the Prime Minister of Thailand (which was published in the *Nation* newspaper), joined the SFI in issuing a joint statement condemning the actions of EGAT in Ubon city, and joined villagers as they marched from village to village along the Moon River.

We feel this conference was a great learning experience for us as an organization. It pointed out the inherent problems we will continue to face as well as the strengths that we shall use to confront such problems in our work. In our quest for social justice we will continue to look for ways to link people in this age of global interdependence in order to bring about the kind of understanding and awareness necessary for change to occur in the social structures that directly affect our lives.

Peggy Reents &
Nicolette Lustig

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SIAM:

University Honours Power Plant Activists

Two leading opponents of the coal-fired power plant projects in Prachuap Khiri Khan yesterday became the recipients of honorary doctorate degrees from Chiang Mai-based Midnight University.

Jintana Kaewkhao and Charoen Wataksorn were cited for their endeavour in self-education on the environment and the law and using the knowledge to protect natural resources.

Prof Nidhi Eawsriwongse, the founder of the avant-garde university, said the knowledge gained by the two recipients "is more solid than some academics'."

Both persons deserved the honour because they used their knowledge to benefit the greater good, said Prof Nidhi, a renowned historian.

Mrs Jintana, head of Ban Krut Conservation Club, and Mr Charoen, head of Rak Thong Thin Bo Nok Group, became active in the anti-power plant movement seven years ago.

Neither went to college but found it necessary to study technical documents, including environmental impact assessment studies, the national policy on energy, environmental laws and the 1997 constitution.

Their self-education of laws enabled them to negotiate with politicians and bureaucrats, resulting in delaying the projects worth several billions of baht for more than two years.

Their quest for knowledge enabled them to detect inaccuracies in documents related to the projects.

The developer of Hin Krut



power plant was forced to redo its environmental study when the activists pointed to its failure to locate a significant coral reef off the Hin Krut coast.

In June, Mr Charoen spotted whales near Bo Nok beach and noted the EIA did not mention the creatures.

Mr Charoen, 34, a retailer of agricultural products, obtained high-school education through the non-formal education programme.

Mrs Jintana, a former kindergarten teacher, told over 1,000 power plant protesters, academics and activists at the ceremony she dedicated the doctoral degree to all Thais who fought for their rights to protect the environment.

Her self-study of the laws enabled her to provide legal counsel to protesters arrested during their earlier protests against the power plants.

"If the power plant projects are scrapped, I will pursue a law degree at Sukhothai University by long-distant learning pro-

gramme," she said.

Both Ms Jintana and Mr Charoen were implicated in the recent assaults on researchers and people associated with the power plant projects.

Prof Nidhi said the university did not support any form of violence. But he said the public should look at the structure of violence in its totality and not scrutinise violence on a piecemeal basis.

The government, he said, promoted mega-projects for its economic benefits without regard to their violence on the environment and the villagers' traditional way of life.

*Chaiwat Sadyaem &
Anchalee Kongrui
Bangkok Post
23 October 2001*



SIAM:

Assembly of the Poor Letter to the World Bank

Mr. Ian Porter
Country Director
The World Bank Office
Bangkok

October 15, 2001

Dear Mr. Porter

We, the villagers affected by the Pak Mun dam and Assembly of the Poor, write to you from Mae Mun Man Yuen village No.1, at the Pak Mun dam site. Thousands of us have been living here since March 23, 1999 to demand the dam sluice gates be opened and the Mun River restored. We also demand that the World Bank take responsibility for the destruction of the environment which has caused suffering to us and endangered the fisheries of the Mun River.

In 1990, the World Bank and EGAT destroyed our livelihoods through the construction of the Pak Mun dam. At that time, we sent a letter to the World Bank requesting the Bank to stop providing loans to support the construction of the Pak Mun dam. The Bank ignored our request and did not listen to our voice. For us, the decision to build the Pak Mun dam was made without the participation of local people.

During our protest against the dam, we were promised a better way of life, but the promise was never delivered. On the contrary, our fisheries were decimated and our communities destroyed. Over the past eleven years we have learnt that the mitigation programs provided by EGAT did not solve our problems. We strongly believe that the only way to sustain our com-

munities and our livelihood is to decommission the dam and restore the river.

The World Commission on Dams (WCD) Pak Mun Case Study Final Report found that fish catch in the reservoir and upstream of the dam has declined by 60 to 80 percent, resulting in an economic loss to villagers of about \$1.4 million per annum. The report recorded that 56 species of fish have completely disappeared since the dam was built and at least 51 species have been caught significantly less since the completion of the project. According to the WCD, migratory and rapid dependent species are particularly affected as their migration route is blocked at the beginning of the rainy season. The WCD also confirmed that the fish ladder "has not been performing and is not allowing upstream fish migration."

The WCD found that the Pak Mun dam has had significant impacts on communities's livelihoods. According to WCD, "in the post-dam period, fishing communities located upstream and downstream of the dam reported 50-100% decline in fish catch and the disappearance of many fish species... Villagers who were dependent on fisheries for cash income have found no viable means of livelihood since the dam was built, despite efforts to provide training opportunities. As their food security and income was destabilised villagers sought different ways to cope, including out-migration in search of jobs." (p.60, WCD Basin Study on Pak Mun).

Economically, the WCD

found the project isn't performing well, and that it contributes only marginal amounts of power. The dam was supposed to generate 136 megawatts, but barely generates 40 megawatts in high-demand months. There's simply insufficient water to turn the turbines in the dry season. According to the WCD, the actual dependable capacity of Pak Mun project calculated from daily output between 1995-1998 assuming that all available power get assigned to a 4 hour peak demand period is only 20.81 MW." Even in the rainy season, EGAT has to shut the plant down because high water levels upstream and downstream mean there isn't enough water pressure to drive the turbines.

Moreover, the WCD found that the actual irrigation benefits are zero. The WCD concludes "it is unlikely that the project would have been built if actual true benefits would have been used in the economic analysis."

In 2001, after we held a long protest at the dam site and Government House, the Thai Government agreed to open the Pak Mun dam's gates for four months to allow fish migration upstream. Two months after the dam gates were opened, we conducted our own report and found that 119 fish species had returned to the Mun River. From our knowledge, we found 99 species are migratory fish including eels, which migrate from the South China Sea.

We also found 54 species of native plants and 23 species of herbal plants, which grow on the river banks after the water re-

cedes.

We have learnt that opening the dam's gates this year has not restored the Mun river ecosystem, but it has also brought back our livelihood. We have been able to generate income from fisheries as well as increasing our food security.

The information above confirms that the dam your institution has supported has caused destruction to the river and our communities, and that opening the dam's gates is the only way to solve our problems.

Therefore, we call on the World Bank to take responsibility for the destruction you have caused to our lives and to the ecology and fisheries of the Mun River.

The WCD in its final report recommends that the World

Bank "Review the portfolio of past projects to identify those that may have underperformed or present unresolved issues and share in addressing the burden of such projects for borrower countries. This may include, for example... providing new support to help borrower countries address unresolved economic, social, and environmental problems."

The Pak Mun dam is such a project. We demand the World Bank work with the Thai government to decommission the Pak Mun dam by opening the dam's gates permanently and restoring the Mun River. We believe that opening the Pak Mun dam's gates permanently will not be useful only for our communities but also for our next generations including the life of the millions

of people in the Mun/Chi and Mekong basins who are dependent on the fish from the Mun River.

We also demand the World Bank work with us to develop a reparations program to restore the livelihoods of our communities.

These are the ways and means to solve our problems and we sincerely hope that you are seriously concerned with our demands.

Yours sincerely,

Villagers Affected by Pak Mun Dam and Assembly of the Poor
Mae Mun Man Yuen Village No.1
P.O.Box 20, Kong Jiam Post
Office, Ubol Ratchathani

TIBET: Nonviolence and Social Action for Freedom in Tibet

A workshop on "Nonviolence and Social Action" was organised by the Friends of Tibet – India at the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics, Dharamsala from 22-24 November 2001. The major purpose of this initiative is to create an environment for debate and dialogue on the choice of nonviolence as a means to the struggle for freedom and independence in Chinese occupied Tibet. The broader interests of the workshop are to build critical awareness as well as to understand the significance of nonviolence in socio-political struggles with relevant case studies from different parts of the world. The process of workshop contributed

to a better understanding of the unique circumstances surrounding the Tibetan struggle for freedom from Chinese rule. This also underlined the need to explore and recognise various nonviolent alternatives in the context of the existing realities both inside Chinese occupied Tibet and outside, in the case of Tibetans living in exile.

This three-day workshop was supported by various NGOs and activist groups like the Gu-Chu-Sum Movement of Tibet, Karma Kagyu Nunnery, Institute of Buddhist Dialectics, CIHTS – Sarnath, Tibetan Youth Congress, Tibetan Women's Association, Jamyang Choeling, TPPRC and

Buddha Smiles. Friends of Tibet – India was the central coordinator of this workshop with the active support and cooperation from the NGOs and groups mentioned above. The hospitality and the base facilities for the workshop provided by the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics, Sarah, Dharamsala were outstanding in a true spirit of goodwill and courtesy.

One of the most remarkable features of this workshop was the decision to organise this event to coincide with the centenary of the date that Mahatma Gandhi began writing his draft of *Hind Swaraj* (22 November 1901). The first session of the workshop fo-

cused on lessons from Gandhi's life, thought and action. The keynote address delivered by Ven. Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche dealt at length with the significance of Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* in today's world. The workshop examined the role and efficacy of nonviolence not only from a perspective of it as a practical alternative to but also as a principle based on faith. The choice of trainers and participants was undertaken with a view to inform, educate and learn from each other. The trainers included Ven. Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche, the first democratically elected Kalon Tripa of the Tibetan Government-in-exile; Shri S.N. Subba Rao, a Gandhian activist who is known for his work with youth and also referred to as "the dacoit man" for his rehabilitation among the dacoits (robbers); Smt Radha Batt, a well-known female leader and Gandhian activist of the Chipko movement; Shri Rajiv Vora, a distinguished Gandhian thinker and also the editor of *Gandhi Marg*; and Dr. Ramu Manivannan, peace activ-

ist and founder and chairperson of Buddha Smiles.

This workshop on "Nonviolence and Social Action" emphasised the need for better understanding and appreciation of the grassroots by the government-in-exile and vice-versa. This necessitates a better and enhanced cooperation and communication among the various members of the Tibetan community, the NGOs and ultimately the government-in-exile. The reluctance and dilemma over the distinction between the demand for autonomy and the goal of independence was clear throughout the workshop. The youth leadership wants certain moderations in the traditional view of what is violence based on the Buddhist teachings. They are beginning to seek accommodation to the basic distinctions of violence and nonviolence based on political ground realities. There is certainly scope for establishing the middle path. This requires far more clear understanding of the emerging political realities and the attitude of the Chinese gov-

ernment towards the goal of a negotiated settlement. The younger generation is also prepared to understand the limitations but the single most important criteria is the need to communicate with each other and the leadership.

This initiative of organising a workshop on "Nonviolence and Social Action" is likely to continue in the future in other Tibetan settlements located in different parts of the country. This is also based on the objective of building a network of trainers and nonviolent volunteers from within the Tibetan community itself. This would in the long run help contribute to building an indigenous resource base of trainers, volunteers and nonviolent activists at the community level and ultimately in seeking a nonviolent resolution to the Chinese occupation of Tibet.

Ramu Manivannan is the New Delhi events coordinator of Friends of Tibet - India
www.friendsoftibet.org



George and Lillian Willoughby celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary in Costa Rica, July 2000.

Exploring the Vision and Needs of Nuns in Ladakh and Zanskar

Zanskar, a remote valley in the Himalayas of 'Little Tibet', is still an isolated place, cut off by snow for seven to eight months of the year where the ancient cycle of rituals which mark the seasons, moon cycles and events in the religious calendar continues. Many of the traditional livelihood practices and basic self-reliance still continue. Crops are cultivated and animals taken to higher slopes in summer. Winter is a time for retreats, teachings and festivals for both monastics and lay people. I went to Zanskar with the nuns from the Ladakh Nuns Association (LNA) in the summer of 2001. This was the first time in years it was possible to undertake the two-day journey to Zanskar along the high mountainous road from Leh towards Srinagar, turning off at the border town of Kargil, where the war between India and Pakistan had been most fiercely contested.

At an INEB conference in Sri Lanka two years previously, I had participated in an Asian Buddhist nuns study tour, and had been invited by Getsulma T. Palmo, the founder of the LNA, to visit Ladakh to do a survey of the nuns and nunneries. The LNA has since its inception fulfilled a great need by beginning to improve the situation for the nuns of Ladakh, and by providing access to Dharma teachings. The creation of the Association has helped to raise the status of nuns—although there is still a long way to go—and has generated wide support from the people of Leh.

I visited in 1999 to begin the survey work and training, and



this work has been continued by the LNA over the two years until my visit this year. The passion of the nuns for the Dharma and their longing for opportunities to deepen their study of both the Dharma and general education moved me. The work and commitment of the LNA Committee also moved me as well as local people's appreciation and willingness to support the work of the LNA. At the time of my arrival however, all were greatly concerned by a conflict which had developed with a group of donors and sponsors of nuns. The donors suspected misuse of funds—a suspicion which was shown to be unfounded. In this episode we saw the potential power of gossip, which could so easily have jeopardised the significant work being done.

I was greatly inspired by this relatively new and small organisation, under the loving leadership of Getsulma Palmo and the nuns around her. It was a privilege this time to visit eight nunneries in Zanskar and five in

Ladakh, to hear the nuns stories and of their longings and hopes in their hearts, and what they are presently doing for themselves and their communities. Our survey team involved Getsulma T. Palmo and Getsulma Tenzin Youdon from LNA and Getsulma Tenzin Lhadron, originally from Zanskar, who has been studying at Jamyong Choling Nunnery in Dharamsala for the last 12 years, and myself. We used a participatory process, and at some of the nunneries we also facilitated leadership and organisational skills training workshops, building on some of the earlier trainings.

Survey of nunneries in Zanskar

We were welcomed very warmly to each of the eight nunneries, mostly reached after a steep climb, and we were refreshed with both milk and butter tea and tsampa. The nuns arranged our meetings with them around their ceremonies and pujas or prayers.

Challenges: We often heard how over the last two years, the snowfall has been greatly reduced. In some of the nunneries water supplies were very limited, with only a trickle flowing through the pipe. The nuns have planted small plantations of trees around all the nunneries, but some were being abandoned due to water shortages. Other changes result from outside influences. The closing of the border with Tibet and the poverty of the region have all made it difficult to maintain the unique spiritual and cultural heritage of Zanskar. The monasteries for monks are in a slightly better position than the monasteries for nuns as in that village people are more likely to support monks. Prior to 1988, the nuns of Zanskar were mostly working in their family's homes, where they cooked, cleaned and looked after the children and animals. They practiced meditation only in the winter months when their families provided tsampa for retreats.

Improvements: Overall, there have been significant improvements for some of the nuns of Zanskar in recent years, but their needs are still great. They still have a strong yearning to deepen their study of the Dharma as their opportunities to do this are still limited. Three of the nunneries (Zangla, Pischu and Karsha) have recently received very limited financial support for the provision of basic food, robes, Dharma texts or construction of rooms. This has given some nuns the opportunity—greatly appreciated by them—to live in a nunnery, and to so have more time for the study and practice of the Dharma.

