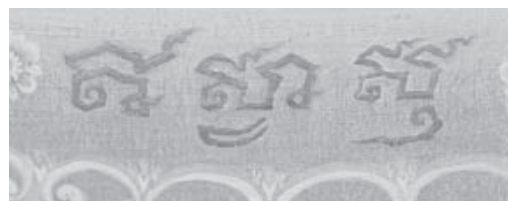


SEEDS OF PEACE

Vol.29 No.1

Jan.-Apr. 2556 (2013)



**When ignorance was destroyed,
knowledge arose...
as happens in one who is heedful,
ardent and resolute.**



SEEDS OF

C O N T E N T S

Publisher

Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa
Foundation

Editors

Sulak Sivaraksa

&

Somboon Chungprampree

Assistant Editor

Phatcharasiri Yimmuang

Cover

Angkarn Kalayanapong

Lay-out

Song Sayam., Ltd.

Tel. (662) 225-9533-5

Published by

SEM

Tel. & Fax: (662) 314-7385-6

&

TICD

Tel. (662) 438-9331-2

&

INEB

Tel. (662) 860-2194

email:

secretariat@inebnetwork.org

www.inebnetwork.org

Distributed by

Suksit Siam

113-115 Fuangnakhorn Rd.

Bangkok 10200

Tel. (662) 2259536-40

Fax: (662) 222-5188

email: spd@semsikkha.org

Baht 100 per issue

suggested annual

subscription US\$ 50

Payment info

Please send a cheque payable to

-Anchalee Kurutach

1795 O'Farrell St. Apt. 101,

San Francisco, CA 94115,

USA for US\$

-Mingmanas Sivaraksa

127 Soi Santipap, Nares Road,

Bangrak, Bangkok 10500

Siam for £

-Hans van Willenswaard

77,79 Fuang Nakorn Rd,

Wat Rajabopit, Bangkok,

Siam 10200 for Euro

-Jill Jameson

6 Hamilton Road, Warrandyte,

Victoria 3113, Australia

for Australian dollars

3 Congratulations

4 Editorial Notes

4 Announcement of 2013 INEB Conference, Malaysia

Country Reports

5 Burma: Back to Work in Myanmar

Thomas Kean

7 Cambodia: Sihanouk's Legacy

Pavin Chachavalpongpun

8 Siam: Time for Thailand to Take a Stand Against Death Penalty

Jose Ramos-Horta

9 Tibet: Tibet's Turmoil Intensifies

Saransh Sehgal

INEB

11 Conflict in Myanmar's Rakhine State

12 Letter from the Secretariat Office

13 80 Years of Sulak Sivaraksa

Harsha Navaratne

14 Climate Change and Biodiversity Conservation :

Moving Forward with ICE Network

17 Report of INEB International Forum in Japan

Jonathan Watts

21 Statement on Nuclear Energy

Sulak Sivaraksa

22 The Wisdom of Inter-being and the Art of Happiness

27 Prince Damrong Rajanubhab from a Personal Perspective

31 Speech on the Third Anniversary of the Death of Charoen Wat-aksorn

33 Dhammayatra in India

34 Siam's Lese Majeste Law from a Historical Perspective

38 From Puey to Mod

39 The Immortality of Angkarn Kalayanapong

Articles

40 Global Warming versus Dharma Cooling

Phra Paisal Visalo

40 Perspectives on a Buddhist Economic System

Nakamura Hisashi

44 Corruption: A Buddhist Perspective on Causes, Impacts and

Solutions

Nigel Crawhall

46 Mekong Youth Alliance for Organic Agriculture

Hans van Willenswaard

Obituaries

48 John Lane

Sulak Sivaraksa

49 Angkarn Kalayanapong

Chetana Nagavajara

51 **Letters**

53 **Book / Film Reviews**

57 **Recommended Readings**

* 28th April 2556 is the 150th birth anniversary of H.R.H. Prince Naris,
perhaps the best Siamese artist of his time.

PEACE

Seeds of Peace is published thrice annually in January, May and September, in order to promote the aims and objectives of the Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development (TICD) and the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) as well as the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB). In order to subscribe a \$50/year donation is suggested. Personal checks from the UK, US, and Euro are accepted.

To contact *Seeds of Peace*:

666 Charoen-Nakorn Road
Klongsan, Bangkok 10600, Siam
Tel. (662) 860-2194
Fax: (662) 860-1277
email: spd@semsikkha.org
www.sulak-sivaraksa.org

INEB

666 Charoen-Nakorn Road
Klongsan, Bangkok 10600, Siam
Tel. (662) 860-2194
email: secretariat@inebnetwork.org
www.inebnetwork.org

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.

Spirit in Education Movement (SEM)

29/15 Ramkhamhaeng 21 (Nawasee)
Ramkhamhaeng Road
Wangthonglang, Bang Kapi
Bangkok 10310, Siam
Tel. (662) 314-7385-6
email: sem_ram@yahoo.com
www.sem-edu.org

Congratulations

The Fukuoka Asian Culture Prize 2012

The Fukuoka Prize was established to honor outstanding achievements by individuals or groups/organizations in preserving and creating the unique and diverse cultures of Asia. The aim is to foster and increase awareness of the value of Asian cultures as well as to establish a framework within which Asians can learn from, and share with each other.



Dr. Vandana Shiva

Dr. Vandana Shiva is an Indian environment philosopher who has enlightened many people by publicizing her original ideas about love for nature and protecting the dignity of life. Her sharp insight has exposed the contradictions in modern 'development' from the perspective of women and the poor. For her powerful messages and initiative in mobilizing people in a grassroots social movement, Dr. Vandana Shiva rightly deserves the Grand Prize of the Fukuoka Prize.



Dr. Charnvit Kasetsiri

Dr. Charnvit Kasetsiri is one of the leading historians not only of Thailand but also of Southeast Asia. His outstanding achievement in the field of Thai history, especially the history of Ayutthaya, and also in his comprehensive research into Southeast Asian history and modern Thai history, embracing political, economic, and social perspectives. He has taken this achievement even further by disseminating his work in the education sphere, and has helped develop international cooperation among the Thai historians. For the invaluable service he has rendered, Dr. Charnvit is truly worthy of the Academic Prize of the Fukuoka Prize.

The Goi Peace Award 2012

The annual Goi Peace Award honors individuals and organizations in various fields that have made outstanding contributions toward the realization of a peaceful and harmonious world for humanity and all life on earth. Created in 2000, previous Goi Peace Award recipients include Ervin Laszlo, Oscar Arias, Lester Brown, Bill Gates and Deepak Chopra. www.goipeace.or.jp



Helena Norberg-Hodge

The Goi Peace Foundation will bestow the 2012 Goi Peace Award on Helena Norberg-Hodge, the founder and director of the International Society for Ecology and Culture (ISEC), and a pioneer of the 'new economy' movement. The selection committee has chosen Helena Norberg-Hodge for the Goi Peace Award "in recognition of her pioneering work in the new economy movement to help create a more sustainable and equitable world. Through her advocacy and educational activities promoting localization from an international perspective, Ms. Norberg-Hodge has contributed to the revitalization of cultural and biological diversity, and the strengthening of local communities and economies worldwide."

Editorial Notes

Sulak Sivaraksa has edited *Seeds of Peace* since its beginning, in collaboration with others. But later other names had to be deleted from the editorial board, as the dictatorial regime of Siam, despite its democratic reforms, threatened to put the editor and his assistants in jail for *lese majeste*. The regime also used psychological warfare towards relatives of those on the editorial board to fear for their safety. Even S.S himself was charged with *lese majeste* quite a number of times. He was finally acquitted on 12 July 2011.

Sulak Sivaraksa has now reached the age of eighty, and feels it is time to relinquish his editorship of *Seeds of Peace*. Since Somboon Chungprempree has become secretary-general of INEB, it is appropriate to ask him to co-edit this issue. From the next issue, he will be the sole editor.

Announcement

INEB 2013 – Biannual Conference

27 October - 4 November 2013

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Dialogues on Spirituality:

An International Buddhist-Muslim Collaboration for Peace and Sustainability

This event will be combined with:

27-31 October **Buddhist-Muslim Awareness Youth Camp**

30-31 October **Exposure Trip to Kelantan State and Putrajaya**

Kelantan: has been ruled by an Islamic party for over 15 years, an excellent example of Islamic Governance; visit also to Buddhist organizations for dialogue.

Putrajaya: Visit to Malaysia's administrative capital, Department of National Unity, to understand strategies and approaches.

1-4 November **Dialogue on Spirituality for Peace & Sustainability**

Incorporating an International Buddhist-Muslim Dialogue

5 November **INEB Advisory and Executive Meeting**

For more details, please visit INEB website www.inebnetwork.org

Or Contact conference@inebnetwork.org

Did you renew your subscription?

May we remind our readers to renew your subscription or help others who cannot afford to pay for *Seeds of Peace* so the publication will be available to all who seek something to read beyond those provided by the mainstream mass media. The suggested rate is USD.50.00 per year. If you can support more, we would be very grateful for your generosity. Your money will go to support INEB activities for grass-root people across Asia.

Burma: Back to Work in Myanmar

The waiter clears the remains of chicken and fish curries from our table as the intense sun of central Myanmar beats down on the tarpaulin roof of a rice shop run by a smiling middle-aged woman named Ma Cho. This modest restaurant is inside the massive compound of the ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party, or USDP, beside one of three hostels where many of the party's almost 350 representatives stay for the eight months or so each year that parliament is in session here in the capital, Naypyidaw.

"Over the next three years, I think we can really act as a check and balance on the government," says U Khat Htein Nan, a parliamentary representative for the Unity and Democracy Party of Kachin State, which—like other parties allied with the USDP—has also been given lodgings here. The Kachin politician pauses and turns his head slightly; in the corner of the restaurant, a TV broadcasts the beaming faces of Barack Obama and Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the National League for Democracy, as they emerge from discussions at her lakeside home in Yangon. Almost on cue, the president, drawing on his own experience as a legislator, praises Aung San Suu Kyi for strengthening the parliament.

"Real democracy involves having different branches of government check and balance each other, and I applaud your efforts in that regard, particularly as the head of the committee of the rule of law," he says, before leaning over to kiss Aung San Suu Kyi on



Barack Obama with opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi following their statements to the media at her home in Yangon on 19 November.

the cheek—an action that prompts consternation elsewhere in the restaurant.

