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Creating Peace in a Chaotic World



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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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Phoonsuk, widow of Thailand's first elder statesman and former prime minister Pridi, expired just a few hours after the commemoration of what would have been Pridi's 107th birthday. She said in her will: "I wish to have no honours conferred on me."

Phoonsuk was almost 17 when she married Pridi in 1928, when he was working as an assistant secretary at the Juridical Department. Pridi later became a prime minister, the first senior statesman of Thailand and the regent of King Rama VIII.

Phoonsuk always supported her husband, who led the 1932 peaceful revolution in Siam, and during World War II she joined the Free Thai Movement, resisting the invading Japanese side by side with Pridi and other Thais to bring peace to the Thai people and the rest of the world.

When a political storm was brewing around Pridi, Phoonsuk calmly endured injustice several times.

In November 1947, Phoonsuk, then 35, faced a political storm herself when a group of "guests" in military uniform visited her Tha Chang residence, informing her that they wanted a change in government. It was at that moment she realised her peaceful existence was no more.

The soldiers searched her house room by room, eventually leaving having found no trace of Pridi.

The political storm forced Pridi to live in exile while Phoonsuk stayed in Siam to take care of their six children.

In November 1952 Phoonsuk and her son Pal were charged with offences against the internal and external security of the Kingdom.

During 84 days in detention, Phoonsuk slept on the floor of a small cell shared with two other women. Her two youngest daughters were at boarding school. Her eldest daughter and younger son, a sickly lad, continued to live with their grandparents. Although deeply concerned about the welfare of her family, not once did Phoonsuk ask to be released on bail.

"I had done nothing wrong," she said.

When she was freed in February 1953 it was four years since she had last seen her husband.

She immediately made preparations and applied for papers to depart to France.

She did not know exactly where Pridi had sought refuge. She only knew that he was alive and somewhere in China.

"I told myself that I could no longer continue living in Thailand," Phoonsuk told *The Nation* in an exclusive interview in 2000.

Phoonsuk took two daughters, Dusadee and Wanee, with her to France. They left France to join Pridi in November that year, a few weeks after Phoonsuk received a letter from him. The Chinese government was willing to offer asylum to the entire family.

But the eldest son, Pal, was still in detention, and the eldest daughter, Lalita, had to stay in Thailand because of poor health. Pal went to China after his release in 1957.

After 21 years of peaceful life in China, the family decided to settle in France, which offered more channels of communication with relatives and friends in Thailand.

Phoonsuk went on ahead and spent three years setting up a new family home in Paris. To ensure sufficient income to cover their expense there, Phoonsuk sold the family's assets in Thailand. By that time she had few illusions about the possibility of Pridi returning to the land of his birth.

Phoonsuk was at Pridi's bedside when he drew his last breath on May 2, 1983. Siam's first elder statesman died in Paris after spending more than three decades in exile.

"All Thailand ever gave us was a place to be born. When Pridi died, the Thai government didn't even send a wreath."

Three years later Phoonsuk took Pridi's ashes to Thailand.

In her handwritten testament, "Directions to My Children", Phoonsuk told them she wanted a simple cremation and did not want any honour bestowed on her.

Phoonsuk leaves five children, daughters Lalita, Suda, Dusadee Boontasanukul and Wanee Saipradit and son Suprida, Pal died at the age of 50.



Editorial Notes

In the Theravada tradition, we begin counting our era with the time of the Mahapranibbana of the Lord Buddha. The Sri Lankan, Burmese and Indian Buddhists count one on the day of the Master's passing away. The Siamese, however, regard the first anniversary of the great event as B.E. 1. Hence the 2500 years of the Buddhist Era was celebrated in Ceylon, Burma and India in 1956 of the Common Era, while in Siam the great celebration took place in 1957.

Modern scholars question the traditional Buddhist Era. Edward Conze, for example, argued that the Buddha passed away 480 years before Christ—not 543. Sonam Marup's *The Date of The Buddha's Mahaparinirvana* (1990) states precisely that it took place in 487 B.C. These are only two diverging points. The Chinese, Tibetans, etc., count their Buddhist Era differently. For example, the Tibetan calendar regards this year as 2138. In fact, there was a council of contemporary scholars on Buddhism which met in Germany some years ago. They wanted to achieve a unanimous agreement on the Buddhist Era, but failed. Practising Buddhists however do not take dates, places, eras, etc., very seriously. For instance, in every sermon in Siam, before the Bhikkhu begins to preach, he would say something like this: "Today is Monday on the new moon in the lunar calendar and 15 January in the solar calendar. The year since the Master's Great Passing is 2555. Listeners should be mindful that everything is impermanent. He or she should practise the teaching of the Buddha for his or her final liberation from hatred, greed and delusion."

In 1956 the Indian government celebrated the 2500 years of the Buddhist Era in a magnificent manner. The Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama were invited as chief guests of an international gathering and pilgrimage. The Indian Buddhists regarded last year as the 2600th anniversary of the Great Awakening of the Buddha, and the government of India gave a lot of financial support to the Ashoka Mission to organize the Global Buddhist Congregation 2011 in New Delhi (held during 27-30 November), which was followed by a Buddhist pilgrimage. The government itself did not host the GBC.

Since the Dalai Lama was in India, he could not be denied a role in such an important event. To avoid conflict with the People's Republic of China, the Indian government maintained a low profile. Yet the PRC protested strongly against the Dalai Lama's participation in the GBC—not to mention that the Panchen Lama has been detained in the PRC. China has its own candidate (i.e., an impostor) for the title of Panchen Lama.

The gist of the GBC is to establish a new international Buddhist organization based in India—not to compete with existing international Buddhist institutions such as the World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB) and the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), both headquartered in Bangkok.

In our humble opinion, since the Ashoka Mission hosted the GBC, it should revitalize itself and serve as a permanent seat of the new international Buddhist movement. This new movement should concentrate on research work to confront contemporary forms of *dhukkha* and to find out their causes, in order to overcome them through the Noble Eightfold Path. Some pressing issues were raised at the GBC already such as: (1) the natural environment; (2) livelihood and development in a fast changing world; (3) preservation and development of Buddhism; (4) ethics and values; (5) Buddhism and mental health: anxiety, depression and alienation; (6) Buddhism, science and technology; (7) a Buddhist response to conflict and violence; (8) change and continuity in politics and society; and (9) women and Buddhism : equality and equanimity.

These are important topics to pursue further. Yet Buddhist economics and Buddhist approaches to the social sciences seem to be missing from the list. And most important of all is how to tackle capitalism and social structures that are unjust and violent.

The new Buddhist organization should collaborate with the existing ones like WFB and INEB—and above all with the Mind and Life Institute under the patronage of the Dalai Lama. Besides there are many more Buddhists in India today since the time Dr. Ambedkar declared himself to be a follower of the Buddha. Yet his name was not even mentioned once at the GBC, and prominent Ambedkarite Buddhists were not invited to take part in the congregation at all.

As for the Thai participants, neither of the two Buddhist universities was represented, but the presence of Dhammakaya movement was very obvious. If people in the new Buddhist organization in India are not aware of how this movement has distorted the Dhamma, it will contribute to their downfall. It will also undermine the future of Socially Engaged Buddhism.

At the closing ceremony of the GBC the Dalai Lama warned all that if Buddhist leaders care more about money and power than about the teachings of the Buddha, Buddha Sasana in the future will be deviated from the right path.

The new international Buddhist Organization based in India should really learn from the great emperor Ashoka—both from his successes and failures. One can learn much from Bruce Rich's *To Uphold the World: The Message of Ashoka and Kautilya for the 21st Century*. If we apply the message of Ashoka appropriately, it will contribute significantly to a better future in the world.

We understand that the Indian government plans to revive the great Nalanda University too. We hope the new Ashoka Mission will find a way to collaborate with Nalanda to make it truly Buddhist; that is, moving it beyond the secular higher learning institutions in the world, which emphasize the head at the expense of the heart and of holistic learning.

Burma:

Burma's Winds of Change

Civilian government warily negotiates a minefield

While Burma's civilian government appears willing to at least observe the veneer of democracy, hardliners and some former top generals are uneasy with the extent and pace of change and are threatening to force another military coup, diplomatic sources in Rangoon say.

The government, for the first time since the military seized power more than 20 years ago, is making a concerted effort to tackle the country's poverty. The newly elected parliament — though many MPs owe their seats to a manipulated vote last November — is beginning to function.

Last week's executive decision by president Thein Sein to suspend construction on the controversial Myitsone dam in Kachin state near the border with China is another example of the government's responsiveness to the wishes of the people, according to a senior Burmese government official. And now the government seems poised to release political prisoners.

The key to change is Thein Sein's willingness to accommodate the pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi. This rapprochement, after their first meeting some seven weeks ago — seems to have set a new tone.

Everything now depends on the release of these political prisoners — of which there are more than 2,000 according to the human rights group Amnesty



International. Only after a significant number are freed will the country be launched on a genuine path to democracy.

Burma's foreign minister Wanna Maung Lwin told the UN General Assembly in New York last month that the government intended to free more prisoners in the near future — though he did not mention whether political prisoners would be included or when. But in Rangoon there is mounting speculation that the government is set to free political prisoners — or at least a significant number of them — within the next few weeks.

The prisoners will be released in three batches, said a senior government official on condition of anonymity. More than 200 political activists may walk free within the next week or so, including the internationally renowned comedian, Zaganar.

This would be a clear signal both to the country and to the international community that Thein Sein's reform agenda is not simply window dressing.

There have been growing signs that the government, elected last November, is serious about economic and political reform.

The changes are often without formal announcements. To mark democracy day, the government unblocked many international news sites, including the Bangkok Post, the BBC, the exile-run Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB), the Burmese language broadcasts of Radio Free Asia and Voice of America, all of which have been blocked for more than two decades. That follows earlier relaxation of media censorship, including allowing access to Skype, Yahoo and Youtube.

"There is enough to make us cautiously optimistic, with the stress on optimistic," Steve Marshall, the head of the International Labour Organization in Rangoon told the Asia Sentinel recently. "There is a new attitude amongst the government ministers according to diplomats and UN officials who have been dealing with them for years. Ministers are far more responsive than before. There's a real discussion now unlike under the previous regime. Decisions do not have to be passed back up to be approved."

Even Aung San Suu Kyi seems encouraged. "I believe we have reached a point where there is an opportunity for change," she recently told a small crowd gathered outside the National League for Democracy's headquarters. Thein Sein seems to be looking to involve Aung San

Suu Kyi in the country's political future — albeit tentatively.

Although Aung San Suu Kyi has revealed few details of their talks, her attitude towards the government has changed markedly. "She trusts Thein Sein, believes he is sincere and needs support," she told western diplomats in Rangoon recently, according to someone who attended the meeting.

The liberal-minded ministers who support Thein Sein's initiatives also believe she is the key to a democratic transition in the country. "It was important to show the Lady that we are willing to work with her," said a government official close to the president. "We see her as a potential partner, not an adversary."

Of course the issue of political prisoners was high on the agenda for the pro-democracy leader, who told her host that there could be no movement forward without their release first. Thein Sein knows that this is also the key to improved relations with the outside world — and even with their neighbors and supporters in ASEAN. It would certainly smooth the path to Burma being confirmed as ASEAN chairman for 2014 later this year.

But the release of political prisoners remains a delicate and vexed issue. General Than Shwe, the head of the junta that ran the country prior to the election, has made it clear on at least two occasions — once just after the elections last year and again earlier this year before Thein Sein took over the reins of government — that the release of political prisoners and the jailed military intelligence officers was

not an option. Both Thura Shwe Man and Maung Aye tried to convince him to make the gesture, but he remained intransigent.

Of course, the recent motion to free political prisoners adopted by parliament by a large majority may have set the seal on the release. It was significant that the speaker of the lower house, Thura Shwe Mann — the former third top general in the junta's army — steered this through parliament.

Thura Shwe Mann is strongly supporting the president, according to sources close to him. He sees the issue of the release of political prisoners as something he can do which would make a difference — both domestically and internationally.

This is crucial, for the government cannot be seen to be bowing to international pressure. The freeing of these political activists is a necessary step in the democratic transition that Thein Sein says he is committed to. They have to be freed before planned by-elections, possibly in November. It is believed that the president promised Aung San Suu Kyi this when they met in August.

It now seems certain that there will be a role, so far unspecified, for Suu Kyi. Diplomats in Rangoon who have met her recently all say she is confident about the future and optimistic about the possibility of genuine change. Her role is going to be crucial. She is obviously willing to support the president's reform process. But whether the next big step is taken will depend on Thein Sein and the government releasing political prisoners.

But the optimism needs to be

tempered, said a senior liberal-minded minister. The hardliners are still waiting to pounce if they are given the opportunity. These same hardliners, led by the vice-president Thin Aung Mying Oo, were not happy to see Thein Sein meet Suu Kyi. Some ministers did not even know the meeting had taken place until they saw the evening television news.

While for the moment the signs are good, the hardliners are still lurking in the background. "If we fail, we'll end up in jail," said a senior member of the government recently on condition of anonymity.

Another military coup is possible if the army becomes convinced that these changes are not in their interests. In fact it is written into the 2008 constitution. Before he retired, Than Shwe had the army Chief General Min Aung Hlaing agree that he would lead a coup if necessary, according to senior military sources in Naypyidaw. The parliament would be abolished, the existing political parties dissolved, a new military-based party formed and new elections held.

For the moment Min Aung Hlaing is supporting both the President and the Speaker of the lower house, but the army's continued support is by no means certain — especially if Than Shwe decides to intervene. Already some old hardliners in the governing United Solidarity and Development Party have been encouraging the old man to return, but so far to no avail.

Larry Jagan,
October 6, 2011

India: The Dead Begin to Speak Up in India

At about 3am, on 23 September, within hours of his arrival at the Delhi airport, the US radio-journalist David Barsamian was deported. This dangerous man, who produces independent, free-to-air programmes for public radio, has been visiting India for 40 years, doing such dangerous things as learning Urdu and playing the sitar.

Barsamian has published book-length interviews with public intellectuals such as Edward Said, Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, Ejaz Ahmed and Tariq Ali (he even makes an appearance as a young, bell-bottom-wearing interviewer in Peter Wintonick's documentary film on Chomsky and Edward Herman's book *Manufacturing Consent*).

On his more recent trips to India he has done a series of radio interviews with activists, academics, film-makers, journalists and writers (including me). Barsamian's work has taken him to Turkey, Iran, Syria, Lebanon and Pakistan. He has never been deported from any of these countries. So why does the world's largest democracy feel so threatened by this lone, sitar-playing, Urdu-speaking, left-leaning, radio producer? Here is how Barsamian himself explains it: "It's all about Kashmir. I've done work on Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Narmada dams, farmer suicides, the Gujarat pogrom, and the Binayak Sen case. But it's Kashmir that is at the heart of the Indian state's concerns. The official narrative must not be contested."

News reports about his deportation quoted official "sources" as saying that Barsamian

had "violated his visa norms during his visit in 2009-10 by indulging in professional work while holding a tourist visa". Visa norms in India are an interesting peep-hole into the government's concerns and predilections. Using the tattered old banner of the "war on terror", the home ministry has decreed that scholars and academics invited for conferences and seminars require security clearance before they will be given visas. Corporate executives and businessmen do not.

So somebody who wants to invest in a dam, or build a steel plant or a buy a bauxite mine is not considered a security hazard, whereas a scholar who might wish to participate in a seminar about, say, displacement or communalism or rising malnutrition in a globalised economy, is. Terrorists with bad intentions have probably guessed that they are better off wearing Prada suits and pretending they want to buy a mine than admitting that they want to attend a seminar.

David Barsamian did not travel to India to buy a mine or to attend a conference. He just came to talk to people. The complaint against him, according to "official sources" is that he had reported on events in Jammu and Kashmir during his last visit to India and that these reports were "not based on facts". Remember Barsamian is not a reporter, he's a man who has conversations with people, mostly dissidents, about the societies in which they live.

Is it illegal for tourists to talk to people in the countries they visit? Would it be illegal for me to travel to the US or Europe and

write about the people I met, even if my writing was "not based on facts"? Who decides which "facts" are correct and which are not? Would Barsamian have been deported if the conversations he recorded had been in praise of the impressive turnouts in Kashmir's elections, instead of about daily life in the densest military occupation in the world (an estimated 600,000 actively deployed armed personnel for a population of 10 million people)?

David Barsamian is not the first person to be deported over the Indian government's sensitivities over Kashmir. Professor Richard Shapiro, an anthropologist from San Francisco, was deported from Delhi airport in November 2010 without being given any reason. It was probably a way of punishing his partner, Angana Chatterji, who is a co-convenor of the international peoples' tribunal on human rights and justice which first chronicled the existence of unmarked mass graves in Kashmir.

In September 2011, May Aquino, from the Asian Federation against Involuntary Disappearances (Afad), Manila, was deported from Delhi airport. Earlier this year, on 28 May, the outspoken Indian democratic rights activist, Gautam Navlakha, was deported to Delhi from Srinagar airport. Farook Abdullah, the former chief minister of Kashmir, justified the deportation, saying that writers like Navlakha and myself had no business entering Kashmir because "Kashmir is not for burning".

Kashmir is in the process of being isolated, cut off from the outside world by two concentric

rings of border patrols—in Delhi as well as Srinagar—as though it’s already a free country with its own visa regime. Within its borders of course, it’s open season for the government and the army. The art of controlling Kashmiri journalists and ordinary people with a deadly combination of bribes, threats, blackmail and a whole spectrum of unutterable cruelty has evolved into a twisted art form.

While the government goes about trying to silence the living, the dead have begun to speak up. Perhaps it was insensitive of Barsamian to plan a trip to Kashmir just when the state human rights commission was finally shamed into officially acknowledging the existence of 2,700 unmarked graves from three districts in Kashmir. Reports of thousands of other graves are pouring in from other districts. Perhaps it is insensitive of the unmarked graves to embarrass the government of India just when India’s record is due for review before the UN human rights council.

Apart from Dangerous David, who else is the world’s largest democracy afraid of? There’s young Lingaram Kodopi an adivasi from Dantewada in the state of Chhattisgarh, who was arrested on 9 September. The police say they caught him red-handed in a market place, while he was handing over protection money from Essar, an iron-ore mining company, to the banned Communist party of India (Maoist). His aunt Soni Sori says that he was picked up by plain-clothes policemen in a white Bolero car from his grandfather’s house in Palnar village.

Interestingly, even by their own account, the police arrested Lingaram but allowed the Maoists to escape. This is only

the latest in a series of bizarre, almost hallucinatory accusations they have made against Lingaram and then withdrawn. His real crime is that he is the only journalist who speaks Gondi, the local language, and who knows how to negotiate the remote forest paths in Dantewada the other war zone in India from which no news must come.

Having signed over vast tracts of indigenous tribal homelands in central India to multinational mining and infrastructure corporations in a series of secret memorandums of understanding, the government has begun to flood the forests with hundreds of thousands of security forces. All resistance, armed as well as unarmed has been branded “Maoist” (In Kashmir they are all “jihadi elements”).

As the civil war grows deadlier, hundreds of villages have been burnt to the ground. Thousands of adivasis have fled as refugees into neighbouring states. Hundreds of thousands are living terrified lives hiding in the forests. Paramilitary forces have laid siege to the forest, making trips to the markets for essential provisions and medicines a nightmare for villagers. Untold numbers of nameless people are in jail, charged with sedition and waging war on the state, with no lawyers to defend them. Very little news comes out of those forests, and there are no body counts.

So it’s not hard to see why young Lingaram Kodopi poses such a threat. Before he trained to become a journalist, he was a driver in Dantewada. In 2009 the police arrested him and confiscated his Jeep. He was locked up in a small toilet for 40 days where he was pressurised to become a special police officer (SPO) in the Salwa Judum, the govern-

ment-sponsored vigilante army that was at the time tasked with forcing people to flee from their villages (the Salwa Judum has since been declared unconstitutional by the supreme court). The police released Lingaram after the Gandhian activist Himanshu Kumar filed a habeas corpus petition in court. But then the police arrested Lingaram’s old father and five other members of his family. They attacked his village and threatened the villagers if they sheltered him. Eventually Lingaram escaped to Delhi where friends and well-wishers got him admission into a journalism school. In April 2010 he travelled to Dantewada and escorted villagers to Delhi to give testimony at the independent peoples’ tribunal about the barbarity of the Salwa Judum and the police and paramilitary forces. In his own testimony, Lingaram was sharply critical of the Maoists as well.

That did not deter the Chhattisgarh police. On 2 July 2010, the senior Maoist leader, Comrade Azad, the official spokesperson for the Maoist party, was captured and executed by the Andhra Pradesh police. Deputy Inspector General Kaluri of the Chhattisgarh police announced at a press conference that Lingaram Kodopi had been elected by the Maoist party to take over Comrade Azad’s role (it was like accusing a young school child in 1936 Yan’an of being Zhou Enlai). The charge was met with such derision that the police had to withdraw it. Soon after they accused Lingaram of being the mastermind of a Maoist attack on a congress legislator in Dantewada. But oddly enough, they made no move to arrest him.

Lingaram remained in Delhi, completed his course and

received his diploma in journalism. In March 2011, paramilitary forces burned down three villages in Dantewada—Tadmetla, Timmapuram and Morapalli. The Chhattisgarh government blamed the Maoists. The supreme court assigned the investigation to the Central Bureau of Investigation. Lingaram returned to Dantewada with a video camera and trekked from village to village documenting first-hand testimonies of the villagers who indicted the police. By doing this he made himself one of the most wanted men in Dantewada. On 9 September the police finally got to him.

Lingaram has joined an impressive line-up of troublesome news gatherers and disseminators in Chhattisgarh. Among the earliest to be silenced was the celebrated doctor Binayak Sen, who first raised the alarm about the crimes of the Salwa Judum as far back as 2005. He was arrested in 2007, accused of being a Maoist and sentenced to life imprisonment. After years in prison, he is out on bail now.

Kopa Kunjam was my first guide into the forest villages of Dantewada. At the time he worked with Himanshu Kumar's Vanvasi Chetna ashram, doing exactly what Lingaram tried to do much later—travelling to remote villages, bringing out the news, and carefully documenting the horror that was unfolding. In May 2009 the ashram, the last

neutral shelter for journalists, writers and academics who were travelling to Dantewada, was demolished by the Chhattisgarh government.

Kopa was arrested on human rights day in September 2009. He was accused of colluding with the Maoists in the murder of one man and the kidnapping of another. The case against Kopa has begun to fall apart as the police witnesses, including the man who was kidnapped, have disowned the statements they purportedly made to the police. It doesn't really matter, because in India the process is the punishment.