Education: In the eight nunneries we visited, about two thirds of the nuns were under 30 years



of age, but despite this there was a great concern expressed over declining interest for young women and girls to become nuns. The main reason given for this decline was that the nunneries are rarely able to offer education or opportunities to study the teachings. Virtually none of the nuns had been to school, although over the last 15 years there have been schools in Zanskar, and most parents want an education for their children these days. However, the medium of instruction is mostly Urdu, so children are forgetting their own language. All the nuns had learnt the Ladakhi script and could read the Dharma texts. Two of the eight nunneries (Karsha and Skyagum) had a resident lama, and there were regular teachings at Tungri nunnery. Most of the nuns had received only occasional teachings. Only Zangla nunnery offered study through the CIBS (Central Institute of Buddhist Studies), but most of the nunneries made strong requests for the study program of Hindi, English, Ladakhi, maths and Buddhist philosophy offered by CIBS.

Work and support: Many of the nuns worked in the fields of their families over the summer months and thus had less time for the study and practice of the Dharma. In a couple of the newer nunneries, where there were

mostly younger nuns, many were working as manual laborers during the summer to pay for the construction of their gompa (nunnery). Because of limited access to the teachings, there seemed to be a general lack of confidence and of the knowledge needed to be able to give even basic teachings to their families and communities. Whereas only some of the nunneries received active community assistance in practical matters such as building and maintenance, all were involved in Dharma activities with their nearby villages, such as when the local community came to offer and sponsor pujas, (prayers) on auspicious days, or have the nuns read texts to them.

The vision and hopes for the future of the nuns of Zanskar: The vision was seen mainly in terms of a longing for the teachings, and the need to attract younger nuns. These were connected, as if there were more young nuns it was felt there were stronger chances of attracting a teacher, and this would also be enriching for the nunnery. However, funds were also necessary for this vision to be achieved, such as to build facilities (e.g. rooms for a teacher and classrooms), as well in some nunneries, to purchase thankas (scroll paintings), Dharma texts and to fund other construction. Dharma study and an

education program would, it was felt, attract younger nuns. Some young nuns from Zanskar have been studying in Dharamsala, Mundgod, and Bhutan, and there were requests that some of these nuns consider returning to Zanskar on completion of their studies to teach the younger nuns. We also discussed how it might be possible to support some of these nuns to return to Zanskar over their vacation times to offer some teachings and encouragement to the nuns.

Survey of nunneries in Ladakh

Next, we visited five nunneries in Ladakh, which have been receiving some support from the LNA over the last few years, unlike most of the nunneries in Zanskar.

Significant changes: As well as the current survey, we drew on information collected by the LNA over the last couple of years. The survey thus reflects a transfer of skills, as well as a means of documenting the situation of nuns and the nunneries in Ladakh. The survey indicates that although the needs of the nuns are still great, there have been significant improvements both in access to the teachings and in support for some nuns. Much appreciation was expressed by the nuns towards the LNA, and towards Getsulma Palmo in particular, for the support and encouragement they have received. Some of the most significant changes for the nuns have been in increased opportunities to deepen their practice, and for some there has also been better access to teachers and recent construction projects to improve the living and practice situation in some nunneries.

Education: Most of the nuns

have never been to school. These nuns are likely to be the least confident and this is usually linked with increasing age. However, older nuns not presently studying were most supportive of the younger nuns who were. Two of the nunneries have recently introduced a study program for the nuns through the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies, which has given the nuns confidence as well as enabling them to see the benefit of education for themselves and others. All of the younger nuns who do not yet have access to such a curriculum are very keen to have this opportunity.

Teachings: Four of the nunneries have a resident teacher or a visiting teacher, who in most cases has arrived quite recently. Nuns at Skitmang nunnery are being instructed in the practices of Nyingmapa by a Rinpoche, who is preparing them for the Tantric practice of the Great Completion. Nuns from Chulichan Redzong nunnery are being assisted by a Geshe to work through the Gelukpa curriculum of Buddhist philosophy, and the nuns from Thiksay nunnery have recently and for the first time, received teachings from a Geshe. Such teachings have been very significant, the nuns said, in deepening their understandings and their practice.

Accommodation: Three of the nunneries (Mulbik, Thiksay and Shagol) currently do not have accommodation for the nuns at their nunneries. Shagol has recently commenced construction of dormitories, and at Skitmang nunnery, the small rooms made of stones are very inadequate and have leaking roofs. Living in a nunnery was considered more conducive to practice than living with their

families. However, many of the nuns were being supported by their families and helped in their fields in return, and some were working as labourers breaking stone or repairing roads as a means of supporting themselves. This meant less time for practice or attending teachings.

Hopes: The nuns passionately expressed their hope for having a resident teacher or access to teachings: as the Thiksay nuns said, receiving the teachings "is like a ray of light coming through the clouds". This seems to be reflected in the changing situation and status of the nuns and in the new name given to the Redzong nunnery by Rinpoche, "Dharma Land for Those Who Seek Liberation". The longer term vision for some of the nuns now receiving the teachings and a basic education is to themselves become teachers of younger nuns, and to help LNA in the future.

The joy of being with the nuns, the simplicity of their life, the dedication to their teachers and the teachings, the challenges faced with equanimity, were all a great inspiration. The LNA needs your support to expand the opportunities for the nuns to fulfil their hopes and vision.

You can contact Getsulma Palmo at the LNA, PO Box 157, Leh, Ladakh 194 101, India or e-mail: ts_palmo@yahoo.com

If you would like to offer support to the nuns, for further information on how to do this you can contact me at jamesonjg@bigpond.com or at 50 Daveys Lane, Hoddles Creek, Victoria 3139, Australia.

Jill Jameson
INEB Women and Gender
Program, Aug. 2001

Letter from INEB

INEB's Chiang Mai office has now been closed and a new office opened in Bangkok. The Bangkok office is located at 124 Soi Wat Thongnopakhun, Somdet Chao Phya Road, Klongsan Bangkok 10600 in what was formerly the TICD office. TICD has relocated to a new office at 29/15 Ramkhamhaeng 21 (Nawasee), Ramkhamhaeng Road, Wangthonglang, Bang Kapi Bangkok 10310.

I have agreed to act as the

coordinator of INEB until the February meeting. The INEB meeting from 5-6 February at Wongsanit Ashram, just prior to the Ariyavinaya Conference (7-9 February) will be an opportunity for INEB to refocus its activities and develop a new plan for the future. Hopefully INEB will be able to continue to do much of the wonderful work it has done in the past as well as starting on some new and exciting projects.

I would like to extend my

sincere thanks to Ouyporn Khuankaew for her assistance in moving the office from Chiang Mai and also for all the wonderful work she has done for INEB, especially in the women and gender program.

If you have any enquiries about INEB please contact me at ineb@loxinfo.co.th or by writing to the address above.

David Reid

Bhikkhuni Ordination: An Option That is Difficult to Evade

The emergence of bhikkhunis in Siam now seems inevitable. Seventy years ago this would have been a preposterous remark. At present things have changed, and anything is possible. The Sangha is too weak to obstruct the ordination of bhikkhunis in the country like it successfully did so in 1927. The Sangha may use various means to hinder the ordination of bhikkhuni but it is unlikely to receive support from the people like in the past. The people have lost faith in the Sangha. As a result, it will be difficult for the Sangha to convince the people to see things in the same way as it does. Needless to say, the Sangha has acted contrary to public opinion countless of times. Many people are already fed up with the Sangha. The Dhammakaya sect is an illustrative case.

Moreover, it will be difficult for the Sangha to borrow power from the state and obstruct the ordination of bhikkhunis as it

had done more than 70 years ago. At present, no government is interested in religious or Sangha affairs unless they interfere with the national security, including the stability of the incumbent government. The public has shown great interest in the issue of bhikkhuni ordination. As such, the government is likely to play it safe by taking the back-seat and allowing the Sangha to sort things out by itself. It is possible that the Sangha Supreme Council will not sit passively and will issue various resolutions, which are unenforceable.

But the aforementioned factors are not the most important catalysts of bhikkhuni ordination in Siam. The most important factor is the public desire to see the ordination of bhikkhunis in the country. Public opinion will play a decisive role in determining whether or not there will be bhikkhuni ordination in Siam. The Sangha and

the government may refuse to recognize the existence of samaneri or bhikkhunis. But if the people pay homage to bhikkhunis, their existence will be a fait accompli at least in the mental world of the public.

Being a monk does not only require the sanction of the government and the Sangha. The *dhamma-vinaya* and public acceptance are also crucial. An individual may be a monk officially under the law (e.g., his ordination followed the regulations of the Sangha and he has not been expelled from the monkhood) but if he has committed "major offences" and the people no longer perceive him as a monk, the *dhamma-vinaya* no longer treats him as a monk. Conversely, if an individual is not officially recognized as a monk (e.g., his ordination was not organized by a spiritual leader recognized by the state and Sangha) but leads a celibate life,

cultivates the *dhamma-vinaya*, and earns public respect, he will inevitably be seen as a monk. (For instance, the Thais have paid equal respect to monks from other Buddhist traditions as if they are Thai monks.)

Increasingly, the Thai people want to see bhikkhuni ordination in their country. In part, the existence of bhikkhunis will help promote dhamma in the country, especially among the women. The importance of bhikkhuni ordination is highlighted by the fact that many women are no longer satisfied with providing *dana*. They are interested in *vipassana* meditation and in applying dhamma to their daily lives. They often frequent temples to learn more about dhamma from monks but face several obstacles. The *dhamma-vinaya* is part of the problem. Another important obstacle is gender. Monks are incapable of fully understanding the problems of female devotees. Thus their advice may be off the mark. Furthermore, there is a shortage of competent monks who could teach dhamma to women—or to society at large for that matter.

Small wonder that in recent years many women are learning dhamma from other women. There are many dhamma centers that are headed by women. And there are many female dhamma teachers. That there are many female dhamma teachers (both lay women and *mae chees*) is a sign of the increasing competence of women. This is the result of women having greater opportunity to learn and practice dhamma. In the past, they could only be servants of the monks.

Anyway, women still have even greater potentials to study and teach dhamma. Being a householder (*gahattha*) or a *mae*

chee would stunt these potentials. Establishing a special community and leading a life like the monks will help increase these potentials. This is the primary reason why the Buddha established a community known as the “Sangha”. The Sangha and daily existence in this community are regulated by the *vinaya*, which fosters self-cultivation and promotes the spreading of dhamma. Of course, dhamma can be practiced anywhere or in any state; one does not have to be a monk to practice dhamma. But the Buddha realized that in cultivating dhamma, determination alone is insufficient. External factors must also be taken into consideration. The formation of such community will not only be beneficial to the members but also to the promotion of dhamma. As a result, the Buddha encouraged all *gahatthas* who had already attained final emancipation to become bhikkhus and join the Sangha even though they no longer needed further training.

Men have long had their own community to provide training. It is now time for women to have their own community. Note well that in supporting bhikkhuni ordination in Siam the issue at stake is not female equality, not elevating the status of women to that of the men. Rather, it is about enabling women to receive training in order to nurture the growth of dhamma. We must be clear about this issue. Otherwise, the ordination of bhikkhunis will be widely misunderstood.

A good sign for Buddhism is the emergence of a Bhikkhuni Sangha in Sri Lanka. And this Bhikkhuni Sangha is becoming increasingly stable despite the opposition from various leading monks. This is because the Bhikkhuni Sangha has received

the people’s support. Some influential monks are also backing it. There are now some 200 bhikkhunis in Sri Lanka.

In Siam many people simplistically assume that women want to become bhikkhunis in order to heal their broken hearts and so on. Therefore, they oppose the ordination of bhikkhunis. No one makes this facile and absurd assumption in Sri Lanka. The people there respect the bhikkhunis as individuals who uphold proper moral habits, who are learned in Buddhism, and who are willing to devote their lives to serve Buddhism. As a result, the status of bhikkhunis in Sri Lanka is no different from that of monks. It is thus socially acceptable for women to become samaneras or bhikkhunis in Sri Lanka.

In any case, an argument—admittedly a good one—is often raised to disapprove of bhikkhuni ordination. It contends that the lineage of bhikkhunis had long been severed. Thus it is impossible to correctly ordain new bhikkhunis according to the *vinaya*. The *vinaya* states that both a bhikkhu and a bhikkhuni must preside over the ordination of any bhikkhunis. Since there is no longer any bhikkhuni left, the ordination of bhikkhunis is not possible. The Sri Lankan people circumscribed the problem by inviting Taiwanese bhikkhunis to perform the ordination according to the Theravada tradition in 1998. The bhikkhuni ordination was carried out alongside the ordination of monks in both the Theravada and Mahayana traditions. Some have questioned whether or not it was possible for bhikkhunis of the Mahayana tradition to perform the ordination of Theravada bhikkhunis. However, one fact that must not be overlooked is

that bhikkhunis of the Mahayana lineage derived from bhikkhunis of the Theravada lineage. There is evidence that in the 10th century a bhikkhuni from Sri Lanka traveled to China to perform bhikkhuni ordination there. The bhikkhuni lineage in China remains unbroken to the present. Moreover, bhikkhunis of the Mahayana and Theravada traditions follow the same "fundamental precepts". Bhikkhunis of the Mahayana tradition even have more disciplinary rules to follow.

There is still a lot to be debated on the issue of the *vinaya*. But the *vinaya* should not be the starting point when discussing about bhikkhuni ordination. The first issue we must confront is rather straightforward: is it appropriate to have bhikkhunis in Siam? We must weigh the

benefits that bhikkhunis will bring to Buddhism and Thai society. We must not allow prejudice to dominate us. (We must be tolerant if we believe that women should not become monks or if we could not stomach the sight of men prostrating before bhikkhunis.) Only when we have decided that there should be bhikkhunis do we need to consider the problem of the *vinaya*—i.e., whether or not there is a loophole in the *vinaya* that allows for bhikkhuni ordination. Put differently, if we conclude that there should be bhikkhunis in Siam, then we must also reinterpret the *vinaya* to allow for bhikkhuni ordination. If this is not possible then we must find other ways to ordain bhikkhunis. For instance, we may call them 'female members of the Order' rather than bhikkhunis. They

would follow the same set of disciplinary rules as any bhikkhuni would.

Samaneri Dhammananda is likely to herald the reestablishment of bhikkhuni ordination in Siam. Several Thai women have already been ordained as bhikkhunis, but their limited numbers are insufficient to constitute a Sangha. In the end, the competence and devotion of Thai samaneri and bhikkhunis in the present and the future will determine whether or not the Thai people will accept the creation of a Bhikkhuni Sangha. If the Thai public supports the establishment of a Bhikkhuni Sangha, neither the state nor the Bhikkhu Sangha will be able to obstruct this process.

Phra Paisal Visalo

2001 Right Livelihood Awards

Laureates from Israel, Brazil, Venezuela and the UK were recognised for their commitment to Peace, Reconciliation and Justice, and for their celebration of the Human Spirit. The 2001 Right Livelihood Award of two million SEK was shared by:

Gush Shalom and its co-founders **Uri and Rachel Avnery (Israel)**, who have shown the way to peace between Israelis and Palestinians, and worked for several decades with courage and dedication to promote its acceptance and implementation. The Jury honours the Avnerys and all Gush Shalom activists for their unwavering conviction in the most difficult and dangerous circumstances that peace and an end to terrorism can only be achieved through justice and reconciliation.