On the other side of Naypyidaw—a twenty-minute drive through the hotel zone, along wide concrete roads with immaculately tended median strips, past a golf course and double-storey homes still under construction—is a "guesthouse" run by the Naypyidaw City Development Committee, where many of the 150 or so opposition legislators, including about forty National League for Democracy members, stay when they're in the capital. The MPs have done their best to make the spartan, concrete rooms feel like home; one, an outspoken lawyer, has his own satellite connection and television, and members of his small party are crowded into his

room to watch the live coverage of Obama's visit.

Nearby are lodged representatives of the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party. An elderly MP from Sittwe and his wife show me the paintings of the ancient city of Mrauk Oo they have made to adorn the walls of their room. Next door, the party's representative for Ponnagyun township, Htun Aung Kyaw, is delighted about the US president's visit, his face glowing as he tells me of his belief that it will encourage the government to deepen and strengthen the budding reforms.

But for Htun Aung Kyaw and many other Rakhine, there is another element to Obama's six-hour stay. "I'm very glad he's here and hope he can see personally the truth, the real situation,

about the conflict in Rakhine State,” he says, referring to longstanding tension between Rakhine Buddhists and Muslims, including members of the Rohingya group. In June and October, this tension spilled over into bloody, week-long riots that claimed more than 200 lives and left more than 100,000 people, mostly Muslims, homeless.

For some, the communal violence in Rakhine State, along with a conflict with the Kachin Independence Army in northern Myanmar, now in its eighteenth month, mean that Obama’s visit, the first by a sitting US president, has come too soon—that it has legitimised a government, still dominated by former generals, which even includes some serving military. (The controversial 2008 constitution demands several ministerial posts, including defence, home affairs and border affairs, are given to officers from the Tatmadaw, or armed forces, while 25 per cent of seats in national and regional legislatures are reserved for military personnel.)

In his speech at Yangon University, President Obama addressed these ethnic conflicts, calling on the people of Myanmar to see “diversity as a strength and not a weakness.” “Your country will be stronger because of many different cultures,” he said, “but you have to seize that opportunity. You have to recognise that strength.”

But it was Obama’s insistence that “no process of reform will succeed without national reconciliation” that drew some of the largest applause from the 1500-strong crowd packed into the university’s historic Convocation Hall. “You now have a moment of remarkable opportunity to transform ceasefires into

lasting settlements, and to pursue peace where conflicts still linger, including in Kachin State,” the president said.

The significance of the location was not lost on the Burmese: so often the site of unrest and protest, the generals shuttered Yangon University following an uprising in 1988 that ended twenty-six years of socialist rule. Just ten days before Obama’s arrival, parliamentarians in the capital—including those from the military—had backed a proposal by Aung San Suu Kyi to reopen the university, despite the education ministry’s objections. For the Myanmar government, it was also a significant concession for Obama’s meeting with President U Thein Sein to take place outside Naypyidaw, the capital since November 2005.

When I asked MPs, government officials and journalists in Naypyidaw which aspect of the president’s speech most resonated, each person had a different answer: for one, it was the fact that he emphasised how, although he is president of the most powerful country in the world, he is not above the law; for another, it was his citing of Franklin Roosevelt’s four “fundamental freedoms,” freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear; for others it was his insistence that one political prisoner is one too many, or his focus on education and the seemingly imminent reopening of Yangon University. And for some, no single point stood out. “I only have one word to say about his whole visit: ‘wow,’” was how Win Htein, the National League for Democracy representative from Meiktila, described it to me.

At 10 am the next morning,

MPs filed into the towering national parliament, the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, to discuss the amended budget for 2012-13. Aung San Suu Kyi, who had flown to the capital earlier that morning, seemed to be happy to take a back seat as Thein Nyunt, a former member of her party who left to contest the controversial 2010 election, argued that the state press should be privatised, citing an auditor general’s office report that found significant corruption in the Ministry of Information’s newspapers. Rather than force a showdown with the government, the USDP’s U Win Than proposed that 30 per cent of the Ministry of Industry’s proposed budget be pushed back a year, to which the minister replied that it had been his plan all along. And Banyar Aung Moe, a representative from Mon State, detailed a litany of complaints about corruption and incompetence in the construction and energy ministries.

“They never finish these projects on time, there’s no transparency—for example, I can’t find the budget for the last five-year plan anywhere,” Banyar Aung Moe thundered, as the timer showing his allotted twenty minutes ticked down on the giant television screen in the corner of the auditorium. “We need to be a proper check and balance; we need to speak out about these issues.”

The applause in the Convocation Hall had died down, Yangon’s main thoroughfare, Pyay Road, had reopened, and Air Force One had jetted out of Yangon International Airport. In the capital, the real work had resumed.

Thomas Kean

Source: *Myanmar Times*

Cambodia: Sihanouk's Legacy

A supposed god-king who vainly tried to protect his country.

Throughout his colourful yet controversial life, King Sihanouk, who died Monday, 15 October, in Beijing at the age of 89 served his country in several political positions, as constitutional monarch, prime minister, president and exiled leader.

Our former King died in Beijing due to natural causes. This is a great loss for Cambodia. We feel very sad. The former king was a great king that we all respect and love him, said Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister Nhik Bun Chhay. It was known that King Sihanouk had long suffered from cancer, diabetes and hypertension and had been treated in China for many years.

What are Sihanouk's legacies? He often claimed that he had represented the face of Cambodian unity and remained a patriotic force against foreign intervention. As head of state of a tiny country surrounded by bigger powers, his choices in conducting his foreign policy were admittedly limited. And some of his choices proved to be dangerously erroneous. He gave his support for the Khmer Rouge and strongly defended the brutal regime at the global stage. This immensely tainted his prestige and reputation.

Now that Sihanouk has gone, all eyes are now on the way in which his son, King Sihamoni, for whom Sihanouk abdicated in 2004, will redefine the role of the monarchy in Cambodian politics. Although the monarchy has in-



creasingly declined in political significance, its status is still important as a factor that underpins the Hun Sen regime. It will be intriguing to see how the loss of such an enigmatic figure will reshape Cambodian politics in the near future.

King Sihanouk ascended the throne in April 1941 following the death of his grandfather, King Sisowath Monivong. At the time, Cambodia was still colonized by France and was a part of French Indochina. The Japanese army helped emancipate Cambodia from its colonial masters, but it was taken over once again by France at the end of the Second World War. King Sihanouk, in his fight against the French, sought refuge in Thailand, at least until Cambodia was finally granted independence in 1953.

He returned home as a king, but his enthronement was brief. In 1955, he abdicated for the first time in favor of his father, Norodom Suramarit, and decided to enter politics. Realizing the declining power of the monarchy, Sihanouk, now reassigned a prince, formed the Sangkum

Reastr Niyum, or the Popular Socialist Community Party, and contested an election in September 1955, obtaining a victory. Sihanouk then implemented a myriad of key domestic and foreign policies. He certainly exploited Cambodian nationalism while calling for his people's support for his policies and leadership.

For example, in 1962, Sihanouk, with ongoing disputes over the ownership of the Preah Vihear Temple with Thailand, took the case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) which ruled in Cambodia's favor. The triumph elevated his political stature. But at the same time, his country's relations with Thailand gravely worsened.

Sihanouk continued to dominate Cambodian politics, at least until the end of the 1960s, which witnessed growing political challenges from his rivals and increasing pressures from outside, with the Americans carrying on an illegal and secret bombing campaign of his country in a failed attempt to wipe out North Vietnamese Army troops who had used it as a refuge from

the war inside Vietnam.

In 1970 as Sihanouk was travelling abroad, Prime Minister Lon Nol managed to convince members of the National Assembly to vote to depose Sihanouk as head of state. As Sihanouk was kicked out, Lon Nol moved in to take full control of Cambodian politics while strengthening his position with emergency powers. It is imperative to emphasise that the Lon Nol regime was recognized by the United States, explaining why Sihanouk tilted toward China to counterbalance the American influence.

Sihanouk was forced to flee to Beijing. While in China, he founded the National United Front of Kampuchea in an attempt to overthrow the Lon Nol government with support from the Khmer Rouge. It was reported that large numbers of new recruits for the Khmer Rouge were ordinary peasants who were led to believe that they were fighting for the country, not really for communism, of which they had little understanding.

Sihanouk played an impor-

tant part in consolidating the Khmer Rouge regime, and even said in 1979, *I was only fighting for my country's independence, even if it had to be communist.* During the Khmer Rouge years, Sihanouk became a new symbolic head of state under the Pol Pot regime.

In 1978, with the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, the Heng Samrin government was installed by Hanoi, reinventing the centuries-old kingdom into a republic. Sihanouk continued to work with the Khmer Rouge in setting up another political platform to undermine the Vietnamese occupation, and appointed himself as President of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK).

Even after withdrawing its troops from Cambodia, Vietnam's influence in the country remained immense. A pro-Hanoi government was formed, led by Hun Sen in a new era of the People's Republic of Kampuchea. The conflict between the CGDK and the PRC had characterised Cambodian politics for much of

the 1980s.

Finally, peace negotiations between different political groups came through in 1991 when all agreed to sign the Paris Treaty which was followed by a United Nations-sponsored election. Sihanouk returned to Cambodia that year after more than a decade of living in exile. In 1993, he became King of Cambodia once again, but his role was increasingly ceremonial as Hun Sen had been able to consolidate his power.

By 2004, King Sihanouk's health had fast deteriorated, prompting him to leave politics for good. Following his abdication, the Throne Council selected Sihamoni, eldest son of King Sihanouk and Queen Norodom Monineath, as the next king. The enthronement of King Sihamoni seems to have ended an era of an active royal politics as defined by King Sihanouk since Cambodia's independence.

Pavin Chachavalpongpun
Source: Asia Sentinel



Siam: Time for Thailand to Take a Stand Against Death Penalty

October 10 marks the 10th World Day Against the Death Penalty. I am proud to say that the inalienable right to life is enshrined in the Constitution of my country, Timor-Leste. Our struggle for independence was not without sacrifice. Many of our loved ones died in the quest for self-determination and dignity, a constant reminder of the sacredness of life. There-

fore, one of our first priorities upon gaining independence 10 years ago was to ensure that no one would be subject to the death penalty.