It could take years for Kopa to establish his innocence. Many of those who were emboldened by Kopa to file complaints against the police have been arrested too. That includes women who committed the crime of being raped. Soon after Kopa's arrest Himanshu Kumar was hounded out of Dantewada. Eventually, here too the dead will begin to speak. And it will not just be dead human beings, it will be the dead land, dead rivers, dead mountains and dead creatures in dead forests that will insist on a hearing.

In this age of surveillance, internet policing and phone-tapping, as the clampdown on those who speak up becomes grimmer with every passing day, it's odd how India is becoming the dream destination of literary festivals.

Many of these festivals are funded by the very corporations on whose behalf the police have unleashed their regime of terror.

The Harud literary festival in Srinagar (postponed for the moment) was slated to be the newest, most exciting literary festival in India—"As the autumn leaves change colour the valley of Kashmir will resonate with the sound of poetry, literary dialogue, debate and discussions ..."

Its organisers advertised it as an "apolitical" event, but did not say how either the rulers or the subjects of a brutal military occupation that has claimed tens of thousands of lives could be "apolitical". I wonder—will the guests come on tourist visas? Will there be separate ones for Srinagar and Delhi? Will they need security clearance?

The festive din of all this spurious freedom helps to muffle the sound of footsteps in airport corridors as the deported are frog-marched on to departing planes, to mute the click of handcuffs locking around strong, warm wrists and the cold metallic clang of prison doors. Our lungs are gradually being depleted of oxygen. Perhaps it's time use whatever breath remains in our bodies to say: "Open the bloody gates."

Arundhati Roy,

October 2, 2011

Source: *South Asian News Agency*

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Nepal: The Himalayan Race



Wen



Bhattarai



Manmohan

In December, Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao is to visit Nepal along with a high-powered ministerial delegation. Wen's three-day state visit is the first by a Chinese premier in over a decade. It marks the apogee of three years of rapid Chinese moves to dislodge the Himalayan buffer state from India's orbit. Senior Chinese party officials visiting Kathmandu this year have disbursed financial assistance for infrastructure and hydroelectric projects and military aid worth over \$100 million. China is building a 256-km extension of the 1956 km Golmud-Lhasa railroad to the Nepal border by 2014. The \$1.9 billion rail extension funded by the Chinese government will eventually reach the outskirts of Kathmandu. China-assisted projects in Nepal such as the Syafrubensi' Rasuwagadhi Road Project linking Tibet with Nepal are already under way. This year, China announced a \$1.6 billion loan

for Nepal's 750 mw West Seti hydropower project.

But clearly, the most important is Beijing's project to develop Lumbini, Buddha's birthplace. It is a project that could potentially weaken the Dalai Lama's hold over Tibetan Buddhists and India's claim to the Buddhist heritage. Three of the four key sites relating to the Buddha's life—Sarnath, Kushinagar and Gaya—are in India. They form part of India's Look East policy of engaging the predominantly Buddhist countries around China's periphery. The mea routinely ferries visiting dignitaries from Vietnam, Myanmar, Japan, South Korea and Mongolia to Bodhgaya in special aircraft. In July, a Chinese NGO, the Asia-Pacific Exchange and Cooperation Foundation (APECF), announced a \$3 billion (Rs 15,000 crore) project to develop the Buddha's birthplace, 250 km south-west of Kathmandu. Nepal's gdp is

\$15 billion (Rs 75,000 crore). APECF announced the signing of the Lumbini project with the Chinese chapter of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) without even consulting Nepalese authorities.

Buddha's birthplace is already home to an eight sq km Lumbini Development Zone designed by Japanese architect Kenzo Tange in 1978 and funded by the Japanese government. The zone is centred around the exact spot Queen Mayadevi is believed to have given birth to Prince Siddhartha in 563 BC. The Greater Lumbini Project will complete Tange's master plan and will have six-lane expressways connecting the birthplaces of Prince Siddhartha's parents, says Gopal Kiraty, Nepal's culture minister. A new Lumbini airport will fly visitors to the circuit and the entire project will take around three years to complete. We want the project

to create an economic boom in Nepal, Kiraty adds.

Nepal is on course to becoming another glittering jewel in China's string of pearls strategy designed to encircle India. The politically fragile nation-it has had four prime ministers in three years-is now a battleground for influence between India and China. If China succeeds in bringing Nepal into its orbit, it will have crossed the Himalayas and established its influence up to the foothills bordering India, warns Jayadeva Ranade, former additional secretary, raw.

Indian security agencies feel the project, just seven km from the Uttar Pradesh border, could be a godsend for China. Lumbini sits astride the neck of India on an 1,800-km porous border with Nepal and could become a launch pad for Chinese subversive activities, says an intelligence official.

Indian analysts say APECF's composition hints strongly at Chinese Communist Party and People's Liberation Army (PLA) links. The foundation's Executive Vice-President Xiao Wunan is a senior party leader.

A senior Indian official attributes complex motives to the project. There is a temptation for the Maoist leadership to bring China into Lumbini to counter India. But the project must not become a backdoor entry for a third party (China), he says. India's concerns were conveyed to Kathmandu during Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai's October visit to New Delhi. Indian authorities are keen that the project be open to international participation.

Nepalese authorities recently announced the APECF MoU had been scrapped, a move calculated at addressing India's

concerns. On November 9, Prachanda met un Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and convinced him to head the Lumbini project. However, APEC is still not entirely out of the project. Kiraty, a Prachanda acolyte, took the somewhat unusual step of inviting the Chinese NGO to register itself in Nepal. Senior APECF officials have since been shuttling between Kathmandu and Beijing.

Why is an atheist communist state pushing a development project at the birthplace of the founder of the world's third largest religion? Beijing, which for the first time in 2006 officially described Buddhism as a peaceful 'ancient Chinese religion' and has held two World Buddhist Forums, apparently continues to seek legitimacy from the Buddhists, says Ranade.

In an attempt to prevent China from monopolising the project, India has suggested that Lumbini be included in the Buddhist tourist circuit along with Sarnath, Kapilavastu and Gaya. Kiraty says Nepal is yet to decide on the proposal. India is one of the largest foreign aid donors to Nepal, providing an estimated Rs 160 crore annually. It is, however, only a fraction of an over Rs 6,000 crore that India has spent on Afghanistan since 2001. Earlier this year, India's Ministry of External Affairs pledged Rs 3,000 crore to build four integrated checkpoints, a 1,500-km road network through 33 districts of Nepal and a 184-km broad-gauge rail link between the two countries.

China has been matching Indian aid with cheque-book diplomacy. Since 2009, it has doubled the quantum of aid, providing Nepal \$22 million annu-

ally (Rs 110 crore). In March this year, General Chen Bingde, visiting chief of the PLA announced a \$20 million (Rs 100 crore) aid package for the Nepalese army.

China's interest in the Himalayan country is geo-strategic. It is suspicious of Nepal's population of 20,000 Tibetan refugees. China sees the Dalai Lama and not the US or India as its main enemy, says an Indian official. Nepal provides the largest escape route for Tibetan refugees into India. China's new ambassador to Kathmandu, Yang Houlan, has directly pushed Chinese projects with the government. We have information that our oldest and nearest friend Nepal is turning into a playground for anti-China activities, the envoy warned before Bhattarai's October 21 Delhi visit. The self-immolations by monks have seen the Chinese intensify its crack down.

There has been a political power vacuum in Nepal since the monarchy's abolition in 2008. China is trying to fill up that gap and neutralise Indian influence, says Yubaraj Ghimire, journalist and political analyst.

We have been negligent about the neighbourhood, says former raw chief Vikram Sood. So it is only natural that someone else is willing to walk in, he adds. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is likely to visit Kathmandu early in 2012. It will be the first state visit by an Indian Prime Minister since 1996. Clearly, China's trans-Himalayan gambit has roused Delhi from its stupor.

Sandeep Unnithan
India Today,
December 5, 2011

Siam: Thai Floods' Political Damage

Yingluck's popularity may be washing away

Although Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra is being criticized for her failures in tackling Bangkok's massive floods, three months of thunderstorms and decades of poor preparation are mostly to blame.

Certainly, however, the floods, the worst in five decades, have dissolved the heavily scripted can-do image created by Yingluck's brother, the former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. It may have been a tactical error to surround Bangkok with makeshift floodwalls in the vain attempt to divert millions of cubic meters of water outside the perimeter, seeking to save middle-class urbanites who voted in large numbers for the Democrat Party in elections earlier this year. The premier and her Pheu Thai Party government were inundating the rural poor who delivered the Thaksin-backed government to power in July national elections. Opponents are expected to use the management of floods and the resulting losses against the government in future elections. Government officials have repeatedly offered contradictory statements, assuring people that they were safe, and then advising them to flee for their lives.

Yingluck didn't help her image when she earlier visited victims who were struggling to survive after Thailand's destroyed their meager livelihoods. She wore colorful plaid, luxury brand Burberry rain boots—reportedly priced at about US\$225 in America—and posted the photo on

her Facebook page, attracting critics and defenders arguing about her behavior. Her personal wealth was recently declared at US\$18 million.

The failed tactic of turning Bangkok into a virtual island—the floodgates were opened on Oct. 20 when the battle was lost—was designed to protect it from a relentless flow of brown fluid, strewn with garbage and chemicals, all flushing alongside the capital and dumping into the nearby Gulf of Thailand.

It hasn't worked. Yingluck announced on Oct. 20 that Bangkok could not be entirely protected after its extensive eastern suburbs were sacrificed to the floods to relieve incoming water pressure on the city's northern flank.

"Flood waters are coming from every direction and we cannot control them because it's a huge amount of water," Yingluck said in a televised address. "We will try to warn people," so they can evacuate, she said. "This problem is very overwhelming. It is a national crisis, so I hope to get cooperation from everybody."

It is estimated by officials that 450 million cubic meters of water are rushing into the Gulf of Thailand every day although the accumulated runoff is expected to continue to rise. It is expected that it will take 40 days for the waters to subside.

The floods, which swamped a third of the country, so far have killed 320 people, put foreign factories out of commission and rendered thousands of people homeless. Despite what is re-

garded by critics as her poor management of the monsoon-swollen rivers, Yingluck is not solely to blame. She heads a lackluster cabinet mostly picked by her brother, and a coalition of squabbling parties. She also faces her worst political enemy, the Democrat Party, which dominates Bangkok's local administration including the governor, who took a central role in trying to protect the capital and has also come under criticism.

The crisis may also partly rehabilitate the Thai army among some Thais, however, because troops were widely seen working in deep water to erect barriers, rescue stranded people, and perform other difficult tasks. (The military's image was badly damaged by its role in brutal suppression of Red Shirt demonstrators—who backed Pheu Thai in the election.

But the extensive destruction is mostly due to the fact that successive governments, headed by various political parties, have neglected to build enough canals, dikes and sluices across the country, and failed to sufficiently dredge rivers and create other ways for annual rains to drain, despite warnings from environmentalists.

Bangkok is a busy river port alongside the Chao Phraya River, with an average elevation of six feet above sea level, making its streets a frequent target for floods.

"People just outside the capital were asking why they should not pull down barriers that kept much of Bangkok dry," *The Nation* newspaper reported.

More rain drenched Bangkok on Oct. 20 as the capital's 12 million people braced for the possibility that other neighborhoods could be suddenly inundated from the north.

Pheu Thai isn't the first government to divert incoming water away from Bangkok. Previous governments have done it,—including last year, causing a similar outcry from people who watched helplessly as their property was deliberately inundated to protect the capital.

Previous governments also allowed cities, industrial zones, highways and other infrastructure to be constructed where floods naturally drain, blocking the water so it spilled onto heavily populated areas. Decades of extensive deforestation have stripped the countryside of natural cover, and dams allegedly have been mismanaged.

Multinationals have been lured to Thailand to profit from low wages and other cheap costs, but their factories and warehouses have been devastated in the current floods because they are located in the Chao Phraya River

Basin. Shocked investors have watched as swirling liquid drowned several sprawling, investor-friendly, low-lying "industrial parks" after breaching insufficient barriers. In some of the industrial areas, the water is three meters deep. More than 14,000 factories have been wrecked by floods across 20 provinces, displacing more than 660,000 workers, according to the Labor Welfare Department's director-general, Arthit Iso.

The worst-affected industrial zones are 80 km. north of Bangkok, where three rivers converge at the ancient capital of Ayutthaya. Multinationals which suspended or slowed operations due to the floods in Ayutthaya include Canon, Ford, Honda, Isuzu, Nikon, Seagate Technology, Sony, Toyota and Western Digital.

"The company now expects that the flooding of its Thailand facilities, combined with flood damage to the company's supply chain in Thailand, will have significant impact on the company's overall operations and its ability to meet customer demand

for its products in the December quarter," California-based Western Digital said in a statement on Oct. 17.

"I think this is the biggest loss for Japan's overseas investment," Japan's ambassador to Thailand, Seiji Kokima, was quoted as saying.

Thailand's main Suvarnabhumi International Airport is vulnerable because it is on Bangkok's eastern outskirts and built on swampland. Life in much of Bangkok's dry areas has meanwhile remained mostly normal, with people shopping in lavish malls, dining out, and going to work while worriedly stocking up on essential items.

Richard S Ehrlich is a Bangkok-based journalist from San Francisco, California. He has reported news from Asia since 1978 and is co-author of the non-fiction book of investigative journalism, *Hello My Big Big Honey! Love Letters to Bangkok Bar Girls and Their Revealing Interviews*. His website is www.asia-correspondent.110mb.com

Siam:

The Hazard in Helping

Leading the Supreme Patriarch's flood-relief effort, Phra Anil Sakya has seen compassion corrupted

Phra Anil Sakya requested five minutes at an international Buddhist conference in Guangdong, China, to describe the terrible flooding in Thailand and Cambodia. The monk had no idea he would in turn unleash a deluge — a surge of compassion from around Asia.

"Dharma happens without

borders, languages or religions," says Phra Anil, assistant secretary to His Holiness the Supreme Patriarch and deputy dean of social sciences at Mahamakut Buddhist University at Bangkok's Wat Bovoranives Vihara.

From the beginning of the flood crisis in Thailand, Phra Anil has led a team of volunteers from the Supreme Patriarch's secretariat that visits the victims to distribute essential goods donated by neighbouring countries.

The Supreme Patriarch's Compassionate Relief Project has seen "survival packs" dispersed in 43 communities.

Chinese delegates at the Guangdong conference promptly dispatched two vans full of medicine to Cambodia and made a donation to Thailand, Phra Anil says. The Burmese sangha became the first group to make a donation through the Thai embassy in Rangoon.

Yee Lai Lin, Malaysia's

representative on the conference's organising panel, helped establish centres to collect goods and cash at three temples in Kuala Lumpur—Chetawan, Buddhist Maha Vihara and Srilankan Maha Vihara.

With the help of Seagull Logistics and its clients in Malaysia, six shipping containers were filled with thousands of bottles of drinking water and tonnes of food and other items and sent to Wat Bovoranives Vihara.

As the trucks arrived, Thai volunteers separated the goods to assemble thousands of survival packs for Thais—including Muslims—and Burmese migrant workers living here.

Phra Anil soon discovered that the Muslim recipients could use only about 10 per cent of the packages' contents—the rest was haram, barred by Islamic strictures, so he and his volunteers quickly began preparing halal survival packs on behalf of the Malaysian donors.

Nevertheless, he says, "I told them that religion is in their mind—religion comes after the stomach is full."

Lest anyone on his team show reluctance to assist the Burmese migrants, the monk keeps reminding everyone of the important contribution the labourers are making to the Thai economy.

"What I always tell people who volunteer is to be careful about their own mind and the way they treat the flood victims," Phra Anil says. "It's only human nature that givers often feel they have some power over the recipients and thus become egocentric."

He saw news footage of volunteers getting angry in chaotic situations when frustrated flood



Phra Anil hands out flood-relief bags in Lam Luk Ka, Pathum Thani.

victims became belligerent. He saw impatient volunteers violently throwing relief packages at the victims.

So Phra Anil feels compelled to remind his team also about the word "compassion" in the name of the Supreme Patriarch's relief project. They must always follow the Supreme Patriarch's calm, caring example, he tells them.

Phra Anil points out that this relief mission is nothing new for the Supreme Patriarch.

In 1970—fully 19 years before his elevation to that role—Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara was led efforts to bring Thai assistance to victims of a tropical cyclone that struck Bangladesh (then East Pakistan).

And Phra Anil was at the Supreme Patriarch's side in 1983 as he provided comfort to flood victims in Bangkok's Minburi district. In 2008 the Supreme Patriarch's secretariat sent caravans of relief items to victims of Cyclone Nargis in Burma.

"With the Supreme Patriarch, we have a very good

example to follow," the monk says.

But he wants to emphasise to all volunteers and those planning to get involved that, as much as the current crisis is an opportunity to show compassion, compassion is easily corrupted by the lure of fame and power.

Note the name

Phra Anil Sakya was born in Nepal to the Buddha's own clan, known as Sakya, or Shakya. In 1974, at age 14, he became a novice and was sent to study the dharma at Wat Bovoranives Vihara in Bangkok.

In 1980 he was ordained a monk with Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara as his preceptor.

Two years later he earned a honours bachelor's degree in sociology at Mahamakut Buddhist University. In 1987 he received a master's in anthropology from Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu.

In 1994 he was awarded a master of philosophy degree in social anthropology from Christ's College at Britain's

Cambridge University. In 2000 he gained his PhD, also in social anthropology, at Brunel University in Uxbridge, England.

Phra Anil is assistant secretary to the Supreme Patriarch, a

lecturer and deputy dean of social sciences at Mahamakut Buddhist University, a lecturer at Mahidol University's College of Religious Studies, and visiting professor at Santa Clara University in the

US and academic institutions in Australia.

Subhatra Bhumiprabhas
The Nation,
November 25, 2011

Siam: Who Holds the Strings to the Thai Royal Purse?

When the bailiff's seal was removed from the private jet of Thailand's crown prince this week, the Thai government put behind it an embarrassing episode that played out on the tarmac of the Munich airport, a favorite destination for the globe-trotting prince.

The unusual standoff between Thailand and Germany, which began four weeks ago with the impounding of the prince's Boeing 737, was resolved on Tuesday. The Thai government issued a bank guarantee for 38 million, or \$54 million, that satisfied the demands of debt collectors in a longstanding contract dispute over a Bangkok elevated highway project that involved a German construction company.

"Our tenacity has paid off," said Werner Schneider, the liquidator who had obtained the order to seize the jet.

But left unanswered was the question of who, precisely, owns the plane.

Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn had no connection to the contract dispute that led to the impoundment, yet German lawyers argued that the jet belonged to the Thai government and thus was fair game as collat-

eral. Thai officials still maintain that the jet belongs to the crown prince, not the government.

For those who study the Thai monarchy, the case underlined a long-unresolved question about the privy purse and the public purse in Thailand—and, ultimately, whether certain assets are held by crown or by country.

At issue are an estimated 1.1 trillion baht, or \$37 billion, in real estate holdings alone, plus substantial stakes in two of Thailand's most successful companies. But the agency that manages the assets, the Crown Property Bureau, is under no obligation to detail the holdings or how profits are spent, according to the author of a landmark study of the bureau.

In recent years, pressure has been building for more transparency, said Porphant Ouyyanont, an associate professor of economics at Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, who in 2007 published the first detailed study of the Crown Property Bureau's assets. That pressure, Mr. Porphant says, is partly a result of the recent political turmoil that has emboldened Thais to be more forceful in confronting the country's elite and ques-

tioning the tenets of the political system.

"It's very difficult to keep secrets anymore," Mr. Porphant said.

Thailand has been trying to distinguish between assets owned by king and country since the 19th century, says Sulak Sivaraksa, a historian and well-known social commentator. Control over crown properties tilted toward the government following a coup in 1932 that ended the absolute monarchy in the country. But the ascendancy of the palace in the subsequent decades, due in large part to the popularity of King Bhumibol Adulyadej, helped to restore royal control over the possessions.

Britain, whose constitutional monarchy inspired many of the institutions in Thailand today, resolved the question of crown lands two and a half centuries ago, during the reign of George III. Control over royal assets was transferred to the government, and profits were paid to the treasury. This year, the Crown Estate, as the British agency handling royal lands is known, sent £230.9 million, or \$374 million, in profits to the government.

By contrast, a 1948 law in Thailand that is still in force says that the Crown Property Bureau's income can be spent "at the King's pleasure."

Much remains unknown about the bureau's assets. The specific tracts of land it owns in Bangkok have not been made public, according to Mr. Porphant. Nor is it clear exactly how the bureau's significant revenues are spent, he said. Through its shares of Siam Cement Group and Siam Commercial Bank, the bureau received dividends from 2010 equivalent to more than \$200 million.

Officials at the Crown Property Bureau did not respond to e-mailed questions. But in its 2010 annual report, the bureau stresses its charitable works and its role in preserving and maintaining "historic sites that have royal and religious significance." The bureau also calculates that 93 percent of its landholdings are rented out as government offices, to nonprofit organizations, or to poor or middle-income families "at rates much lower than the market price."

In 2008, when *Forbes* magazine ranked King Bhumibol as the world's richest royal, the Thai government strongly protested, saying the magazine had conflated the king's personal wealth with assets managed by the bureau.

"Crown property is state property and public property," the bureau said in the annual report. The bureau has always operated "for the benefit of the public," the report said. "But many people still miscomprehend this."

That statement drew a sharp response from one of Thailand's leading academic authorities on

the monarchy, Somsak Jeamteerasakul, who said the bureau was distorting facts.

"No government has any power to control or manage crown property," Mr. Somsak, a professor at Thammasat University in Bangkok, wrote in a response published on a popular Thai news Web site, Prachatai.

(Income from the crown properties is separate from the approximately \$350 million in taxpayer money allocated for the royal household, royal-led development projects and other expenses related to the royal family. The king and his family also have personal assets, a category that the government says includes the prince's Boeing 737.)

Mr. Somsak argues that in a constitutional monarchy, "crown" property should belong to the state and be "subject to the control and oversight of the government elected by the people."

Such public outspokenness about the monarchy is rare in Thailand, both because King Bhumibol commands widespread respect after more than six decades on the throne and because of the increased use of a Thai law that carries a prison sentence of as much as 15 years for anyone convicted of defaming, insulting or threatening leading members of the royal family.

The head of the country's powerful military, Prayuth Chan-ocha, has led a campaign of shoring up loyalty toward the monarchy. "Don't be skeptical in your loyalty," the army chief told a group of young people last month. "If you are skeptical, you cannot be considered a Thai person."

In May, the military charged

Mr. Somsak, the professor, with *lèse-majesté*, a case that centers on comments Mr. Somsak made about a princess and that is still pending.