Trident Ploughshares (UK), represented by Angie Zelter, Ellen Moxley and Ulla Roder, honoured as a model of principled, transparent and non-violent direct action dedicated to ridding the world of nuclear weapons. Their imaginative campaign highlights the illegality of these weapons. It is a timely reminder that the unprecedented nuclear threat to life on Earth is still with us.

Leonardo Boff (Brazil), one of the founders of liberation theology in Latin America. The Jury honours Boff for his inspiring insights into the links between human spirituality, social justice and environmental stewardship, and for his decades-long commitment to helping the poor and excluded realise these values in their lives and communities.

Jose Antonio Abreu (Venezuela), the founder of the National System of Children and Youth Orchestras, which has brought the joys and benefits to music to countless children and communities, especially among the poor. The Jury celebrates with Abreu the creativity which he has demonstrated is innate in children everywhere and applauds his achievement of a unique musical and cultural renaissance.

For more information see www.rightlivelihood.se

Peace is more persuasive

The September 11 terrorist attacks were shocking in their nature and magnitude. They were rightly condemned by leaders around the world and demand a response. However, by responding violently to the attacks the USA and its allies, especially the UK, will only perpetuate and escalate the cycle of violence that led to the attacks in the first place.

If the USA and its allies truly want to lead the world they must respond in a mature and nonviolent manner. Unfortunately some leading politicians in the USA are under the control of the arms merchants making such a response unlikely. However, if the USA chooses to act this way it can ensure that it will have the moral authority to lead the world for the foreseeable future.

The USA is now the world's only superpower. Since the end of the Second World War it has ruled the world with a combination of economic and military power and since the collapse of the Soviet Union its role has been unchallenged. It is a great empire like the British Empire was before it, but unless it heeds the lessons of history it will soon go into decline much as the British Empire did.

The US campaign against Iraq has gone on for over a decade now and for what result? Saddam Hussein still remains in power and the Iraqi people must endure untold suffering as a result of harsh trade sanctions. However in the Iran-Iraq war Saddam was supported by the USA and supplied with its arms.

The USA is now engaged in a war against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. In the 1980s the

USA supported, funded and trained the Mujahideen in the fight against the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. Osama bin Laden was among those trained by the USA. Subsequent political manoeuvrings led to the birth of the Taliban regime that the US is suddenly intent on destroying. Yet in supporting violence in this way they have experienced the ultimate blowback, a term coined by the CIA to refer to unintended consequences of policies that were kept secret from the American people.

US foreign policy in the Middle East has apparently played a part in the escalation of violence in that region. Former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said that the death of 500,000 children as a result of US economic sanctions was "a very hard choice" but "the price is worth it." This kind of attitude combined with ongoing conflicts and poverty in the region has fostered the feelings of resentment that led to the terrorist attacks against the USA.

If the USA wants to truly demonstrate its moral leadership of the world it could begin by acknowledging its past failures. If it truly examines its role in the region it will understand that its involvement has been one disaster after the other. It also must remember the law of karma. Violent actions have violent consequences as the people of the USA so tragically saw on the 11th of September.

A story from the life of the Buddha demonstrates the law of karma. The King of Kosala wanted to be related to the Buddha, so he asked for a princess

from the royal Sakya family to be his queen. The Sakya, the clan in which the Buddha was born, was very caste conscious and refused to allow marriage outside their related clans. Although they regarded Kosala as a mightier kingdom, they still did not wish to regard that royal family, caste-wise, as equal to theirs. However, a compromise was reached by sending a princess, born of a slave girl, to be the Queen of Kosala. Vidhudhabha was the son of this queen. Neither he nor his father knew that the Queen was an outcaste. When the young prince went to visit his maternal grandfather and maternal relatives among the Sakya clan, he accidentally found out that they all looked down upon him behind his back because his mother was a slave girl, so the young prince vowed to kill all members of the Sakya clan in revenge.

When Vidhudhabha succeeded his father to the throne of Kosala, he marched his army northward. The Buddha knew of the situation. He went to sit at the border of the two kingdoms thrice and was able to stop the warlike king. Yet the Buddha could not convince the King to get rid of his own hatred and desire for revenge. Eventually the King managed to kill almost every member of the Sakya family. Yet on his return home Vidhudhabha and his troops were drowned in the river.

One could draw many conclusions from this incident. However, if we believe in the law of karma, we should realise that each individual, each family, each nation will reap the benefits or otherwise of their own deeds, speech and actions. Although

the Sakya clan produced a wonderful person who eventually became the Buddha and preached that people should get rid of caste and class barriers, they held views in opposition to his teaching. They also deceived the King of Kosala who was much mightier than them. As for Vidhudhabha his bad thoughts lead him to bad action and his life ended tragically.

So how does this story relate to armed conflict? For Buddhists the law of karma reminds us that when faced with violence we must not react against it violently. Not only Buddhists, but Christians, Jews and Muslims—people of all religions—need to be mindful when confronted with violence. Then they can find the skillful means to deal with the situation nonviolently.

It is very important to understand that nonviolence is an effective and very powerful response to conflict. It does not mean doing nothing. It is actually a powerful force that can be acted upon. Peace is not merely the absence of war. Peace is a proactive, comprehensive process of finding ground through open communication and putting into practice a philosophy of non-harm and sharing resources. Creating a culture of peace is an active process.

When confronted with

large-scale conflicts there is no question that they demand a response. The problem is that many people believe that a non-violent response means doing nothing whereas responding with force or violence means doing something. The Middle Way of Buddhism defines very well how one should respond to violence. It is about avoiding extremes. The extremes being doing nothing on the one hand or responding with similar violence on the other.

Although the US and UK have already started bombing Afghanistan there is still time to seek nonviolent alternatives. The rhetoric of a “just war” cannot be taken seriously. The former Labor government in the UK didn’t support the US in their involvement in Vietnam. The UK is in a powerful position and can lead the rest of the world in seeking a nonviolent response if it has the courage and support to do so.

I met with a representative of the US Embassy on Thursday and he told me that the US had to attack Afghanistan and there was no alternative. Many of the major media outlets also put forward the view that there is no alternative and that the war is just. However, they are under control of the multi-national corporations and their reporting

is not independent. They maintain the same “just war” rhetoric that we hear from the leaders of the US and its allies.

In order to create a culture of peace, first we must make society more just, more fair, and give equal rights to all people. The imposition of so-called peace has, in fact, at times been used as a tool of suppression. Look at the many programs for pacification taken throughout history and the world. In many cases, the institutionalised definition of peace is tantamount to the suppression of righteous struggles for equal rights and justice. In other cases, the institutionalisation of peace is really propaganda for maintaining the status quo of an unjust government or system. Thus the development of a culture of peace really begins at ground level.

If we act nonviolently and create a culture of peace then we can ensure that we have long-term peace. The USA has the world’s largest military, but nothing could protect it from what happened on the 11th of September. Only a nonviolent response can provide it with protection against further attacks.

Sulak Sivaraksa
Bangkok Post
14 October 2001

The real crisis in the present world

Islam teaches peace and non-violence. It is lamentable that many mainstream scholars accuse Islam of being one of the root causes of violence in the world, including the 11 September terrorist attack on the United

States. The attack seems to confirm the “Clash of Civilizations” thesis of Samuel Huntington. Building on Huntington’s thesis, some have even argued that World War Three—a war between the West and non-West

civilizations—will break out within the next 25 years. The 11 September terrorist attack is the main catalyst of the Third World War the argument goes.

It is unfortunate that the American ruling elites are pay-

ing even a modicum of attention to Huntington, who is a false prophet. It must be remembered that in the 1960s Huntington advocated massive American bombings of the Vietnamese rural areas in order to drive refugees into the government-controlled area. There the refugees would be awe-struck by the material benefits of urban life. They would then develop modern values and turn their backs on communism, Huntington contended. It will take quite a talent to miss the consequences of this policy: (South) Vietnam was strewn with dead bodies. And of course, the Thai military dictatorship government participated in this noble cause, providing bases for American warplanes to pound Indochina to pieces. Before returning to the Thai bases, American warplanes generally emptied their bomb loads over Laos. It is estimated that the total tonnage of bombs dropped over Laos is greater than that dropped over Japan during World War Two.

The US might have a superior technological and military power, but it could not legitimize the American invasion of (South) Vietnam. A similar case can be made about the American attack on Afghanistan. The US government, which is closely supported by Britain, accused the Taliban government of harboring Osama bin Laden, the alleged mastermind of the 11 September terrorist attack. American leaders soon issued an ultimatum, ordering the Taliban to hand over bin Laden. The Taliban had asked the US for evidence against bin Laden, which Washington did not provide—or could not come up with. Afghanistan is now being battered by all kinds of bombs, including the breathtakingly 'dumb' cluster

bombs, and its entire population are being held as hostages for defying the American demand. The majority of the victims of the Anglo-American attack are innocent people—like the victims of the World Trade Center attack. It should be pointed out that no Afghani participated in the September 11 attack. Most of the terrorists were Saudis.

The US was quick to occupy the moral high ground, insisting that its attack on Afghanistan is a just war, a moral crusade. Bin Laden's 'admittance' that he ordered the terrorist attacks against the US lends further credence to the American position, or so the apologists for the Anglo-American violence believed. But this 'hard' evidence was only available *after* having unleashed the dog of war on Afghanistan. Whether or not there was any shred of hard evidence before the Anglo-American attack was deemed immaterial to the crusaders.

How many times have the US committed atrocities in the name of pious principles. A just war launched by a violent superpower? The postwar record of American foreign relations helps shed greater light on why numerous peoples worldwide hate the US. Remember the Sarits, the Suharto, and the Pinochets of the world? These brutal tyrants were all supported by Washington during the cold war. It did not matter that they came to power by military coup d'états or other illegal means. It did not matter that they were atrocious or conducted nefarious aggressions against neighboring states (e.g., Suharto's Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975), thus violating international law and the UN Charter. As long as they were subordinate client states,

Washington was willing to turn a blind eye to their actions. Conversely, independent nationalists who legitimately came to power by free elections were often targets of American subversion.

Bin Laden was once on the CIA payroll. His service was needed to fight the Afghan leaders sponsored by the USSR. Saddam Hussein, now portrayed as a reincarnation of Hitler, was once a client of Washington—until he committed the crime of insubordination by invading Kuwait. The Anglo-American sanction (under the fig leaf of the UN) against Iraq is depriving the Iraqi people of basic necessities, leading to the deaths of over 500,000 Iraqi children due to starvation and easily preventable diseases. Anglo-American forces have literally been bombing Iraq at will since the end of the Gulf War—an act that no longer appears in the news as if to say that the Iraqis are unworthy victims. The Anglo-American forces need not extend the air war into Iraq: an air campaign against Iraq has already been in place for close to a decade.

Madeleine Albright, President Clinton's secretary of state, admitted this fact with a straight face. She expressed sorrow for the disastrous consequences of the American sanction against Iraq, but contended that the sanctions are inevitable. In other words, the US has the right to use any means—no matter how violent—to topple or attack a regime it dislikes. But, of course, other regimes or parties that are opposed to the US are denied the same right.

And what about the Taliban who came to power in Afghanistan in 1996? Did Washington see the Taliban as a rogue regime

from the outset? Did Washington complain about how the atrocious Taliban did not allow Afghani men to shave their beards? As the muckraking journalist John Pilger observes, "When the Taliban took Kabul in 1996, Washington said nothing. Why? Because Taliban leaders were soon on their way to Houston, Texas, to be entertained by executives of the oil company, Unocal." [The same company that built the yadana gas pipeline from Burma to Siam and now plans to construct another pipeline in southern Siam bringing gas from Malaysia.

"With secret US government approval, the company offered them a generous cut of the profits of the oil and gas pumped through a pipeline that the Americans wanted to build from Soviet central Asia through Afghanistan."

Small wonder that a 'moderate' set of leaders is now needed to replace the Taliban, to protect American oil interests in Afghanistan.

The 11 September attack is an illustrative case. The American president argued that the terrorists attacked the US because they envied the freedom and prosperity in the United States. This is a fallacious and conceited view. At present, blinded by vengeance, patriotism, and imperial hubris the American mainstream mass media are engaging in self-censorship or news distortion, parroting the official line. Perhaps, this is nothing new; this has long been the case. Moreover, had the terrorists really envied American liberty, they would have attacked the Statue of Liberty. That they chose to destroy the World Trade Center and the Pentagon means that

they opposed capitalism and the American military-industrial complex, two leading causes of violence in the world.

Although I truly oppose and condemn the 11 September terrorism, it nevertheless raised many questions for thought. If only the American ruling elites—and the ruling elites of the world—are able to reflect critically on this act, then wisdom and compassion may emerge, replacing vengeance and hatred.

The US decided to use its own way (i.e., more violence) to avenge the terrorist attack, bypassing the UN and making a mockery of international norms. The US clearly stated that it would still act unilaterally if no other states chose to side with Washington. This is the logic of a violent superpower.

It was appropriate for the international community to condemn the terrorist attack in September. But anyone who is interested in justice must likewise—perhaps even more heavily—condemn the Anglo-American attack on Afghanistan. The US has consistently declared that the main target of its attack is the terrorist network. But no terrorist has so far been captured. Furthermore, innocent people in Afghanistan, including women and children, are among—or may likely constitute the majority of—the victims of the Anglo-American attack. It is clear that the US lacks any basic concern for human rights, its pious rhetoric notwithstanding. And what about the humanitarian airdrops? They generally land in the hands of local warlords or on fields littered with landmines. So much for American humanitarian concern.

If the US and its allies want to assume global responsibility they must first cultivate mindfulness and use ahimsa as guidance. They must derive their leadership from legitimacy, compassion, and justice, not from military might. The more the US uses its power illegitimately, the more its standing as the self-designated leader of the world will be repudiated and undermined. Take Britain as an example. It was once the leader of the world but did not exercise its power legitimately. It is now a loyal servant of the US.

The terrorist attack in September indeed constitutes a crisis. It should be noted that the word 'crisis' comes from the Greek word 'krisis', which means choice. If—admittedly, a very big if—American leaders also interpret the 11 September terrorism as a cost and consequence of American imperial practices in the past and the present, then the US still has an opportunity to redeem itself, to shun violence and pursue ahimsa. If not, it is likely to face more of the same tragedy in the future. Peace not only means the absence of war, but also metta, karuna, and wisdom.

Sulak Sivaraksa

This is an edited version of a speech given in Thai at the Thailand Islamic Centre on 20 October 2001. Published in the *Bangkok Post* on 25 November 2001.

For the latest articles and speeches by Sulak Sivaraksa, see www.sulak-sivaraksa.org
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*Sulak Sivaraksa travelled to India in November. He was invited by Tibet House to give the Padmapani Lecture at the India International Centre on November 13. He lectured on "Buddhist Solutions to Global Conflict".

Time for neutrality, activists say

Civic organisations and Muslim representatives want the government to review its military agreement with Washington and opt for a more neutral stand in the US-Afghanistan conflict.