This reverence for human life is consistent with humanity's experience of the modern world. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, formulated after the devastating world wars that caused the deaths of tens of

millions of people, declares in Article 3 "Everyone has the right to life". Similarly, Cambodia emerged from the savagery of its Killing Fields with a Constitution that also upholds the sacredness of life. The Philippines, another ASEAN member, has also abolished the death penalty.

At the time the Declaration was proclaimed in 1948, only

eight countries had abolished the death penalty. On September 13th of this year, the UN Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki Moon reported that the number of countries which have now, in one form or another, abolished the death penalty has reached a total of 150 States, while another 32 are retentionist.

Although Thailand retains the death penalty, there have been only 2 executions since 2009. The government of Thailand has told the UN that it is studying the possibility of abolishing the death penalty. Abolition of the death penalty has been included in Thailand's National Human Rights Program of 2009 to 2013. On August 15th this year, there was a remarkable commutation of sentence from execution to life imprisonment of all 58 condemned prisoners.

The resolution calling for a World Wide Moratorium on the Death Penalty has been presented at the UN General Assembly 3 times already in 2007, 2008, and 2010. Thailand on the first two occasions voted against the Moratorium, but in 2010,

abstained.

In December, a vote on a Moratorium will again be submitted to the UN General Assembly. I hope, as a friend of Thailand, that it will vote in favor of the resolution. While the votes have been enough to get the resolution passed, with an increasing number of countries voting "Yes" with each occasion, it is important that Thailand votes "yes" as official evidence of the moral stand of its government and people. Just as importantly, I sincerely hope that Thailand follows up on such an official commitment by stopping the imposition of death sentences and executions.

What motivation can be proposed to favor a step forward for countries which still hesitate? For centuries now, law makers and humanists have come to realize that the death penalty does not deter serious crime. Caesar Beccaria, an Italian criminologist pointed out in a famous work on Crime and Punishment, that execution was an ineffective deterrent, that certainty of detection and punishment were the

only bar to crime.

There are many arguments for a Moratorium on execution. The Council of Europe, an association of 47 states, makes abolition of the death penalty a condition of membership, declaring boldly: "Capital Punishment, like torture, is simply wrong". The death penalty does not deter crime, however much is to be gained in emphasizing the inviolability of human life. In the history of Asia, there is an emphasis on mercy, kindness and forgiveness in all our faiths and cultural values.

As member of a brother nation in the family of Asian nations I hope that all the countries of Asia will join Timor-Leste in the UN General Assembly to cast a positive vote in favor of life over death. I am very proud that Timor-Leste does not have the death penalty, and that the maximum prison sentence is 25 years. We do not have life imprisonment.

Jose Ramos-Horta,
16 October 2012.

Source: www.prachathai.com

Tibet:

Tibet's Turmoil Intensifies as Xi Jinping Takes China's Reins

Self-immolations increase

On Thursday, 15 November as the Chinese Communist Party unveiled its new leadership slate headed by Xi Jinping in Beijing, far across in the Himalayan plateau yet another disturbance engulfed the Tibet region, a twin self-immolation by teenagers in protest against Chinese rule of Tibet.

That brought the number of self-immolations to at least 74, of which 10 have taken place in just

the last 15 days. They come at a time when the 18th Communist Party Congress in Beijing was seeking to project an image of national unity. However, the suicides are an outcry by Tibetans living under Beijing's authoritarian rule. The burnings signal increased instability in the region, as the suicides shout demands for religious freedom and the return of their spiritual leader the 14th Dalai Lama before they set themselves

alight. Yet these remonstrations remain largely overlooked in the wider world.

The Chinese government and Tibetan exiles have been pointing fingers at each other over who bears the responsibility for the turmoil. As most of the self-immolations or mass protests occur inside Tibet, the Chinese Foreign Ministry in Beijing and the Tibetan exile administration in Dharamsala, India, continue to issue state-

ments blasting each other. Yet, for those inside Tibet these desperate self-immolations are becoming depressingly regular as a way of expressing resistance to Beijing's hard-line policies.

Exiled Tibetans say the current Chinese regime denies Tibetan claims of suppression and indicts the exiles and the Dalai Lama of encouraging such acts. As well as the Chinese have flooded ethnic Tibetan areas with massive security forces and made lives of Tibetans nearly unbearable.

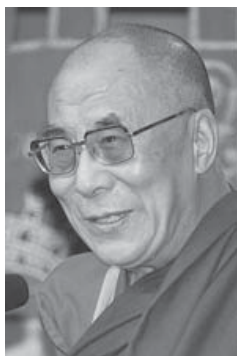
The Dalai Lama has expressed sadness over the incidents and recently asked the Chinese government for a thorough investigation to determine the causes of the self-immolations.

The Chinese government should investigate the cause (of the incidents). China does not look into it seriously and tries to end (the incidents) only by criticizing me, he told journalists in Tokyo on Nov. 13. *Chinese Communist propaganda creates a very rosy picture. But actually, including many Chinese from mainland China who visit Tibet, they all have the impression things are terrible, some kind of policy, some kind of cultural genocide is taking place.*

The Chinese government in turn immediately lashed out at the Dalai Lama, accusing him and other exiled Tibetans of instigating the escalating protests.

The Dalai Lama clique and overseas Tibetan separatists have been sacrificing other people's lives for their own secret political aims, said Losang Gyaltzen, vice-chairman of the Tibet regional government. *We welcome everybody to Tibet, but if people investigate issues like human rights, we don't think that is appropriate,* he added.

The exchanges have only infuriated both sides, and any hope of negotiations appears remote. Despite Tibetan exiles' frustration, they remain hopeful



for dialogue, although Beijing closed its doors to talks ever since the 10th round failed in January 2010, after demanding changes in exiles' policies.

Although the eyes of the world have focused on enviable economic advances in Beijing, the Tibetan burnings continue to tarnish Beijing's image. The government faces widespread allegations of suppression leveled not only by Tibetan ethnic groups but by human rights organizations across the globe. In the wake of deteriorating conditions inside Tibet, the United Nations has also urged the Chinese government to allow independent agencies to monitor the situation and allow media access.

The UN senior human rights official Navi Pillay urged China on Nov. 2 in Geneva to address the deep-rooted frustrations that have led to the desperate forms of protest, which began in March 2011. In a press release, the United Nations human rights chief said she was disturbed by *continuing allegations of violence against Tibetans seeking to exercise their fundamental human rights of freedom of expression, association and religion,* and pointed to *reports of detentions and disappearances, of excessive use of force against peaceful demonstrators, and curbs on the cultural rights of Tibetans.*

Beijing immediately delivered strong objections to any UN monitors and blasted the Rights panel for criticizing its handling

of the protests in the Tibetan areas. According to the Chinese government, most Tibetans are happy and extensive economic development is improving their lives. On the sideline of the 18th Party Congress in Beijing, Liang Tiangeng, head of the organization department of the CPC Tibet autonomous region committee, said the local government would achieve its goal of building 400,000 homes for farmers and herdsmen by the end of this year, with more than 330,000 already been built, according to a report in the state-run *China Daily*. "The unemployment rate in Tibet is 2.69 per cent in urban areas, which is lower than in most cities nationwide," Liang added.

Political analysts watching closely the self-immolations and China's leadership transition believe the tussle between Beijing and Tibetan exiles is likely to continue, as will suicide attempts by Tibetans in Tibet. It is extremely unlikely that the incoming leadership have any intention of risking their positions over Tibet.

So long as China refuses to change its hardline policies and so long as Tibetans sense that they are at a most significant turn in their national history and they have no other option but to immolate and protest to make their voices heard, these will continue, Dibyesh Anand, associate professor of international relations at the University of Westminster in the UK, told Asia Sentinel. *The Chinese government has given no indication of any change in its attitude that created this crisis in the first place. Given the preoccupation of the Communist Party with the leadership transition and the fact that it will be many months before the Politburo Standing Committee will be in a position to take any bold steps, Tibetans are likely to face more of the same. The deeply conservative makeup of the standing committee offers little hope for a*

more liberal policy involving accommodation with the Dalai Lama.

The exiled Tibetans urgently called for an International Tibet Support Groups meeting from today to Nov. 18 to discuss the crisis and to explore ways to press the Chinese government to end its repressive policies.

Dr. Lobsang Sangay, the prime minister of the Tibetan government in exile and the

political successor of the Dalai Lama, expressed hope that the US President Barack Obama would engage with China on the Tibetan autonomy, as the president is to visit the Buddhist countries Cambodia and Thailand from Nov. 17.

Mr. Obama should use his trip in part to make a broader point about the compatibility between Buddhism and democracy, said Dr. Sangay, an op-ed

article published in the *Wall Street Journal* on Nov. 14.

The self-immolations and the subject of Tibet's instability remain a thorn in China's side. Desperation is increasing among domestic Tibetans and with it the suicide movement. China remains obdurate. The tragic standoff continues.

Saransh Sehgal
Source: Asia Sentinel

Conflict in Burma's Rakhine State – A Statement from The International Network of Engaged Buddhists

Since June 2012, violence between communities of Rohingyas and Rakhines in Rakhine State has resulted in hundreds of dead and wounded, thousands of homes and shops razed, and more than 75,000 displaced and impoverished.

The roots of this conflict are hard to untangle. It goes back at least decades to the period of British colonial occupation. But current hostility also speaks to a scarcity of land and economic resources that manifests as communal hostility. Undoubtedly there has been violence and provocation on both sides. We commit ourselves to open-minded investigation of the past and present sources of this violence.

Although some Rohingyas have lived in Myanmar for generations, if not for several hundred years, the former military regime's 1982 law excluded them from among the nation's many recognized ethnicities, denying the Rohingyas citizenship and basic rights. As they are driven from their homes, neighboring Bangladesh prohibits the entry of them as refugees, and also denies citizenship to Rohingyas presently living within its own borders. It is not surprising



that the United Nations views the Rohingyas as "one of the world's most persecuted minorities."

We feel for the families of all sides of this conflict, and have compassion for the people of Myanmar who are suffering and trying their best to resolve this issue.

We call for the government of Myanmar, and the leaders of the Buddhist Sangha and other religious leaders to play an active and nonviolent role in resolving the conflict in Rakhine state. Central to this is to grant humanitarian assistance and work towards tolerance and respect for all of Myanmar's diverse inhabitants. We also call on Buddhist monks across Myanmar to set

aside fear and the delusive religious discrimination; to honor the Buddha's robe and example by being peacemakers for all people. May all beings—Buddhist, Muslim, Eastern, Western—and all peoples of Myanmar recall the Buddha's vital message.

"Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world; by non-hatred only is hatred appeased. This is an unending truth." *Dhammapada*, 5

Adopted and ratified at the annual INEB Executive and Advisory Board Meeting, November 8-9, 2012 at the Kodo Kyodan Buddhist Fellowship in Yokohama, Japan.

Letter from the Secretariat Office

Dear INEB members and readers,

During 2012, INEB has taken significant steps to involve in Climate Change issues, which was one of the target areas highlighted in INEB's latest strategic plan. There were over 100 organizations represented at the Inter-religious Dialogue on Climate Change and Biodiversity Conservation in Sri Lanka this September. From this wonderful and inspiring meeting at the ancient city of Anuradhapura, we have now formed an Inter-religious Climate and Ecology Network (ICE-Network) to take forward collaborative actions across the region on Climate Change. Recently, the INEB secretariat office also attended the UNFCCC — United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP18 — CMP8) in Doha. One of the key outcomes from this meeting is a collaboration from faith-based organizations from Europe, Africa and Asia, where INEB is also represented. We are tentatively planning to organize an interfaith platform on Climate Change in Poland for the forthcoming COP19 meeting in 2013.

Beyond Climate Change, INEB also successfully organized the INEB joint Advisory and Executive Committees Meeting and International Platform at Kodosan Temple, Yokohama, Japan. We are very much appreciative to Rev. Okano, head of Kodosan Temple and also to JNEB — Japan Network of Engaged Buddhists, for organizing this event.

We are pleased to announce an upcoming Asian Women's Interfaith Gathering, co-hosted by INEB and the International Women's Partnership for Peace and Justice (IWP). The gathering, to be held at Wongsanit Ashram, Thailand from January 18-20, 2013, is intended to bring 30 women leaders and activists from diverse faiths across Asia, with the aim of identifying common needs and challenges, drawing lessons learned, and prioritizing issues relating to gender and spirituality from an Asian perspective. The objectives of the gathering are to bring together different generations of interfaith women to create a platform to build trust and friendship for continued collaboration and networking; to nurture social and spiritual values as a foundation for effective and contextually appropriate approaches for women's leadership for social justice; and to develop a participatory needs assessment as a first step towards a comprehensive action plan on women's issues in the Asian region by identifying successes and challenges of women activists.

We, as an INEB movement would like congratulate to Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa on the special occasion of his 80th birthday on March 27, 2013. His whole life has been dedicated to justice and peace for all sentient beings, not only human society. He is a visionary, scholar, social critic and spiritual mentor to all of us, an example for us to learn from in order to go beyond his limitations. We are wishing him longevity, health and strength. For those who are in Bangkok on 24th March 2013, we would like to invite you to join us for his birthday event at Siam Society. Please contact to secretariat@inebnetwork.org for more information of the event.

Yours in Dhamma,

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

- We are happy to present you the **INEB 2011 Conference report**. You can download directly at www.inebnetwork.org

or request us to post you hard copy with a small

contribution to cover costs at coordination@inebnetwork.org



80 Years of Sulak Sivaraksa

I first heard of Sulak Sivaraksa when I was working with the Sarvodaya movement more than three decades ago. It was a time that social movements were being born and starting to grow all over the world. People were looking for an alternative society—a new world order. In Sri Lanka, educated rural youth and students were pushing for change. This became a violent uprising that the government controlled with full force. Thousands of young people were killed; thousands more ended up in jail.

Sarvodaya provided an alternative. It was influenced by Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent activism and Buddhist values. The leader of Sarvodaya, Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne, was promoting a peaceful path to social transformation or social "awakening." Dr. Ariyaratne is my mother's eldest brother, my uncle, and throughout my childhood he was my greatest hero. He had been a teacher, but he left everything to become a social activist and travel to all parts of the country. Most of the civil society leaders and politicians in my generation were his students or followers at one time.

During the same period, in another Buddhist country, Thai university students were pushing for social and political change. They too were violently suppressed by their government. We knew of the similarities between these uprisings and their roots. We heard that they had an engaged Buddhist leader in their country, like Dr. Ariyaratne here in Sri Lanka, named Ajahn Sulak, who was working to address the structural roots of violence.

In those days, people who

were working for change had a close understanding and deep appreciation for each other. We wanted to learn from others and share experiences. Even though we came from different cultures and spoke different languages, we felt this bond of being part of a new global network that was trying to change our own societies and the world. Four young student leaders came from Thailand to Sri Lanka. They had been actively working with Ajahn Sulak, and they told us more about his work.

Since that time, so much has happened. So much history has been written. I left Sarvodaya more than 20 years ago, and after I left, I lost contact with many of the people I met while I was there. I lost contact with the four young activists from Thailand. All I had left was the great memories of our conversations.

After I left Sarvodaya, I began building a small development organization called Sewalanka. In the early years, there wasn't much time for anything else. My country was at war. Innocent people on all sides were getting killed, and people were becoming more and more divided. I began looking around for other groups that had done similar work, and Ajahn Sulak's name came up. On a personal level, I also felt like I was missing something in my life. I was looking for an elder whom I could talk to and get advice from. So, I decided to go and see him.

The first night I met with Ajahn Sulak I got a shock. Ajahn was sitting with a few of his friends drinking wine and eating meat. Both of those things are taboo in our Theravada Buddhist

society. There I was with one of the great Buddhist leaders, and he was fully drunk. Before returning to my hotel that night, I agreed to visit his ashram the next day with one of his students, but I spent the whole night thinking whether or not I should go.

I found the whole situation confusing. He wasn't the first Buddhist leader that I met who had habits that didn't seem to match the teaching. When we were in Sarvodaya, we always had an issue with our leader's smoking habit. I kept asking myself how it was possible that such great teachers could have those kinds of habits. How was it possible to work with them if they didn't even have that basic discipline? Those days most of us youngsters were looking for a great example. We were searching for teachers who could be role models and guide us on how to lead a proper life.

I knew that Ajahn Sulak came from a feudal family and learned in the best schools in London, so I figured that's how he got some of those social habits. Watching Ajahn had reminded me of the high caste land owner in my village when I was a child. He had arranged for his daughter to marry the district judge. We kids would watch as they would come in a big Ford car. We would look over the parapet wall and watch him being massaged by two boys. The son-in-law played cards alone or with his wife, and sometimes they would drink. When they slept after lunch, we would jump over the wall and pluck the mangoes off their trees.

It disturbed me to see this kind of behavior in Ajahn Sulak,

but then I realized that this had more to do with my own childhood feelings and my memories of how those landlords treated us in the village. All of us humans have baggage that we are carrying with us. We come from different social backgrounds and experiences, so why not accept things as they are and move forward.

So the next morning, I went with Ajahn's students to his ashram and spent the whole day there. By the time I left, I knew this was the connection I was looking for, and I made arrangements to bring an inter-religious group from Sri Lanka to have a few days retreat in his ashram. It was during that retreat that I first heard Ajahn Sulak give a speech on engaged Buddhism.

We were sitting around in a circle in a mud hut. The roof was covered with traditional thatch. On one side there was a Buddha statue. In another area there was a big photo of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Near the entrance there was a photo of Aung San Suu Kyi, the Burmese civil society leader, who was under house arrest at that time. On the other side of the room there was a photo of the great socially engaged monk Buddhadasa. I looked everywhere for a photo of Ajahn Sulak, but there was none.

In his speech, he spoke about

the Buddhist way of looking at other ethnicities, other faiths and conflicts. It was the best teaching I had ever heard on this sensitive subject. The participants were Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, and Hindu, and they still talk about the impact of that trip and that program. After his talk we all had a vegetarian lunch together at a beautiful traditional restaurant. I thought, "Well, for 20 years I was okay with my teacher's smoking. Let me stop worrying about this guy's wine drinking and meat eating, and try to learn about engaged Buddhist work." After that, I became a very frequent visitor.

I've been many places with him over the last several years. I visited his wife's floating river house in a beautiful village north of Bangkok, slept in his family's temples, attended ordination ceremonies, and met artists and musicians, and I began to realize his contribution to Thai society...or as he would say, Siamese society. People who know him as a social critic are threatened and attack him. People who are working for social change bow their heads when he passes. He responds to both the positive and the negative with a smile and a joking remark.

Ajahn Sulak is an amazing mobilizer and a networker. He has brought people together to

catalyze and build many organizations in his own country, and he has created an international web of people working for social transformation and the end of structural violence.

When I went to Thailand for Ajahn Sulak's 75th birthday, I walked into his room and saw the four guys who visited Sri Lanka 30 years ago when I was a young Sarvodaya worker. My eyes became wet. All of us have gray hair now, but we still continue with the same work. They are civil society leaders and artists. The nicest thing is they all remember their time in Sri Lanka like it was yesterday. They remembered what we discussed and what we promised to each other as young activists. In different fields, each of us has kept those promises. Maybe this is the biggest gift we can offer to the ones who first taught us. Ajahn Sulak showed us the road, connected us with our fellow travelers, and helped us move forward together.

Ajahn, I am honored to join so many others in wishing you a happy birthday. I hope you will use your beautiful collection of walking sticks to travel with us for many more miles to come.

Harsha Navaratne
Sri Lanka

Inter-religious Dialogue of Climate Change and Biodiversity Conservation : Moving Forward with ICE Network

The *Inter-religious Dialogue on Climate Change and Biodiversity Conservation* was held in Sri Lanka from the 23 to 27 September 2012 through the collaborative efforts of INEB (International Network of En-

gaged Buddhists), Sewalanka Foundation, IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) and CEESP (Commission on Environmental Economic and Social Policy).

The concept of the confer-

ence developed out of recommendations at the INEB bi-annual conference held in Chiang Mai, Thailand in 2009, where working group discussions prioritised the urgent need for a Buddhist response to climate

change and exploration of pathways for collective action. Drawing from the African experience of the “*We Have Faith*” inter-religious campaign represented at the 17th Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP 17) in Durban, South Africa, a faith-based conference was proposed for the Asian region, expanding beyond INEB’s Buddhist focus, to collaborate across different faith traditions in order to bring the voice of morality and ethics of human behaviour into dialogue and identify cooperative actions on climate change.