Yet in the twilight of King Bhumibol's reign—the 83-year-old king is ailing and has been hospitalized for almost two years—there appears to be a movement toward more openness over questions surrounding the king's role in society.

Anand Panyarachun, a former prime minister who is seen as one of the country's leading statesmen, said in a television interview in June that Thais must be more prepared to tolerate dissent toward the monarchy.

"I can accept that as long as there's no persecution of the monarchy," he said.

A group of about 350 Thai writers signed an open letter in May calling for more constructive discussion of the monarchy and denouncing what they described as use of the *lèse-majesté* law as a political tool.

"It is time for Thai society to distinguish between attempts to overthrow the institution and the debates which will lead to long-term social stability and protection of freedom of expression under a democratic system with the King as head of the state," the letter said.

As for the specific question of the prince's plane, a German court was to rule on its ownership in September. But with the aircraft now back in Thai possession, the case is closed.

Thomas Fuller
International Herald Tribune
August 13-14, 2011

Tibet: The Trouble Brewing Inside Tibet

An unprecedented series of suicides erodes Beijing's repressive policies, hinting at a new wave of unrest

What is responsible for the unprecedented recent spate of Tibetans setting themselves afire? Over the past eight months, nine monks, former monks and a nun have immolated themselves. At least five have died, in what they have said is an attempt to send a message about dramatically deteriorating relations between Beijing and Tibetans.

Tibetan Buddhists say growing religious repression has gripped the Ngaba (sometimes called Aba) prefecture of China's eastern Sichuan Province. The most recent incidents have occurred in Kirti Gompa, one of the largest Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and the site of frequent unrest over the past three years. Ngaba County is in a state of siege, activists say.

China accuses the Dalai Lama of encouraging separatism, saying that the self-immolations are part of a plan to violently overthrow Chinese rule in Tibet. Beijing has angrily rejected any foreign interference in regard to Tibet, insisting that Tibet is an integral part of the People's Republic of China. Authorities have imposed a news blackout and restricted access to the region, making it difficult to independently verify any information coming out of the Tibetan areas.

"In the wake of the incidents, overseas Tibet independence forces and the Dalai Lama group



did not criticize the cases but on the contrary glorified such cases and incited more people to follow suit," a Chinese government spokeswoman, Jiang Yu, said at a daily news briefing in Beijing. "As we know, such splittist activity at the cost of human life is violence and terrorism in disguise."

The latest self-immolation came on Oct. 17 when Tenzin Wangmo died outside the Dechen Chokorling nunnery. The 20-year-old nun before setting herself ablaze called for religious freedom, an independent Tibet and the return of their exiled spiritual head, the 14th Dalai Lama, the leader of Tibetan Buddhism.

"That Tibetans feel they must resort to such a form of protest is illustrative of their desperation in the face of China's brutal and oppressive policies," said Stephanie Bridgen, director of Free Tibet, a London-based protest NGO. "These young Tibetans (all are under the age of 30, and many are teenagers) are willing to give their lives in order to draw international attention to China's occupation of Tibet, one of the world's greatest and long-

est-standing human rights crises."

Observers believe the deadly pattern is linked to Chinese authorities' strict policies and in particular the imposition of regulations in the Kirti monasteries to force 'patriotic education' onto Tibetan monks. The monks are being urged to sign declarations supporting the Chinese Communist Party. Reports suggest the authorities have made it all but impossible for the monks to go about their normal religious lives. They have reportedly been told to slander the Dalai Lama, which has triggered fresh debate over human rights inside Tibet itself.

The other likely reason is the impasse since January 2010 over talks between the Dalai Lama's envoys and Beijing authorities. There is also fear over the succession of the current Dalai Lama. Beijing has announced its intention to choose its own reincarnation of the religious leader. In recent months a verbal war between the exiled Dalai Lama and the Communist regime has entered a new high.

At that, it is unsure if the reincarnation tradition will continue. Last month, the 76-year-old religious leader said that when he is 'about 90' he will consult the 'high Lamas of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions, the Tibetan public, and other concerned people who follow Tibetan Buddhism, and re-evaluate whether the institution of the Dalai Lama should continue or not.'

"Bear in mind that, apart

from the reincarnation recognized through such legitimate methods, no recognition or acceptance should be given to a candidate chosen for political ends by anyone, including those in the People's Republic of China," the Buddhist prelate's statement added.

"There ... may be frustration contributing to the self-immolations: the inability of the Tibetan government in exile to attain negotiations with the Chinese government and therefore the lack of significant changes in the relationship between the state and monasteries, such as Kirti, where protest has been prevalent," said Tibet expert Barry Sautman, an associate professor of social science from the Hong Kong University of Science & Technology.

Although there is no general suppression of religion in China, Sautman said, there is interference with religious practices where there is state concern about separatism, particularly in Tibet and Xinjiang.

"There is a heavy security presence in most Tibetan areas, but the self-immolations have been largely confined to monks at one large monastery, Kirti Gompa, and associated small monasteries and nunneries," he said.

"China's policies in Tibet are aimed at cementing China's occupation of Tibet," the Free Tibet group told *Asia Sentinel*. "The Chinese Communist Party's ruthless determination to integrate Tibet and Tibetans into the 'Motherland' is the root of the human rights violations, from arbitrary detentions, torture, lengthy imprisonment for 'splittism,' to violations of free-

dom of religion — including the imposition of patriotic re-education campaigns in monasteries such as Kirti, violations of freedom of expression, the systematic erosion of Tibetan as a language for public life. The Chinese regime works relentlessly to enforce loyalty to the Motherland and to eradicate loyalty to a distinct Tibetan identity which is seen as a threat to the State."

The first reported self-immolation came of March 16, just after the third anniversary of 2008 riots when Phuntsok, a 21-year-old monk from Kirti monastery, set himself afire outside a hotel and died of his injuries. The pace began to pick up in August, with the death of another monk. In September, two young monks, both from Kirti monastery, were hospitalized in critical condition. Their whereabouts and condition are unknown. Five have immolated themselves in October, with three dying. The whereabouts and condition of the other two are unknown.

"Most Tibetans live in fear because of suppressive and unfair government policies but they dare not speak up," Tibetan writer and activist Tsering Woeser was quoted as saying. "Tibetan Buddhists can't use violence to protest; therefore they can only do violence to themselves, such as self-immolation, to make people pay attention to their situation. This is not suicide; this is sacrifice in order to draw the world's attention."

In Dharamsala, the exile capital of Tibetans, the Dalai Lama led prayers for the victims on Oct. 19 as Tibetans tended butter lamps. Top lamas and other Tibetan settlements in exile also

commemorated the self-immolations. After the prayers, young Tibetans took to the streets shouting anti-China slogans and burning China's flag. The exiled head of one of the Kirti monastery's sister complexes, established in Dharamsala, has described the situation in the monastery as a "virtual prison." Elsewhere hunger strikes, candlelight vigils and protests were reported. Social networking websites are buzzing, calling for a free Tibet and trashing Beijing's policies.

The elected political head of Tibetan exiles, Lobsang Sangay also paid tribute to the lives lost and expressed solidarity during the prayer service in which he urged China to loosen its control on Tibetan religious freedom and called on the United Nations to send fact-finding teams to the Himalayan region.

"We would like to appeal to the Chinese government to immediately stop its repressive policies in Tibet, and to resolve the issue of Tibet through peaceful means," Sangay said in a prepared statement. "Through its propaganda, Beijing shows a different image, but in reality China practices colonialism and systematic destruction of the unique Tibetan culture, religion, language, and environment because of which Tibetans have peacefully demonstrated time and again."

China has invested heavily in developing Tibet and other areas with large Tibetan populations in the recent years, including rebuilding monasteries damaged during the Cultural Revolution. China on Oct. 20 also opened a Tibet Buddhist Theological Institute, which aims to promote the study of Tibetan Buddhism,

in the Tibet autonomous region. More than 600 people, including 150 newly-enrolled students as well as Buddhist delegates and government officials, attended a grand opening ceremony held in the regional capital of Lhasa, according to the state-owned news service Xinhua.

However major world powers and human right have shown serious concerns to the recent incidents believing the tension have reached a critical state. The US State Department in an Oct. 20 press briefing said that: "These acts clearly represent anger and frustration with regard to Tibetan human rights, including religious freedom, inside China. We urge Chinese leaders to address counterproductive policies in Tibetan areas that have created tensions; and to protect Tibet's unique religious,

cultural and linguistic identity," it said.

A German Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Oct. 21 that China should 'shape its policies to reduce the existing tension' and also urged the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader to use his influence to stop the young nuns and monks from killing themselves.

The New York based Human Rights Watch indicates from its latest report that the conflict is partly a result of heavy-handed tactics by the security forces. Beijing's spending on 'public security' in Ngaba region is 4.5 times higher the amount spent on keeping the peace in other parts of Sichuan.

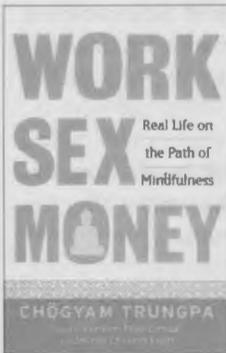
Tseten Peldon Zöchbauer, an exiled Tibetan living in Vienna, says: "If the bravest (those self-immolated Tibetans inside Tibet) leave, who'll resist? I think by

now most Tibetans prefer to die than to become Chinese but it is time to unite and bring the democratic world to take responsibility by urging a fact finding delegation entering most urgently to Tibet.

And while the more the Dalai Lama and Beijing are at odds given the impasse over Tibet talks and over the incarnation, the more will remain fear among the Tibetans whose fidelity for their religious head is unquestionable. Their responses of support by such demonstrations and actions appeal to the world to understand the gravity of situation, inside Tibet.

Saransh Sehgal is based in the Tibetan exile community of Dharamsala, India. He can be reached at saranshsehgal@gmail.com

Recommended Readings



Work, Sex, Money

Real Life on the Path of Mindfulness

By Chögyam Trungpa

Edited by Carolyn Rose Gimian and Sherab Chödzin Kohn

First Edition Printed in the

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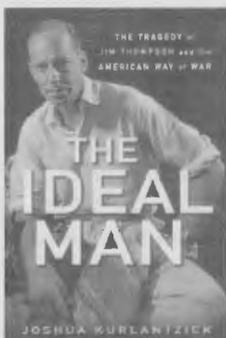
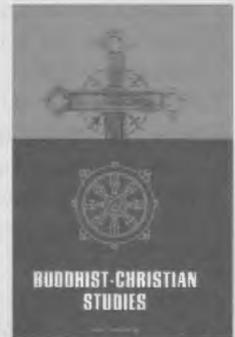
Published by Shambhala Publications, Inc.

Buddhist-Christian Studies

Volume 31, 2011

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Published by University of Hawai'i Press



The Ideal Man

The Tragedy of Jim Thompson and the American Way of War

By Joshua Kurlantzick

Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

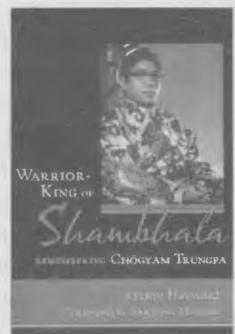
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Warrior-King of Shambhala Remembering Chögyam Trungpa

By Jeremy Hayward

Foreword by Sakyong Mipham

Published by Wisdom Publications ©2008



Letter from the Secretariat Office

Dear INEB members and readers,

We are so happy to have hosted Buddhist activists from all around the world at the 2011 INEB Conference. It was an impressive event to have over 300 Buddhist activists come together to share and learn from each other, as well as to have time to meditate and reflect on the mission of social transformation. The conference topic of 'The Future of Buddhism' was discussed, debated and contemplated in many forms; from panel discussions, lively question and answer sessions, and 'break out' topic sharing among small groups. Many strong friendships were formed across generations and experiences, truly embodying the values of INEB and the spirit of *kalyanamitra*.

The 1st International Buddhist Art Gathering at Wat Thai Buddhagaya held prior to the conference was attended by thirty artists from eight countries, with the aim to share and contribute their creative art by connecting to the root of Buddhism, which originally started from Bodhgaya. We are grateful to the ICCR & Ministry of Tourism of India to support for this event, as well as the Khyentse Foundation, who deeply value the activities of the network. The art work was transported to New York City for the INEB Buddhist Art Gala and exhibition, which included talks and an auction of the art work. It has been inspiring to expand the reach and appreciation of the art work internationally, and also successful for raising funds to continue this project. Tentatively, we plan to host another art gathering in the Himalayan region, Sri Lanka, as well as Thailand.

The International Youth Volunteer workshop, also preceding the conference, planted seeds of enthusiasm and inspiration among the Buddhist youth who continue to connect and deepen their bodhisattva vows in practice. A number of action plans were made and updates of their activities will be communicated as they take place. We are so grateful to Khyentse Foundation for financial support for this activity, and the value, power and commitment of the young people, who are the future of INEB.

Now, INEB is moving forward on several programs in order to follow up the needs from the partners and respond to local and global issues. Below is the letter from Harsha written after the INEB New York Gala that clearly expresses the areas we are working on in detail:

Dear all,

We just finished a very fruitful program in New York. I joined Ajahn Sulak and Moo for the last two days of the trip and we were all together for the Art Gala.

In our meetings, discussions, and the Gala, there was a lot of enthusiasm. The exhibition hall of the Tibet House was full for the Gala, and Ajahn Sulak received big applause from the crowd. Everyone was impressed by the Buddhist art and some pieces were sold. The balance were shifted to another gallery and our partners there will work on online sales. Lisa Bratt volunteered to organize this event, and she has done a great, great job. I'd like to thank her on behalf of all of us.

This event was organized in a hurry because the artists were requesting some international exposure. A few of us worked with the Secretariat to organize the Gala in New York. We did this so that the artists would feel encouraged and recognized. Because the arrangements were made so

quickly, it was not properly announced, and a few of our most active members in the US were not able to come. This was our mistake, and I'm very sorry for it. We really missed them on this beautiful evening.

Through the Gala, we met many friends of Ajahn Sulak. All of them were happy to see that INEB was getting stronger and reaching out. They renewed their relationships and said they look forward to working together in the future. There were also representatives of different organizations that came to show their solidarity. It was very encouraging to see how many people are looking for a socially engaged Buddhist community and want the network to be stronger so we can face challenges as a group. This is a good opportunity for us to look at building coalitions.

With this in mind, Ajahn Sulak and some of his close friends have proposed that we have a seminar in the US, probably in combination with the full launch of the Right Livelihood Fund. As agreed in the AC/EC meeting, the core team is finalizing a business plan that will include more details on management systems and operations. A few AC/EC members will be in Bangkok the first week of January. We will take a look at the plan and help see that the implementation plan and registration process are clear. If all those things are ready, we might look for a date in the middle of 2012 to launch the fund in NYC. On our trip, there were a few investors who spoke to Ajahn Sulak and committed to join and invest, but it's important to wait until all aspects are clear, internal capacity is developed, and everyone has the same understanding.

While he was in the US, Ajahn also delivered an address at Princeton University. Some senior academics came and there were discussions with representatives from a few other universities, including Columbia. Moo will be following up with these groups and their students who are interested in doing exposure visits to learn more about our network and experience.

We also met individuals and groups that are interested in the climate change conference and wanted more information. I will meet with the organizers when I am back in Sri Lanka and will follow up.

Matteo has agreed to start working on a new biography with Ajahn Sulak. He will need to spend most of the coming year traveling and doing research work. The Secretariat will work out a costing. It's really important that we all contribute so it can be launched on Ajahn's 80th birthday.

The art program will be continued with the experience we gained. We have an excellent female artist from our network who will be developing the follow up program with us. Now we have in-house expertise. We will be sending you the strategy and future plan soon.

So that is my brief update. I hope all of you will assist the Secretariat in whatever way possible to see that these initiatives will be successful.

Thank you.

Harsha

Yours in Dhamma,

Somboon Chungprampree (Moo)
Executive Secretary
secretariat@inebnetwork.org
www.inebnetwork.org

P.S. You may go to www.inebnetwork.org to see every issue of *Seeds of Peace* from the earliest volume.

Sharing with Those Who Suffered

Sendai, Japan, 4 November 2011 — “When I heard about the earthquake and tsunami—and then also the serious danger due to nuclear reactivity—in this area last March, I really felt very, very sad,” His Holiness said, on his first stop after arriving in Sendai, the large town north of Tokyo near which the earthquake of March 11th had its epicenter. “Such suffering, beyond our control! Also, as a Buddhist, I felt sadness for Japan, a Buddhist country. Thirdly, because I have visited Japan many times, I have many Japanese friends. So therefore I felt it was my duty to pay a visit to share in your suffering.”

At the end of April, on his way to America, His Holiness had stayed in Tokyo for a few extra days, he explained, to the group of 30 or so media people who had gathered for a small press conference, “and I had the opportunity then to pray for those who tragically died and to express my condolences to their families. And then, in Gokokuji temple in Tokyo, I met one person who came from this area, and I promised him that as soon as I had the opportunity, I wanted to visit the region where this tragedy took place.”

Thus, His Holiness, on the sixth full day of his Japanese tour, set the tone for his journey to the areas of Sendai and Fukushima-ken, which suffered so terribly earlier in the year.

He had begun his day in the radiant, red-mapled quiet of Koyasan, the mountain center of Shingon Buddhism, and, after taking leave of his hosts there,



*His Holiness the Dalai Lama greets well-wishers as he departs Koyasan for Sendai, Japan, on November 4, 2011.
Photo/Kimimasa Mayama*

had drive to Osaka for lunch, and to fly to Sendai. When he arrived at the airport in Sendai, he was greeted by representatives of the Sendai Buddhist Association, clapping as they saw him and saying, in some cases, that they had been praying for him to come.

As he drove into the city, scenes of devastation were everywhere: whole areas had been flattened, high rectangles of scrap metal were gathered along the sides of the road, everywhere tractors were clearing ar-

eas laid waste by the tsunami. Even in high buildings in the center of town, cracks could be seen from the earthquake. Only a few months after the earthquake and the tsunami had hit, just as Sendai began to recover, a typhoon swept through, causing further destruction. Now, making his first trip to the remote, largely rural Tohoku area—Japan’s “far north”—His Holiness explained a little to the press about his reasons for coming, but said that he wanted to reserve most of his thoughts for his visit and prayers the next day.

“The tragedy has already happened,” he stressed. “Now, instead of too much sadness, we should try to translate that sadness into enthusiasm. And find the strength to rebuild your town.”

As members of the press asked him about the recent self-immolations in Tibet, about the future of the Dalai Lama incarnation, about what the earthquake means in terms of Bud-



*His Holiness the Dalai Lama meets with members of the press on his arrival in Sendai, Japan, on November 4, 2011.
Photo/Tenzin Choejor/OHHDL*

dhism, he spoke briefly of the law of causality, and reminded the gathering that he had completely handed over political responsibility to Tibet's elected political leadership in March. It was now up to the Kalon Tripa to answer some of these questions.

As for the future of his incarnation, he said, "The final decision will be taken when I'm 85, 86, 87. So there's no hurry. I would like to fully consult with leaders of Tibetan Buddhism, not only from Tibet but from all Buddhist countries that follow the Tibetan tradition, which



His Holiness the Dalai Lama waves to members of the media as he leaves the press meeting held in Sendai, Japan, on November 4, 2011.

Photo/Tenzin Choejor/OHHDL

means Mongolia and the whole Himalayan range. Then I can

come to a final decision according to consensus."

"I can't take the sorrow of the people here away," he concluded, asked about what he could truly "share" with the people of Sendai. "But simply mixing with them, exchanging my own deep feelings, that's what I can share. When you're going through some difficulty, if your friend goes out of his way to come and see you and express some kind of condolence, that kind of sharing can mean a lot."

November 4, 2011

The Economics of Wellbeing

The world is on an unsustainable economic path

It has been a challenging summer for those of us who had hoped the economy would settle down to something like normality. A tropical storm hit New York, the euro has struggled to survive the European debt crisis, major British cities were the scene of rioting and looting, and millions in the drought-parched Horn of Africa faced starvation.

These may seem like very different events. Yet all of them, in their own way, are symptoms of the larger crisis testing our conventional understanding of how economics works. A new economics, one that puts people and planet first, is necessary and also achievable.

The global economy as it has developed thus far has four systemic, interlinked problems, what I call the four U's. It is unsustainable, unfair, unstable, and it's making us unhappy.

Unsustainable: We are running out of planet. We face the serious risk of a temperature rise

of 4 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels, with the extinctions of species and other problems that go with it.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment of a couple of years ago, which looked at trends in the various life-support systems of the planet, showed that 15 of the 25 major ecosystems, the life-support systems the whole planet depends on, are in decline or serious decline. This includes fresh water, topsoil, pollination systems and many others. The problem is much wider than climate change.

If everybody in the world consumed resources at the rate that people do in the UK, we would need three planets to sustain them. If everybody lived at the US level, we would need five. Because we have only one, it is impossible for everybody to achieve these lifestyles. We must change. Unless we do, we can look forward to scarcities and ballooning prices.

Unfair: The second major problem stems from the first. At

the beginning of the 20th century, the richest 20 percent on the planet were between five and seven times richer than the poorest 20 percent. At the end of the 20th century, the ratio had moved to 75:1.

Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett's book *The Spirit Level* shows convincingly that the biggest driver of many social ills — such as crime and drug use among many others — is not poverty or even unemployment. It is inequality. The degree of inequality in a country corresponds closely to all sorts of social ills within that country, from the prison population to the number of unwanted teenage pregnancies to drug use.

Neoliberal economists talk about wealth "trickling" down to the poorest as the economy grew. What we are seeing now is wealth being sucked up from all sections of society to the very rich.

Unstable: We need our economic systems to be both resilient and efficient. Conventional

economics is bad at delivering resilience — because the discipline lacks easy measures to the quality and therefore does not value it.

Because most developed nations have designed their economic systems largely around efficiency, they have minimized safety nets, buffers and firewalls. As a result, the developed countries have systems that are neither efficient nor resilient because they keep on collapsing. The subprime crisis in the US housing market spread throughout the world and nearly brought down the banking system. There are similar crises in Greece and Portugal, and the frequency of unstable events is increasing.

Before the fire that destroyed San Francisco in 1906, all the fire hydrants in the city were filled from one place. Water in one central place flowed through to the different tanks. If there was a fire on Post Street, the water was right there. It was a cost-effective design. The trouble is that, in an earthquake, pipes rupture, the water flows out of the system, and fire spreads through the city. Now each tank in the city is filled separately. Economic systems require similar safety nets and firewalls.

Unhappiness: One of our advisors at the New Economics Institute, author and environmentalist Bill McKibben, said, “More and better are parting company. More income does not equal better lives any more.”