Their views were reflected at a meeting yesterday of NGOs and religious groups on Thailand's role in the conflict.

The session, organised jointly by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and the Senate panels on public participation, and foreign affairs, called for a consensus around a "third option", which they said Thailand should take in the name of peace. The country should not swing in support of either the US or Afghanistan since that would fuel the cause for violence, they said.

Sulak Sivaraksa, of the Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute, said the government should tear apart the military pact allowing use of Thai airbases by Washington. Critics say the bases have been used for attacks on Afghanistan, though the US and the Thai government deny it. Thai soil, he said, should be used only for peace missions.

His view was shared by other participants who denounced the government's green light for US access to the U-tapao naval airbase. The country should

lead the global search for peace and extend humanitarian aid to innocent Afghans, they said.

Pibhop Dhongchai, chairman of the Campaign for Democracy, said Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra should tell Washington his government was taking a strictly impartial position. Mr Thaksin is scheduled to visit the United States next month. Mr Thaksin should also make it clear whether any satellites operated by Shin Corp, his company, had helped the US in any way to launch any attacks against Afghanistan.

Danai Phasuk, of Forum-Asia, said the terrorists behind the Sept 11 attack on the New York World Trade Center and the Pentagon, once caught, should be tried in a special war crimes court. Washington, he said, had chosen not to solve the problem through peaceful means. The US was acting as the world's policeman and was trying to subject the global community to its own set of rules. It was waging a mindless war purely to exact revenge.

The government, the forum said, should distance itself from Washington in this case.

Pradit Charoenthathawee, a member of the NHRC, said the government should adhere to the constitution by consulting par-

liament before ratifying any international conventions.

Senator Kraissak Choonhavan, chairman of the Senate panel on foreign affairs, said his panel would examine every international convention the country had entered into. He had submitted questions about the government's stand with the prime minister, who would answer them on Thursday.

Senator Chirmsak Pinthong, chairman of the public participation panel, said the government must listen to the people in deciding the country's position.

Meanwhile, Apinant Buranapong, chairman of the Muslim Council of Thailand, claimed Muslim-run radio programmes had been subjected to heavy censorship when they presented opinions contradicting the sentiments of the US and its Western allies. He said the stations were also ordered not to air any comments critical of the US.

Vinai Sama-ul, deputy leader of the Central Islam Committee of Thailand, said certain media outlets were attempting to act as a mouthpiece for Washington.

*Onnucha Hutasingh
Bangkok Post
16 October 2001*

A Prayer for the Living and the Dead

September 11, 2001

Oh God pray for us,
oh God beyond the God made
small in our languages,
God beyond the God we don't

believe in,
God who beats our hearts, who
blinks our eyes,
the One who flames the billion

billion stars
and cries our tears, oh God of
infinite mercy
pray for us as we die,

we who are caught in this fury,
this impossible collision
of jet and tower,
ignite in us your light as the force
explodes our bodies,
receive us in your safety
as the weight of our collapsing
world crushes every memory,
every wish,
the steaming cup of coffee wait-
ing on our desk, our weekend
plans,
receive us – stockbroker, cook,
secretary, fireman –
pray for us in our surprise
as we hurtle back to what we
were before we were,
oh help us die beautifully, as we
die,
into your sudden light bring us
home.

God pray for us still here,
pray for us as we gasp, mouths
open like babies,
seeing the impossible wrath of
weight,
the inferno falling,
pray for us as we look up from
our lives,
from our homes and schools and
workplaces,

from our lawns and freeways,
as we look up from the dust of
Kabul and Khartoum,
from our shanty towns and card-
board walls,
pray for us as we see
this repetition of ancient unkind-
ness,
our judgment on ourselves,
oh pray for us.

May sorrow break the hearts of
we who are the killers,
may sorrow break the hearts of
the perpetrators,
may we weep to have done this to
each other,
may we weep for the cause that
would cause us
to stab with knives on a clear
Tuesday morning
and drop from the sky this bomb
of people,
may we weep for the hurt we
have suffered
and the hurt we have made others
suffer,
oh God pray for us and break our
hearts with sorrow
for the lineage of dominance and
greed
that has caused this to happen,

this rage
that has crazed us with hatred, oh
pray for us God,
forgive us

We who are left to pick up their
bones,
pray we remember their calling
us,
calling as they dropped from the
sky,
calling "I love you, I love you,
take care of the children, take
care of yourselves,"
pray we remember their calling
take care of the children.

Oh God stop our hands on knife
and trigger,
stop our hands with sorrow,
break our hearts so we weep and
in grief
learn the justice of mercy,
oh God show us mercy, show us
no one is other,
neither enemy nor stranger nor
even
You,
who we, in the birth of your
mercy, reveal.

Elias Amidon

America Challenged: A non-violent response to terrorism

I was in New York. I was stay-
ing only two miles from the
World Trade Centre. I saw with
my own eyes the second plane
hitting the south tower of the
World Trade Centre, the fireball,
the buildings collapsing and that
horrible mushroom of black
smoke and dust. Standing on 7th
Avenue, watching it all, I was
horrified. Using innocent people
to destroy innocent people is
criminal to a degree that simply

cannot be articulated. Cries of
"Oh my God, Oh my God, Oh my
God" went out yet, I also knew
that in the midst of the horror,
grace and wisdom must prevail.

The lives of the great Ma-
hatma Mohandas Gandhi and
Martin Luther King, Jr. show us,
from East and West, examples of
what non-violence can accom-
plish. But these are only exam-
ples: The full power of nonvio-
lence has yet to be explored.

Faced with this crisis, we can
begin to discover the full rich-
ness of that potential. The power
of armies and the might of the
atom bomb have been found
wanting. A razor blade used with
deep hatred, has left nuclear
weapons impotent.

Violence has been used
throughout human history and
still, it does not bring us worthy
results. If the American people
could only choose a non-violent

response, their action would be seen throughout the world, not as weakness, but as the deepest and most purposeful moral strength.

The destruction of the World Trade Center is the tip of an iceberg, the visible demonstration of a terrible hatred and fear in the world against the wealthy, powerful and rich countries, epitomized by the United States of America. In Seattle, in Genoa, in the bombing of the embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, we have seen how the frustration of the weak and dispossessed manifests itself in violent protest. If we do not take the path of nonviolence, there will be other terrorist attacks. This fact is utterly predictable. Violence begets violence. We must unearth the roots of terrorism and commit ourselves to resolving the causes of such hatred.

Governments must provide for the security and defence of their citizens. But parallel with that protection, we must create a new international culture of peace. Peace is the ultimate security, greater than that provided by any government or any armed entity.

We spend so much money on our armed forces and weapons. If half of those resources could be devoted to resolving conflicts peacefully, then we might see some good coming out of this tragic act.

Violence must be overcome with non-violence, love must overcome hatred. A terrible fire now enflames the heart and soul of America. But when such a fire rages, we must quench it with the cooling waters of compassion. Only in this way can we create a lasting testament; that the sacrifice of so many will not go in vain but will be used to lead people into a new flowering of peace and non-violence. This is statesmanship, this is true leadership.

America was unable to resolve the conflicts in Vietnam through war, but only by negotiation. Peace was brought to Northern Ireland also by talking. Therefore, let there be a conference of all aggrieved parties under the auspices of the United Nations in Geneva, where Saddam Hussein, Bin Laden, Huzbulla, Hamas, Taliban and other organizations forced into pursuing the path of terrorism

can come face-to-face with the governments of USA, Israel, and other nations of the world. Parallel to the efforts against terrorism, let us try to remove the causes of terrorism. As Tony Blair once said, "Tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime".

If we can resolve conflict in Vietnam and Northern Ireland through negotiation, we should be able to do so in the Middle East and elsewhere. So, let us establish a new Commission for Conflict Resolution under the umbrella of the UN. Perhaps Mikhael Gorbachev could be invited to be the head of such a Commission: well-funded and well-resourced, working towards peaceful solutions to all the outstanding causes of terrorism. Such a Commission should have total impartiality and moral authority so that it can command the respect of all parties, in order for justice, compromise and compassion to be promoted throughout the world. This is constructive leadership.

Satish Kumar
Resurgence
Nov/Dec 2001



Lady Phoonsuk Banomyong will be 90 years old on 2nd January 2002 (2545). We wish her a very happy birthday. May she remain strong physically, spiritually and morally, to guide us to carry out our activities nonviolently in the footsteps of her late and beloved husband so that social justice will really be established in Siam and beyond.

SVN Asia-Thailand Visits Pak Moon Dam

Hundreds of villagers were clapping warmly when a group of 'socially responsible' businesswomen and men entered the Pak Moon protest-village near Ubon Ratchathani in North Eastern Thailand. The Third SVN Asia Annual Conference included visits to the farmers co-operative of Kud-Chum and to the "Assembly of the Poor" near Ubon. The pioneering businesspersons also engaged in heated dialogue with multi-national Monsanto and national mega-companies and retailers like Lion Corp. (Nike), 7-Eleven (C.P.) and Robinson. This instructive discussion was attended by some 200 students of Ubon Ratchathani University. It was preceded by an inspiring introduction to the "Social Investment Fund" by Dr. Ammar Siamwalla, Distinguished Scholar of the Thailand Development Research Institute. And last but not least the group paid a visit to Phra Chayasaro Bhikkhu, a disciple of the late Phra Ajarn Chah, at his international meditation center. Ajarn Chah inspired the foundation of a series of remarkable monasteries in the West in the Thai forest-tradition of Theravada Buddhism.

It was all about "Business Ethics in Reality". This title of the conference indicates that after a period of getting-to-know-each-other and membership development SVN is now heading for a genuine contribution to transformation. The SVN movement is not romantic; it does not expect quick results. But it is clear that social and environmental responsibility are no longer pet-issues but *the* direction to go for global business. This vision has penetrated even into



bodies like the Employers Confederation of Thailand and the United Nations. This was exemplified by Anantachai Kunanantakul, member of the Senate of Thailand, who reported on Kofi Annan's Global Compact initiative. However, for the implementation of business ethics in reality we need small groups of businesspersons who by conviction and from their own creativity gradually change business practice towards full compliance with social justice and cultural integrity. Or, as Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa puts it, they can become *kalyanamitta*—good friends who encourage and criticize each other by sharing experiences from the ups and downs of doing business. That this can be a joyful process became clear during the evenings full of songs and in the bus. It also includes sourcing inspiration from Nature like we did at the Khone Pja Pheng waterfalls in Laos and the prehistoric rock paintings in the ancient landscape of Pha Tam near the Pak Moon protest village.

Highlights of the conference were the deeply moving

Baisri ceremony at the Pak Moon protest-village where Prida Tiasuwan, the Chairman of SVN Asia, spoke as an old friend with the villagers. And the presentation of the SVN Awards by Anand Panyarachun, former Prime Minister of Thailand. The Baisri ceremony, where visitors receive a cotton thread intimately knotted around their wrists to welcome them into the community was especially moving for the foreign participants from Indonesia, Singapore, England, and the Netherlands. In the coming years SVN Asia-Thailand envisages expanding gradually towards a network of national groups in Asia. Opportunities for exchanges with SVN groups in Europe, USA, Africa, and Latin America will open up. The quality of the network will depend on the personal determination of the individual members and the way they share their concerns and drives with each other from a perspective of sincerity and realism. SVN Asia-Thailand now organizes monthly activities including business visits.

The 2001 SVN Awards

were given to the Kud Chum farmers co-operative as an innovative and pioneering business in organic rice-growing, while initiating community building, including the introduction of its local currency (which now has been banned by the central government). Some years ago the farmers co-operative received support for training from RABO-bank, one of the leading members of SVN Europe – the Netherlands. And the NGO awarded by SVN in 2001 was the Nature Care-group in Ubon, headed by Senator Nirand Pitakwatchara. Dr. Nirand is not only a well-known medical doctor but his clinic is a lively center for environmental activism. The clinic is home to the regional office of the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) which supports the “Assembly of the Poor” in their protests against the Pak Moon dam. This implies not only non-violent action and political pressure, but support for the protest-village



school, and finding new ways to secure the “right livelihood” of the villagers and farmers affected by modern development. Plans are underway for the start of an experimental organic farm and exchanges with the new college in India “Bija Vidya-peeth” founded by Vandana Shiva and Satish Kumar. The college is situated at a farm specialized in conservation and cultivation of a unique variety of

traditional seeds. Suan Nguen Mee Ma Co. Ltd or “Garden of Fruition”, one of the pioneering members of SVN Asia, will try to support experimentation with organic rice, cotton, fruits and herbs and assist in marketing local village products.

*Wallapa Kuntiranont &
Hans van Willenswaard
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SEM Lecture and Buddhadasa Library

On 17 November the Buddhadasa library at Wat Pathumkhongka was officially opened. The library is located in the Wat (temple) where Ajarn Buddhadasa Bhikkhu stayed while he was in Bangkok before he founded Wat Suan Mokkh in the south of Thailand. The library will serve as a place to preserve his many teachings in the form of both books and tapes. The event marked the beginning of preparations to celebrate Ajarn Buddhadasa’s centenary in 2006.

The opening ceremony in-



cluded traditional chanting by nine monks. Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa gave an address on “Thai Buddhism and modernity”. Ajarn Sulak spoke of the role of Buddhism in traditional Thai society and how this has been eroded by modernity and development.

In the afternoon the great Siamese artist and poet, Angkarn Kalyanapong sang one of his poems. A group from Mahasarakham College in the North-east of Thailand performed traditional folk dances much to the delight of the crowd.

Dr Vichai Chokevivat then introduced the Sem Pring-puangkaew lecture for 2001. Dr. Gomart Jeungsathiensup gave the 7th SEM lecture on the topic "A new vision for health". He spoke of the need for a paradigm shift in health care. Health care must move away from the Western model which views the body

in mechanistic terms to a more holistic system. A holistic system of health care must take into account the people's spiritual needs.

That these events took place at Wat Pathumkhongka was significant as they complement the Puey Intercultural Forum that was opened in July (see *Seeds of*

Peace Vol. 17 No. 3 p. 21). The Puey Forum has been a lively centre of discussion and activities since its opening. They all form part of Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa's vision for temples to once again become a central part of the life of Thai society.

David Reid

Alternative Education: Its Role in Transforming Society

An international gathering on "Alternative Education: its role in transforming society" was held at Moo Ban Dek (Children's Village School), near Kanchanaburi, from 26 November to 1 December 2001. It brought together educators from Siam as well as international participants from Southeast Asia, India the US and Europe. The gathering was organized by the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) and the Suan Nguen Mee Ma Company. It was the third alternative education gathering since 1997. The first one took place as part of the Alternatives to Consumerism network.

A busy program of events kept participants engaged in lively discussion as well as experiential learning experiences. Each day began with a session of meditation and yoga. Informal discussions continued well into the night.

Workshops were held on many topics including the Role of Religion in Education, Arts & Crafts in Education and Ecology /Environmental Education. Piphob Dongchai, co-founder of Moo Ban Dek, gave a lecture on

democracy in school. Later there was a chance to observe the school's weekly parliament session.

A lecture on values in Education was delivered by Ven. Dhammananda (formerly Chatsumarn Kabilsingh), who was ordained as a *samaneri* (novice nun) in Sri Lanka in February 2001 and Ven. Somchai Sripari-yatimolee, the Vice Rector of Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University.