Over 150 people representing 20 countries from Asia and across the planet from Buddhist, Hindu, Baha’i, Christian (Catholic and Protestant), Asian animists/naturalists from Sri Lanka (Vedda) and Vietnam, and Islamic faith traditions, gathered at Sewalanka’s peaceful Islander Center, which itself provides a unique model for sustainable living, community cross-cultural and interfaith relationship building, and biodiversity regeneration in an area scarred by the impacts of war and extremes of unpredictable climate patterns¹.

Here, faith leaders, environmental and climate scientists, conservationists and social activists from across the region converged to collaboratively explore the scientific foundations of climate change and biodiversity loss, its social, political and economic drivers, the impacts of climate change on human societies and the environment, and importantly, the underlying human behaviours which contribute to climate change.

Together, a common understanding of the causes and



impacts of climate change was articulated. Discussion evolved from an exploration of the human drivers of climate change, which are integrally tied to an overuse/abuse of fossil fuels and extractive industries, and a failure to reduce their continued exploitation. Overconsumption and greed, profit-seeking and extreme socio-economic inequalities and lack of educational opportunities are entrenched in our social systems, yet solutions to climate change and biodiversity loss are rooted in the same paradigmatic thinking that have led us to this critical juncture.

“Are the purveyors and promoters of fossil energy the horsemen of the apocalypse?”

Ranil Senanayake

(Rainforest Rescue International)

An emphasis was placed on the urgent need to address inner spiritual values as they relate to our human stewardship and interconnected care and protection for our natural environment. The prevailing attitudes across faith communities which contribute to a failure of our responsibility towards the living world were critically examined. These attitudes support behaviours and actions that accelerate and exacerbate our current climate crisis, and contribute to human vulnerability to the increasing impacts of climate change. Structural impasses were also cited as an

area that also must be urgently rectified, most alarmingly the absence of an international binding agreement for reduction of Green House Gas emissions (GHG). The identification of these key issues rose up through a group analysis of cause and effects, from scientific, political, experiential and spiritual perspectives, inspiring a committed and collective faith-based response. This response recognizes the need to move beyond personal affiliations and identities, towards a cooperative action that embraces solutions embedded within faith values, ecological ethics and climate science.

A Faith-based and Ethical Response

Only by recognizing and engaging with underlying human behaviours and actions can there be any movement towards sustainable solutions. The problem is not just a matter of uncontrolled GHG emissions—there is a more serious and toxic problem of inequalities and a disregard for life which has become systematic in the behaviour of many states, the private sector, leaders and ordinary people. A faith-based approach combined with ecological ethics lights our pathway towards a sustainable, healthy and balanced existence as part of the living planet. It seeks an understanding of hu-

¹ <http://www.sewalanka.org/islander.html>

mans in healthy relationship to the world around us, rather than a narrow perspective based upon short-term and myopic self-interest. Climate science and the implications of biodiversity loss also point to this critical understanding of our interconnectedness with all living beings, for all time, within the living world.

Our response to climate change seeks to mobilise inter-faith leaders, establish networking with other committed social actors, climate scientists, organisations and groups across the region and beyond, while simultaneously focusing on micro and macro level practical interventions within a faith-based and ethical approach.

Commitments and Roadmaps for Action

The context of this conference—post-civil war Sri Lanka, where extremes in climate conditions are adding further stresses on an already marginalised population—show us that climate change cannot be understood, or solutions developed, in isolation. Its impacts are connected to the intricate web of human existence, and therefore solutions to climate change must also be solutions to livelihoods, peace and wellbeing. A faith-based response aligns with this understanding. Our commitments to action look beyond technological fixes, by promoting an alternative ‘development’ model which strengthens resilience and sustainability, integrity and social justice, over the values of mass acquisition or a persistent drive towards over-production and consumption.

A tripartite approach will guide actions resulting from this conference, addressing the key strategic areas where an integrated faith-based response can organise and engage directly to



“...There will be great suffering caused by our human created climate change, but we may need to go through this process in order to see the ‘light.’”

Nigel Crawhall (IUCN, CEESP representative, South Africa)

mitigate impacts and integrate adaptation responses, and importantly, solutions which recognize the human drivers of climate change and biodiversity loss:

- **Micro Level:** Faith traditions continue to play a strong role in the everyday life of communities across Asia. Faith leaders should collaborate across inter—and intra-faith networks to educate and raise awareness among faith leaders and faith communities around Climate Change and biodiversity, and to facilitate community actions for mitigation and adaptation, rooted in long-term sustainable, equitable development.
- **Macro Level:** At a policy level, faith leaders have an essential role in advocating values and ethics, while leveraging their position within society, to influence global negotiations and direct national and local policies—that are at this time rooted in national interests—for immediate and long-term health, safety and socio-economic-environmental well-being of political constituents.
- **Paradigm Change:** At all

levels, from grassroots communities to local and national awareness and onto the global stage, a faith-based response has a critical role to play in advocating a paradigm change in values and orientations towards our planet and the way we coexist within it.

These three levels of engagement framed the creation of a roadmap for action drawn collaboratively by participants of the conference, based upon six thematic areas.

- **Education:** public awareness of climate change, biodiversity, ecology and social justice, training for clergy and lay people as change agents within their localities;
- **Advocacy:** national training on advocacy methods, opportunities, and processes related to climate change and the environment within a framework of social justice; specialised training on international advocacy; potential online support to build regional and critical mass on specific advocacy campaigns within a given member’s

- country or municipality;
- **Personal change and eco-ethics:** religious and inter—religious actions and awareness on personal change, building awareness of actionable impacts and areas to personally bring change, and personal agency for environmental transformation founded in eco-faith values;
 - **Religious institutional change and eco-ethics:** changing the carbon footprints or environmental impacts of religious institutions, modelling behaviour and change institutions;
 - **Community change and modelling:** Modelling eco-villages, organic and ecological small scale farming, artisanal fisheries, local ecosystem conservation, urban gardening, food security projects, indigenous knowledge systems support, community forestry. Creating platforms for sharing innovations and successes in local transformations, resilience and changing how people treat each other and the Earth;
 - **Institutionalisation of the network:** Media, websites, social networking media, sharing campaign, cross-Asian testimonies, building organisational capacity and developing a platform to share

learning and experience, collaboratively problem solve, plan collective actions and potentially advocacy work; This global media platform can serve to facilitate and support the education, networking, community modelling, religious institutional support, and advocacy components drawn out in the preceding points.

The commitment to take forward the roadmap is supported by the set-up of a network named the Inter-religious Climate and Ecology Network (ICE Network) among participants, as well as their invited contacts, which will provide a platform to develop concrete actions while also sharing program and advocacy experiences (lessons learned, transferrable, adaptable approaches), as well as relevant research and education resources. Specifically, this will take the form primarily of a global media platform which will serve to facilitate and support the education, networking, community modelling, religious institutional support, and advocacy components drawn out in the following points.

Secondly, INEB will take the coordinating role in the development of collaborative work plans and follow-up, in order to

carry out the areas of action.

Thirdly, as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP) 19 will likely be in Korea, the Korean members of the network will be supported to host religious-related leaders and organisations to further the network's interfaith actions at the international advocacy level. Initially, this will include building experience from the COP18 meeting in Doha, Qatar later in 2012.

“One might expect a conference and inter-religious dialogue on Climate Change and Biodiversity to be depressing, anxiety-inducing, overwhelming. Yes, this was overwhelming, but in terms of sheer power of compassionate, healing and hopeful energies. The path to transforming and navigating through our great challenges and upheaval as a planet has been lit up. Together, networks of grassroots, indigenous, and local communities—together we work to create healing, to protect each other and the planet as we ride this wave, a wave promising loss, death and rebirth, promising to push us to change. We can guide and determine, together, how we can go through this”.

Emilie Parry (Sustainable Transformation, USA)

2012 INEB Executive Meeting and International Forum

The Wisdom of Interbeing and the Art of Happiness:

An International Engaged Buddhist Vision for Post 3/11 Japan

November 6-10, 2012

Fukushima 3/11 has become a watershed; the moment when it became very apparent that the sacrifices of modern industrial development had outpaced the benefits. While Japan became

the first Asian nation to achieve a high level of modern development, it accomplished this feat by dismantling its intimate rural communities and ancient cultural traditions for alienated urban

life based on workaholism, consumerism, and the endless drive for growth and success. Its rich natural environment has been slowly compromised in this process with the present specter

of nationwide nuclear contamination endangering life itself. For a country that has a rich Buddhist history of over 1,400 years, it seems the Buddhist values of sufficiency and harmony with others and with nature have no role in contemporary Japan, nor it seems do Buddhist priests and Buddhist temples. As Japan has been the leading nation within Asia of the promise of modern development, is its situation the fate that the rest of Asia and the Buddhist world must follow? And how about the West that is already experiencing the same dislocations of Japan?

It was against this backdrop that INEB held its annual Executive and Advisory Committee Meeting hosted by the Kodo Kyodan Buddhist Fellowship under the leadership of Rev. Shojun Masazumi Okano (INEB Advisory Board) in Yokohama Japan from November 8-9, 2012. The two-day meeting was sandwiched by 3 two-day study tours to better understand Japanese society and Japanese Buddhism beforehand and a daylong symposium and networking event open to the general public afterwards. While INEB Japan was a founding member of the network in 1989, INEB has rebuilt itself in Japan since the death of INEB Japan's two main founders into a new network called JNEB (Japan Network of Engaged Buddhists). JNEB and Kodo Kyodan thus welcomed 24 INEB board members from all parts of Asia for a week packed full of events, meetings, and encounters.

Study Tour 1: Nuclear Power and Local Communities in Fukushima

After an overnight at the downtown Tokyo temple of JNEB member and tour leader Rev. Hidehito Okochi, who



recently rebuilt the temple with affordable chemical-free apartment units, a third of the INEB delegation headed into Fukushima. The group was supported by Prof. Hisashi Nakamura (INEB Advisory Board and an expert in development economics), Rev. Daiki Nakashita (a Buddhist chaplain who has worked with the dying, homeless, and those traumatized by disasters), Ms. Yuki Kitano (a volunteer for the Interfaith Forum for the Review of National Nuclear Policy), and JNEB team members Rev. Kobo Inoue and Rev. Naoyuki Ogi.