Worse, well-being is actually declining in many of the so-called developed countries. Mental-health problems are increasing rapidly in many places. In English-speaking countries, almost a quarter of the population will suffer some kind of mental illness. We are not happy people.

Putting all four problems

together, it is clear that we are running faster and faster in the direction of unsustainability. We are burning up the planet, and causing huge instability and inequality, with all the associated social problems. We are not making ourselves any happier. It's a stupid path, yet one that's avoidable.

I am an optimist. There are ways through this conundrum, but they will require a systematic rethink of most of our economic orthodoxy, including new incentives, different ways of measurement, and other shifts as well.

Measurement can sound technocratic, but is central to solving the problem, because we tend to get what we measure.

British Prime Minister David Cameron said recently that economic growth was a means to an end, rather than an end in itself, which was in itself a fundamental shift in thinking. That is why his government is beginning to measure well-being, a more meaningful and effective goal for the economy.

Well-being means more than just measuring happiness. The officials we are working with also use the term “flourishing.” This includes not just happiness, but people's relationship with others and, crucially, their sense of purpose in life. It is possible to be happy after taking an illegal substance but in no way is one flourishing!

No economic objective is as fundamental as the percentage of the population who are flourishing, and how that flourishing is distributed throughout the population. Putting those measures at the heart of the new economy means a major shift in what we are trying to achieve.

An economy that has well-being or flourishing at its heart requires two elements: One is the human systems and the in-

stitutions we need to make such goals possible, which will certainly include GDP. The other is the ecosystems, the resources those human systems require to achieve well-being.

That is the new economics of return on capital. And the new economic question for economies of the future is this: How much well-being can you achieve for each unit of natural resources?

This contrasts with the current focus on maximizing financial returns to financial capital. It will still remain necessary to provide sufficient returns to financial capital, but the key goal will become to maximize well-being while preserving national capital. Maximizing well-being will, among other things, involve providing sufficient good jobs and reducing inequality.

That question changes the economic fundamentals. That is why measuring the right qualities will lead to a fundamental rethink of economics and new goals.

Changes in economic understanding tend to go far slower than they should. “Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist,” said John Maynard Keynes.

The sooner we free ourselves from the shackles of defunct economics, the better it will be for all of us.

Stewart Wallis is executive director of the New Economics Foundation in London and a board member of the New Economics Institute in the USA. This is reprinted with permission from the Yale Center for the Study of Globalization.

Mind and Life Institute's 23rd Meeting with the Dalai Lama

This was Mind and Life Institute's 23rd meeting with His Holiness the Dalai Lama over the past quarter of a century: [http:](http://www.mindandlife.org/dialogues/past-conferences/ml23/)



[//www.mindandlife.org/dialogues/past-conferences/ml23/](http://www.mindandlife.org/dialogues/past-conferences/ml23/) The meeting, held in Dharamsala at His Holiness' residence, included top scientists, ethicists, Buddhist scholars, and activists in an exploration of ecology, ethics, and interdependence. It was also attended by His Holiness the Karmapa, many geshe, monks, nuns, and supporters of Mind and Life's endeavors. As always with Mind and Life meetings in Dharamsala, His Holiness was very engaged during the entire five days of intensive presentations. His Holiness the Karmapa also gave an exceptional talk on his view of the environmental crisis and shared why he is so deeply committed to environmental sustainability.

The printed introduction of the meeting is as follows: "The slow meltdown of Earth's capacity to sustain much of life, as we know it, poses an urgent challenge for both spiritual traditions and science. These two ways of knowing have developed distinctive responses, which are potentially synergistic. The goal of the meeting is to provide an opportunity to articulate an engaged environmental ethics. This would include the understanding of interdependence through an examination of the most recent

data on the scientific case for effective ecological action. Furthermore, it will be a unique opportunity to meet with other faith traditions that have arrived at a religious basis for motivating environmental activism. A dialogue between contemplative scholars, activists and ecological scientists could enrich the response to our planetary crisis. Insights from the new thrust in ecological science evoke the deep interconnections between individual choice and planetary consequence as well as through cross-fertilization of ideas and meaningful action among activists working within their own spiritual framework. We will explore many dimensions, from the human-caused deterioration in the global systems that sustain life, and the role each of us plays as seen through the lens of industrial ecology, to a view from Buddhist philosophy and other faith traditions, to the on-the-ground realities faced by ecological activists. Our hope is that this conference will be a significant catalyst for the formulation of new research ideas in these fields and solutions to our planetary crisis."

I felt the arc of the meeting was powerfully conceived and rendered, beginning with a comprehensive introduction by

co-moderator Dan Goleman, where we were introduced to a systems and relational view as a base for our deliberations. This was followed by environmental policy maker Dr. Diana Liverman, who did a striking presentation on the unfolding of the Anthropocene and the "great acceleration" of negative human impacts pushing the earth into danger zones and close to the tipping point of planetary viability; then physician and scientist Dr. Jonathon Patz gave a clear presentation on how human health, and especially the health of the so-called poor, (and I would surmise the health of all species) is contingent on our commitment to consume less, and that we can make small changes that have big effects if we are mindful of the potential outcomes of these changes; this was followed by industrial ecologist Greg Norris' convincing evidence of the interconnected impacts of all products that are manufactured, consumed, and tossed, and that there are huge footprints to deal with, and, as well, handprints that can pull back impacts if we chose to exercise our responsibility through knowing how interdependent we are; ethicist Dr. Clare Palmer's clear and concise presentation on ethical perspectives and

dilemmas led me to realize that no matter what lens we look through, in the end we all have a moral responsibility to live conscientiously and not be blind and avid consumers; Dr. Palmer's presentation was followed by Vajrayana monk Matthieu Ricard's presentation of a powerful case in point about the human consumption of animals and the devastating impact of the so-called "livestock" and fishing industry, both in terms of horrific environmental impacts, from an excess of methane to biodiversity loss, and, at the same time, an undeniable call for compassion in the cruel treatment of other species; then theologian Dr. Sallie McFague's voice rang out with a call for a view of interdependence and self-emptying, what the Christians call kenosis, and the embodiment of principles that move us from belief to action; renowned Buddhist scholar Thupten Jinpa spoke to the Buddhist perspective of view, meditation, and action, and of how Buddhist thinkers have characterized the move from motivation to action, including the role of joy in our practice and service, drawing on the Nalanda tradition and Shantideva in his talk; economic psychologist Dr. Elke Weber shared with His Holiness the current psychological understanding of moving from motivation to action, and she broke important ground as she explored why we don't take action, touching on the cognitive, attentional, informational, and motivational deficits that render us indifferent, and the positive conditions that can prime effective action; His Holiness then spoke of the relevance of ahimsa, causality and responsibility, the profound importance of education, demo-

cracy, and science, and the necessity of being the right kind of "trouble-maker" (!); our final presentation was given by our 21st century representative, environmentalist and an extraordinary Asian woman from Sikkim, Dekila Chungyalpa, who used the World Wildlife Fund as a case in point, when she addressed how we can apply motivation, inspiration, view and ethics to foster dialogue, with participation/engagement being a valuable goal in the transformation and empowerment of all stakeholders in actualizing responsibility for the environment.

Thus we went from science to ethics to action, with the final afternoon being a session with our presenters and three moderators, including Drs. Dan Goleman, John Dunne, and me, exploring how to actualize this vision of interdependence and moral responsibility; during the afternoon, we explored through a vital discussion strategies and visions of the way through this crisis. Clearly, we have to act on the policy as well as the personal level to move out of the danger zones we have created in the Anthropocene, and increase the human handprint of compassion, while reducing the human footprint of consumerism.

At the end of the meeting, after our departure from Dharamsala and the ride to Amritsar, where we were unwittingly witness to a case in point of environmental devastation from unbridled human impacts, I taught a daylong in Delhi to His Holiness' Foundation for Human Responsibility, where most of the participants were people who served the poorest cancer patients in Delhi. It was Diwale, the festival of lights, and the courage I encountered in our

Indian friends was in a way a light in the darkness of the Delhi smog and noise. I then made my way to Bodhgaya and the INEB conference, as well as the revered stupa and Bodhi tree that mark the place of Buddha's enlightenment. Again, the air, water and sound pollution were another clear illustration of how we humans have taken our privilege and as well our inner poverty to prime outer poverty, indeed taken our consumerism to the edge of environmental as well as human tolerance. The three meetings and teachings I was engaged in during my time in India hung in my heart and mind like a scrim of wisdom, as I passed through the worlds of Dharamsala, Delhi, and Bodhgaya.

These days have been impactful for me personally. For many years, I was a vegetarian, but with travel and forgetfulness, I shifted unconsciously away from this practice. Matthieu Ricard's presentation sent an arrow to the heart. We have to walk our talk, be the change, live the vows. I also felt a terrible pang getting on another airplane, and am hoping that my work in Asia, including the service in Mustang, Nepal, and the teachings in Chiang Mai with HIV leaders, clinicians, NGO workers, and those who care for the dying has some merit. I felt the same about the Dharmasala meeting and its carbon footprint. May there be upstream and downstream outcomes of value for all the carbon we have released into our atmosphere in the course of our travels and our deliberations.

About the Mind and Life meeting, I was grateful that His Holiness was so deeply engaged, that the meetings were streamed,

that they (all but the last one) are on you tube now: <http://www.mindandlife.org/dialogues/past-conferences/ml23/>. I feel that whether we have a human centered or system centered view, we are all in this situation together, and need to feel and act on the vision of deep moral responsibility for “future people”, future generations, and, truly, all species; and after hearing Diana Liverman’s presentation, I see we need to do this NOW.

It was a great joy being with good friends and new friends in

Dharamsala, as we created a cohesive community together. This is one of the most special features about the Mind and Life process, that we become a sangha. All this in the precious atmosphere that is generated by His Holiness as he listens and inquires so vividly into our presentations and shares his joy and concern equally. And I was grateful to teach for CanSupport: <http://www.cansupport.org/newcansupport/> and His Holiness’ Foundation for Human Responsibility <http://furhhd.org/>,

as well as present Upaya’s work at the International Meeting of Engaged Buddhists: <http://www.inebnetwork.org/>. These endeavors indeed seem to be of the same cloth: gatherings of deeply committed, intelligent and compassionate men and women who are acutely aware that compassion and wisdom are called for in the 21st century and who act of what they perceive.

*Roshi Joan Halifax,
Upaya Zen Center,
Co-moderator of the meeting*

Why INEB is The Buddhist Conference to Attend



Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia — Gaya is a contradiction. At one end, fine yellow dusts fill the air and choke the lungs, while piercing horns and shouts from a thousand bodies choke its narrow streets. You can see children who wear torn rags on the streets, who probably have no idea what school is like — ever. Then you see polio stricken kids crawling on muddy sidewalks extending their hands for alms, and you get hit by the effects of deep poverty and the consequences of what an unattended fever can do to a young child.

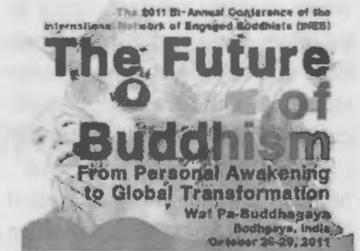
At the other end, there exist vast tracts of verdant green fields. These are hidden behind

monasteries, temples and village slums which dot the periphery of the local highway leading from its airport to the focal point of Gaya’s existence, the Mahabodhi Temple, spot of the Buddha’s Enlightenment.

In this vortex of noise, pollution, poverty and calm, serene greenery, augmented with a historic Enlightenment, the International Network of Engaged Buddhists held its biannual conference here.

More renowned for its acronym, INEB brings together Buddhist based organizations and individuals from around the world to share stories, resources and to support each other’s work.

This year, the organizers —



Jambudvipa Trust, Youth Buddhist Society of India (YBS), the Deer Park Institute and INEB designed the conference as a platform for examining the future of Buddhism to re-awaken and to re-vitalize Buddhist commitment towards helping all sentient beings. More significantly, this year’s INEB takes place to commemorate the 2,600 years since the Buddha gained Enlightenment right here, in Bodhgaya.

Unlike any other Buddhist conferences, people who attend INEB do not just sit through a series of talk shops. A significant difference between this and other Buddhist gatherings is the participation of “resource persons”. These are not just practicing Buddhists, but also dedicated professionals who are respected in their field of expertise.

The guy who gives detailed

narratives of guided tours around the Mahabodhi temple was also a founder of a public listed pharmaceutical company, whose products are made based on traditional medical knowledge. His name is Richard Dixie.

Then there is the Japanese priest Rev. Hideshito Okoshi who established a micro-credit "Future Bank", developed buildings that could last for 100 years and is now dedicating himself to work for a nuclear free Japan.

In Thailand, Phra Sangkom Thanapanyo works with remote villages to address issues of water scarcity while helping to maintain local agricultural practices and to protect forest ecosystems. He calls his work "Application of sufficiency economy".

At "The Bridge Fund", Monica Garry from the United States manages a foundation which works exclusively with disadvantaged people living on the Tibetan Plateau in Western China, down to the most remote nomad. The fund supports developing local entrepreneurship (right livelihood), expanding rural healthcare, tackling waste management and strengthening communities, while grounded in respect for Tibetan culture and values.

Like any previous editions of INEB, social action is synonymous with engaging underserved, under privileged and sometimes persecuted groups. This year, the delegates heard stories of *samsara* at work on whole communities: the *Chakmas* (India), the *Dalits* (untouchables of India) and the *Chittagong Hills Tribe* (Bangladesh). For some of these communities, like the Dalits, embracing Buddhism is a way to escape the clutches of discrimination.

And so we get to see real

people doing courageous work at ground level to help these disadvantaged communities, people like Mangesh Dahiwalé from the Jambudvipa Trust and Santoshita Chakma from the Chittagong Jumma Refugees Welfare Association.

All through the presentations, we hear how these individuals and organizations fortify themselves with non-violent communication strategies, compassion and street smart wisdom as they face the realities of engaging with people who are denied basic human rights just because some parts of society deemed them as below "cows".

We see at first hand how the Buddha-Dharma operates in diverse conditions of human and environmental suffering — from working with rejected population, empowering marginalized groups, gender identity, awakening the youth, climate change and green marketing. All these are laid out in work groups, led by one or more resource persons.

These work group structures facilitate connections that could be made, so that people with a variety of knowhow, experience and skill can get together and brainstorm on issues. Even innocuous activities such as discussions on how to use a website effectively, film making, photography and art have a role to play in that creative process.

Like Gaya's vortex of dichotomies — of dust with verdant fields, noise with serene gardens, poverty with its majestic monasteries, INEB's key success lies in its ability to blend tools with experience, strategies with street smart realities, faith with focus and compassion with wisdom.

Yet, like the focal point of the Buddha's Enlightenment in the Mahabodhi temple, partici-

pants from such diverse backgrounds would not have been so evidently committed if not for the drive and inspiration of INEB's founder, Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa. In his opening address, he said:

"We need to be culturally sensitive, politically concerned and socially committed to have the courage to tackle questions of the common good and to point out abusive situations. To be able to see clearly, to be truly aware of the state of the world, we must begin by deprogramming ourselves and be free of prejudice toward those we criticize. By working with others of goodwill, we can identify and confront abuses of power. It is critical for people of all faiths and ideologies, as well as atheists and agnostics, to listen to each other as we promote justice and have balance through non-violent means. Equality must be upheld in all situations, in order to have empathy for, as well as to stay in touch with the poor and the oppressed."

This was aptly summarized and supported with a simple advice from the Bhutanese monk Dzongsar Kyentse Jamyang Rinpoche (a strong advocate of non-sectarian Buddhism), when he observed,

"When you drink tea, there is the tea and there is the cup. We can't say whether the tea or the cup is more important. Without the cup, you cannot hold hot tea in your hands. Yet, we should not be attached to the cup, and say 'only this cup can hold the tea'."

Without a doubt, INEB have successfully brought together groups of diverse Buddhists from all corners of the world, each personally and socially committed to reach out and to help the underserved and under

privileged. More admirably, their work are accomplished using Dharma inspired strategies such as mindfulness, compassion motivated actions and non-violence.

They have shown the way that Buddhists are not just self-centred practitioners, motivated only by personal salvation. This INEB gathering has demonstrated anything but that.

Utilitarian Buddhist values need not be undermined by dogmas and cultural strait-jackets, and yet it need not succumb to rootless modernism and new age secularism. With a balanced

understanding of the new and the ancient, of east and west, the Buddha's Teachings is timeless and equally effective, then and now.

All that is asked of us is to have the capacity to see clearly without prejudice, to have the ability to listen to one another and to act without selfish motives and personal agendas.

And when we can do this, no amount of samsaric dust, pollution or mental poverty can stop us from reaching out and fulfilling the dreams of our common humanity, that is to end suffering for ourselves as well as

for others.

Kooi F. Lim,

The Buddhist Channel,

November 6, 2011

<http://www.buddhistchannel.tv>

The International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) was established in 1989. It held its biannual conference from October 26-29, 2011 at Wat Pa Bodhgaya, Gaya, India. The next INEB conference will be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 2013. For more information, please visit: <http://www.inebnetwork.org/>.

What's Art Got to Do with It?

A Report from

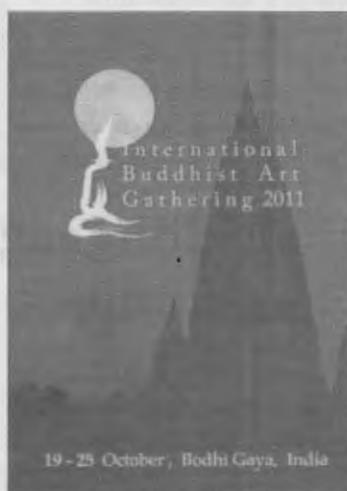
the 2011 International Buddhist Art Gathering in Bodh Gaya

Why should we care about Buddhist art and Buddhist artists?

What role do artists play in the buddhadharma and in bettering our world?

On October 19 INEB invited a diverse array of Asian artists to Wat Thai Buddhagaya for the 2011 International Buddhist Art Gathering. Entitled "Pilgrimage to the Roots of our Heritage", the event drew thirty-three artists from Laos, Vietnam, Siam, China, India, Burma, Sri Lanka and the US to work together and share their ideas for seven days in the birthplace of Buddhism.

One of the events preceding the main INEB conference in Bodh Gaya, the Arts Gathering was inspired by two previous exchanges between Thai and Sri Lankan artists in 2007 and 2009. These workshops were so fruit-



ful, that INEB decided to expand them into a larger event in tandem to its bi-annual conference, "The Future of Buddhism."

Set-up under adjacent tents in the courtyard and strewn throughout the residence halls of the Thai temple, the artists used

a combination of traditional and modern iconography and techniques to create new works. Some such as Bhanuwat Kittivuthikarn used photography and video to document the event. Mareeya Dumronophol conducted a performance piece, covering herself with a cloth soaked in clay collected in Bodh Gaya and meditating for two hours at dawn. Sculptor Apisak Wattiwapol created a traditional moon throne also out of local clay. In the Thai custom, visitors were given the opportunity to sponsor a section of the throne, donating money in small clay cups set around the sculptor as he worked. Burmese artist Moat Thone created an abstract painting of the artists in the workshop environment. Many sketched the Mahabodhi Temple and its surrounding grounds.

On the third day, artists piled into two buses for a field trip to Vulture's Peak in Rajgir and the site of the ancient Nalanda University. An all-day affair, this trip helped break the ice and gave artists who had never been here an opportunity to do pilgrimage. While the Gathering's goals of collaboration and exchange were challenged by the significant language barrier between artists, there were several occasions of spontaneous sharing. Zhang Hong, a professor at Guangzhou Academy of the Arts, taught participants a Chinese method of wet mounting paintings on paper. Known for his spectacular charcoal drawings, Somyot Kumsang, a professor at Rajamangala University in Bangkok, showed others his techniques for producing myriad forms in one fluid gesture.

Each evening, three to five artists presented their work in the temple's dining hall. These presentations were attended by INEB organizers, Youth Program participants, and friends in the community, and ranged

from live drawing accompanied by instruments, to projected video and slide-shows, to the showing of work created at the gathering.

Representation in the congregation was dominated by seventeen artists from various Thai schools. Bhanuwat, Mareeya, Apisak and Somyot were joined by Sithichai Smanchat, Supot Singhasai, Surasak Rodphrohboon, Suwat, Saenkattiyarant, Chatchawan Rodklontan, Lipikorn Makaew, Phra Pol Kuwiangwai, Peap Vara Misara Prakitsilpa, Plaek Kitfuangfoo, Boonrat Na-Wichai, Pornchai Chaima, Sone Simatrang, and Songdej Thipthong.

Indian artists included Kaustav Paul, who studies ceramics at Visva Bharati University in Santiniketan, and Bodh Gaya artists Anish Kumar, who studied Tibetan thanka painting in Nepal, and Jagjeevan Kumar, who is a self-taught artist.

Wang Jian and Zhang Hong hailed from the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts in China. Nguyen Xuan Viet came from Vietnam.

Tiane Vilayphonechith and Chaleunphone Phonnabouth traveled from Laos. Zaw Win came from Burma and Minette Mangahas flew in from the United States.

Many of the artists brought finished works to donate to INEB while others created works in response to the Buddhist theme and their experiences in Bodh Gaya. The works donated were exhibited in the Main Hall of Wat Pa Buddhagaya during the first two days of the main conference. They then traveled to New York City for a benefit auction and gala at the Tibet House on November 19. Proceeds from this event will benefit INEB programs and future arts gatherings.

Based on the successes and lessons learned from this first Arts Gathering, the future of the arts program carries dazzling potential. INEB has set the next International Arts Gathering for 2013 in Thailand, and may host some smaller workshops in the interim period in India and Sri Lanka.



Global Buddhist Congregation 2011 Communique

Environment & the Natural World: A Buddhist Response

A declaration on the urgent need to apply compassion, ethics and wisdom to the environmental crisis

The human population now stands at seven billion and human beings are placing increasingly unrealistic demands on the earth's resources. We are witnessing extreme weather events, dramatic changes in climate, rising sea levels,

retreating glaciers and depleting ice at the poles. Still, we continue to pump greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. The great forests of the world are being destroyed more quickly than they can be replaced, coral reefs are dying, and species are disappearing at an alarming rate due to habitat loss and changes in temperatures and water supply. With the current rate of extinction, it is likely that very many species will become extinct before we are

even aware of their existence. Many people view this as the sixth mass extinction, but this one is different in that it is not caused by an unavoidable catastrophe, but primarily by our actions.