Ven. Dhammannada made the point that real education means going beyond our ordinary perception of things. Our ordinary perception is not always reflective of reality and by looking more deeply we can see new levels of truth.

Ven. Somchai said there are three very important things we need to consider about the current curriculum. These are: (1) Values should not only be part of the curriculum but they should guide the direction of education itself. (2) The Ministry of Education is 84 years old and Mahachulalongkorn University is 109 years old, but there were many resources for education

before this. We should draw upon these resources more. (3) Until about 100 years ago Buddhism was the main resource but it is marginal now. Buddhism needs to play a more important role to revitalise education. In addition he added that the three subjects of Buddhism, Society and Art are marginal in the current curriculum whereas they should be central to it.

Hans van Willensward of the Suan Nguen Mee Ma Company said, "the gathering represents a positive signal for educators. There is a real need for a network of Asian educators and this gathering has been a good start."

The conference was in itself a form of alternative education—it demonstrated new ways of learning. All of those present are sure to take what they have learnt back to their communities and play a part in transforming society.



Ariyavinaya and Peacemaking and International Insecurity

The third Ariyavinaya Conference will take place at Wong-sanit Ashram from 7-9 February 2002. As well as building on the outcome of the previous conferences the conference will examine the question of "What is the Buddhist identity in the modern world?" as well as looking into ways of challenging structural violence.

The Buddhist identity has been challenged in many ways by consumerism, globalisation and development. Many Buddhists from Cambodia, Tibet and Vietnam have been forced to leave their countries and create new lives as refugees. Buddhists in Sri Lanka must deal with conflicts within their own country. In India many are converting to Buddhism in order to escape the oppression of the caste system. These situations all provide new challenges and there is a need to adapt old traditions to new circumstances.

Globalisation and consumerism also present new chal-

enges to Buddhism. How can the precepts be reinterpreted in this light? While an individual may not engage in stealing, banks and TNCs take vast amounts of resources and money from the South in order to feed the appetites of consumers in the North. Buddhists must find new ways of understanding the precepts.

INTERBUDDY, the youth group that formed at the last Ariyavinaya Conference, will hold a one day workshop at Chulalongkorn University on 19 January to prepare for Ariyavinaya. The input of young people is vital as they must take responsibility for and implement solutions to the many problems the world faces.

Following the Ariyavinaya Conference a meeting entitled "Peacemaking and International Insecurity in the 21st Century" will be held at the Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok from 10-13 February. The meeting will bring together NGO leaders, intellectuals, peace activists and

religious leaders from Southeast Asia as well as the US and Europe.

The meeting will discuss what the current climate of global insecurity means for Southeast Asia. It will also inquire into potential citizen peacemaking initiatives in the region such as the formation of a Southeast Asian Peace Force in the Gandhian tradition of *santi sena*.

It is envisaged that the meeting will be the first in a series of meetings over the next four years. The meetings will both examine the issue of nonviolence and initiate programs that implement the ideas developed at the meetings.

Recent events highlight the need for new nonviolent approaches to conflict resolution and overcoming structural violence. Ariyavinaya and "Peacemaking and International Insecurity in the 21st Century" will do much to provide answers to some of the most important questions of our time.

David Reid

A Pilgrimage with Ajaan Sulak and Friends

It was a late afternoon, when we left Bija Vidyapeeth, the new branch of Schumacher College, nestled in the Himalayan foothills in the Gharwal region of India. Ajaan Sulak had been invited there to deliver the opening lectures along with Satish Kumar, and Mohammed Idris. We were travelling to the Tibetan settle-

ment of Clement Town. We had been invited there as guests to the Mindrolling Monastery, which is the seat of the Nyingma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism.

Lama Tenkyab, who exemplified the Tibetan reputation of warmth and affection, received us and took care of us through our stay. After some Indian *chai*, and

little rest we made our way to a nearby park which was part of a Kagyu nunnery. The park was a place for relaxation as well as worship and prayer. It housed a 60-foot statue of the great compassionate one, Shakyamuni who stood out in distance like a lighthouse to those who seek the way. The park also housed 108

prayer wheels, a small shrine room for lay practitioners to perform rituals and offerings, and also some rocks arranged as caves which housed a small bronze cut sculpture of the renowned yogi, Milarepa. For our evening meal, we had the honor to have with us, a young re-incarnate lama, Penam Rinpoche, who at his young age of 15 years displayed great composure and a very warm presence. After our meal, Lama Tenkyab informed us to our great delight, that the following day we would have audiences with some of the great masters and teachers of Tibetan Buddhism, who also are the heads of their distinct lineage. The next morning, we woke at 5:30 am to attend the morning prayers in the main hall of the Mindrolling Temple. The main hall was beautifully adorned with traditional *thankas* (scroll paintings) and visually stunning wall frescos. These elements are very characteristic of Tibetan Buddhist temples. They depict various manifestations of the Buddha, in previous lives and lives to come. They also portray previous holders of the lineage, various Dharma protectors and deities. All these elements occupy a very central important position in the practitioner's *sadhana*. Our first audience was arranged with H.H. Sakya Trizin, who is the Supreme head of the Sakya tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. The meeting was very inspiring. We offered traditional white scarves, called *khatas*, and sought blessings for our efforts and activities. H.H. spoke very good English, and is very well read. We discussed issues of engaged Buddhism with him.

Ajaan Sulak also informed H.H. about the new college Bija Vidyaapeeth, and the idea of having some courses on the Tibetan

Buddhist worldview—ecology and social action. We requested H.H. to visit Siam and pave the way for H.H. the Dalai Lama's visit. We also invited H.H. Sakya Trizin's to be involved in the Ariyavinaya project. After our half-hour meeting, we felt greatly encouraged and inspired in spirit with the compassionate and aware presence of H.H. Sakya Trizin.

Then Lama Tenkyab led us the seat of the Drikung Kagyu sect of Tibetan Buddhism, which to our joy was located on a very remote hillside. We were shown around the newly constructed centers of study, meditation and libraries. The library of this monastery is intended to have the world's largest collection of books, manuscripts and scriptures in Tibetan, Sanskrit, Pali, Chinese, and English. H.H. the Dalai Lama is to inaugurate it in March 2002. We were then received by H.H. Drikung Kyabgon Rinpoche, to whom we made traditional offerings and sought his blessings. H.H. wished for our assistance towards the new library project and Ajaan Sulak offered to have an edition of the Thai-Pali Buddhist Canon donated.

We then were taken for a holy bath to a waterfall nearby. The water of this particular place is known to have many natural minerals, which are well known for their medicinal and healing powers. After a refreshing dip, we had some hot *chai* and proceeded back to the Mindrolling Monastery where a sumptuous traditional Tibetan feast was prepared for us. Tibetan food is much closer to the Chinese than Indian, as the popular Tibetan saying goes "for their Dharma, the Tibetans preferred the Indians, and for their food it was the Chinese.!" After tea, we were shown around the monastery

complex, we then were able to attend a traditional dialectic competition at the Mindrolling *shedra* (college). There is a very unique atmosphere, which is present at Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, where one feels at ease and warm in spirit.

At 5pm we were told that would be granted an audience with H.H. Mindrolling Trichen Rinpoche, who is considered one of the most accomplished Tibetan practitioners of our times, popularly thought of as a living embodiment of Guru Padmasambhava. He is known for remarkable powers, and insight into the ultimate nature of reality. He is also H.H. the Dalai Lama's teacher/guru. Well as we came in his presence, all of us felt greatly overwhelmed. We felt that we were seeing somebody who embodied a thousand-year-old tradition and who is aware of different realities. Meeting him proved to be such an empowerment.

This brings to light something very unique to the tradition of Vajrayana-Tibetan Buddhism. It devotes prime attention to the cultivation of *bodhicitta*, the precious attitude, where one works for the enlightenment of all sentient beings. It is this unique motivation which has enabled the Tibetan community to offer much to the world, even though they have suffered brutal oppression and hardship. We cannot ignore the positive contribution that the 200,000 Tibetan refugees have made to the entire world. The Tibetan civilization embodies a very rich tradition of inner transformation, which expresses itself in many forms.

Especially the nature of their contribution is of much need in these deteriorating times. Many great teachers of the Buddhist

tradition have made very significant contributions to heal suffering world over. It is these "seeds of peace" being sown which help us through these times of great uncertainty.

In closing my account, I would like to convey my deep

gratitude to Lama Tenkyab, Penam Rinpoche as well as all members of Mindrolling monastic community for the warmth and kindness extended and made this visit truly a pilgrimage. It is this nourishment which the Sangha offers in refuge.

Prashant Varma works with Friends of Tibet (www.friendsoftibet.org) in India. His email address is zoetrope4@hotmail.com

Honoring the Father of Thai Democracy

The Honorable Speaker of the Senate,

We would like to express our gratitude to you for accepting to preside over the opening of the last phase of the centennial natal anniversary of Pridi Banomyong ceremony. The initial phase of the ceremony started here at Thammasat University on 10 May 2000. As the keynote speaker, the President of Indonesia lauded the accomplishments and vision of Mr. Pridi. And on 11 May, the day Mr. Pridi was born, a special commemorative ceremony was held at the Parliament. Subsequently, special activities to observe the Pridi centenary were organized throughout the kingdom as well as abroad in several countries. These activities were held to awaken the moral consciousness of the Thai people along with that of foreign individuals who are interested in Siam, to make them aware of the virtues of Mr. Pridi. Mr. Pridi was essentially the father of Thai democracy and was the leader of the Free Thai Movement during World War Two, to cite just two examples. He had dedicated his life to improve the well being of his nation and compatriots as well as that of citizens of neighboring countries. The principles of freedom, fraternity, and equality

guided his vision and actions. Unfortunately, since the 1947 military coup d'état, the country's ruling elites have ungratefully betrayed and vilified him. Mr. Pridi's image has yet to be fully recovered. His colleagues in the democratic movement have suffered from a similar fate.

The committee for the commemoration of the centennial natal anniversary of Pridi Banomyong (private sector) has organized various artistic and academic activities. The main objective of these activities is not simply to help rescue the image of Mr. Pridi and his political colleagues from groundless and infamous slandering, but also to expose the Thai youth to the virtues of meaningful democracy, moral courage, and personal dedication to truth, beauty, and goodness. I will not delve into the details of these activities: they have been published elsewhere.

We are especially pleased to have the Speaker of the Senate with us today because

- (1) The Speaker is also a native of Ayutthaya province, which, aside from being our former capital city, has also produced a long and continuous lineage of capable and venerable individuals
- (2) The Speaker has been

elected by the Thai people into the Senate. Mr. Pridi foresaw the importance of this democratic practice in the 1946 Constitution. He tried to democratize the country as much as possible within the context of the time. Were Mr. Pridi alive today, he would be much pleased with the democratization and empowerment of the Senate. And he would bless the Senate, encouraging it to continue fostering and nurturing democracy in our country.

Over the past two years, the committee for the commemoration of the centennial natal anniversary of Pridi Banomyong (private sector) has received equivocal support from the government. The committee wanted the government to produce Pridi Banomyong postage stamps but the government was uncooperative. Needless to say, it is practically impossible to make the government consent to the printing of Pridi Banomyong banknotes. In any case, both the previous and the present governments have agreed with the idea of building a park in Ayutthaya province in honor of Mr. Pridi. And they felt that it is appropriate for the Parliament to establish the Luang Pradist

Manudharm Institute to help develop and strengthen the Thai judiciary system and act as an independent institution engaging in the research and development of public laws and policies. The Institution will provide academic advice and consultation to the Parliament and ordinary citizens, especially the ones who want to enact new laws that are line with the spirit and words of the new constitution. This is essential if Siam wants to have a modern

judiciary system. The Luang Pradist Manudharm Institute will also serve as a precedent for the legislation of an act that allows for the establishment of independent academic institutions. The Institute of Advanced Legal Studies in Britain and the Max-Planck Institute in Germany are two living examples of such institution. The Luang Pradist Manudharm Institute may first be established under the auspices of Thammasat University.

The next step is to wait for parliamentary approval and certification. I hope that you will collaborate with the speaker of the House of Representatives and with the Prime Minister in order to have the Institution and the public park for democracy and the Free Thai Movement established within the foreseeable future.

Sulak Sivaraksa
8 December 2001

Closing Ceremony of the Pridi Banomyong Centenary

The closing ceremony of the Pridi Banomyong Centenary celebrations was marked by a special program of events in Bangkok from 8-10 December. A busy programme of activities included challenging speeches on topics related to democracy as well as music and poetry.

Highlights included flute recitals by Tibetan musician Nawang Khechog and a march of over 1,000 people from the Democracy Peg of 1932 to the Democracy Monument and Pridi Square at Thammasat University.

The March included members of the Pridi Banomyong Centenary Committee, the 1932 Revolutionary Party, the Free Thai Movement, relatives of the brave individuals of 14 and 6 October and 17 May, students, civilians, labourers, farmers and slum dwellers. Jean-Pierre Phillippe, Special Advisor to the French Minister of Culture and Education gave a lecture on "Education in the Next Century". On December 8, the 60th Anniversary of Pearl Harbour, Chaiwat Sathanand delivered a lecture entitled

"From Pearl Harbor to the 11 September 2001 Attack on the US: Problems and Nonviolent Solutions".

In Paris from 19-20 February another ceremony will be held to honour Pridi Banomyong. There will be a symposium on "Constitutional Democracy" with leading academics and politicians from Southeast Asian and Latin America in attendance. His Holiness the Dalai Lama will be the guest of honour.

Background Notes on Prince Charun and the Student-stipends scandal, 1926

Prince (Mom Chao, later raised to Phra Ong Chao) Charunsak Kritdakorn was a son of Prince (Krom Phra) Naret Woratit (Phra Ong Chao Kritsada Phinihan, a son of King Mongkut and founder of the Kritdakorn family).

Charun was appointed Min-

ister Plenipotentiary at the Thai Legation in Paris in December 1912, and he still had that post when he died in 1928. He was also the Thai delegate to the League of Nations in Geneva after the First World War. He was a brother of Mom Chao Bowaradet, who held the post of

Minister in Paris, 1909-12.

French foreign ministry records show that Charun had a taste for extravagance and luxury. He was also involved with at least two French women—at significant cost to himself, because both brought court cases against him. He could not afford

such and expensive lifestyle in Paris on his salary alone, and perhaps not even with funds received from the Kritdakorn family in Bangkok. One way he found to supplement his income in the mid-1920s appears to be that he kept part of each Thai student's scholarship stipend for himself, using an exchange-rate trick.

The Thai government allocated student scholarships in British pounds sterling. Charun accepted the pounds and exchanged them into French francs, giving the francs to the Thai students in France. The French franc lost much of its value in relation to the British pound during the years 1924-6. We do not have records of how much money Charun took from the students, but the exchange rates between the baht, the pound sterling and the franc are easy to calculate.

Let us assume that Charun gave the Thai students the full value of their stipends in French francs in January 1924, and that he continued to give them the same amount of francs during the next two years. In this case, he was able to keep for himself about 21% of the value of their money by September 1925, about 35% by January 1926 and 57% by August 1926. This problem can be seen in the following table.