In two vans, the group travelled along the north-east corridor from Tokyo to Suka-gawa city, Nihonmatsu city, and Fukushima city – all some 60 kms from the nuclear facility with common radiation readings of around .2 microsieverts/hour. We then turned south-east down towards the 20 km restricted area. This southeast corridor is the area with the highest levels of radiation since the largest explosion from the nuclear plants on March 15th was pushed in this direction by wind, rain, and weather patterns. In this way, the abandoned town of Iita-te, some 40 kms from the plants, has much higher radiation readings from .3 to .7 microsieverts/hr than the still inhabited northern part of Minami-Soma, some 25

kms from the plants, which has levels between .15 and .25 microsieverts/hour (.03 is considered normal; Tokyo is on average .045).

Wherever the group travelled, we learned of the heartache and trauma of both those who have remained and those who have evacuated. Especially for those who have stayed in these areas, we learned first hand that by denying the danger to those outside of the 20-30 kms radius, the Japanese government does not provide information on radiation levels and food security to enable these communities to avoid unnecessary dangers caused by higher than normal radiation levels that persist. This includes the difficulty concerned parents have of finding a doctor or medical facility to conduct thyroid examinations in Fukushima, which national and prefectural medical authorities are suppressing. Finally, the group was overwhelmingly moved by the courage of these local people, especially a number of Buddhist priests, to courageously remain in the area to try to educate their people on the nuclear issue and the way forward to rebuilding their lives. From this experience, the group helped the INEB board to draft and adopt its official statement on nuclear energy (see next article).

Study Tour 2: Suffering and Illness in Post Industrial Society: The Pathology of Contemporary Japanese Society

With the economic downturn of the Japanese economy in the early-mid 1990s, Japan began to exhibit the kinds of post-modern, post-industrial social problems of the United States and Europe. This vicious cycle of unskillful social and economic development has led to social breakdown in Japan, which is having a deep effect on human relationships and a marked increase in various forms of psychological trauma and disease seen through the abandonment of the elderly; bullying and psychological hazing in many social sectors; the dropping out of youth from social involvement; and suicide. For thirteen straight years (1998-2011), since the full onset of the Japanese economic recession, Japan has exceeded 30,000 suicides per year. As conductors of funerals, Buddhist priests often come into direct contact with families who have suffered from the suicide of a loved one. An increasing number of priests are beginning to get involved in preventative psycho-spiritual care for both the suicidal and the bereaved while reviving the traditional role of the Buddhist priest as a counselor and supporter – a role that has been largely lost in urban, modern Japan.

This study “tour” offered an intimate interaction with two prominent priests working in this field, Rev. Jotetsu Nemoto and Rev. Fujio Soin, both from the Rinzai Zen sect. They have been working individually and also collectively with the Association of Buddhist Priests Grappling with the Suicide Problem. They were assisted by Rev. Okano, Rev. Yukan Ogawa (also a member of the Association), and

Ms. Chisa Yamashita (of the Zenseikyo Foundation & Buddhist Council for Youth and Social Welfare).

Over two days, they learned about the work of Revs. Fujio and Nemoto, which often involves emergency phone counseling late at night. The group also spent time sharing personal images of death and suicide, and what role Buddhism can play in directly confronting this issue. On the final afternoon, the group went to the ancient capital of Kamakura with its many Buddhist temples and engaged in some traditional Japanese zazen meditation at the 800 year old root temple of Rev. Fujio, Kencho-ji. The experiences of this group along with others in INEB are inspiring plans to create an international network for Buddhist chaplaincy and counseling for the traumatized, suicidal, and dying.

Study Tour 3: The Current State of Japanese Buddhism and Its New Movements

The theme of the previous INEB Conference in Bodhgaya, India was “The Future of Buddhism.” For Buddhist Asia, Japan in many ways shows what the future of Buddhism as well as the future of these Asian societies might come to look like. Since Japan’s push toward modernization and “westernization” in the mid 1800s, Japanese Buddhism has been struggling to adapt. Its unprecedented step in Buddhist Asia of allowing its monks to abandon the monastic *vinaya* along with the development of massive modern lay denominations has been a revolutionary step fraught with problems but also filled with potentials. Today, Japanese Buddhism faces the major challenge of its marginalization in a highly secular, post modern

society. Mirroring the economic downturn and development of gaps between rich and poor in mainstream society, the traditional system of temples is in crisis, and the Buddhist world is struggling to create a meaningful social role for itself in 21st century Japan. The trends and challenges in Japanese Buddhism offer important lessons to other Sanghas in Buddhist Asia as their societies are following similar paths of economic and social development.

This tour was led by two young members of JNEB, Rev. Yuzuki Matsushita (a Shingon Vajrayana sect priest who helps to run a virtual on-line temple called Higan-ji geared toward attracting young people to Buddhism) and Rev. Jin Sakai (a Jodo Pure Land sect priest working with the Japan Buddhist Federation). Rev. Yoshiharu Tomatsu (former Secretary General of the Japan Buddhist Federation) also supported the group. On the first day of the study tour, the group visited temples and Buddhist activities outside of Tokyo, such as Ippo-An, a small dharma center located in the ancient Buddhist capital of Kamakura. Ippo-an is run by Ven. Sudhammacara (Rev. Ippo), a Japanese Soto Zen priest who ordained in Burma for 5 years and is also close with Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche. He teaches meditation and an ecumenical “One Dharma” Buddhism to Japanese looking for Buddhist practice that is more practical and relevant to their daily lives. In the afternoon, they visited Joshin-ji temple (a Jodo Pure Land sect) in Hiratsuka City. The abbot, Rev. Kennichi Yoshida, has been rebuilding his small rural temple community by providing more affordable grave sites, creating a grief care support group as well as a group of

priests involved in counseling work, and acting as a local parole officer for criminal youth.

On the second day, they looked at temples in urban Tokyo, such as Komyo-ji, a small temple that has opened various areas on the grounds as an “open café” for any one to come relax and enjoy quiet, slow time. The group also visited Myo-oh-in temple (Shingon Vajrayana) and met with Rev. Shunsui Ichihashi, a fully ordained female priest who is the daughter of the abbot and married to a fully ordained male priest, and their young son born 2 years ago. Their temple and relationship represents what the future of Asian Buddhism could look like with fully ordained female priests and male priests working for their sangha and society. At the end of the day, the group gathered at Rev. Tomatsu’s temple, Shinko-in, situated right under the Tokyo Tower to learn about the deeper structural problems of Japanese Buddhism and its relationship with the government and public organizations.

Board Meeting and Public Symposium

The whole group then reconvened at Kodo Kyodan temple for two days of meetings on INEB affairs, which were highlighted by discussions about the next INEB general conference in Malaysia on Buddhist-Muslim Dialogue and the adoption of official declarations on the conflicts going on in Myanmar and Bangladesh between Buddhist and Muslims, and the problem of nuclear energy as highlighted in the recent study tour.

The week’s events culminated in an entire day of public interactions on November 10th at the Kodo Kyodan Temple. In the

morning, INEB board members met with 25 Japanese engaged Buddhists from the JNEB network to discuss in small groups issues of common concern such as: 1) Buddhist economics & INEB’s Right Livelihood Fund, 2) environment & INEB’s project on global climate change, 3) peace & human rights especially in Myanmar, 4) Buddhist chaplaincy and counseling for the suicidal, traumatized, and dying, 5) gender and INEB’s project on Buddhist Education for Social Transformation, 6) Buddhist revival and renewal activities, and 7) Youth Development & INEB’s Young Bodhi-sattva Program.

The afternoon was devoted to a public symposium on the theme of the program of the entire week, *The Wisdom of Interbeing & The Art of Happiness*. After Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa’s keynote speech on the topic, we were fortunate to have four special speakers and commentators both long familiar and new to the network. A new friend, Ven. Huimin Bhikshu, spoke on the Wisdom of Interbeing and the long held Japanese value of mutual bonds (*kizuna*), which is being revived in the wake of the 3/11 disasters. Old friend, Phra Phaisan Visalo spoke on the Art of Happiness which comes from not acquiring but rather giving away. Rev. Mari Sengoku, also new to the network, spoke on her experiences as a Buddhist chaplain in America and Hawaii and the power of Buddhist based Naikan therapy for the many people in Japan with relational disorders. Rev. Yoshiharu Tomatsu, another long time INEB participant, reviewed the work of Japanese Buddhists to confront the challenges of the 3/11 disasters, including the nuclear issue, and challenged Buddhists to resolve

issues of ethnic conflict like those in Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Conclusion

As both a main organizer within Japan and a long time INEB member, I got to experience both sides of this event. Once again the most enjoyable, precious, and meaningful aspect of this week was the sharing of *kalyanamitra*—spiritual friendship. This term has almost become a cliché in INEB, yet it is truly the fabric of who we are and how we interact in both sharing our joys and our sufferings. The two days through Fukushima were filled with intense listening and bearing witness to the suffering of the people there, while sharing laughter and friendship during the long van rides through Northeast Japan. The Executive and Advisory Meetings were filled with serious discussion on a wide variety of important social issues. But the evenings were filled with silliness especially in our common dormitory rooms where participants shared feelings, stories, songs, and laughter. As an organizer, I worried that INEB often doesn’t provide comfortable enough accommodation, like private bedrooms. Yet sharing such common space at our meetings takes the inspiring experience of working on social issues together to another level of creating deeper interpersonal bonds amongst our members. In this way, I feel the week of events in Japan was another successful chapter in the INEB story and very consistent with what INEB aspires to be. We now hand the torch to our *kalyanamitra* in Malaysia and greatly look forward to the next general conference there in October 2013!

Jonathan Watts
(INEB Executive Committee,
JNEB Coordinator)

Statement on Nuclear Energy

by The International Network of Engaged Buddhists

Affirming the Value of Life and Working Towards Interdependent Lifestyles

November 10, 2012

The International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) through its partner network the Japan Network of Engaged Buddhists (JNEB) and the Inter Faith Forum on the Review of National Nuclear Policy in Japan have been closely monitoring the Fukushima #1 Nuclear Reactor Incident since it evolved from the massive earthquake and tsunami of March 11, 2011. From November 6-7, 2012, seven of INEB's Executive and Advisory Board members, including its Chairman, toured a variety of areas in Fukushima Prefecture including the cities of Sukagawa, Nihonmatsu, Fukushima, Da-te and Minami Soma as well as visiting the high radiation areas of Ita-te village and the Odaka ward of Minami Soma. The concerns that we have developed over the past year and eight months from our partners and from this visit are:

- The ongoing exposure of children and young persons to dangerous levels of radioactivity that continue to linger in the atmosphere and affect food security. Many children have already developed abnormalities in their thyroid glands.