Scientific research is revealing evidence of animals' intelligence and emotions. This new understanding of animal sentience has huge implications for the way we treat them and the policies and laws we adopt. By

addressing the needs of other sentient beings, we stand to safeguard the well-being of the Earth's environment and ecosystems it supports. This eventually benefits all life forms including our own kind.

2,600 years ago, when the Buddha attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, he touched the ground to signify that the earth was witness to that moment. Today, the earth is witnessing a collective ignorance that endangers the future of all species and the future of our children. As entire ecosystems and habitats disappear, the Buddha's teachings on interdependence are more evident than ever before. The Karma of our actions haunts the present and stands to threaten the future of all.

We as followers of the Buddha's teaching make a

commitment to:

1. Act with the knowledge that the warming planet and species loss presents a moral issue of the highest order.

2. Become more educated about environmental issues, seek to educate others regarding the interdependence of all life forms and take right action to minimize our negative impacts on the Earth.

3. Within the Buddhist community, bring our collective wisdom to bear on environmental issues and address them with compassion and insight based on the skilful means of sound ethics and scientific research.

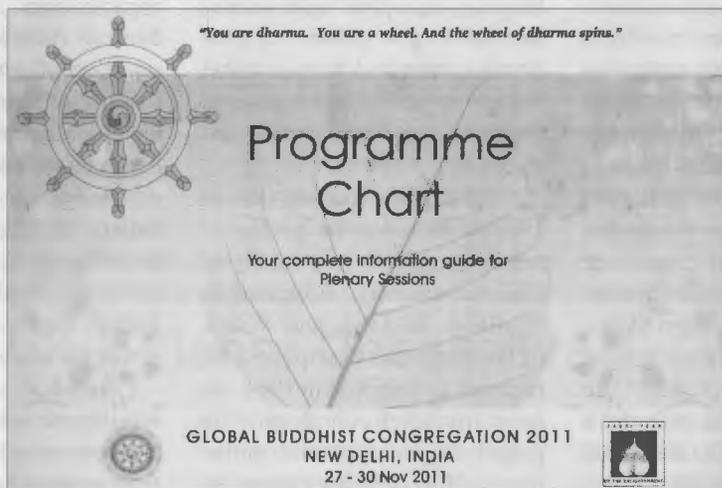
4. Recognizing that animals are fellow sentient beings who feel pain and fear and take right action to reduce the suffering they endure as a result of human behaviour.

5. Apply our commitment to have compassion to sentient beings in interactions with them and address the indirect harm caused to them by our consumption of resources, use of land and climate change.

6. Be a mindful consumer by avoiding waste and refusing to buy products created from the suffering of other beings.

7. Seek to change societal, consumer and political frameworks so that they see animals as kin and not merely resources or commodities that can be utilized by humans without regard to their welfare.

8. Apply Buddhist principles and teaching to overcome the denial of the situation we face and seek co-operation with other communities as we move towards true ecological sustainability.



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The Niwano Peace Prize Goes to Sulak Sivaraksa

Loving kindness, compassion, and above all self-awareness: Thai Buddhist leader Sulak Sivaraksa always returns to those themes when he speaks. But there's a steely determination behind his gentle facade and admonitions to pay attention to one's breathing as a first step to self mastery. Sulak accepted the Niwano Peace Prize in Kyoto, Japan, on July 23 in a ceremony that highlighted his life's work, marked over many decades by the courage, determination, imagination, and the inspiration that are the anchors of his Buddhist faith. It was a splendid occasion to celebrate a special leader.

The Niwano Peace Prize has been awarded annually for 28 years, to a leader or organization whose work for peace draws on a religious or spiritual inspiration and a commitment to interfaith action. Established by the Niwano family which leads the lay Buddhist organization, Rishso Kosei-Kai, the winner is selected by an international committee (I am currently the chair). Rather little known in the United States, the Niwano laureates are an impressive group and the aspiration is that this prize be a spiritual equivalent to the Nobel Peace Prize.

Sulak Sivaraksa was selected as the 2011 winner because his life of dedication to peace and justice exemplifies the principles of the Niwano Peace Prize. He uses a wide range of tools—insights, personal example, and raw persistence—to change the views of political leaders, scholars, and young people, in Thailand, Asia, and the



world. He encourages a new understanding of peace, democracy, and development, challenging accepted approaches that fail to give priority to poor citizens, men and women alike. He gives new life to ancient Buddhist teachings about non-violence.

Sulak Sivaraksa was born in 1933 in Siam (as he prefers to call his country), to a family of Chinese ancestry. Educated in Thailand, England, and Wales, in law and other disciplines. He returned to Bangkok in 1961. He uses his intellectual gifts to propel the concept and movement of Engaged Buddhism. He is a true teacher and has nurtured and supported younger leaders over the years. Many today are leaders of a wide range of organizations. He is also a scholar, publisher, and founder of many organizations, with more than a hundred books and monographs, in Thai and English. He promotes a spiritual education movement grounded in traditional culture

and values.

What marks Sulak in the many encounters I have had with him is the way he speaks truth to those in power, even though those truths are couched in often gentle ways. To serve society truly, Sulak contends, one must stay in touch with poor people and the grass roots and engage in politics. Working to bring about change has embroiled him in many controversial issues and many stints in jail. He approaches advocacy with a combination of knowledge, courage, and absolute commitment to nonviolence. He is widely credited with having mobilized Thai civil society, creating many social welfare and development organizations. All embody two central themes of his work: rejection of development fueled by consumerism, and pursuit of development rooted in indigenous culture and socially-engaged religious traditions and beliefs. His organizations reflect an indigenous, sustainable, and spiritual model for change. Today, these organizations are active far beyond Thailand.

Sulak is among the most intelligent advocates for the environment. He speaks forcefully against environmental destruction, promoting environmental preservation and environmental justice. Sekhiyadhamma (Students of the Dhamma), a network of Buddhist monks, works in their communities to preserve local environments, principally forests that are so essential to village economies. Characteristic of Sulak's approach, the work combines

education, teaching villagers better ways to conserve natural resources, and political action to protect local social, cultural, and natural environments from the encroachment of commercial, industrial, and urban development. Sulak's environmental ethic is grounded in a holistic understanding of the Buddhist principle of interdependence and a deep respect for nature. Knowledge of inter-becoming (a term he borrows from Thich Nhat Hanh), is achieved by developing mindful awareness. In contrast to more reflective and contemplative styles, he aggressively fights in the trenches for the cause of human and environmental justice.

Buddhist principles are thus a personal and political resource and Sulak's life shows that the interior life of spiritual contemplation, and the exterior life of political action, need not be opposites or hostile to each other. On the contrary each can illuminate and inform and encourage the other.

Sulak extends the Buddhist Five Precepts into ethical guidelines that can forge a more sustainable, compassionate, and

just global society. To refrain from killing today means an end to all modern forms of violence. To refrain from stealing is a call for global economic justice. Not engaging in sexual misconduct calls us to examine all systems of male dominance which exploit women. Prohibiting false speech is a call for honesty at the international level. Avoiding intoxication is a call for global responsibility for drug and alcohol use and an examination of its causes. In Sulak's Buddhist vision of society, the individual is understood as a starting point for change: through individual spiritual growth, social justice is eventually achieved.

Sulak is a leading voice in global inter-religious dialogue and engagement, an acknowledged global leader for peace. Interdependence is an essential, living concept. His voice of reason and ethics highlights the tangible issues that touch on human dignity. He was one of the early leaders who brought the ethical challenges of caring for the environment into global discourse.

For Sulak, Buddhism is a questioning process: question

everything, including oneself, look deeply, and then act from that insight. He is among a handful of leaders world-wide working to revive the socially engaged aspects of spirituality. Whatever he does, however he does it, at the core of his work is a mission to build a new leadership for change at all levels, within his country and beyond.

Sulak's speech at Kyoto was characteristically laced with wisdom and advice, emotional and balanced, nuanced yet urgent. He highlighted the extraordinary example of Japan's courageous people, as they rally in the face of the March earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster. The experience offers a compelling vision of the risks we face today, and it calls us above all to listen to each other. Sulak's constant message is that consumer driven models are profoundly flawed and the inequality that goes with it is something we must abhor and fight. He urged us all to act—to protect the planet, to fight inequities, and to learn to enjoy the beauties of the world with moderation—before it is too late.

Katherine Marshall

Vichai Chokevivat

Vichai and I are kalyanamitta. A kalyanamitta acts as one's external voice of conscience, cautioning one to be mindful. That is, a kalyanamitta often says things that one does not necessarily want to hear. But once contemplated, these things may be beneficial to the development of critical self-reflection or at least self-criticism. A kalyanamitta sincerely points out one's shortcomings or flaws, paving the way for self-improvement.

Ultimately, this will help reduce self-attachment and foster our being with others.

Therefore, I'm speaking to Vichai as a kalyanamitta. The extent others will be able to tolerate its tone and message is entirely another matter.

It can be said that in this gathering I have known Vichai far longer than many others have. At least, Vichai had read my books prior to our initial meeting at the Student Christian Center in 1966.

From that moment onward our friendship progressively developed until we became one another's kalyanamitta. Although we belong to different generations, we do learn a lot from one another. I'm fortunate to have benefited from younger friends throughout my life, especially from Vichai and his friends in the medical community. They have helped nurture my physical well-being and aided me in many other ways. Therefore,

I've always felt gratitude for them, especially at this time in my life.

Enough of the personal background and kind words. Below are the direct and honest words of a kalyanamitta.

1. Ever since I've known Vichai (from his university days till now), he's always been devoted to good causes. He's never wavered from this position. He often speaks his mind and isn't afraid of thinking outside the box. He's done many good things that the mainstream couldn't accept and is skillful in networking and mobilizing others. Many mainstream figures see Vichai as their enemy. At the personal level, they may not be bad individuals. But they are afraid of social change—especially structural and institutional transformations that dismantle the existing hierarchies, inequalities, exclusionary practices, and so on. Throughout his life Vichai has to inevitably struggle against these figures. Luckily, he's managed to survive—so far at least. We must not forget that many other individuals who were more skillful or capable than Vichai had succumbed to these forces; for instance, Pridi Banomyong, Puey Ungphakorn, Kularb Saipradit—and even Madame Poonsukh Banomyong was not spared.

We may or may not believe in luck. But we should heed well the words of Julius Caesar, one of the greatest figures in the West. Caesar said that success, especially in the battlefield, depends on luck. Similarly, when Trevor Leggett, the renowned judo teacher in London, visited a

rich men's club in Tokyo on the invitation of his friend, he wanted to know the secrets to their success. He was told by his Japanese friend as well as several other millionaires at the club that their success depended in no small part to luck. We may be clever, diligent, talented, etc. but without a bit or a lot of luck we may not be successful—at least in the material world. (The same logic applies to Thaksin Shinawatra and his sister Yingluck the present Prime Minister. Luck is now on their side—but it will not always stay this way.)

It's not possible to evaluate the extent that luck has played in Vichai's life thus far. But I would argue that good conducts have been the most important determining factor in his life.

Now the time has come for real criticisms. I don't doubt that Vichai is full of good intentions. That is why he is doing so many charity or philanthropic works. Vichai is certainly capable of managing or running them. The problem is not with his capability. Rather the problem is that these activities are incapable of subverting or challenging the mainstream. In fact, they are not intended to do so. We need to have the time to think, analyze, and criticize. Otherwise, we will be doing many activities that end up propping or sustaining the very system we professedly despise. To put it strongly—and this may upset Vichai—I'd like to pose a simple question: To what extent are the organizations that you are working for radical enough to challenge

or create a rupture in the mainstream?

Perhaps Vichai couldn't find someone else to manage these projects or run these organizations. Perhaps he was simply too nice to turn down these offers. Whatever the actual reason, doing so isn't good for Vichai. Why? Because he won't be able or have the time to create something novel—that is, to think and enact radical change. In other words, he's better off thinking and doing something else. He needs the time to rest, listen, think, and meditate in order to realize his potentials as well as those of others.

Now Vichai is approaching old age. Hopefully, he will take into consideration the words of this old kalyanamitta. At least, I feel that they are more beneficial to him than those of the mass media, which Puey Ungphakorn once called the "herd media". If one knows how to cope with criticisms, it will do one good rather than harm.

2. Vichai is not only accepting too much work. He's working with a number of organizations that are utterly dominated by Capital or vested interests—including the Thai Health Promotion Foundation. Moreover, Vichai is in several committees working under public figures like Anand Panyarachun and Prawase Wasi. They are highly contentious figures to say the least. Vichai needs to ask himself seriously whether it is really necessary for him to work under these figures.

Furthermore, to what extent are these committees truly independent and accountable to the public?

3. Another important thing that Vichai must never forget is that he is the medical doctor Vichai Chokevivat. Do you know that many people in this country are fed up with doctors and physicians? Students want to become medical doctors. Why? Because doctors these days not only take care of physical well-being but also business well-being. They serve in many high-ranking administrative positions of various institutions and universities that are essentially authoritarian, highly centralized, and unaccountable. These institutions and organizations serve the interest of the rich and powerful—oligarchic forces in society. We must ask: Is capitalism the only reality that there is? Do these medical doctors know about unjust social structures? Can they think holistically? Can they think about Truth, Beauty, and the Good?

Although Vichai is different from many mainstream doctors, he's become involved with them—for whatever reason. And he will suffer the same fate as they did. Doctors who are truly devoted to the well-being of their patients—and not to wealth, power, and social status—are not widely known. A good

representative was the late Sa-nguan Nitayarumphong. They must be given due recognition.

The conducts of good teachers must also be like those of good doctors. The Buddha was both a teacher and a doctor. We should follow his way. It is now terribly difficult to find doctors qua teachers who are humble, treat everyone equally, and are not subservient to power. We are badly in need of them.

At this stage, if Vichai and his medical friends devote themselves to producing doctors qua teachers they will leave an invaluable gift to Thai society. They have already initiated something important called the Rural Doctors Society.

If possible they should also try to emancipate themselves from the hegemony of Western medical science and from the control of big pharmaceutical corporations. We must take alternative healing seriously and look into various other traditions for inspiration and wisdom—not only Thai but also Tibetan, Burmese, Laotian, Cambodian, Indian, Chinese and so on.

It would even be better to have an alternative medical movement that is simul-

taneously Buddhist. This will be something truly new. By Buddhism I don't mean it in the religious or orthodox sense. Rather, it has a more spiritual sense of being awakened from Greed, Hatred, and Delusion. Thus this alternative medical movement will also cooperate with other people's organizations to awaken Thai society from falsehood, half-truths, mediocrity, etc.

4. Lastly, many figures in the mainstream mass media—the herd media—see Vichai as their enemy. If these herd media are like the animals in George Orwell's famous *Animal Farm* they will be pretty harmless or negligible. But they are more like savage beasts that serve militarism and capitalism—hence they are far more dangerous. Think of how terrible *Siam Rath* newspaper was under M.R. Kukrit Pramoj. Or think of *Khao Sod* and *Matichon* newspapers under Khanchai Bunpan. However, the ordinary people are increasingly mindful of and concerned about the manipulations and activities of these herd media. Hopefully, Vichai and his young friends will side with the ordinary people to struggle against and overcome these reactionary forces.

Thai Social Structure Harms Innocent People

On 11 October 2011 the Supreme Court sentenced Mrs. Jintana Kaewkao to four-month imprisonment. The Supreme Court declared that the sentence was already lenient as the

Appeal Court had previously sentenced the accused to six months in prison. Of course, not mentioned was the fact that the Court of First Instance had dismissed the charges against

Jintana on 30 September 2003.

The initial case was lodged against Jintana ten years ago. On 13 January 2001 Jintana and a number of Baan Krut villagers stormed into a celebratory party

held by the Union Power Development Company. They were there to exercise their right to protect community life and natural resources against violation by government policy as guaranteed by the 1997 Constitution.

Of course, breaking into a private property constituted a legal offense. But we also have to carefully scrutinize the whole context of the situation and the various factors behind the dispute. And if we look at the case from the perspective of public interest (and not personal interest) it seems that the sentence is unfair to Jintana as well as the whole movement for community and environmental rights in the country. As such, many found the Supreme Court's decision contentious or appalling.

In any case, the decisions made by the three courts enable us to see more clearly the form and phenomenon of justice in the country.

The Midnight University had awarded Jintana Kaewkao with an honorary doctorate degree for her environmentalism. Her 'research' was essentially devoting her life to environmental protection in a way that most professional researchers could not match easily—not to mention researchers who are serving oligarchic forces in society.

When I heard the court's decision on 11 October, I traveled with a group of friends to visit Jintana at the Prachuab Khiri Khan provincial prison on the following day. Jintana was full of moral courage. Quite a large number of villagers gathered in front of the prison. Some of them mocked or protested against the justice system. Some of the villagers asked me to give a speech

like I had done at the opening ceremony of Charoen Wat-aksorn's monument. (Charoen was assassinated for his environmental activism.) Villagers in the area as well as Thais who are concerned about justice hold both Charoen and Jintana in high esteem.

A *Matichon* journalist asked me for an interview, which was done over a recording device, on 12 October. The journalist also interviewed Jintana and photographed the two of us. He told us that *Matichon* would print our story on the front page on the following day. I told him that Khanchai Bunpan had ordered both *Matichon* and *Khao Sod* newspapers not to publish any story related to me. I also asked him to give my 2012 New Year's card to Khanchai. The card shows the picture of my Thai house. I told the journalist that at this Thai house Khanchai and Suchit Wongthes had played Thai musical instruments together at a time when they were both fired from *Siam Rath* newspaper by Kukrit Pramoj. But those were the good old days.

In the speech I gave to the villagers I reminded them that our justice system has been off balanced ever since the sentencing of the three individuals accused of being involved in the mysterious death of King Rama VIII with capital punishment. If *The Revolutionary King* by William Stevenson can be trusted, the present King admitted that the three accused were in fact innocent. But how could we grant life back to them? At least, Jintana's sentence is only four months in prison (and the judges were already saying how she should feel gratitude for them because they reduced her sentence by 2 months!).

What I really want to know is whether or not all the judges in the system have ever come into contact with the poor and marginalized. Do they know that the villagers are fighting oligarchic forces that are sustained by unjust and violent social structures? Do they know what it means for an individual or movement to struggle for the common good and environmental protection?

Ajarn Pridi Banomyong was one of the political targets in the 'regicide' case mentioned above. His political opponents tried to implicate him in it. Based on Stevenson's book, the King also said that Pridi was innocent. But many figures in the ruling and oligarchic classes (including those in the Democratic Party) still depict him as a malicious politician. (Perhaps they have intentionally forgotten that Democratic Party leaders such as Khuang Aphaiwongse and Seni Pramoj collaborated with the coup makers in 1947 to dismantle democracy in the country. And democracy has yet to find its way firmly back into Thai society since then.)

It is a good sign for Thai society that we still have individuals like Charoen Wat-aksorn and Jintana Kaewkao. It shows that the villagers have become awakened and they are engaging in systematic struggles. If the ruling class understands this fact and acts accordingly, there is a chance for Thai society to move in a more progressive direction.

In an article Srisuwan Janya, president of Stop Global Warming Association Thailand, argues:

In the past 20 years, capitalists and vested interests have managed to slay approximately 20 core leaders

of the environmental protection movement in the country. In most cases, government agencies and the justice system could not protect these individuals even though they were innocent and had acted on behalf of the villagers in the name of human and environmental rights and the common good. Their names are as follows:

Boontawee Upakarakun, a leader of the movement against pollutions emitted by the Lamphun Industrial Estate; Prawian Bunnuk, a leader of the movement against a stone grinding factory in Loei province; Vinai Jantamano, an environmentalist who opposed illegal logging in Satun province; Thong-in Kaewwatta, a leader of the movement against the construction of an industrial waste treatment plant in Rayong province; Tunruejun Bunkhantot, a leader of the movement against the construction of Bongkhunpet dam in Chaiyaphum province; Thongmuan Kumchaem and Som Homphrom, leaders of the movement against providing state concession to a stone grinding plant in Nongbualumpoo province; Aree Songkroh, a leader of the movement against forest encroachment in Surat Thani province; Jurin Rachapon, an environmentalist who opposed the destruction of mangrove forest areas in Phuket province; Narin Podaeng, a leader of the movement against a stone grinding plant belonging to a national politician in Rayong pro-

vince; Pitak Toh-nawut, a leader of Baan Lum Nam Chompoo community who opposed a stone grinding plant belonging to a national politician that had encroached on a forest reserve area in Pitsanulok province; Kaew Pinpunma, a leader of a group of villagers who came into conflict with local capitalists over land use; Suwat Wongpiyasathit, a leader of the Bangplee community who opposed the Rajathewa garbage dump in Samutprakarn province; Somporn Chanapon, a leader of a group of environmentalists who opposed the construction of Klong Kradae dam in Surat Thani province; Bunsom Nimnoi, a leader of an environmental group that opposed the construction of a condensate-splitter plant in Petchburi province; Preecha Taengpan, a leader of a movement struggling for community rights against a wastewater treatment plant in Nakhon Sri Thammarat province; Bunrit Channarong, a leader of a group of villagers demanding for community rights and opposing illegal logging in Surat Thani province; Bunyong Intawong, a leader of Rong-ha community who opposed the activities of a stone grinding plant belonging to a national politician in Chiang Rai province; Kumpun Suksai, a leader of Chiang Dao community who opposed the encroachment of community forests in Chiang Mai province; Sumnao Srisongkram, president of the Lam Nam Pong Recovery and Conservation Group in Khon

Khaen province; Charoen Wat-aksorn, a leader of the Bo Nok villagers who were against coal power plants and the encroachment of the commons by local capitalists in Prachuab Khirikan province; Suraphon Sirichan, a leader of the Mae Mok forest community opposing illegal logging; Pakwipa Chalermklin, a leader of the Baan Hua Krabue community in Anghthong province who opposed the construction of a port to transport sand excavated from the river; Phra Supoj Suwajo, an activist monk who refused to sell the land of his Suan Metfa Dharm monastery in Chiang Mai province to a group of investors; and Thongnak Sawekchinda, an environmental activist who led protests against coal-related businesses in Samut Sakhon province.

All of these individuals struggled to assert their rights guaranteed by the Constitution and the justice system. But they were all wiped out by extra-judicial killings. The justice system could not help them in any way. But their actions have sparked the spirit of struggle especially at the grassroots throughout the kingdom, calling the people to rise and rise again until they succeed. Jintana's prison term—however unfair—is nothing compared to the fate of the other environmental activists mentioned above. As long as state power and Capital still work to disrupt the weighing scales of justice in the country the Court's decision will not be able to stop the struggles of the people and villagers.