Exchange-Rate Problem, 1924-6: index of the value of the franc in the exchange rate with the pound sterling:

Dec. 1923 = 100 (the franc had its full value)

Sept. 1925 = 79.8 (the franc lost 21.2% of its value)

Jan. 1926 = 65.2 (the franc lost 34.8% of its value)

Aug. 1926 = 42.9 (the franc lost 57.1% of its value)

Charun's ability to withhold half a student's stipend seems to be confirmed by a 1926 Thai newspaper report, which complained that one privileged student received 2,000 francs, which was twice as many francs as those of the other students. There were 24 Thai students in France in 1925. If Charun gave them only 1,000 francs per month each, and withheld the rest, he may have taken 10,000 francs or even 20,000 francs per month from the stipends during the years 1925-26.

This was not a small amount of money. By comparison, the Thai government at that time gave the Chiang Mai Prince a stipend equal to about 10,000 francs per month. Charun's uses of the money he got may have angered the students. He gave an unmarried woman in Bordeaux 30,000 francs per year: a fact that became public when she lodged a court case against him!

Pridi Banomyong studied law at the University of Caen and then moved to Paris, where he spent three academic years, 1924-6, before leaving for home in March 1927. He was in Paris when the changes in the exchange rates and the effects of inflation in prices in Paris were at their worst. He was only one among many Thai students, and almost all of them suffered badly because of Charun's control over their stipends.

The Thai students in France, led by Pridi as chairman of the student association (S.I.A.M., its French acronym), sent a petition to the king in 1926 accusing Charun. The king replied in October 1926 by ordering the student association to disband, since it was not supposed to engage in political matters. But he indicated that he would inves-

tigate the exchange-rate request. In December 1926, however, a Thai newspaper (*Si Krung*) published some of the details of Charun's misappropriation of scholarship funds, and the scandal then became public. Charun made a visit to Bangkok in February 1927, and a Thai newspaper speculated that he might be given another job or be forced to resign. But he was not removed from his post. He returned to Europe and died in October 1928 in Geneva.

Vichitvong Na Pombhejra's study (*Pridi Banomyong and the making of Thailand's Modern History*, Bangkok, 1979) explains much additional detail about the student association. Ben Batson's study covers some of these points. Both studies, perhaps preferring to be discreet, do not reveal the brutal details of Charun's actions.

Prince Charun was also an object of hatred and resentment. The students knew he was cheating them, even though most of them were poor. There seems no doubt that Prince Charun was regarded by the students as a symbol of royal decadence and the type of greedy official who would not hesitate to take money from the people under their control, even from poor students. The extent to which Charun misappropriated students' funds will never be known. But the fact that students believed he was cheating them is surely an important factor that helped shape the views of some coup leaders, prior to the events of June 1932.



Dear Sir,

Tashi Delek

Hearty greetings from Sera. Thank you very much for I received *Seeds of Peace* book and letters. I hope that the World Festival of Sacred Music's staff are fine and progressing their works. I am here, also fine and everything is well here. I am glad to say that His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama visited here on 22nd July. And he taught us Lamrim (Lamrim is a holy book, written by Tsongkhapa). After seven days he advised and blessed us. We are very happy to have His Holiness visit here.

I have received your gift before His Holiness' visit. And I could not reply soon because on that time we were very busy preparing the visit of His Holiness. So please pardon me.

I am very happy to receive the *Seeds of Peace* magazine and other papers. Thank you very much for your kind.

Now I want to stop my poor letter here, please pardon me if there are any mistakes in my letter.

With best wishes from your friends

Lobsang Tashi

Thousands of Tashi Delek to you all.

19 September 2001

Dear David,

Tashi Delek! Firstly, thank you very much for your letter and a copy of your magazine *Seeds of Peace*. And of course I'm glad to know about you from your colleague Ladda. Your magazine looks very good and I really appreciate your work. I will leave the magazine at our college library as soon as I finish going through it, so that other students and visitors could gain from it. I wish and pray for further improvement of upcoming issues.

Yours ever friend,

Gedun Jamyang Gyatso

5th year medical student, Tibetan Medical and Astrological Institute

Dharamsala, India

21 September 2001

Dear Sulak,

Thank you for putting an advert for Schumacher College in *Seeds of Peace*—it is most kind of you to support the College in this way and I am most grateful.

The reason for the delay in answering your letter dated 3rd September is because I was stranded in New York for a week because of the tragic event on 11 September. I was staying in the Greenwich Village, only a couple of miles away from the scene and I saw with my own naked eye the plane hitting the second tower, the horrific fireball, the mushroom of smoke and dust and the buildings collapsing. I have never witnessed anything like it before. Large numbers of people standing in 7th Avenue, aghast, shouting "Oh my God, oh my God, oh my God".

Let us hope that some good can come out of this terrible and painful experience and sacrifice of lives. Let us hope that terrorism can be tamed by the power of non-violence, although the US government and other governments seemed to have learnt little.

With best wishes,

Satish Kumar

4 September 2001

Dear Sulak,

How very nice to receive a letter from you together with your most recent book and the card. Though it is a bit late to send congratulations for your 36th wedding anniversary last year, I proffer them anyway. I hope that despite increasing age both of you are reasonably well—I have also noticed some incursions of jara into this body!

Maybe we will get in touch through e-mail later but keyboards were never my strong point and I rely upon Dhammika for this. Meanwhile it is good to have some news of you. Thank you for your kind offer to review books but at present it is difficult here to find anyone with enough time to put them into a computer. You know, of course, that *Buddhism Explained*, that old campaigner, and my verse translation of the Dhammapada, *Jewels in the Heart*, are both published by Silkworm in Chiang Mai. They may also publish *Bag of Bones*, a revised edition of a "Wheel" booklet, but *An Odd God* which is still in manuscript could be produced in Britain. It consists of 50 verses upon God from a Buddhist perspective, with a commentary upon each verse quoting many Suttas and Sutras. Windhorse in Britain is bringing out my *Noble Friendship*, an account of my teachers, particularly Sangharakshita, and travels in India more than 35 years ago.

Perhaps you would like to receive a copy of our newsletter produced every quarter for mention in *Seeds of Peace*?

Last month I was in Malaysia for a month's teaching tour (KL, Ipoh, Melaka, Kuantan and Penang) where I even met some old friends from my last journey there over 20 years ago. I may go again next year. It was notable that most of the enthusiastic (English speaking) Chinese were young. An encouraging sign! Perhaps when the Dharma is not featherbedded by the government (certainly not in Malaysia!) it thrives. Buddhists have really to struggle hard there just to establish any new Buddhist centre. And a Buddhist University which was established in northern parts of the country is now to be built just over the border in Thailand! Malaysian government apparently does not approve of tertiary Buddhist education!

Though I have not heard much of Pannavaddho for many years I still think gratefully of his teachings given so long ago in that rickety house in the lower parts of Hampstead. I trust that he remains well. I must start getting myself ready for the Tuesday morning meditation. So, with every best wish,

In the Dharma,
Lawrence (Khantipalo) Mills
Bodhicitta Buddhist Centre
Cairns, Australia

17 September 2001

Dear Sulak & Friends

Thank you for the encouragement and guidance regarding the Sept 11th events. On Friday, Sept 13, I took two classes of students to the local Muslim mosque as a gesture of friendship and support and had a wonderful visit. Then in the evening I showed the movie *Gandhi* to about 40 students at Soka University. The students themselves are writing letters to congressmen and to the President urging against violence, and the local newspaper printed a photo of their candle-light vigil under a banner headline that read GUARDING AGAINST HATE.

A blessing from this tragedy is that perhaps the President now realizes he has to cooperate with the rest of the world and not ignore previous agreements, like the Kyoto Protocol and the anti-ballistic missile treaty.

Best wishes,
David Chappell
Soka University, California, USA

12 September 2001

Dear Ajarn Sulak,

I hope you are well in the midst of your hectic schedule. Many thanks for sending me a copy of *A View From Below*, which contains descriptions of activities of various organisations with which you are connected.

I know your support to the movement of the Pak Moon Dam affected people. I remember in May 1995, after your lecture at Thammasat University, a Pak Moon oustee spoke there. From the above mentioned report I came to know that your organisation had initiated many activities in the protest village around Pak Moon Dam—including traditional health care centre, natural products and organic vegetables for their own use, a youth environmental group and a pre-school centre. I will use the contents of the small book in my various articles I intend to write.

My second son, Dew, is an admirer of your writings and your activities. He buys all your books. He is now a student of Ramkhamhaeng University.

With best wishes, yours sincerely,

Niranjan Halder
Calcutta, India

14 September 2001

Dear David,

It was a thrill to meet with you last week. I enjoy reading your *Seeds of Peace*. I particularly like the articles about the Thai nuns. I deeply sympathize with them. They should be treated as an equal like the other monks. It is absolutely unacceptable to have distinctions between monks and nuns. I don't think any spiritual cultivator can be called as a cultivator if he or she has this distinction in mind.

Good luck and keep in touch!

King-pong Liu
Editor-in-Chief, Foreign Language Publications Department
Tzu Chi Foundation, Taiwan

30 September 2001

Dear Acharn Sulak,

What wonderful news in these troubled times and Satish Kumar sharing the honours. Many many congratulations in which Khun Inson joins me.

We celebrated International Day of World Peace and Hear the Children's Day on September 19th for the second year running. We ran a "Poetry for Peace" competition via the Dept of Primary Education, the poems were very touching and the winners read them during the ceremony in the Gallery.

We repeated the painting competition "Peace the World" the theme for this year and some of the paintings were poignant reflections of their feelings about the attack on the WTC. Over 250 children from kindergarten through to secondary school students joined us including five young monks who are doing Pali studies at a Monastery School not far from Pasang, one of whom won a prize.

We released seven white pigeons after the procession to the Peace Pole crowned by the sculpture Inson designed for the Pridi Banomyong award "Children of the world wanting democracy!"

The pigeons had been reared in a village some 12 km away, I was not sure if they would return. To my great joy, having evidently enjoyed their freedom, they decided to remain with us. They came back next day and were under the eaves of the roof above the gallery which is crowned by a weather vane. I felt very blessed that they seem quite at home up there.

This year the event held real meaning for the children and as always I drew their attention to the way out of suffering. Again we made a personal commitment try hard to control our negative tendencies and destructive emotions and develop peace in our hearts, holding candles and symbolically extinguishing them in the basin of the Fountain of Wisdom, including the nine monks who were present.

Khun Tawachai and Long Rot, Buddhist artists from Chiang Mai spoke about the value of art in society and helped judge the paintings.

All this is only a drop in the ocean of samsara but we will persevere—impressions:

Virtual reality Video Games

Became reality

Wake up everybody!

The Great American dream

Became a nightmare

Wake up everybody!

Thank you for all you have done and will continue to do to further World Peace.

Yours in the Dhamma,

Venetia, Buddhita and Vanida

Dharma Park Foundation

Lumphun, Thailand

6 October 2001

Dear Friends

This is to inform you that since 5th September I have assumed responsibilities of the Chairman of the Kashag. Since then I wish to write to you personally but due to heavy rush of work I was not able to do so until today.

I am writing this letter to convey my greetings and express my heartfelt appreciation for your dedication and commitment to strengthen the struggle of the Tibetan people for freedom and dignity.

As you are well aware the worldwide Tibet movement created by all of you is one of the most effective movements in the world in our time. The Chinese leadership is constantly baffled by the power and consisting of this movement, and considers it a serious force to be reckoned with. This is because of the quality of the leadership provided by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the strength and spirit of the Tibetan people and the depth of friendship and the diversity of talents you have given us.

In assuming my new and heavy responsibility I ask for your co-operation, suggestions and counsel. I will appreciate if you could keep me informed of the various campaigns you will conduct to ease the suffering of the Tibetans in Tibet.

Yours sincerely,
Samdhong Rinpoche
Chairman of the Kashag



Rogue States: The Rule of Force in World Affairs

by Noam Chomsky

Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000

For over three decades Noam Chomsky has been living a life of dissent, tirelessly confronting the various concentrations of power, exposing the skeletons in Washington's closet (all the 'it would not do to tell' things), and challenging the meta-narrative of American benevolence and exceptionalism. The latter, he correctly argues, is an ideological and cultural construction in the service of power—hence an opiate—rather than a reflection of reality. He does it again in *Rogue States*, one of his latest books; well actually it is a collection of some of his recent political essays.

A central tenet in post cold war foreign policy discourse is that the US (or the West in general) is consumed with a "new humanism" and thereby acts as the world policeman whose primary role is to protect global stability, especially from rogue elements such as Iran, Iraq, Cuba, mad mullahs, etc—and here the list is compiled annually by the US State Department. Chomsky measures the United States by its own standards and irreverently asserts that the greatest "mafia don" in the rogues' gallery is in fact the United States. Branding the US a 'world policeman' is "an insult to the police, who in principle are supposed to enforce the law, not tear it to shreds. There was criticism of Washington's 'arrogance of power' and the like—not quite the proper terms for a self-designated violent outlaw state."

Since 1945 and with even

greater severity after the end of the cold war, the US has shown open contempt for international norms as codified in the UN Charter, International Court of Justice decisions, and numerous conventions and treaties. For want of space, it is impossible to cite all instances of American directed, supported or incited aggression, subversion, and terror which Chomsky has richly documented in his book. So let's stick to some recent examples, to the context of post cold war world.

The guiding principle of US foreign policy in the post cold war world, Chomsky insists, rests on two roguish concepts: unilateralism and madness. He cites Clinton's, Albright's, and Cohen's consistent remarks that the US will act "multilaterally when possible, but unilaterally when necessary"; and a 1995 policy paper of the US Strategic Command, which states: "It hurts to portray ourselves as too fully rational and cool-headed." "That the US may become irrational and vindictive if the vital interests are attacked should be a part of the national persona we project." It is "beneficial" for our strategic posture if "some elements may appear to be potentially 'out of control.'" As Chomsky aptly concludes, "To ensure that its writ is law, a rogue superpower must maintain 'credibility': a failure to respect its power carries severe penalties."

As a result, Washington's professed devotion to a new humanism is a sick joke, not a fact. It is interesting that "Cuba qualifies as a leading 'rogue state' because of its alleged involvement in international terrorism, but the US does not fall into the category despite its

terrorist attacks against Cuba for close to 40 years...." Moreover, Chomsky notes, "The US sanctions against Cuba are the harshest in the world" and "the US is totally isolated in the world" on this issue—isolation internationally is characteristic of any rogue state.

Chomsky adds, "More than half the people in the world are subject to unilateral coercive sanctions imposed by the US, according to a recent UN commission established in response to a 1997 resolution of the General Assembly condemning 'unilateral coercive economic measures against developing countries that were not authorized by relevant organs of the UN or were inconsistent with the principles of international law...'"

Another blatant case is the US-UK sanctions against Iraq, which have stirred substantial international acrimony. In the case of Iraq, the term 'sanctions' may be a misnomer. As Chomsky put it, "the US and UK are now engaged in a deadly form of biological warfare in Iraq. The destruction of infrastructure and banning of imports to repair it has caused disease, malnutrition, and early death on a huge scale, including more than 500,000 children...." Recall that Washington had long cultivated Saddam Hussein despite his roguishness—e.g., repression against his people and the Kurds—until he disobeyed the US by invading Kuwait. Chomsky remarks, "The criteria are fairly clear: a 'rogue state' is not simply a criminal state, but one that defies the orders of the powerful—who are, of course, exempt." The same logic applies to the ousting of, among others, Panama's strongman, Manuel

Noreiga.