- The devastation of individual lives from the loss of livelihoods and the sudden and continual experience of evacuation and relocation.

- The destruction of community, and in turn highly developed local cultures, as individuals and families choose between remaining in the region or evacuating.

- The ongoing and serious negligence by the Japanese government, the Tokyo Electric

Power Company (TEPCO), and other responsible parties of providing timely and accurate information on radiation levels, proper health standards, and appropriate life style responses for people living in these regions.

From not only the experience of Fukushima but the long standing direct, structural, and cultural forms of violence that nuclear energy has brought to the people of Japan and many others around the world, INEB would like to make the following conclusions from the standpoint of an ecumenical Buddhist based organization concerned with social justice as well as personal liberation.

- Nuclear energy is an unsustainable and unsuitable form of energy generation that endangers not only those presently alive but future generations. Belief in the power of such technology to bring us prosperity and lasting happiness is a form of ignorance and delusion.

- Nuclear energy provides nations with the ability to produce nuclear armaments and opens the door to the horrors of the nuclear warfare.

- Nuclear energy has been developed according to the present economic paradigm based on uncontrolled economic and industrial growth by highly centralized power structures at the cost of:

- 1) the health and well being of laborers working in various sectors of the nuclear industry,

- 2) the integrity of traditional rural communities based around sustainable lifestyles, and

- 3) the health and well being of especially of children and future generations.

- Based on these dangers, nuclear energy is not an answer to the problems of fossil fuel use and the problem of global climate change.

In conclusion, INEB will seek to do and to encourage others to join in the following:

- Make widely known the voices and suffering of the people of Fukushima as concrete examples of the dangers of nuclear energy. Inspired by their courage and perseverance, we will offer whatever support we can to their families and children.

- Support education and greater understanding of nuclear energy as well as the development of more regionalized and localized forms of sustainable non-toxic energy generation based on the cyclical principle of recycling all that is consumed back into regeneration, especially among Buddhist temples and communities and through international networking.

- While in solidarity with other like-minded religious communities, support Buddhist priests and temples as well as entrepreneurial community leaders who serve as centers of sustainable living based on the Buddhist values of sufficiency, care for all sentient beings, and interdependence.

Adopted and ratified at the annual INEB Executive and Advisory Board Meeting, November 8-9, 2012 at the Kodo Kyodan Buddhist Fellowship in Yokohama, Japan

The Wisdom of Inter-being and the Art of Happiness :

A Buddhist Approach to Rebuilding Our Society and Ensuring Our Future

The foundation of all Buddhist practice, and without which there is no Buddhist practice, is *sila* (ethics, which means how to be normal and natural without exploiting oneself and others). Ethics, in Buddhism, begins with the understanding that we are not just observers in reality. Whether we like it or not, we participate with our bodies, our speech, and our minds. Certain behaviors of body, speech, and mind are injurious, whether in solitude or with others. They lead to our own unhappiness, to conflict, and to the suffering of others. Much the suffering that human beings inflict on others is within our control. What mental processes give rise to human-made conflict, misery, and suffering? What behaviors of body, speech, and mind bring benefit : greater peace, happiness, and relaxation, and also greater harmony with others? This empirical, rational, pragmatic approach is the foundation of Buddhist ethics.

For contemplatives who follow the Buddhist path to become buddhas themselves, rather than merely studying Buddhism, ethics takes on the further meaning of refining the mind. It becomes part of their contemplative technology (*samadhi*). In the west, one problem with introspection, which has had a very short lifespan within the scientific context,



is that the tool used was very poorly trained. The ordinary mind that oscillates between excited agitation and dull laxity is not a good instrument for making observations. This problem was recognized by the Buddha, who adopted existing techniques, brought them into Buddhism, and applied them in uniquely Buddhist ways. Adam Curle, a leading English Quaker felt that western meditation lacks

methodology to analyse the mind appropriately. Without ethics—if you are behaving out of anger, craving, or delusion, and thereby reinforcing these mental afflictions—meditation can make no progress. *Zen at War* by Brian Victoria demonstrates clearly that Japanese warrior with a lot of zazen can kill more skillfully. With proper mindfulness you need *sila* side by side. A very fine sense of ethics

is necessary for developing this contemplative technology of a mind that can enable you to make careful, precise, and deep investigations (*prajñā*).

The final phase of Buddhist practice is the cultivation of insight, where you explore the world as it exists, not independently of experience and consciousness, but rather the world of experience called in Sanskrit *loka*. The strategy for this begins with trying to discover the nature of the objects of consciousness, the objects of mind.

Before investigating the rest of reality, you have to examine the tool that is the mind. Scientists waited three hundred years before examining this tool, and there's still no science of consciousness. How can you have a science of consciousness when you have no scientific means of exploring the nature of consciousness?

The scientific community is like a living organism. Science in 2012 is not the same as the science of 1812 or 1612. Like a marvelous living organism, science has been drawing in nutrients, excreting waste products, and mutating in various unexpected ways through history, economics, war, and a myriad other influences. It evolves but maintains its integrity. It has never stopped being science. It's growing now and it seems quite healthy.

The power and knowledge of science is so great that if it is used with hatred or malice, it could destroy humanity. Science urgently needs to absorb the nutrients of greater wisdom and compassion for its own self-preservation, if for no other reason.

Buddhism is also like a living organism that has evolved.

We do not practice exactly the same Buddhism now that the Buddha revealed 2600 years ago, but there is a coherent identity. You can recognize that this really is Buddhism. Traditional Asian forms of Buddhism have now entered the very different environment of the modern world. How do we preserve its integrity? It has to adapt, but if it adapts too much, the organism dies and is replaced by little fragments. It could become little more than a therapy, helpful but very far removed from what the Buddha had in mind. On the other hand, if we try to preserve too much, it will also die. If it is seen as irrelevant, no one will feed it.

Both of these living organisms have to adapt. If science does not adapt, it may destroy all of us. If Buddhism does not adapt, it may just die. But the two may come together in a form of symbiotic mutation. They already share four basic elements of empiricism, rationalism, pragmatism, and skepticism. Maybe emergent properties will arise, new ways of inquiry that preserve both scientific and Buddhist values.

If we take Buddhism as a science of mind, we need to understand the importance of the notion of consciousness.

A gross level of consciousness, such as visual perception, is contingent upon the body and depends on the mechanisms of the retina and the visual cortex, as well as on the objective referent, whether that is photons or the object that you are seeing. But in the midst of the visual perception there is the very element of awareness, which the Tibetan called *rigpa*. This is the luminous experiential compo-

nent, the cognizant component of visual perception, or of knowing. We are speaking now of a subtler level, which does not arise from the visual faculty or from the objective referent. It arises only from a previous continuum of consciousness.

There is used to be a wide gap between the Western and Buddhist views of consciousness. Nowadays Western philosophers have good reasons to criticize very strongly the idea that consciousness is an emergent property of a complex chunk of matter. One is that science, by its very method, is unable to grasp what consciousness is. In order to make good predictions, science has to exclude everything that is not common to everybody. For instance, when science speaks about heat, it excludes the felt quality of heat and only retains what can be measured with a thermometer and shared on a piece of paper. Since it excludes felt quality from the outset, present methods allow no possibility of explaining them. A second reason is that consciousness cannot be called a property, nor even a phenomenon. A property is something objective, some thing detached from us, which is attributed to an object, whereas consciousness obviously cannot be detached from itself. Likewise, consciousness is not something that can be considered a phenomenon. Rather, it is phenomenality by itself. For these two reasons at least, and there are many others, many philosophers nowadays think that consciousness must be considered primary, and not derived from anything else.

The Dalai Lama explained that, "*Even in Buddhism there is*

an implicit recognition of the difficulty of identifying what consciousness is. Although we are aware that consciousness exists, when we try to define it, it becomes very nebulous and difficult to pinpoint. But in principle, Buddhism maintains that it is possible to recognize experientially what consciousness is and identify it. There is an understanding, for example, that a highly advanced practitioner at the point of death can identify something called the 'clear light of death,' which is regarded as the subtlest experience of consciousness."

His Holiness continues, *"In the Buddhist view, the difference between the animal realm and the human lies more in the level of intelligence. As for subtle consciousness, there is no difference between animal and human beings. Any sentient being that has the capacity to experience pain and pleasure is thought to possess this subtle consciousness."*

There are different modes of meditation within Tibetan Buddhism, different avenues to that experience. In the cultivation of samadhi, for instance, you train in highly refining and developing the mind to such a degree of subtleness, clarity, and stillness that you can penetrate through the turbulence of your gross human mind, with all of its sensory perceptions and all of its cogitations. You settle your rapidly churning mind so that it becomes transparent, and then you tap into an underlying core of memory, including memories of previous lives that lend themselves to objective corroboration.

There is another mode of meditation within Tibetan Buddhism, called Dzogchen, where

you do not necessarily have to achieve a deep state of samadhi, but you let your awareness come to rest in a very subtle way, where again the turbulence of the gross mind is calmed. Occasionally during this state something arises, like a bubble coming out of water, where one remembers a previous life, or a hundred lives, just like that even as far back as the Buddha's time, or before that. I have not had that kind of experience, but some of my friends have."

It is important to understand the relation between a correct perception of reality.

When we analyze reality, we have a tendency to solidify or reify phenomena. Although we know that things are impermanent, that they are always flowing, that nothing remains identical to itself even for two consecutive moments, yet we have this tendency to perceive that yesterday's table is today's table, that the person we meet today is more or less the same person as yesterday. Even more deeply, although we know that we change from youth to old age, we think there is something constant is *me*. Instead of seeing the fluidity of phenomena, whether external or within our minds, we grasp them as being solid. What was fluid water now becomes ice.