II

The Supreme Court's decision to imprison Jintana Kaewkao makes me wonder about the fate of Bundit Aniya who was charged with lese majeste and is waiting for the Court's final decision. As such, the sentence that he is likely to receive will be much harsher than Jintana's.

Bundit was charged with lese majeste because of his role in distributing documents in a 2003 seminar. The main idea of the documents is that the justice system should be impartial and must not bow down to any higher authority. Subsequently, Police General Wasana Permlarp, one of the panelists in the seminar, filed a lese majeste charge against Bundit.

While waiting for his trial in the Bangkok Remand Prison, he was verbally abused and almost physically beaten by one of the officials there. He had to kowtow before that official and beg for his personal safety.

As for the justice system, deliberations in the first two courts were closed to the public. Only present were the plaintiff, defendant and witnesses on both sides. (One of the witnesses on the plaintiff side was the secretary general of the Privy Council.)

The Court of First Instance found the defendant guilty on two counts and sentenced him to a four-year jail term, suspended for three years. The judges reasoned that the 36-year-old defendant was mentally imbalanced and had no prior criminal record. They also wanted the defendant to have a chance to treat his mental disorder.

The public attorney however did not let the matter rest. The case went to the Appeal Courts

and Bundit was given a jail term of 2 years and 8 months without suspension.

Fortunately, a foreign well-wisher helped to pay for Bundit's bail bond, which was quite sizeable.

Today, Bundit is suffering from several physical and mental problems. He had undergone operations removing his bladder cancer and one of his kidneys. His physical condition is deteriorating. There are a lot of concerns about his well-being if he's sentenced to prison.

If the Supreme Court uses the same standard as in Jintana's case, Bundit will surely end up in jail. One can only wonder to what extent any of the judges will deliberate the case without prejudice and with compassion for the poor and marginalized. The King had made it clear many years ago that any lese majeste charge filed would ultimately hurt him and the monarchy. This is something to think about along with the fact that our prisons are already overcrowded.

III

I went to visit Jintana Kaewkao at the Prachuab Khiri Khan provincial prison on Wednesday, 12th October. On the following day, I received the news that Sahachai Supamitkrissna had passed away quietly that morning at Ashram Wongsanit. I went to his cremation ceremony on 15 October at Wat Laem Hin in Prachinburi province.

Sahachai's death didn't become news even though he had clearly suffered under unjust and violent social structures for several decades.

Sahachai and his siblings opened a department store selling fabric and textiles at Ming Muang Market in the Pahurat area.

The department store rented 5 blocks of buildings, 3 belonging to the Crown Property Bureau (CPB) and 2 to the King's Private Property. Each block of building is four-story high. Business was largely good for Sahachai and his family until both institutions embarked on land development projects in the area. The rent cost shot up greatly. Many rent contracts were quickly scrapped with little compensation paid to the tenants.

Sahachai was told that he had to sign a new contract which required a 3 million baht down payment. Alternatively, he could close down his department store and receive a compensation of between 50,000 and 80,000 baht. Many tenants caved in to the demand. But Sahachai felt that it was unjust. He brought the case to court but ultimately lost because the law benefited the property owner far more than the tenant. The police—upholders of public peace and orderliness—then came to seize Sahachai's five buildings and asked him to sign a document admitting that he had disobeyed the court's decision. He was essentially dispossessed.

Worse, he was thrown in prison. He spent 24 days in jail and then appeared before the court. The court ordered him to admit his wrongdoing. But Sahachai steadfastly maintained that he was innocent. As a result, he had to spend 12 more days in prison before he was released—even though he hadn't signed any document admitting his guilt.

Sahachai's five buildings were ultimately demolished in 1976, which was a year of political turmoil in the country. After he had fought his case in the court for some time and wasted quite a fortune on it, he opened a

new store in the Saphan Kwai area. To open the store, he was required to pay "additional charges" of 250,000 baht. Eventually, Sahachai had to close it down because the trial consumed all his time and money.

This misfortune tore his family apart. His mother and six siblings moved away to live elsewhere. Thongchai, the eldest brother, broke down mentally and passed away in 1989. Sahachai had to borrow some money from his friend to pay for the funeral ceremony.

Prior to this, Sahachai had braved his way passed numerous royal aide-de-camp and police officers to make a royal petition when the King visited Wat Kai Tia in Thonburi province. The King appeared to have understood his plight. This made Sahachai feel reassured and grateful. However, nothing substantial resulted from this royal encounter.

But Sahachai did not give up. He managed to petition the King in person several more times. Each time the King promised that justice would be restored to him. Sahachai's eighth attempt at making a royal petition occurred in August 1989 when the King visited Wat Boworniwes. This time the King explicitly stated that justice would be restored to him. Sahachai's mother was deeply moved by the royal benevolence and broke down in tears.

On 17 September 1990 Sahachai petitioned the King in person for the ninth time. The King stated that he was fully aware of Sahachai's problem and ordered Vinij Vinijapark, deputy secretary general of Chitralada Palace, to become directly involved in finding a just resolution to Sahachai's case at the

soonest possible time.

Prior to serving as deputy secretary general of Chitralada Palace, Vinij Vinijapark had been a judge. Ironically, he was the judge who made Sahachai lose his store. On 4 October 1990 Vinij held a meeting with Sahachai. His message was simple and disheartening: Sahachai had already lost his case, what else did he want? Furthermore, he stated that Sahachai should treat the King's concern as a blessing in itself and that it wouldn't be possible for Sahachai to get everything he wanted. Sahachai replied that if this was what Vinij called "help" then he had no other choice but to petition the King one more time. Unfortunately, Vinij subsequently died in an airplane crash in 1991.

Someone told Sahachai to tell his whole story to me. At that time I was a columnist for *Matichon*. I wrote an article pleading the CPB to show some sympathy to Sahachai. For whatever reason, Jirayu Israngkul na Ayutthaya, director of the CPB (and someone who once called me 'the country's voice of conscience') called Sahachai for a meeting to resolve the lingering problem. The CPB offered a deal. Sahachai would be able to choose a plot of land in the Salaya area of Nakhonpathom province belonging to the CPB in order to build five blocks of buildings—like the ones he once had. Sahachai said that this was unfair because Salaya was in the middle of nowhere. The CPB had another offer to make. Sahachai would be compensated with a sum of 760,000 baht for the buildings that were taken away from him. This too Sahachai found wanting because when he was dispossessed and unemployed he incurred a debt of over

three million baht.

Sahachai's mother began to lose hope and became distrustful of almost everyone and everything. She too broke down mentally in the end. Sahachai had to take her to the emergency room of Lerdsin Hospital. But the doctors and nurses there couldn't care less about her. Sahachai thus exclaimed, "Doctors and nurses, this old lady is my mom. Her sickness is caused by being victimized by the King." The shocked doctors and nurses rushed in to treat his mother. Unfortunately, she passed away a few days later.

On 7 November 1997 Sahachai petitioned the King in person for the tenth time. The venue again was Wat Boworniwes. The result was that he later received a reply letter from the King's private secretary, M.L. Taweesan Ladawan, stating that the King had asked the CPB to reconsider the compensation offered to Sahachai because the sum was unfair.

One and a half year later, the CPB sent Sahachai a letter informing him that it was willing to pay him the offered compensation with interest accumulated in the past 20 years. The sum amounted to 5-6 million baht.

As for the case involving the King's Private Property, which was under the directorship of M.R. Disnadda Diskul, Sahachai managed to petition the Princess Mother in person while she was travelling by car. The Princess Mother told him the following: "Your case is trivial. I cannot interfere with the work of my subordinates. I must trust them." Having dismissed Sahachai's petition, the Princess Mother then turned to converse with her foreign friend. The two of them laughed heartily together. Saha-

chai felt as if he were a monster.

Pravit Rojanaphruk had written a piece on Sahachai's plight for *The Nation* newspaper in December 1997. But he was deeply uncertain whether or not the editors of the newspaper would publish it. I then invited him to the Children's Village School in Kanchanaburi province to find some peace of mind.

As it turned out, Pravit's article somehow slipped through the eyes of *The Nation* editors. It was published on 5 December

1994; that is, on the King's birthday. As a result, the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation granted Pravit an award in recognition of his morally courageous journalism that same year.

As for the dispossessed Sahachai, the Foundation found him a room at the Puey Forum building in the compound of Wat Pathumkongkha. Room and accommodation were also provided to him at Wongsanit Ashram in Nakorn Nayok province. He had his last meal at the dining hall of the Ashram in

the evening of 11 October and passed away quietly in his room thereafter.

Many more Sahachais could be found in a society with violent and unjust structures like ours. In fact, their number is rapidly increasing. They are being dispossessed not only by the CPB but also by universities (e.g., Chulalongkorn University) and temples (e.g., Wat Kalyanamit) in the name of social and economic progress.



Do the Best You Can, But Don't Expect to Win An Interview with Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa

EB: In *The Wisdom of Sustainability*, you described consumerism as a "demonic religion". Consumerism is one of the main drivers of the climate crisis. Why and how can it be described from a Buddhist point of view as a demonic religion?

SS: From the Buddhist point of view, the three root causes of suffering are greed, hatred and delusion. Consumerism promotes greed. Greed now dominates global society, through advertising in the media and because transnational corporations are in control. It is linked with hatred and violence. Violence is on the whole controlled by politicians, but more politicians are now under the control of transnational corporations. So greed is now in control of hatred. Greed and hatred go together. People want more and more, and if they don't get it, violence takes place. But underneath everything is *delusion*. People on the whole don't know who they are — they



aspire for more power, money and luxury, whatever. These are the three root causes of our suffering.

I think we Buddhists should not simply preach. We should concretize it. That's why I keep saying consumerism is an expression of greed. Most governments—even democracies, not to mention dictatorships—promote hatred. But deep down it is delusion. Delusion is directly linked with mainstream educa-

tion, which teaches people how to be clever, and promotes greed and hatred. Mainstream education never teaches people to *know who they are*. They don't teach how to breathe properly—the basis is always "cogito ergo sum"—one-dimensional thinking.

If people are taught to breathe properly and mindfully, we can tackle greed, hatred and delusion. That's why His Holiness the Dalai Lama is such an

important example. He is a simple monk who gets up every morning, breathing properly. You can see his wisdom and compassion shining. At the same time he realizes that is not enough. It is a good foundation, but we must learn from science too, and bring it together with wisdom and compassion. Scientific know-how without proper breathing, wisdom & compassion, becomes a servant of transnational corporations and governments. We must come together now to change ourselves—and also change this world.

The more you promote violence in the media, the more people feel insufficient. Hence consumerism: they will buy this and buy that in order to get happiness. They never do get it, but they carry on aspiring for it. Violence is a threat. It creates fear in a population. People hope that by acquiring something, they will overcome the threat. But you can never overcome a general state of insecurity.

EB: Social psychologist Clive Hamilton wrote a powerful book called “Requiem for a Species”. He describes the “consumer self”—a false self that is continually dissatisfied and seeks to establish its identity through buying more goods. Cycles of dissatisfaction, anxiety and debt are created as it tries to acquire more elements of consumer identity. Meanwhile, the judicial position of transnational corporations now gives them legal rights of “personhood”.

SS: To be protected.

EB: When corporate behaviours are examined using psychiatric criteria, we discover an institution with a psychopathic personality.

SS: That’s right.

EB: Some people say “We must not condemn corporations, because there are also human beings working there.” Yet if the institution of the corporation is a psychopathic institution, its CEOs serve an ideology that has no empathy. Can we Buddhists afford to be sentimental about this?

SS: No, but if our condemnation comes out of anger, that will not help. We would do better to understand and de-structure these corporations. My main concern is social structure that is unjust and violent. Corporations are the biggest and most powerful examples.

Most churches, and even the Buddhist Sangha, also have structures that are violent. We cannot ignore that issue. We may talk of “the future of Buddhism”, but if we don’t tackle social structure, it is mere chatter. To tackle this issue seriously, we have to learn who we are. We re-structure ourselves first, so that we don’t campaign for ego, for victory or for Buddhism.

Humility, compassion and wisdom are necessary to tackle social structures that are violent and unjust. With that in mind, we do need social scientists, anthropologists and mainstream scientists to come together. That is the new possibility. We have to push ahead with it.

EB: So Buddhist analysis in your view has to prioritize understanding of cultural and structural violence—which are less easy to discern than violent colonialism, because they hide themselves in a kind of mental fog. In order to discern the fog, one has to de-structure it within oneself.

SS: Precisely. Gandhi’s success

was also his failure. He used truth and nonviolence against oppressors outside India — the British empire. But he never used *Satyagraha* (the power of truth and nonviolence) against the unjust social structure within India—the four *varnas* (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra).

Ambedkar (who led thousands of the Dalit “untouchable” people to Buddhism) was great because he emerged from beneath the four *varnas*. Unless that system is tackled, India will remain un-liberated. 60 years after independence. The social structure is still awful. They got rid of one imperialism, but now they blindly follow American neo-imperialism. The suffering of India’s poor carries on and on.

This is why more and more so-called “untouchable” people become Buddhist.

I am happy to talk with them. I say “You became Buddhists, that’s great. But if you still hate the Brahmins, that doesn’t help. You must learn to cultivate compassion and wisdom, and how to change the social structure—rather than hating the Brahmin oppressor. One reason we held our meeting (INEB) here was because I want to listen to the oppressed Buddhist Indians, and I hope they will also learn from us. Together we can change the social structure of this country.

The Japanese monk who led the ceremony this morning points out that Japanese Buddhism maintains a national social structure that is violent and unjust. Japan promotes violence, particularly in Asia: destroying the environment, importing cheap labour, prostitutes, even wives—because Japanese women are rebelling against male domination. That monk is wonderful.

He is one of the few to speak out. I make efforts to meet a small group of such people, who don't follow the mainstream.

EB: In America now we see a non-violent struggle confronting the corruption of the political process by Big Oil corporations. On November 6th, people formed a human circle around the White House, carrying posters citing President Obama's own statements when he was running for election.

SS: That's great. More and more people are awakening there, and even *breathing* more correctly! They are learning to question smartness and arrogance. We remain young at heart if we learn to be humble, breathe properly and honour others. I see much in America to be hopeful about. It is a country that has done dreadful things in the last 100 years or so, but it's not too late to change.

I was involved with the creation of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship there. Many wonderful Americans have become Buddhist. Most are well-to-do and white, and they may not have embraced lifestyle changes that fully reflect the Four Noble Truths. But I think there are real developments. It is a matter of urgency, after all. The world may be irreversibly damaged by climate change during this decade.

EB: The great danger identified by James Hansen and colleagues (at NASA) is that unless there is a sufficiently rapid change in the energy system—unless we successfully turn back the power of the fossil fuel industry—humanity will lose control of the process. That brings us back to the “demonic” nature of consumerism and corporations.

SS: Precisely

EB: Simon Baron-Cohen and colleagues at Cambridge University have identified an *empathy circuit* of 10 interconnected regions in the human brain. It is underactive in psychopathic individuals who commit acts of cruelty. Such a person does not feel the normal, involuntary human reaction of empathy for others' feelings: a genetic lesion affects the empathy circuit. We are instinctively repelled by an individual without empathy: we call unfeeling cruelty “evil”. Baron-Cohen has defined this on a neurological and genetic level. The demonic or evil is a “zero-empathy negative” state.

So, what happens when fossil fuels create the greatest profits in human economic history, but are controlled by *zero-empathy negative* institutions? In 1995, the great evolutionary geneticist Edward Wilson asked “Is Humanity Suicidal”? Sixteen years later, carbon emissions are out of control and extreme weather events have become “normal”. Shouldn't we Buddhists be asking Wilson's question anew, with all its implications?

SS: This is good for me to know. I would like to be clear and understand what you say before I can make any meaningful comment. It is very useful for me to learn this information.

Extreme weather led to a major flood right now in my country, Thailand. Three cabinet ministers came out and said they are inexperienced and don't know how to handle it. Why didn't those supposedly democratic politicians resign?

We have been uprooted from our own culture. 150 years ago when we opened the country,

westerners complained that they could not ride horses, so we built new roads. Now we have so many roads and cars that the natural drainage (of Bangkok) has been lost.

We have abandoned our traditional respect for Mother Earth, Mother River and Father Mountain. Now we see them only as material to be consumed, turned into money and subject to technology. We have to pull ourselves back to our roots, while at the same time being open to new scientific knowledge. We must change ourselves and society fundamentally, through non-violent action.

To be mindful one must cultivate inner peace. But we must also have *kalyanamitra*, good friends who have good ideas, with whom we can dialogue. They need not only be Buddhists, they could be Christians or atheists. This isn't a matter of numbers. A few friends can achieve a lot with technological know-how, commitment, less egoism, more compassion and wisdom.

Time is short and pressing. But with groups of people like this, we may pull through. Even if we don't pull through, we will have done our best. We must fully do our best—not out of self-concern, but for the next seven generations, and for all species.

We all have Buddha nature. It is my conviction we can pull through. strongly support creative civil disobedience. I strongly support the *Occupy* Movement. It is wonderful! We have to use all kinds of tactics. We have to learn to be non-violent. We have to learn to be mindful.

Do the best you can, but don't expect to win.

John Stanley

The Case for Young People and Nature: A Path to a Healthy, Natural, Prosperous Future

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Abstract

Even the widely accepted goal to keep human-made global warming less than 2°C is not a 'safe' target. Indeed, it would put Earth on a path with severe consequences for civilization and essential ecosystems. A scenario that returns atmospheric CO₂ close to the 350 ppm level and stabilizes climate within this century is still technically possible, but it requires both rapid phase down of fossil fuel emissions and forestry and agricultural programs that enhance carbon storage in the biosphere and soils. A 10-year delay in initiating fossil fuel phasedown likely would cause the climate system to pass tipping points with disastrous consequences and keep CO₂ above the 350 ppm level until at

least 2250. Yet governments and the fossil fuel industry aim to exploit all fossil fuels before the world turns mainly to clean energies. If governments fail to adopt policies that cause rapid phase-down of fossil fuel emissions, today's children, future generations, and nature will bear the consequences through no fault of their own, and today's adults and their governments will be complicit in the tragedy.

Background

Humanity is now the dominant force driving changes of Earth's atmospheric composition and thus future climate on the planet. Carbon dioxide (CO₂) emitted in burning of fossil fuels is the main cause of global warming in the past century.

Today's changes of atmospheric composition will be felt most by today's young people and the unborn, in other words, by people who have no possibility of protecting their own rights and their future well-being, and who currently depend on others who make decisions today that have consequences over future decades and centuries.

The Kyoto Protocol established in 1997 has been so ineffective that global fossil fuel emissions have since accelerated by 2.5% per year, compared to 1.5% per year in the preceding two decades.

Governments and businesses have learned to make assurances that they are working on clean energies and reduced emissions, but in view of the documented emissions pathway it is not inappropriate to describe their rhetoric as being basically 'green-wash'. The reality is that most governments, strongly influenced by the fossil fuel industry, continue to allow and even subsidize development of fossil fuel deposits. These efforts include expansion of oil drilling to increasing depths of the global ocean, into the Arctic and environmentally fragile public lands; squeezing of oil from tar sands; hydro-fracking for natural gas; and increased mining of coal.

The true costs of fossil fuels to human well-being and the biosphere is not imbedded in their price. Fossil fuels are the cheapest energy source today only if they are not made to pay for their

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damage to human health, to the environment, and to the future well-being of young people who will inherit on-going climate changes that are largely out of their control. Even a moderate but steadily rising price on carbon emissions would be sufficient to move the world toward clean energies, but such an approach has been effectively resisted by the fossil fuel industry.

The greatest injustice of continued fossil fuel dominance of energy is the heaping of climate and environmental damages onto the heads of young people and those yet to be born in both developing and developed countries. The tragedy of this situation is that a pathway to a clean energy future is not only possible, but even economically sensible.

Burning all fossil fuels would have a climate impact that literally produces a different planet than the one on which civilization developed. The consequences for young people, future generations, and other species would continue to mount over years and centuries. Ice sheet disintegration would cause continual shoreline adjustments with massive civil engineering cost implications as well as widespread heritage loss in the nearly uncountable number of coastal cities. Shifting of climatic zones and repeated climate disruptions would have enormous economic and social costs, especially in the developing world.

These consequences can be avoided via prompt transition to a clean energy future. The benefits would include a healthy environment with clean air and water, preservation of the shorelines and climatic zones that civilization is adapted to, and retention of the many benefits humanity derives from the remarkable

diversity of species with which we share this planet. Rapid transition requires a steadily rising price on undesirable emissions. Other actions by governments are needed, such as enforcement of energy efficiency standards and investment in technology development. However, without the underlying incentive of a price on carbon emissions, such actions, as well as voluntary actions by concerned citizens, are only marginally effective. This is because such actions reduce the demand for fossil fuels, lower their price, and thus encourage fossil fuel use elsewhere. The price on carbon emissions, to be most effective, must be transparent and across-the-board, for the sake of public acceptance, for guidance of consumer decisions, and for guidance of business decisions including technology investments.

1. Modern Temperature

(1) Summer sea ice cover in the Arctic plummeted in 2007 to an area 30 percent less than a few decades earlier. Continued growth of greenhouse gases will likely cause the loss of all summer sea ice within the next few decades, with large effects on wildlife and indigenous people, increased heat absorption at high latitudes, and potentially the release of massive amounts of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, presently frozen on both land and sea floor.

(2) The great continental ice sheets of Greenland and Antarctica have begun to shed ice at a rate, now several hundred cubic kilometers per year, which is continuing to accelerate. With the loss of protective sea ice and buttressing ice shelves, there is a danger that ice sheet mass loss will reach a level that causes

catastrophic, and for all practical purposes irreversible, sea level rise.

(3) Mountain glaciers are receding rapidly all around the world. Summer glacier melt provides fresh water to major world rivers during the dry season, so loss of the glaciers would be highly detrimental to billions of people.

(4) The hot dry subtropical climate belts have expanded, affecting climate most notably in the southern United States, the Mediterranean and Middle East regions, and Australia, contributing to more intense droughts, summer heat waves, and devastating wildfires.

(5) Coral reef ecosystems are already being impacted by a combination of ocean warming and acidification (a direct consequence of rising atmospheric CO₂), resulting in a 1-2% per year decline in geographic extent. Coral reef ecosystems will be eliminated with continued increase of atmospheric CO₂, with huge consequences for an estimated 500 million people that depend on the ecosystem services of coral reefs.

(6) So-called mega-heatwaves have become noticeably more frequent, for example the 2003 and 2010 heatwaves over Europe and large parts of Russia, each with heat-death tolls in the range of 55,000 to 70,000.