American incitement of human rights abuses can be witnessed in Colombia, Turkey, and Kosovo. "Through the 1990s," Chomsky writes, "Colombia has been by far the leading recipient of US military aid in Latin America, and has also compiled by far the worst human rights record, in conformity with a well-established and long-standing 'correlation'; combating narco-trafficking serves as the latest pretext for providing military aid to Colombia. Turkey's repression of the Kurds has long been an international scandal. The repression peaked in 1994, and so did Turkish arms import from the US. In that year Turkey became "the biggest single importer of American military hardware and thus the world's largest arms purchaser." Approximately 80 per cent of its arsenal are American.

Contrary to popular belief, Kosovo does not qualify as a humanitarian intervention. Rather it was a case of US incitement of violence because "The [NATO] bombing was...undertaken under the rational expectation that killing [of Kosovars by vengeful Serbian forces] and refugee generation would escalate as a result, as indeed happened, even if the scale may have come as a surprise to some, though apparently not the commanding general [Wesley

Clark]." (Clark stated that it was "entirely predictable" that Serbian violence and terror would escalate after the NATO bombing—this from a man whom *Newsweek* has recently lauded as a "forceful advocate of humanitarian intervention".) Moreover in Kosovo, the US deliberately bypassed the UN and instead relied on NATO, which it virtually dominates.

Interestingly, Kosovo became a humanitarian concern for Washington, but not the crisis in East Timor, which was happening simultaneously. Only after intensive Australian pressure did the US show any concern for East Timor. Washington had long maintained the position that "We do not have a dog running in the East Timor race." This standpoint is understandable as Washington had first green-lighted the Indonesian invasion of East Timor (to appease Suharto, otherwise known as 'our kind of guy'), then shipped arms to Jakarta as the killing in East Timor was reaching genocidal level, and, as late as 1999, consistently obstructed any international involvement in East Timor. As Chomsky acerbically notes, the dying East Timorese were not even a "small dog" in Washington's calculations.

Towards the end of the book, Chomsky examines how the American dismantling of the Bretton Woods system and sub-

sequent rabid support for neoliberalism is another indication of its roguishness. "One basic principle of the Bretton Woods system was regulation of finance, motivated in large part by the understanding that liberalization could serve as a powerful weapon against democracy and the welfare state, allowing financial capital to become a 'virtual Senate' that can impose its own social policies and punish those who deviate by capital flight." Small wonder that "For the 'developing world,' the post-Bretton Woods era has been largely a disaster."

Neoliberalism has empowered transnational corporations at the expense of human beings. Chomsky shows what the American support for the expansion of capitalism really means. "The word 'capitalist' doesn't mean capitalist. Rather what it refers to are state-subsidized and protected private power centers—'collectivist legal entities,' as they are called by legal historians—internally tyrannical, unaccountable to the public, [etc]"

Alas, the exclusion of the US from the UNCHR a few months ago, among other examples, is put into proper context. The act will *not* 'hurt all' as apologists for American imperium argue.

S.J.

Santi Pracha Dhamma:
Essays in Honour of the
Late Puey Ungphakorn

Sulak Sivaraksa (Hon. Ed.)
Bangkok: Santi Pracha Dhamma
Institute, The Sathirakoses-
Nagapradipa Foundation and
The Foundation for Children,
2001

ISBN: 974-260-184-4

Dr. Puey Ungphakorn was a man of extraordinary vision, integrity and character. He certainly made difference to the lives of his people through his dreams, actions and more especially in his courage to pursue

the principled path that he had chosen for himself. He was no doubt one of the conscience keepers of his nation and the time that he represents. The legacy of his exemplary life, ideas and actions are alive at many levels of the civil and political society in Siam. He was



not only a great scholar and intellect of his time but also possessed practical knowledge of translating his ideas and vision into reality. In that sense he was a genuine nation builder of his time. Ajarn Puey was also a great teacher whose life and works can be best understood through the precept "to lead by example". His devotion and commitment to pursue the ideals of *santi pracha dhamma* (peace, public participation and righteousness) not only guided his conscientious life but also his country through the dark hours of violent oppression and military dictatorship in the seventies.

This volume with its aesthetic cover design and spacious layout contains many articles that reflect Ajarn Puey's ideas, dreams and actions. (The flaw in production [page outlay: page-243] could have easily been avoided). The meaning of this volume lies not simply in recognising his life and contribution but in seeking relevance to our present and the future in the face of extreme challenges facing our societies. A good example of this approach is reflected in Nicholas Bennett's narrative of the conversation between a Thai fisherman who was sleeping on the beach in the

shade of his boat and a development expert. The beautiful story, as told, is in itself a dialogue on development. John B. Cobb, Jr's article on 'Consumerism, Economism and Christian Faith' reflects the similar concerns in purely Christian terms and seeks to establish alliances and patterns of mutual support. This is based on his view that it is society's commitment to economism that supports and encourages consumerism. Carol Johnston in 'A Christian Critique of Economics' seeks relevance to the crucial elements of Jewish and Christian conceptions of justice and the need to transform and create economies that are sustainable and more humane. Vira Somboon in 'Ariyavinaya in the Age of Extreme Modernism', provides a telling glimpse on the life and relevance of Ajarn Puey through his profound discussion on the culture and meanings of *Ariyavinaya*. He writes, "we should not hope either for a perfect past, which has never existed, or for an ideal future, which may never come true. To be awakened is to face the present as it is, and to work out, both individually by oneself and jointly with others, for the best and most viable in each particular circumstance. And as many have understood and practiced it—change has always been and will always be initiated by a small number of people". Is this not a unique tribute to this great man Dr. Puey Ungphakorn of Siam. In this sense Christopher Walker and Eric Zesbenyi reflect in 'Contemplative Education and the Three Prajnas' that Ajarn Puey embodied contemplative education and also represented the higher meaning to knowledge.

There are several contribu-

tions in this volume that signify the centrality of culture to understanding the nature of state, society and the political system both in the context of Siam and the world at large. David Streckfuss's article, 'Culture and Murder' provides an historical account of the relationship between the culture and power politics in Siam. He argues that conformity and ethnic suppression became the very core of the social conflicts of the 1970s. Also, David Streckfuss recognises that Dr. Puey Ungphakorn was one of the few to have contributed a great deal in both democratic interludes (signified as 'culture-heavy' period of 1946-47 and 1973-76) in which two of Siam's most democratic constitutions were drafted and subsequently came into effect. In a way Vijay Pratap's article on *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: A New Alliance for Democracy in the Era of Globalisation* reflects the cultural context of the struggle for democracy in India and elsewhere in the world. The role and significance of culture to both understanding and transformation of politics in Asia is emphasised by Pracha Hutuanuwat and Jane Rasbash in their article on 'Asian Cultural Values and Green Politics: A Buddhist Perspective'. They articulate effectively for the need to understand Asian cultural and spiritual traditions in building an alternative politics in and for Asia. Walden Bello in 'The Multiple Crises of Globalisation' advocates the search for alternatives, which can become meaningful only if the primacy of society over market is restored once again. A participatory process is critical to this transition.

This volume lays great emphasis on the need for

spirituality in politics. Bhikkhu Visalo in 'Integrating Spirituality into People's Politics' observes that spirituality is a critical element of social ideology and activism. He also considers spirituality as an integral part of people's politics. Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa's social activism and his search for alternative politics for Siam and Asia are based on practical understanding of this knowledge of spirituality. This once again can be exemplified in the forest culture of traditional Siam. This forest culture also has a deep social roots, economic value and environmental significance. It above all reflects the idea of justice in a social, economic and environmental sense even transcending the traditional basis of relationship between man and nature. It is

more a harmony of interests of both living and non-living things. Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa's article on 'Economic Aspects of Social & Environmental Violence from a Buddhist Perspective' considers that a good society is one that encourages the cultivation of the wholesome quality of life. Nuttarote Wangwinyoo in 'The Pgakenyaw's Bioregional Mapping and the Struggle for Land Rights in Northern Siam' reveals that what is personal is not only political but also sacred. This sacredness and its relevance for environmental and bio-diversity conservation has been beautifully depicted in Les Sponsel and Poranee Natadecha-Sponsel's article, 'Why a Tree is More Than a Tree: Reflections on the Spiritual Ecology of Sacred Trees in Thailand'.

This beautiful book with six major parts is certainly a valuable contribution to the existing discourses on the holistic approach to life in peace and development. It is unique in a sense that it represents more than one religious worldview and yet consistent in its message because of the underlying spirituality of all the religions. It no doubt elevates the 'personal' and 'political' to the realm of sacredness. That is the true tribute to Ajarn Puey Ungphakorn who believed that "good things are hard to achieve but not impossible to do so and however practical bad things may be, they will never transform into goodness".

Ramu Manivannan is Reader in Political Science at Hindu College, University of Delhi.

Jampa: The Story of Racism in Tibet

International Campaign for Tibet, 2001
ISBN: 1-879245-20-5

Jampa is the main character of a propaganda film called *The Serf* produced by the PLA in 1963. Jampa is characterised as dark, enslaved, dirty and uneducated. Oppressed by the Tibetan aristocracy, he becomes withdrawn and unable to speak. Ultimately he is saved from his oppression by a Chinese soldier who gives up his life to rescue Jampa. Liberated he speaks his first words for many years—Mao Zedong.

This film is well known in China. For many Chinese people it constitutes their only knowledge of the Tibetan people thus perpetuating racist stereotypes. It is a lens through which Chinese attitudes towards the Tibetan

people can be analysed.

Jampa: The Story of Racism in Tibet was published by the International Campaign for Tibet for the United Nations World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) in South Africa in September 2001. It openly acknowledges the fact that race relations between the Tibetan and Chinese people have long been troubled. Historically the Chinese have considered themselves as superior to the "backward" Tibetans while the Tibetans have regarded the Chinese with fear and distrust. However, as Tibet and China were for the most part isolated from each other this only created problems in border areas and among the elites who maintained contact between the two countries.

The problem of racism is not unique to China; it is a problem that exists in one form or another

in most parts of the world. That the WCAR was held in South Africa—a country which was for many years regarded with scorn internationally for its government policies of racial discrimination—was symbolic. It signals that even those countries with the most endemic and repressive racism can change their ways.

For Tibet this conference was especially significant. It was the first time a Tibetan delegation had been officially accredited to a UN Conference. For China however the conference was problematic. Chinese people in many parts of the world experience racial discrimination but, in the eyes of the Chinese government, the problems of racial discrimination do not exist in China. According to the PRC's Vice Foreign Minister, Wang Guangya, "At present, the Chinese people of all ethnic groups are living in

harmony and have achieved remarkable successes in economic and social development. They never enjoyed such a high level of human rights in history as they do now."

Jampa paints a somewhat less rosy picture of racism and human rights in Tibet. The "ethnic harmony" that the Chinese like to promote is a harmony that exists only for those who adapt to Han Chinese norms. Expressions of difference are seen as a threat to national unity; a unity which is conceived of in terms of conforming to Han Chinese culture. Despite the fact that the PRC constitution guarantees racial and ethnic equality this is overshadowed by the constructed myth that all the people of China

have a common ancestry. Such a myth fails to accommodate the huge differences between the Tibetans and Han Chinese whose cultures actually share little in common.

The fact that China now dominates the political and economic life of Tibet creates a world where Tibetans have few choices. If they wish to advance in terms of education or career they must give up some of their identity as Tibetans and become more Chinese. A Lhasa intellectual is quoted as saying "Tibetans can speak Tibetan at home and at work but in order to get ahead you must speak Chinese." For those Tibetans who choose to maintain their Tibetan identity it means facing continuing dis-

crimination.

The attitude of the Han Chinese to the ethnic minorities is one of paternalism. The Chinese continue to believe that the "Tibetans require leadership from the central government in order to develop." While the rest of the world has mostly recognised the error of such paternalistic attitudes, for the Chinese they still reign strong.

Tibetans today are clearly oppressed in much the way that Jampa was in *The Serf*. Jampa paints a picture of Chinese-ruled Tibet in which the Han Chinese play the same role as the Tibetan aristocracy played in *The Serf*, that of oppressors.

David Reid

Bija Vidyapeeth

The International College of Sustainable Living

Under the Directorship of Vandana Shiva, a new college has been set up in India. The college is based on a farm 10 miles from the city of Dehra Dun, North India, with views to the Himalayas.

For further information on fees and dates, write to:
Vandana Shiva, A 60 Hauz Khas,
New Delhi 110016, INDIA
Ph: (00) 91 11 696 8077/685 3772
Fax: (00) 91 11 685 6795 E-mail: vshiva@vsnl.com
www.vshiva.net



January 1-29: Holistic Science

This course examines the limitations of reductionist thought in biology and its consequences with regard to pollution, conservation of biodiversity, and sustainability in development, with an exploration of alternative views of nature that characterise all living beings as part of a living, symbiotic cyclical universe. Participants will study for a week in Delhi and two weeks in the Himalayas and will have the opportunity to learn from the living tradition of Holistic Science as practised in organic agriculture, ayurveda and other indigenous systems of medicine. FACULTY: Brian Goodwin of Schumacher College, Dr Santosh Satya of Indian Institute of Technology, Dr Sudha Asokan, India's leading Ayurveda specialist and Dr Vandana Shiva.

March 3-23: Sustainable Cities

This course will examine the crises of pollution, poverty and socio-economic divisions, violence and crime, environmental degradation and homelessness created by accelerating globalised, investment-based urbanisation. It will explore newer, more environment- and people-oriented models of development. Travel includes visits to villages in and around Dehra Dun where students can learn about the realities of village life and the patterns and causes of rural-urban migration. There will also be an opportunity to non-sustainable urban development in the artificially-created new Tehri town.

FACULTY: The course will be led by Herbert Girardet and Kathy Goldsmith as well as leading ecologists, town planners and architects in India.

Each course will be of three-week duration.

Course fee: £750

including accommodation, food, tuition and field trips in the Himalayan region.

Where Division Ends: On Feeling at Home in Chaos

by Maurice Ash

Totnes, UK: Green Books, 2001

In this collection of essays Maurice Ash challenges the inherent falsehood of Cartesian dualism. He sees that it is this dualism which lies at the root of the crises facing Western societies today. He also aims to demolish metaphysics which gives birth to idealism, utopianism, communism and all other isms. Satish Kumar says in the foreword "If you want to find the relevance of Buddhism to our time, then this is the book for you."

*Transformation at the Base:
Fifty Verses on the Nature of Consciousness*

by Thich Nhat Hanh

Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 2001

In *Transformation at the Base* Thich Nhat Hanh draws on the most important streams of Buddhist thought, from the early Abhidharma teachings to later Mahayana teachings on the nature of consciousness. Bringing his gift of deep understanding and clarity to these ancient teachings, Thich Nhat Hanh presents commentaries on each of the fifty verses in clear everyday language. He helps the reader to understand the wisdom found in Buddhist psychology and to apply these teachings in their practice and in their daily lives.

Timeless Simplicity: Creative Living in a Consumer Society

by John Lane

Totnes, UK: Green Books, 2001

This book is about having less and enjoying more. Simplicity does not mean destitution or self-denial, but the restoration of wealth in the midst of an affluence in which we are starving the spirit. *Timeless Simplicity* shows how one can live a less cluttered and stressful life in contrast to the manic-paced consumer life that now dominates much of the world.

A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics

by Hans Kung

New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998

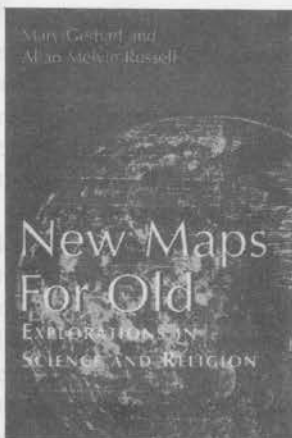
As the forces of globalisation come to dominate the world, political and economic considerations are overshadowing important ethical questions. Hans Kung, one of the world's leading Christian theologians, explores these issues in a visionary and cautionary look at the coming global society. If we are going to have a global economy, a global technology, a global media, Kung argues we must also have a global ethic to which all nations, and people of the most varied backgrounds and beliefs can commit themselves.

The Life of Buddhism

Frank E. Reynolds and Jason A. Carbine (Eds)

Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001

A collection of fifteen essays by leading scholars of Buddhism this book aims to represent the life of Buddhism. The essays highlight not so much the Buddhist doctrine, but rather the actual behaviour of and lived experience of Buddhist adherents from Sri Lanka to Tibet and Japan.



***New Maps for Old:
Explorations in Science and Religion***

by Mary Gerhart and Allan Melvin Russell

New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2001

Mary Gerhart and Allan Russell have been writing together on science and religion for twenty-five years. Their collaboration developed out of the conviction that both science and religion are today such highly developed and complicated fields that their interaction is best studied by two persons—one from each field—working together. This book attempts to answer questions such as “Does myth play a role in science as it does in religion?”

Here & Now:

Alternative Education and Society Journal

Here & Now is published in a bilingual (Thai and English) format by the Suan Ngeun Mee Ma Company (see *Seeds of Peace* 17(2): 30). It contains news and opinion about alternatives in business, culture and education. Its perspective on these issues is very much a view from below; from the village, the classroom and the campus.



Valued Less Than a Milk Tin

by Jed Greer and Tyler Giannini

EarthRights International, nd

The Burmese military's oppression of the Karen and Shan people is extensively documented in this publication. Most of the information is based on interviews conducted by EarthRights International staff in Burma. The title comes from a quote from one of the interviews: “The Burmese military doesn't value Shan people even as much as one milk tin.”

Meeting of Minds:

A Dialogue on Tibetan and Chinese Buddhism

by H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama and

Venerable Chan Master Sheng-yen

Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Foundation, 2000

This book is based on a discussion between the Dalai Lama and Master Sheng-yen that took place in New York in 1998. Although they had met previously this was the first time they had engaged in a discussion. As the foremost representatives of their traditions the conversation is respectful and insightful. They find that despite the different approaches of Chan and Tibetan Buddhism they share much common wisdom.



Monk's Life Mission is to Empower the People

Few monks dare speak up against the clergy's feudal dictatorship that breeds nepotism and corruption. Far fewer monks understand the modern challenges that Thai Buddhism is facing and how to cope with them. That makes 44-year old Phra Paisal Visalo one of a kind.

The monk, who never minces words about the clergy, is conducting a comprehensive research project to offer concrete measures to reform the cleric system. His Sangha reform research project involves many progressive Buddhist scholars who believe the clergy's inertia and insularity is severely hurting Thai Buddhism. Research topics include the recruitment system, monk's education, temple finance, female ordination and lay Buddhism.

Phra Paisal's equal passion for both intellect and activism defines his life both before and after his initiation into the monkhood. Born in 1957, young Paisal Wongworasit grew up in the politically progressive atmosphere of the 1970s. He became involved in political movements in high school, but his religious bent was evident right from the start. While most student leaders were discussing Marxism and revolution, Paisal worked with a small group of friends to advocate non-violence.

When political ideologies of the right and left clashed in 1976 culminating in a state massacre of students at Thammasat University, many students fled to the jungle to take up arms with the Communist Party of Thailand.



Paisal was arrested and briefly jailed before being released on bail. Although under threat from the right-wing government, he refused to join the revolution. "I believe in non-violence. I don't believe in so-called people's wars," he said.

Paisal and a small group of peace activists then formed the Coordinating Group for Religion in Society to work on human rights issues and non-violence. It was the only politically-active non-governmental organisation in Bangkok at that time. Things were tough. Paisal lost himself in risky political activism and academic writings, so much so that he was nearly burnt-out both physically and mentally.

When the tense political atmosphere began to ease in 1979, with the government granting amnesty to the student fighters, Paisal entered the monkhood in 1983 to "charge the batteries".

"I was exhausted from work. I was stressed," he recalls. "I thought I needed merely three months to meditate to revitalise myself." But he never left the monkhood again.

"The more I practice dhamma, the stronger my faith is," he explains, "and the more I realise the value of a spiritual life."

Now eighteen years in the

robe, Paisal has become abbot of Wat Pa Sukato, located behind the mountains in Chaiyapume province. Its distance from Bangkok, however, has failed to mute his activism. The monk is still the focal point in several non-governmental organisations that advocate Buddhist activism, non-violence and inter-religious dialogues.

His organisations are also critical of consumer culture and the government's "greed driven" development policies which allegedly destroy nature, moral restraints and communities.

He is also a driving force behind the Sekhiyadham movement of monks and nuns who apply Buddhist teachings to organise villagers to develop community empowerment. One of the group's goals is to prove that alternative models of development based on religious values of contentment and simplicity are not only possible, but also crucial for the livelihood of future generations.

To make Buddhist teachings relevant to the younger generation, Paisal initiated a website www.budpage.com in the hope that more and more youngsters will now learn about Buddhism from the Internet.

He is also campaigning to sensitise the public to see merit-making as a way to help others in society rather than a personal investment for an after-life in heaven.

A prolific writer, Phra Paisal is well-known for his works that shed light on the problems of Thai Buddhism and the challenges the religion faces in the

information age. "Thai Buddhism has three main problems," he says. "The problems involve the teachings, the clergy and the lay Buddhists themselves."

Thai Buddhism, he says, has lost its mystical and social aspects. "We're only interested in our needs, not those of society." Meanwhile the clergy is fraught with weaknesses.

"Monks are generally weak intellectually, morally and spiritually," he charges, blaming this development on the monks authoritarian education system and rigid lifestyle.

Concurrently, he said, nepotism is rife and corruption in the clergy's closed and autocratic governing system encourages bad monks to abuse their positions while constantly increasing the clergy's power chain through money and favours.

The lay Buddhist society does not fare much better, he said. Not knowing the true essence of Buddhism, lay Buddhists end up pampering monks with material possessions, believing this will buy merit, well-being, success and a sweet after-life in heaven.

He also notes that the proliferation of lay Buddhist movements, that have tended to eclipse the role of monks, are also full of pitfalls. Governed by consumer culture, the new religious groups are often geared to serve their followers' individualistic and materialistic needs, he observes.

While his research in Sangha reform may provide some answers as to how the clerics and the devotees can meet each other half-way through various checks and balances, the monk does not believe change will come from

within the clergy.

He said cleric reform, here or elsewhere, show that change almost always stems from external pressures, be they alternative movements from the fringes or direct forces from secular power centres.

Whether he is successful in his goals, or fails, Phra Paisal sees his duty and life's mission as providing knowledge in Sangha reform and proposing ways to empower both monks and the lay society against the dangers of consumer culture.

"I don't expect to see any changes in my lifetime," he says, "but we must do what we can to inject new life into Thai Buddhism. Otherwise, it will wither away."

Sanitsuda Ekachai
Bangkok Post,

Special Supplementary
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Next Generation, November 2001

Dreaming of a Better World

At the age of 44, Vanida Tantiwitthayapitak has spent half her life fighting for the underprivileged. But it was not until the Pak Moon dam protest that... [she] became a national figure, as the undisputed champion of the poor.

Ms Vanida, advisor to the Assembly of the Poor, is one of the architects of the Pak Moon Dam protest strategy, which has changed the dynamics of both business and politics in Thailand and empowered the powerless.

Instead of camping outside Government House to pressure the authorities, the disaffected villagers decided to set up a make-shift village close to the Pak Moon dam.

The village of Mae Moon Man Yuen is home to more than

a thousand villagers who harbour complaints against the dam and other development projects.

In terms of financial compensation, the Pak Moon dam protest could be considered a flop... But Ms Vanida said in terms of public participation and as a model for other protest groups, the Pak Moon dam saga has been instrumental in forcing authorities to pause before they proceed with any large-scale development schemes.

According to Vanida...the dam project was a classic example of the state's development policy gone wrong, especially when local people most affected by the project had no say in its development.

In terms of creating a sense of belonging in the community

and building an extensive national network that fights for the rights of the poor and the dispossessed, the Pak Moon dam protest was a resounding success, she said.

Ms Vanida believes a protest does not always end with a win or a loss.

"When it comes to a protest, I don't aim for a win. It doesn't always end with a winning or losing, but I do hope that at the end of the day the protest helps make a better society," she said.

The Pak Moon dam campaign has led to more disclosure of state information, public hearings and reviews of other development projects which would have an impact on local people.

Vanida said that the Pak Moon dam is just a part of devel-

opment policy that was crafted by the state and the state alone.

She said that as long as the state refuses to make changes to society due to a fear of losing power and control, society will demand more public scrutiny and there will be more confrontation.

To avoid confrontation, which is likely to increase in the future in the battle over the use of limited natural resources, she suggests that the state maintains an open mind and keeps its

options open.

Big enterprises and corporations...should learn to take more responsibility for the welfare of people and not so readily exploit natural resources. [She] argues that development has widened the gap between the rich and the poor. "The figures for economic growth do not determine government prosperity. The government should look around to see what's going on. High growth rates are not necessarily a cause for celebration,"

she said.

Thanks to her role as an advocate for the poor, it is no surprise Ms. Vanida is also a strong believer in an agriculture-based, self-sufficient economy.

She says she has been fighting for the rights of the poor for almost two decades and she will never give up that fight.

*Nauvarat Suksamran
Next Generation*

A long overdue justice for the poor: Unjust cases against Thai rights and environmental activists

Legal prosecution has been a major tool of the state to persecute the rebelling poor. Three cases in point are the charges pressed against former Phra Prachak Kuttachitto, Wanida Tantiwittayapitak and Sulak Sivaraksa, all of whom have sacrificed to protect nature and people's livelihoods. Yet, their rewards are long, strenuous, and costly court trials.

Phra Prachak helped non-violently to protect one of the largest forests still left in the barren Northeast of Siam around 1993-5. With vested interest in logging, the local army units and influential traders threatened his life and later on had him sued for encroaching on a forest reserve. And when the then government initiated forced relocation projects to push out villagers who had lived there for generations to pave the way for massive Eucalyptus plantations, he came out to protect them and attempted to mediate so that the local police refrained from using violence

against the protesting villagers. For that, he was charged with instigating riots and leading people to destroy governmental properties and encroaching on a forest reserve. Since 1995, after having disrobed, he has gone through numerous court trials. Some of them have been concluded with suspended jail terms. The remaining two cases are on trial. According to his lawyer, Vinij Lamlua, the process has been all along very slow. Two witnesses of the plaintiffs have already died. Besides his deteriorating morale, funds raised for helping him to fight the cases have been greatly depleted. A lot of money has been spent on travelling expenses to attend trials in different provinces at different times, a number of which have been cancelled with no prior notification.

Another important figure who has masterminded and steered the Assembly of the Poor, one of the largest and strongest people's movements in Siam, is

Wanida Tantiwittayapitak, a recipient of the Social Venture Network Award. Along the painful episode of over ten years of their struggle against Pak Moon Dam and other mal-development projects, she and her colleagues have been charged with numerous cases—very similar to those of Phra Prachak's, including instigating riots, destroying governmental properties, etc, despite her and her colleagues' steadfast adherence to nonviolence. According to Wasant Panich, her lawyer, the trials are due to conclude soon. Again, Wanida has to travel numerous times to attend court cases wasting a lot of money and time. Yet, despite pleas from lawyers and rights activists for the acquittal of her cases, the government has not responded positively. Only recently did the government decide to drop charges against 225 members of the AOP for intrusion on the Governmental House early this year after some lobbying efforts.

Meanwhile, a criminal case pressed against Sulak Sivaraksa for obstructing the construction of the Yadana gas pipeline has not been given due attention. More than a year ago, the Constitutional Court was requested to rule on the constitutionality of the Petroleum Act, cited against Sulak's demon-

stration. He argues that the Act, which makes any obstructions to PTT's projects indictable, contradicts articles and clauses in the 1997 Constitution, the present charter, that encourages individuals to protest to help protect natural resources. The Court has been reluctant in giving its ruling on Sulak's case.

But for the case against Thaksin Shinawatra, the Prime Minister who was accused of falsely declaring his assets, it simply took the Court four months to issue its ruling in favour of him.

It is still a long step before judiciary processes can really serve people's causes.

Pipob Udomittipong



Message of Appreciation

From

His Holiness Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara,
the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand
to HIKMABUDHI

On the occasion of its celebration of 30th anniversary

The Buddha says, 'a farmer has three urgent duties viz. plowing the field extensively, sowing the seeds in proper time and season and irrigating the field in proper time. In the similar vein, the Buddha compares to the three priorities for Buddhists viz. observance of the precepts, cultivation of mind and development of wisdom.'

A farmer does not have the power or might to say: 'May my crops spring up today, may the grains appear tomorrow, and may they ripen the next day' but when the time has come, the crops spring up, the grains appear, and they ripen. In the same way, the undertaking of heightened virtue, the undertaking of heightened mind, the undertaking of heightened discernment a Buddhist does not have the power or might to say: 'May my mind be released from fermentations through lack of clinging today or tomorrow or the next day' but when the time has come, his mind is released from fermentations through lack of clinging.

Accordingly, we as a Buddhist should train ourselves: 'Strong will be our desire for the undertaking of heightened virtue. Strong will be our desire for the undertaking of heightened mind. Strong will be our undertaking for the undertaking of heightened discernment.'

Anumodana and appreciation to HIKMABUDHI on its successful celebration of the 30th anniversary. May the HIKMABUDHI carries on further its wholesome work for the benefits of many and towards the right understanding of the Buddha's teachings. Putting the Buddha's words into practice will eventually lead to the liberation of physical and spiritual suffering.

May all the members of HIKMABUDHI be prosperous in upholding the values of virtues, mental cultivation and wisdom. May the HIKMABUDHI be successful in encouraging others to achieve the same understanding of the Dhamma for years to come.

Sd. Phra Nyanasamvara

Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara
Supreme Patriarch of Thailand

HIKMABUDHI is the Union of Indonesia Buddhist Students. They celebrated their 30th anniversary on the 24th of November 2001. The Bahasa Indonesia edition of Sulak Sivaraksa's book *Seeds of Peace*, translated by Ken Ken, was published on the same day.