2. Paleoclimate Temperature

Today CO₂, global temperature, and ice area are under the command of humanity: CO₂ has increased to levels not seen for at least 3 million years, global temperature is rising, and ice is melting rapidly all over the planet. Another ice age will never occur, unless humans go extinct. A single chlorofluorocarbon

factory can produce gases with a climate forcing that exceeds the forcing due to Earth orbital perturbations.

Global mean temperature 2°C higher than peak Holocene temperature has not existed since at least the *Pliocene*, a few million years ago. Sea level at that time was estimated to have been 15-25 meters higher than today.

The suggestion that 2°C global warming may be a 'safe' target is extremely unwise. Global warming of that magnitude in a century would put Earth on a rapid journey toward Pliocene-like conditions. Species and ecosystems have no evolutionary experience with such an excursion. Consequences would include disruptions of society and ecosystems, with loss of ecosystem services that maintain human communities today.

3. Earth's Current Energy Imbalance

Earth's energy balance is a vital measure of the status of Earth's climate. In a period of climate stability, Earth radiates as much energy to space as it absorbs from incident sunlight. Today Earth is out of balance because of increasing atmospheric CO₂. Greenhouse gases such as CO₂ reduce Earth's heat radiation to space, causing a temporary energy imbalance, more energy coming in than going out. The immediate planetary energy imbalance due to an increase of CO₂ can be calculated precisely. It does not require a climate model. The radiation physics is rigorously understood. Through accurate and extensive measurement of ongoing changes of the heat content of the ocean, atmosphere, land, and ice on the planet, we can now conclude that this planetary

energy imbalance is substantial, with implications for future climate change.

It means that global warming will continue on decadal time scales, as the 0.8°C global warming so far is the response to only about half to the net human-made climate forcing. The important point is that CO₂ is the dominant climate forcing agent and it will be even more so in the future. We cannot burn all of the fossil fuels without producing a different planet, with changes occurring with a rapidity that will make Earth far less hospitable for young people, future generations, and most other species.

4. Carbon Cycle and Atmospheric CO₂

Atmospheric CO₂ is already about 390 ppm. However, it is still conceivable to get CO₂ back to a level near 350 ppm this century via a combination of rapid reduction of fossil fuel emissions and aggressive measures to increase CO₂ uptake by the soils and biosphere. If emissions were halted in 2011, CO₂ would decline to 350 ppm at mid-century. With a 20 year delay in halting emissions, CO₂ returns to 350 ppm at about 2250. With a 40 year delay, CO₂ does not return to 350 ppm until after year 3000.

Fossil fuel emissions account for about 80 percent of the increase of atmospheric CO₂ from 275 ppm in the preindustrial atmosphere to 390 ppm today. The other 20 percent is from net deforestation. What about artificially drawing down atmosphere CO₂? At present there are no large-scale technologies for air capture of CO₂. An assessment by the American Physical Society concludes that the cost would be so large and the facilities required so substantial that their

construction to deal with a climate emergency would be implausible.

5. Future Global Temperature Change

Most global climate models, incorporate only the effect of the so-called 'fast feedbacks' in the climate system, such as water vapor, clouds, aerosols, and sea ice. Slow feedbacks, such as ice sheet disintegration and climate-induced changes of greenhouse gases, as may occur with the melting of tundra and warming of continental shelves, are not included. Exclusive of slow feedbacks in the 21st century is a dubious assumption. We must bear in mind the potential for slow feedbacks to create a situation where climate change is beyond humanity's control. It is only a question of how fast they will come into play, and which generations will suffer the greatest consequences.

There is thus strong indication that we face a dichotomy. Either we achieve a scenario with declining global CO₂ emissions, thus preserving a planetary climate resembling that of the Holocene or we set in motion a dynamic transition to a very different planet.

Earth has experienced a huge range of climate states during its history, but there has never been such a large rapid increase of climate forcings as would occur with burning of most fossil fuels this century. The closest analogy in Earth's history is probably the PETM (Paleocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum) in which rapid global warming of at least 5°C occurred. In that period, the Indian subcontinent was moving rapidly through the Indian Ocean, just prior to its collision with Asia,

when it began to push up the Himalayan Mountains and Tibetan Plateau. Global warming of about 5°C, occurred at a rate less than 1°C per million years. Approximately 55 Mya there was a rapid release of carbon gas into the surface climate system, from melting of methane hydrates. This injection of carbon and rapid additional warming of about 5°C occurred over a period of about 10,000 years, causing the extinction of almost half of ocean life in general.

The rapid PETM carbon injection was comparable to what will occur if humanity burns most of the fossil fuels, but the PETM occurred over a period that was 10-100 times longer. The ability of life on Earth today to sustain a climate shock comparable to the PETM but occurring 10-100 times faster is highly problematic. Climate zones would be shifting at a speed far faster than species have ever faced. Thus if humanity continues to burn most of the fossil fuels, Earth, and all of the species residing on it, will be pushed into uncharted climate change territory, with consequences impossible to foresee.

6. Consequences of Continued Global Warming

[a] Sea level.

If most fossil fuels are burned global temperatures will rise at least several degrees Celsius. The eventual sea level change in response to the global warming will be many meters and global coast lines will be transfigured. Even moderate sea level rise will create millions of global warming refugees from highly-populated low-lying areas, who must migrate from the coastline, throwing existing global demographics into chaos.

During the Pliocene, when global mean temperature may have been 2°C warmer than the Holocene, sea level was probably 15-25 meters higher than today. "Business-As-Usual" (BAU) CO₂ emissions are producing a climate forcing so much larger than any experienced in prior interglacial periods that a non-linear ice sheet response with multi-meter sea level rise may occur this century. The destabilizing mechanism of greatest concern is melting of ice shelves that buttress the ice sheets, limiting the rate of discharge of ice to the ocean. Ocean warming is causing shrinkage of ice shelves around Greenland and Antarctica. Loss of ice shelves can open a pathway to the ocean for portions of the ice sheets that rest on bedrock below sea level. Most of the West Antarctic ice sheet, which alone could raise sea level by 6 meters, is on bedrock below sea level, so it is the ice sheet most vulnerable to rapid change. However, parts of the larger East Antarctic ice sheet are also vulnerable. Children born today can expect to live most of this century. If BAU emissions continue, will they suffer large sea level rise, or will it be their children, or their grandchildren?

[b] Shifting climate zones.

Subtropical regions expand poleward with global warming. Observations reveal that a 4-degree latitude pole-ward expansion of the subtropics has occurred already, yielding increased aridity in southern United States, the Mediterranean region, and Australia. This has contributed to increased forest fires that burn hotter and are more destructive in all of these regions. Isotherms (lines of a given average temperature) having been moving poleward at a rate of about 100 km

per decade during the past three decades. Wild species have responded to this climatic shift, with at least 52 percent of species having shifted their ranges pole-ward by as much as 600 km on land and 1000 km at sea.

[c] Lose of Species.

Explosion of the human population and its presence on the landscape in the past field centuries is having a profound influence on the well-being of all the other species. As recently as two decades ago biologists were more concerned with effects on biodiversity other than climate change. Now, however, there is agreement that global warming is a main contributor to a global biodiversity crisis. Mountain-restricted species of all taxa are particularly vulnerable: as isotherms move up the mountainside, so does the climate zone in which a given species can survive. Many mountain-dwelling species are being driven to extinction as they literally run out of mountain habitat. Polar-restricted species face similar problems. The threat is not limited to mountain and polar species. Plant and animal distributions reflect the regional climates to which they are adapted. Mass extinctions have occurred in conjunction with rapid climate change during Earth's long history, and new species evolved over millions of years. But such time scales are almost beyond human comprehension. If we drive many species to extinction we will leave a more desolate planet for our children, grandchildren, and as many generations as we can imagine.

[d] Coral reef ecosystems.

Coral reef ecosystems, often described as the rainforests of the ocean, are the most biologically diverse marine ecosystem, gener-

ating ecosystem services critical to the well-being of 500 million people that populate tropical coastal areas.

Acidification arises due to the production of carbonic acid as increasing amounts of CO₂ enter the world's ocean. Ocean pH is already outside where it has been for several million years. Mass coral bleaching and a slowing of coral calcification are already disrupting coral reef ecosystem health.

[e] Hydrologic extremes and storms.

A warmer atmosphere hold more moisture, so heavy rains become more intense and increase flooding. Higher temperatures, on the other hand, cause an intensification of droughts, as does expansion of the subtropics with global warming. Heavy precipitation events have increased substantially. Droughts are more common, especially in the tropics and subtropics.

[f] Mountain glaciers.

Mountain glaciers are in near-global retreat. Glacier demise will yield summers and autumns of frequently dry rivers originating in the Himalayas, Andes, and Rocky Mountains that now supply water to hundreds of millions of people. Glacier retreat and global warming in the pipeline indicate that the current 390 ppm of CO₂ is already a threat for future fresh water security.

[g] Human health.

Children are especially vulnerable to the health impacts of climate change. Principal effects are (1) heat waves, (2) asthma and allergies, (3) infectious disease spread, (4) pests and disease spread across taxa: forests, crops and marine life, (5) winter weather anomalies, (6) drought, (7) food insecurity.

Societal Implications

The science is clear. Continuation of business-as-usual fossil fuel emissions for even a few decades would guarantee that global warming would pass well beyond the warmest interglacial periods in the past millions years, implying transition to literally a different planet than the one that humanity has experienced. Today's young people and following generations would be faced with continuing climate change and climate impacts that would be out of their control. Yet governments are taking no actions to substantially alter business-as-usual fossil fuel emissions. Rhetoric about a 'planet in peril' abounds. But actions speak louder than words. Reality is exposed by continued investments in infrastructure to expand the scope and nature of fossil fuel extraction, even including the most carbon-intensive fuels such as tar sands.

The matter is urgent. The apparent solution is to phase out fossil fuel emissions in favor of clean energies and energy efficiency. Governments have taken steps to promote renewable energies and encourage energy efficiency. But renewable energies total only a few percent of all energy sources, and improved efficiency only slows the growth of energy use.

The transition to a post-fossil fuel world of clean energies is blocked by a fundamental facts, as certain as the law of gravity: as long as fossil fuels are the cheapest energy, they will be burned. However, fossil fuels are cheapest only because they are subsidized directly and indirectly, and because they are not made to pay their costs to society—the costs of air and water pollution

on human health and costs of present and future climate disruption and change.

Those people who prefer to continue business-as-usual assert that transition to fossil fuel alternatives would be economically harmful, and they implicitly assume that fossil fuel use can continue indefinitely. In reality, it will be necessary to move to clean energies eventually, and most economists believe that it would be economically beneficial to move in an orderly way to the post fossil fuel era via a steadily increasing price on carbon emissions.

An across-the-board price on all fossil fuel CO₂ emissions emerges as the simplest, easiest, fastest and most effective way to phase down carbon emissions, and this approach presents fewer obstacles to international agreement. A gradually rising carbon price is the *sine qua non*, but it must be combined with a portfolio of other actions: energy research and development with demonstration programs; public investment in complementary infrastructure such as improved electric grids; global monitoring systems; energy efficiency regulations; public education and awareness; support for climate change mitigation and adaptation in undeveloped countries.

The basic matter, however, is not one of economics. It is a matter of morality—a matter of intergenerational justice. The blame, if we fail to stand up and demand a change of course, will fall on us, the current generation of adults. Our parents did not know that their actions could harm future generations. We, the current generation, can only pretend that we did not know. And that is unforgivable.

November 29, 2011

Dear Acharn Sulak,

Thank you for your letter dated November 24 gratefully acknowledging financial grant by Government of India towards an International Buddhist Art Workshop organized by the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) that was held at Bodh Gaya during October 19-25. While the financial grant of \$10,000 by ICCR would have helped in organizing the workshop, the day trip organized for artists to Rajgir and Nalanda by Ministry of Tourism would definitely have inspired them. I will definitely convey your message of gratitude to both ICCR and Ministry of Tourism.

I look forward to meeting with you in person soon and also to more collaborations with INEB on subjects of mutual interest.

Yours sincerely,
Anil Wadhwa
Indian Ambassador in Bangkok

Dear Sulak,

Yesterday, I read an article in the "Basel News" that a 61-year-old Thai citizen, Ampon Tangnoppakul, was sentenced to 20 years in prison because of "Lese majeste". The concrete wording of three SMS', which he was supposed to have written, is not known. He and his family have only about 75 monthly for living. The same article says that last year 36 cases of violating the lese majeste law have become known. The author, Willi Germund, lives obviously in Bangkok, is not very much in favour!

How are you? We have a very warm sunny fall, but very dry. Usually Stuttgart has in November 66 litre rainfall, this year only 0.6 litre! So, we have too less of what you had too much.

Hope, you are in good health. Cordial greetings, yours,

Wolfgang Schmidt
Germany

Ajarn Sulak,

I can say, with authority, the monarchical realm of Thailand could, easily, within a decade become a G20 Nation, with greatly reduced corruption, political stability and fairness, peace among classes and increased, overall, prosperity, with an honest economy.

[If we didn't have to 'prove' my honesty and intelligence, we could go directly to requesting an audience with His Majesty's trusted advisors, in order to reveal a road map to a future, so bright, it would be the marvel of the World,]

As for my intelligence, would I profess that Burma or Cambodia have the societal ingredients to lead Asean into a Golden Era? Absolutely not. Would I predict America will ever recover from its downfall at the hands of debt financing and military spending? No way.

However, Thailand really does have a combination of historical and cultural foundations which offer her, unique from so many other countries, the opportunity to wake up from a bad dream of division and turmoil.

While every weak person and country has the 'potential', like Buddha, to be great; I am saying that Thailand has real and promising potential, achievable potential.

Will you agree to having an online discussion with me? [This message is BBC to a loyal and intelligent Thai who has spent many hours and days in dialogue with me. You could be put in touch with her to get a reference as to the level of my caring and concern.]

Within 10 years the corruption rate among businesses, the military, police, foreign investor, NGO's will be reduced to the rates of Canada and Singapore. However, with impeccable timing, bribery and graft among politicians could be eradicated within months if the Joseph solution is adopted and the Joseph plan is implemented.

As Buddhadasa Bhikkhu showed us, ant and bee colonies don't have the greed and hoarding of individuals. Many know the why? and wherefore? of the problems. The Thailand solution enters into the realm of the how? [Intelligence tell us why?; genius shows us how?]

Think of the politicians as a bunch of spoilt brats who can't stop raiding the cookie jar; it's a jar with corruption cookies, btw. Both 'regulating' and 'educating' have been like a dog chasing its tail. Relying on these 'solutions' will take generations and a miracle. However, what about, simply removing the Corruption Cookie Jar? Believe me, this will not be difficult!

Is there divine comedy? [For example, Thailand and Cambodia are at war over a Holy Site?] Also, 90% of Thais are friendly, honest, hard working lovers of life. They all want peace and stability, yet there is turmoil and divisions. You have to admit, if it wasn't so sad, it would, then, be humorous, eh. Officially, Thailand is 96% Buddhist. Therefore, those other 4% are sure causing a lot of grief, eh? If Thailand wants to continue with crocodile and snake fighting over red meats of corruption, it will spiral down to the levels of Burma, Cambodia and N Korea. If she lets me show her how to drain the swamp, using law, peacefully, she will lead the world!

For Vishnu's sake, I hope you will chat online with me. If you want to chat with the devoted Thai, Noot, first, then you can decide.

May a divinely bestowed, beneficent monarchy govern, bicameral, [in partnership] with elected representatives of the people.

Gary Joseph Chandler
Canada

13-9-11

Dear Acharn Sulak,

I heard that there have been floods and escaped crocodiles in Bangkok, so a wet letter in a very small thing! Thank you for your postcard. I will try to remember what I wrote in the last letter!

Firstly, many congratulations for receiving the Niwano Peace Prize. It must have been tinged with sadness for you, given the terrible disaster at Fukushima shortly afterwards. I saw your interview on the BBC's 'Hardtalk' series, and read the article about you in the Sunday *Independence*, by far the best newsletter in the U.K.

It is deeply satisfying for me to see the ideas that you and others have propagated for a long time finally getting the mainstream attention they deserve. It seems that with every passing year those ideas are more and more perceived.

Secondly, I would like to thank you both for the children's books (which they enjoyed) and, for the Thai translation of my tiger story. I really cannot emphasize how much it means to me for the story to be available in the language of those who inspired it. I am writing another story which needs more editing; when it is finished I will send it to you for your opinion. I am trying to work on my writing, and am considering re-write on the tiger story to improve it and others.

Lastly, we have a place in Bordeaux City Centre that I am working very hard to renovate. It is taking all of my time at the moment, so of course my writing has suffered accordingly.

I hope this letter finds you and your family in good health; please pass my regards to any Thai friends who may remember me.

If there is anything you would like me to do, please do not hesitate to ask.

I remain your friend,
Danny Campbell
France

P.S. Keep your eyes heeded for those crocodiles!

New Economics Institute
 neweconomics@neweconomicsinstitute.org

Dear Suksit Siam

This Saturday's Thirty-First Annual E. F. Schumacher Lectures in New York City is one of many events celebrating the centennial of the birth of the author of *Small Is Beautiful*. Juliet Schor and Gar Alperovitz, Charles Young, Rina Kuusipalo, and Kyle Gracey of Youth for a New Economy, and two representatives from Occupy Wall Street will address the emergence of a new economy, a next economy, a green economy, a responsible economy, — the necessity of which Schumacher described in his influential book.

Registration is still open at neweconomicsinstitute.org/event-registration. Tickets are also available at the door beginning at 9:30 AM at Community Church of New York, 35th Street just west of Park Avenue.

In September the European Spirituality in Economics and Society Forum (europes.be) convened "Responsibility in Economics and Business — The Legacy of E. F. Schumacher" in Antwerp, Belgium — another centennial event. We have posted keynote talks by Simon Trace, Barbara Wood, Susan Witt, and Stewart Wallis at our website: neweconomicsinstitute.org/schumacher

SIMON TRACE, Executive Director of Practical Action spoke on "Responsibility in Technology."

"Schumacher's essay 'Buddhist Economics' was, I would argue, fundamentally about two things: Firstly it was about putting human well-being and not growth as the central concern of development. Secondly it was about finding a path to a new equilibrium—a rebalance of our efforts at technological innovation away from meeting the 'wants' of consumerism towards meeting the basic needs of the two billion people in this world who still live in abject poverty as well as a better recognition of the rights of future generations alongside those of our own.

Those ideas have stood the test of time and are as relevant today as they were 40 years ago. Our responsibility to current and future generations must be to put human wellbeing back as the central purpose of economics and development. But in doing this we need to heed Schumacher's challenge to create an economics that makes contact with the human realities of poverty, frustration, alienation, and despair. We therefore need to make sure that our definition of wellbeing goes beyond people's material concerns (for food, shelter, access to basic services such as water and energy, education and health, and an income to pay for all of this) and includes also critical relational aspects of wellbeing (a sense that you as an individual have a degree of control and power over your own life, that you can be a part of decisions that have a major impact on the way you live, that you can live in dignity, that you have the respect of your fellow citizens, and that you can live in peace with your neighbors)."

SUSAN WITT, Education Director of the New Economics Institute, addressed the topic: "Inspired by Place, Informed by Wisdom of the Ages, a New Economy is Emerging."

"The new economy that Schumacher took responsibility for promoting is visible today in towns and villages around the world, spearheaded by citizen groups determined to build vibrant, sustainable, local economies. They recognize that change is inevitable. They wish their communities to be resilient in the face of climate change and global financial collapse. They are taking steps to forge alliances of producers and consumers working together to shape a common future. . . ."

Those organizing the annual BerkShares Bike-a-Thon have a message for their city, their country, and for the Congress of Nations that will gather in Rio in June. It is a message first spoken by the man we are honoring today, who planted its seeds: "It is time to change our priorities and forge a new economy that will slow environmental degradation, provide a living wage to workers, and foster greater well-being for all."

The farmer working with neighbors to restore the integrity of her fields at the Interval following the devastating rains of the recent hurricane shares in that appeal. The residents of the Ninth Ward in New Orleans, building their homes on land now a permanent part of the community, add their support. Those who have found new jobs in Bridgeport, with their Westport friends standing beside them, raise their held hands in affirmation.

Their voices will be heard, joined in chorus. A new economy, a next economy, a green economy, a responsible economy, is emerging."

STEWART WALLIS, Executive Director of the New Economics Foundation (nef) spoke on “A Great Transition: Why there is an urgent need to transform economic thinking and practice and our responsibility to lead this transformation.”

“About five years ago we (nef) calculated how much the global economy would need to go up if those who are now living on one dollar a day were to have an additional dollar. You need to raise the GDP of the whole world by \$166 a day to in order to add one more dollar for each person now earning one dollar a day. It’s ecologically impossible to keep doing that. If you want to have everybody on the planet earning \$1000 a year, which is \$3 a day, and you keep global income distribution as it is and keep the resource intensity of output as it is, you need fifteen planets’ worth of resources in order for everybody in the world to make \$1000 a year. We haven’t got fifteen planets. So the need for transition is overwhelmingly clear when you start looking at these simple facts that can be figured out on a slip of paper.”

BARBARA WOOD, daughter of Fritz Schumacher and his biographer, spoke of the transition in her father’s thinking in her talk “In Honor of E. F. Schumacher.”

“He started to ask new questions: What is man? What is the purpose of life? How does economics help in fulfilling that purpose? These were not easy questions for him to answer. For the first half of his life he had dismissed such philosophical questions as irrational and unscientific. Honesty now required that he gave them attention.

The final moment I want to mention is his visit to Burma in 1955 as an economic adviser with the UN. Again he observed carefully and reflected on what he saw and experienced. The Burmese seemed to be so happy. (It was a very different place from the Burma of today). There he saw that western economics was not adding to the happiness of the Burmese, but rather the reverse. It was making them want things they did not need. It dawned upon him that economics was not a science independent of values: what the economist believes to be the meaning and purpose of life is also relevant because it determines the kind of economics he or she will pursue. He wrote: I came to Burma a thirsty wanderer and there I found living water.”

Best wishes,
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Dear Ajarn Sulak,

In partnership with Mom Ratchawongse Narisa Chakrabongse, Editor and Publisher of River Books, it is my pleasure to invite you to a special evening at Chakrabongse House on Tuesday, December 13, 2011 at 19:00 hours for a Photo Exhibit and Dinner Discussion on The Changing Face of Burma.

This is the second of two events involving collaboration between the Serindia Gallery, River Books and the Embassy of Canada . On November 24, 2011 the Serindia Gallery launched a compelling photo exhibition of Burma Political Prisoners by famed British photographer James Mackay. Some of the photos in this exhibit will be on display at Chakrabongse House, and James Mackay will be personally present to introduce his exhibit.

The dinner and discussion to follow will be an intimate gathering of Burma experts and those with a keen interest or stake in Burma’s reform. Following the Chatham House rule, the dinner discussion will be a unique and timely opportunity to review recent political and economic developments in Burma, assess their significance, including implications for Thailand, and determine possible future approaches and responses by Thailand and the international community to help anchor and deepen reform measures underway and still needed.

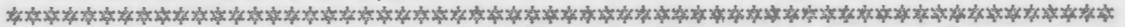
Khunying Narisa Chakrabongse has kindly opened her historic home for this occasion and will offer dinner guests a private tour of the extraordinary Chakrabongse House during the evening. Built in 1908 by

HRH Prince Chakrabongse, Chakrabongse House was originally a robing pavilion used by the prince when he attended royal ceremonies at the Grand Palace, and also for picnics and excursions on the Chao Phraya river. After the 1932 revolution, it became the Bangkok residence of HRH Prince Chula Chakrabongse, the writer, historian, and motor-racing manager. Today the grounds have been transformed into a boutique hotel by his daughter Mom Ratchawongse Narisa Chakrabongse. It is located at 396 Maharaj Road, Tatien. (website: www.chakrabongsevillas.com ; Contact: Khun Run 089 810 0498)

We sincerely hope you are able to contribute to this special evening.

Ron Hoffmann

Ambassador | Ambassadeur
Embassy of Canada | Ambassade du Canada



Why do we continue to ignore HM the King?

Re: "Time for long-overdue reform of outdated legislation", Opinion, December 7.

Passion runs high in the Akong lese-majeste case, with Pavin Chachavalpongun concluding, "Monarchists are the ones who breed anti-monarchists". Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa, a professed monarchist being prosecuted under the said law, might find the outburst ironical.

The King himself came out very clearly against the law, I quote from the recently launched book under the supervision of former PM Anand Panyarachun—*King Bhumibol Adulyadej: A Life's Work* (Editions Didier Millet, page 313). "Thailand's law of lese-majeste has one very prominent critic: King Bhumibol.... In 2005, after an increase in politically inspired lese-majeste complaints, King Bhumibol used his annual televised birthday address to convey three concerns:

"The king, he said, is a human being and as such should be subject to criticism.

"Charges against those accused of lese-majeste should be dropped, and those held in jail for lese-majeste should be released.

"The use of the lese-majeste law ultimately damages the monarchy."

So I fail to understand why successive governments and the concerned authorities have not taken notice of His Majesty's complaints. Or is there a darker side to this matter?

Sumet Jumsai
Bangkok
The Nation
December 8, 2011



December 11, 2011

Dear Sulak,

There was one bright spot for me in the summer: at 12.30 am. on 28th June, being unable to sleep, I switched on the BBC World Service TV and heard the introductory words that the chief guest in the programme would be a prominent leader of opinion in the Far East. Short pause, then on walked Sulak Sivaraksa. That gave me great pleasure and I felt that you acquitted yourself extremely well. I was very touched when the interviewer said that you had been educated in England, and you gently corrected him "No, Wales."

I hope that the Thai floods have subsided and that the losts have been less than was feared. Do forgive me a dull letter but I don't get about much. And we send to you all our best wishes and thoughts.

Yours ever,
John Graham, Scotland

10-10-2011

Dear Ajarn Sulak:

Let me introduce myself as a student of International Relations and American Politics. For some years now I have been reading and reflecting on the post cold war globalisation and its impact on the world, especially with respect to humanism and global ecological balance. Thanks to Ajarn Samdhong Rinpoche, whom I had the good fortune of meeting, I came to know about your work in the area. I am currently reading your insightful book, *Wisdom of Sustainability: Buddhist Economics for the 21st Century*, with a foreword by Professor Rinpoche.

I am amazed at the degree of coincidence in our analyses, views, and approaches with respect to the phenomenon of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation and its essential negative impact on human values and ecological future of the planet earth. I am particularly happy to know about you at this time because we are going to convene an inter-civilisation conference on the "Philosophy of Globalisation" during February 2012. The theme note of the Conference is attached herewith. Leading spokespersons from different civilisations of man are being invited. We would very much like you to represent Buddhism at the conference.

Please read the theme note carefully and get back to me at your earliest convenience. Our plan is to bring out a book based on the papers and proceedings of the Conference.

A brief CV is also enclosed for your kind information. I am also sending by airmail a copy of the Endowment Lecture I delivered at the University of Bombay not long ago.

Look forward to hearing from you.

With kind regards.

B. Ramesh Babu

E-mail:brameshbabu@ipeindia.org; brameshbabo08@gmail.com

Recommended Readings



Contemplation Nation: How Ancient Practices Are Changing the Way We Live

Paper from The State of Contemplative Practice in America

Edited by Mirabai Bush

Foreword by Rob Lehman

First Edition 2011

Published by Fetzer Institute



Selves & Not-Self

The Buddhist Teaching on Anatta

By Thanissaro Bhikkhu (Geoffrey DeGraff)

For free distribution

©Thanissaro Bhikkhu 2011



Songs of Insomnia

Poems by Frank William Finney

First Edition 2011

Published by Suksit Siam



Buddhism - nu

Att undvika allt ont, att göra gott,
att rena sitt eget sinne – det är de upplystas lära.

Nr 1 – 2010 / årg. 5

Wang Gungwu: Junzi Scholar - Gentleman

By Asad-ul Iqbal Latif

Published by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010

Available at leading bookshops

Wang Gungwu, perhaps more than anyone else, has highlighted the complex dilemmas facing Chinese living abroad and their interaction with their homeland. In a world dominated by Western science, Western thought and Western scholarship, Wang Gungwu is recognised internationally as a leading historian on China and Southeast Asia.

Asad-ul Iqbal Latif's book "Wang Gungwu: Junzi Scholar — Gentleman" is a series of conversations with Wang published last year to mark his 80th birthday. The interviews span the life, times and thoughts of an eminent intellectual, scholar, Sinologist and teacher. The text is reflective, lucid and easy to read.

Wang was born in 1930 in Surabaya in Dutch Indonesia, the son of a Chinese-language teacher who'd emigrated from Taizhou. The family subsequently moved to British Malaya and Wang was raised in Ipoh.

He acquired from his parents a strong Chinese identity. Growing up in a colony impressed on him how much Asians had lost over the centuries to the dominant Europeans. He wondered why China, after millennia of greatness, failed to respond to the challenges of the 19th century. Wang looked to history for the answers.

What happens when a great empire collapses? How does it recover? These questions intrigued him against the backdrop of the Qing Dynasty's demise in 1911 and China's descent into 40



years of civil war.

He searched for parallels in history and found the 100-year civil war following the fall of the Tang Dynasty. The result was Wang's 1957 PhD dissertation for the University of London School of Oriental and African Studies, "The Structure of Power in North China during the Five Dynasties".

However, born into a migrant family, Wang was also interested in the history of overseas Chinese and the pattern of China's relationship with the countries around the South China Sea.

Wang's vivid reminiscences of his childhood and the Japanese occupation of Malaya are poignant and reflect the challenge of identity re-orientation that many overseas Chinese face.

As an adult he came to understand that authorities regard

history as a dangerous subject. The restrictions imposed on the study of history in Southeast Asia frustrated his quest for answers. His youthful curiosity about China remained unsatisfied.

The British wanted to play down Anglo-Chinese conflicts and instead turn the Chinese against Japan. The strategy was probably the most successful British policy contributing to Japan's military defeat during World War II.

"The Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 gave Chinese nationalism its particular stridence, and the war of 1937-1945 still provides the trigger, if not the core, of contemporary Chinese nationalism," Wang says. "Compared to Chinese nationalist passion against the Japanese, even the nationalism against the Great Powers and America seemed pale in retrospect."

Japan had earlier inspired Asian nationalist movements against Western colonial powers with its 1905 military victory over Russia. Its invasions of the early 1940s speeded up the de-colonisation of Southeast Asia.

The war resulted in the installation of independent nation states throughout Asia, but they became divided into opposing camps, capitalist or communist.

The 1940 triumph of Mao Zedong provoked a fiercely anti-communist reaction in post-colonial Southeast Asia, so that it became impossible to study modern Chinese history in Malaya. The governments of

Malaya and Singapore suspected every Chinese resident of communist sympathies.

Communist phobia intensified during the Korean War and America's war against North Vietnam. Anti-communist propaganda, official suspicion of Chinese intellectuals, the banning of Chinese-language books, and a travel ban to communist China made it almost impossible for overseas Chinese to research modern China.

So Wang shifted his attention to ancient history. The source materials were freely available in most countries, although the travel ban precluded access to any within the People's Republic.

Wang's earliest publications reflected a careful avoidance of modern China. Following his 1957 treatise on the Five Dynasties, there was "The Nanhai Trade: A Study of the Early History of Chinese Trade in the South China Sea".

Wang also wrote extensively about the Chinese diaspora in the region, although he disliked that term when applied to Chinese leaving China, because of its association with propaganda that perpetuated fears of a "Chinese threat" in the South China Sea.

He observed that overseas Chinese embraced neither Chinese nationalism nor that of their adopted countries. And yet nationalists in their host countries did seek to enlist them in nation-building efforts in the wake of de-colonisation.

Witnessing at close quarters the formation of Malaysia in 1963 and Singapore's separation in 1965, in the wake of divisive ethnic politics, must have tarnished his faith that people of diverse heritages could enrich



national culture while being loyal citizens of their new nation.

After completing his PhD in London, Wang became an assistant lecturer at the University of Malaya. His talents were quickly recognised. By 1962, at age 32, he was dean of arts, and by the following year a full professor.

In 1968, though — stung by Malaysia's refusal to grant his son an identity card and still restricted in his travels in China — Wang moved to the Australian National University as professor of Far East history.

There, with abundant resources on contemporary China, he was able to renew his earlier interest. The People's Republic was then in the throes of the Cultural Revolution.

Finally working without fear of official suspicion or reprisal, Wang spent 18 productive years. Australia actually brought him closer to China.

And, when Wang became vice chancellor of Hong Kong University in 1986, he got a close-up look at China after the Cultural Revolution. Hong Kong unwittingly gave him a ringside

view of the tragic Tiananmen Square crackdown in 1989.

Despite Tiananmen, the decade Wang spent in Hong Kong convinced him that Deng Xiaoping's reforms had reversed the decline China began in the 19th century. He characterised Deng's success as China's "Fourth Rise" — after the unification achieved by the Qin-Han, Sui-Tang and Ming-Qing dynasties.

It must be gratifying for him to see China seeking to rejoin world history largely on Chinese terms.

He left Hong Kong in 1996, the year before Britain gave it back to China, and returned to Singapore as chairman of the East Asian Institute. He had come full circle, back to the island of his youth.

Wang continues to live and work in Singapore. He is also chairman of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies and the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy.

Jeffery Sng

The Wisdom of Sustainability: Buddhist Economics for the 21st Century

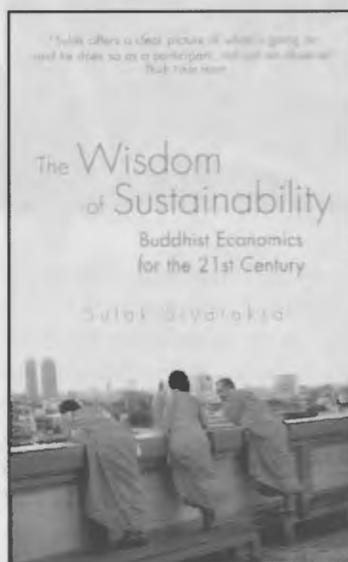
by Sulak Sivaraksa

with a foreword by Samdhong Rinpoche.

Kidhei HI: Koa Books, 2009/London: Souvenir Books, 2011.101 pp.\$12.50/£10.

This slim volume, its size much belying the wisdom in its pages, is a collection of the writings and speeches of the Thai nobleman, Buddhist scholar/monk, and passionate and much incarcerated activist for just and peaceful change, Sulak Sivaraksa, frequently imprisoned under the pernicious lese-majesty laws of Thailand, he has been a champion of the poor and the dispossessed all his life. His life is a testament to the Spirit in action. The Temenos Academy was fortunate to host Sulak for a day's study group in the summer of 2007, and I was personally fortunate in being able to spend time with him during that visit. Spending time with Sulak is like sitting in front of a great fire in winter, for he simply warms one up with his openness, his generosity, his enthusiasm and his great sense of hope for the human condition.

Living in the comfortable West, where so much of our conspicuous consumption seems to be so clearly unsustainable, made me approach a review of this little book with some trepidation. A meditation on what is truly sustainable in our world, a world which feels so increasingly precarious, seemed daunting. I knew that Sulak, faithful to his Buddhist calling, was much attached to the idea of being close to nature and the agrarian way of life, and this is indeed a theme of his writing as it is of the Buddhist



scriptures. I did wonder however if he would be able to remain relevant in addressing the realities of the great sprawling urban mega-cities, where so much of humanity now resides uncomforted by the beauties and certainties of nature and the old traditional forms. I need not have worried, for Sulak speaks to the Spirit wherever it may reside; and much of his practical teaching may be practised anywhere, in whatever circumstances we find ourselves.

The book is a collection of writings and speeches which speak, among many themes, to the nature and the value of crisis, the urgent need for the creation of a culture of peace, and the necessity of learning from our misguided concept of 'develop-

ment'. Sulak speaks of the need for real education, an education of the Spirit, a concept with which Temenos readers will easily identify. He speaks of the need for true moral governance, of the need for an authentic security, and of where and how that might be found. And of course the golden thread that binds all these necessary and important ideas together is the thought of the Buddha himself, whose teaching has so deeply informed Sulak's life and work. This is a book that, most rarely, combines penetrating insight and deep critical thought into the nature and flaws of our international Western world-view with deep insight into how it must be in our own individual lives that real change must first take place. It travels among lofty peaks of philosophical thought, but also includes simple practical instructions for our daily life.

The chapter entitled 'Heavenly Messengers' seems most particularly relevant at this time of crisis. It seeks to show how some crises come as 'heavenly messengers' to force us to change our misguided ways, ways that have become wholly unsustainable. I say 'some' crises out of respect for the people of Japan, who have recently experienced the darker side of nature through no fault of theirs. Our current Western crises, however, have surely come about through our own profligacy and greed, and a

profound disrespect for the natural world we live in and the individual human lives that inhabit it.

Sulak argues against the exporting imperative of many industrialized societies. He argues most persuasively that if a society concentrates on fulfilling its own needs, the way of life that is engendered by such activities is not only sustainable but conducive to individual human creativity and dignity. In the small market town in which I grew up in Cumbria there used to be three tailors who made the clothes for the whole population, and fine well-made clothes they were. Today there are no tailors, and we rely on cheap imports of inferior cloth from the East. This has become the nature of our economy, if indeed one can dignify the nature of such a practice with such a word.

One of the other themes that run through this collection is Sulak's profound mistrust of consumerism, globalization and technology:

The World Bank and other institutions presume the superiority of the industrialized model over agrarian lifestyles, subsistence economies and indignity.

I paused a long time over this sentence and wondered if it was wholly true. Anyone who was lucky enough to visit Thailand in the '50s and '60s, before consumerism and globalization took hold, will nostalgically have some sympathy with this view. It was indeed a country of great beauty and seeming harmony, and yet I did wonder if that was the whole picture. If we think of our own industrial experience, which transformed the English from an essentially agrarian people into an urban one, we too might indulge in a bout of nos-

talgia for our rural past. And yet industrialization, in the United Kingdom, has mutated in so many ways from its rather brutal beginnings into a much cleaner and fairer society. If we consider the welfare state alone, while few would dispute that it has now gone too far, it was surely a brave experiment in compassion to consider that the collectivity of the state should help those who could not help themselves. This surely is a long cry from the slavery and demeaning poverty of the 'dark satanic mills' of Victorian England.

Sulak leans hard against the growth model of the Western economics and argues that 'no economy can expand forever'; and yet I am far from sure that this claim is just. Thomas Malthus thought in the eighteenth century that we would eventually run out of food as populations increased. However, by innovation and experiment, huge surpluses of food were subsequently produced in many parts of the world. All civilizations depend on three pillars to sustain themselves: food, energy and a system of belief. It is true that we now seem to face a crisis in all of these fields; and yet I have a feeling that mankind will eventually rise to challenge as it has always seemed to do. We shall in time find new and even cleaner methods of making energy; the elusive dream of nuclear fusion is one. I have no doubt that we shall, again in time, find more productive methods of producing food sustainably that work in harmony with nature and not against it; or, alternatively, we shall change our diets because we have to. In the matter of belief, we are going to come to realize that man simply cannot live without some form of spiritual belief. He may live without

a religion, but not without spiritual values. In time, maybe over a long time, he will again find that life-giving dimension. If we fail, then indeed we are all doomed; but the transformative capacity of humans and the creative nature of life itself to rise to these challenges fill me with hope.

So is Sulak's claim of the misguided nature of much of our Western way of life wrong? I don't think so, for he has much of value to say and much that will make us very thoughtful. But I think that it is possibly not the whole truth. We in the West have so much to learn from the Buddhist world-view; and Buddhists have so much to teach us about the non-rational, non-literal, non-material sides of life, as this book makes clear. However I do think that our development in the Western world of the rational and scientific faculties, while currently perhaps almost barbarically one-sided, will none the less be essential to our survival as a planet. There is and can be no going back—a glance at life in our mega-cities and at the explosion of populations informs us of that—and a way forward must surely include a balance of both capacities abundantly present in human life.

In the last chapter Sulak takes us to the heart of the matter, for it is here that we are invited to face ourselves and our sustainability in the simplest and most compelling manner. I wonder if there are many who will read this book and not wonder about the sustainability of their own lives in this time of tumult. We really do seem to be living in an apocalyptic time of change, with no real idea of whether or when some great tsunami of events will sweep us up in its path and leave us stranded and awash

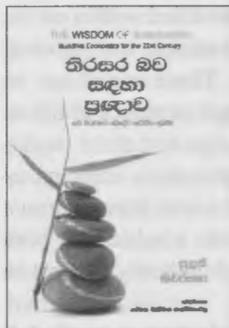
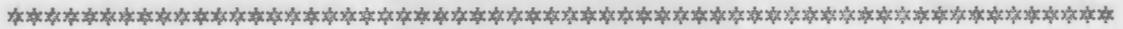
in the loss of so much that we take for granted. So the question arises: 'How then may we sustain ourselves?'; or perhaps: 'What, in spite of all the troubles that may beset us and those around us, is truly sustainable about our lives?' In answering this question, Sulak goes straight to the Buddha for inspiration and in doing so gives us the simplest advice—which, if practised with diligence, never fails to reassure. I breathe, therefore I am; and the title of the last chapter, 'The Breath of Life', take us to the core of sustainable life whatever our circumstances:

Breathing in, I calm my body.
 Breathing out, I smile.
 Dwelling in the present moment,
 I know this is a wonderful moment!
 ...

Breathing in, I feel calm.
 Breathing out, I feel at ease.
 As I inhale, I smile.
 As I exhale, I release all accumulated pressures.
 Breathing in, I know there is only the present moment.
 Breathing out, I know it is a wonderful moment.
 Sulak makes the point that the world is filled full enough with governments, organizations, societies, programs and projects; but without personal spiritual transformation, so much good intention is wrecked on the rocks of compulsive fear and greed and wrong intention. He reminds us that the practice of mindful breathing restructures our consciousness and helps us develop critical self awareness. We become more able to see the structural violence in ourselves and in our world.

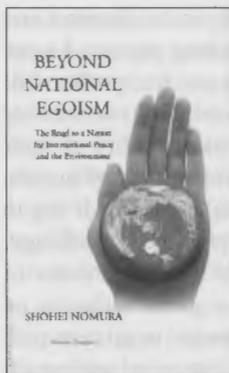
So it is here, in the practice with our own personal breath, that the starting point of our own transformation and the root of our own ultimate sustainability lies. Simply put, while we have breath we live, while we have breath, our lives are sustainable—whatever else of comfort, wealth or health we may gain or lose. This may appear an obvious truism and an oversimplification to many, but reading this and reflecting on it I felt the ultimate truth of it and felt reassured. The key, as with any spiritual discipline, is regular and devoted practice. I think that Sulak Sivaraksa inspires us in this small book to make that effort.

Sir Nicholas Pearson
 Temenos Academy Review 2011



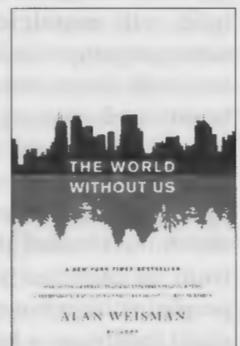
The Wisdom of Sustainability
Buddhist Economics for the 21st Century
 Engaged Buddhist Solidarity for Nature
 (Sinhala edition)

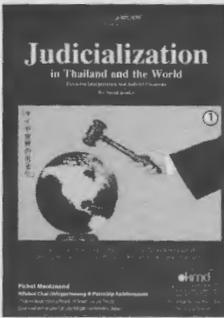
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Song of Homage

A Life's Work

On this Seventh Birthday Anniversary Cycle of Your Noble Sovereign,
Pray Your Majesty overflows with joy and happiness;
May You be removed from all infirmities forthrightly.
The bearers of enmity be extirpated by Your virtuousness.

From thence may You be freed from sufferings and sorrows.
Endow the populace with fortuity, a sense of integrity.
Malfeasants who brashly 'devour towns and cities' who's sordid and heinous nature bore.
By the grace of 'phra-dharma-raja' doomed forevermore.

By upholding the Ten Princely Virtues high
Awakening the populace in every blade of grass
To reside a life of righteousness and demeanor;
And too, turning their faces towards each other, reaching out to one another.

Lessens and brings an end to class afflictions among the ad-masses,
Making each and every person considerate....all compassionate;
Nurture and nourish each individual life preeminence,
Aptly transforming 'revolving chakras' to sweet blossoming 'lotus flowers'.

The aim in life's journey is to arrive at the wisdom most high,
Enabling Siam the nation to attain what they want and desire,
Thus safeguarding their 'freedom' by strong insistency;
Espousing and procreating that which is '**self-sufficient economy**'.

One shalt face up to veracity while holding on to integrity,
Resolving each and every problem without recourse.
Unite men and women far and wide, fusing them in unanimity,
Exercise their rights and voices in acceptable modus operandi.

One shalt strive for excellence, both spiritual and physical might,
Humbly making these offering to Your Majesty, as my witness.
Wishing You joy and happiness every single day and night;
Who else, but Your Noble Majesty, befittingly proclaimed, the one and only,
'Phra Bhubodi (Bhumi)' of Thy populace!

[The 84th birthday, or 7 cycles, of H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej, was on 5th December 2011 (2554).]