What are the consequences of that? Instead of perceiving the intimate interdependence of constantly changing phenomena and understanding that nothing can happen except through relationship, we instinctively try to ascribe intrinsic properties to things. The first great divide, of course, is between self and others. What is in truth completely interconnected becomes two

worlds : me and all the rest of the world. Then from 'me' comes 'mine': "This is mine ; that is not mine"—my relatives, my belongings. Then we start to ascribe properties to things and people. We say, "This is beautiful." Somehow we cannot help but feel that this beauty, or that pleasant aspect, intrinsically belongs to this person or that object. Little by little, we solidify, crystalize, and divide everything as being pleasant, unpleasant, beautiful, ugly, delicious, disgusting, mine, others. We have passions, impulses attracting us to what is pleasant to me, what I like, what I want to attract, to get, to keep, to increase. And we have a tendency to repulse whatever causes fear or disgust or animosity, because we ascribe those feelings as intrinsic properties. This is a friend, this is an enemy; and both become solid identifications.

What comes next is a very big development. Our mind is invaded by a chain of thoughts that arises from those feelings of attraction and repulsion. Attraction becomes a strong craving, an obsession, a desire that completely invades our minds. We feel pride and superiority when our self relates to others we consider inferior. We feel jealousy when something we consider ours is taken away. We feel animosity, wanting to destroy or harm, what seems threatening to us or goes against our desires. We lack discernment because we are blinded by this host of emotions and toxic mental events. We can't discern with correct judgment, what needs to be accomplished and what needs to be avoided in order to fulfill our most intimate wish, the longing for happiness, and the

longing that other beings have for happiness.

All these different meta-toxins become the way our mind functions, to different degrees. Sometimes the mind is stronger than other times, but in the end all this leads to a deep feeling of frustration and suffering because the world will never match our desires. So there is a very close relation between our first misapprehension of the nature of phenomena—finding solid, intrinsic properties in an increasingly fragmented vision of the world—and suffering.

If you turn this around, you perceive interdependence. Instead of building reality out of separate, permanent, intrinsic qualities, there is a whole dynamic flow of relationship, constantly in transformation. It crystallizes in different ways under different conditions, according to your perception and so many other factors that you cannot isolate individual causes as pleasant or unpleasant. This vast net of interconnection is described in *avatamaka sutra* as a necklace of pearls on the palace of Indra, each pearl reflecting the whole palace. If you perceive things like that, then the whole process of solidification will not happen. You will naturally have the understanding that things are impermanent and changing, that the enemy of yesterday can be the best friend of tomorrow, that what seems beautiful to someone seems ugly to someone else, that you yourself are changing from one minute to the next.

You will also see that there is no such thing as the constant entity you perceive within yourself, the 'me,' if you really analyze it. In this stream of constantly changing consciousness,

there is no permanent entity that is the self. In realizing this, instead of losing what you might feel is the most precious thing in yourself, the 'me,' you are not losing anything. You are just unmasking an impostor. It is not the most precious thing in your being, but rather, it is what ties you to suffering.

Realizing the interdependence and the dynamic flow gives you freedom. You are no longer driven by the mechanism of taking and rejecting in the same way. There is no longer a reason for strong animosity to arise from identifying someone as truly, intrinsically an enemy. Ice and water are of the same basic nature. But the ice that comes from solidifying phenomena can cut. You can break your bones on it. If it melts, through inner freedom from the solidification of concepts, it is just fluid. It no longer threatens to harm your happiness. Losing the self does not mean becoming nothing; you simply untie the knots of solidified phenomena and gain inner freedom.

This also has a very intimate link with compassion. Compassion without interdependence means nothing. Our true nature is love. Imagine yourself suspended in space. If there were no interdependence with other beings, then there is no notion of love or compassion. Understanding interdependence makes you understand that your happiness comes through others' happiness. There is no way you can build your happiness at the cost of others' suffering. You might gain a temporary satisfaction at having defeated your enemy, but that will never be a lasting happiness.

For these reasons, a correct

understanding of reality—the absence of any intrinsic nature of phenomena, and their interdependence—is said to be the ultimate view of the Buddhist teachings, referred to as wisdom. And this is intimately linked with compassion—like a bird's two wings. A bird cannot fly with one wing. And you cannot ask which wing should start first. Both work together. You cannot start to fly with the right wing only and get to the left one later. You won't fly very far that way. We have to keep wisdom and compassion in union all the time, from beginning to end, uniting understanding with ethical thoughts, words, and actions.

What I have said so far is in fact the traditional art of happiness for oneself and others, but to rebuild our society and ensuring our future, we need to understand structural violence.

The term was coined by Johan Galtung, the Norwegian Buddhist and the founder of peace studies as an academic discipline. It refers to systematic ways a society's resources are distributed unequally and unfairly, preventing people from meeting their basic needs. Structural violence includes elitism, ethnocentrism, classism, racism, nationalism, heterosexism, and ageism.

Structural violence may be political, repressive, economic, or exploitative. Unequal access to resources, power, education, health care, or legal standing are forms of structural violence. When inner-city children attend inadequate schools while others do not, when laborers work in inhumane conditions, structural violence exists.

Social structures are not permanent or natural phenome-

na. They evolve-through political and historical development—and usually refer to organizations, institutions, laws, and ideologies. Social structures influence action by creating frameworks of propriety that govern those within the structures.

Social structures pressure us to adopt desired dogma, establishing what is then regarded as normative. Each structure creates boundaries to what is acceptable, speakable, and thinkable. These boundaries define “the truth.” They describe our worldview, and we accept it without question. We become spectators, even cheerleaders. When our mind gives rise to an idea that is “outside the box,” we feel too afraid to seek the truth.

The power of social structures is enormous. They influence our thoughts, actions, attitudes, desires, and even our bodies. When we accept this canon, we enjoy a privileged status. When we challenge or reject it, we become marginalized. We have to see the relationships between social structures, self-surveillance, and self-censorship. To enforce social constructions, institutions intimidate us. Modern medicine fills us with the fear of illness, aging, and even ugliness. Religions might deceive us; Buddhist temples in my country have become terribly rich from donations people make in order to gain merit and thus ensure for themselves an auspicious rebirth. Governments control us through fear: fear of jail or even execution.

“National security,” “private property,” and “free-market capitalism” are social structures. By showcasing these and other structures, our education system

teaches students to be subservient to power and accept the status quo rather than work to overturn injustice. The central operating concept of the global economy is “private property”. The West invented this, and we Asians dutifully have followed their lead. Recently the government in India declared that (literally) every drop of rain in Rajasthan belongs to them, and they will, in turn, provide concessions to private companies to buy and sell this rainwater.

The media—almost all are for-profit corporations—are expert in legitimizing the actions of those in power. It is essential that we learn to analyze structural violence and social structures. In this age of extreme modernism, a time of terror, we need to understand how our systems of thought have been crafted, so when a heavenly messenger awakens us, we will know what is true.

This understanding links us directly to the wisdom of inter-being. Together with compassion, we can use skillful means in rebuilding our society and ensuring our future.

Today in much of Asia, Buddhism has to compete with the new demonic religion of consumerism. A Buddhist sect in Siam called Dhammakaya in fact urges people to embrace consumerism wholeheartedly. The challenge that engaged Buddhists face is to show that Buddhism can be a force to soften the damage caused by the onward march of globalization.

We must attack the neoliberal agenda of the World Bank, IMF and WTO and to the unproven hypothesis that if the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increases in a particular society,

the citizen will automatically be better off and that modern technology can solve everything. This is in fact wrong, as the tsunami in many countries and the nuclear disaster in Japan demonstrate, that we should not control nature but respect it and understand it by using interconnectedness appropriately.

We should explore replacing GDP with the still imprecise but important concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH).

According to western development specialists, we can increase happiness and satisfaction by increasing our consumption of goods and services whilst according to Buddhists, our happiness and satisfaction can only be increased by reducing our desire of things.

For the future to be possible, we need a Buddhist perspective for alternative development—stressing on truth (*satyagraha*) and nonviolence (*ahimsa*).

Our world is being ripped apart by conflict, as the rich get richer and the poor live off their crumbs, hundreds are killed and maimed daily and many thousands more starve to death.

Our world needs to be healed, everywhere, at every level. We know what to do but we must not use only external social engineering. We need to integrate the spiritual dimension with scientific know how. As flawed individuals, this is difficult to achieve. However we need to heal ourselves first. Only then can we make our planet a more habitable place for generations to come.

*A keynote address
for the INEB International Forum
at Kodo Kyodan Buddhist
Fellowship, Yokohama,
10 November 2012*

Prince Damrong Rajanubhab from a Personal Perspective

A lot of ink has already been spilled on (and trees cut for) Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, one of King Mongkut's illustrious royal children. I myself have written a great number of essays on Prince Damrong over the decades, and they have recently been collected in book form to commemorate his 150th birth anniversary. One of the earliest published articles dates as far back as the 1950s.

At the risk of repeating myself, let me begin on a personal note. Although I had never met Prince Damrong, I feel that I owe an immense debt of gratitude to him both personally and intellectually. He trailblazed the way for me for understanding the distinctive characteristics of being Siamese-Thai, which according to the prince was based on the love of freedom and self-rule, non-domination or non-exploitation, and adaptation and compromise. Aside from being a capable and honest state official—especially the longest-serving Minister of Interior—he had also left behind massive intellectual treasures in the fields of history and art and culture. As such Prince Damrong was the first Thai to be recognized by UNSECO as one of the world's great personalities. He was widely credited as the father of modern Thai provincial administration and of Thai historiography. He was also a leading intellectual of his times.

More specifically, Prince Damrong was a direct link between old Siam and new Thailand. He represented endogenous Thai intellectual creativity, a



major intellectual who sought to maneuver wisely between on one side pride and confidence in Buddhism and Thai identity and on the other side external influences, both good and bad, and internal constraints and counteractions. A point that cannot be overemphasized is that like most of his brothers, Prince Damrong was a product of traditional Thai education within the walls of the Grand Palace and in Buddhist temples. This education nurtured in him endogenous intellectual creativity that is increasingly difficult to find these days. In other words, emulating the spirit of his father King Mongkut, Prince Damrong had shown that it was possible to be proud of Thai culture and identity as well as adapting with the changing times and values. In this respect, I have learned immensely from him and encouraged contemporary Thais to do likewise. In this sense, we are still living in the shadows of Prince Damrong.

Unfortunately, many people could not grasp or appreciate the

prince's real greatness. His numerous contributions to society have been widely misunderstood at both the popular and academic levels. I feel that Prince Damrong has also been unjustly criticized by several contemporary Thais. The objective of this lecture is to shed greater light on Prince Damrong's significance and contributions to Thai society—as far as I could grasp them—and to correct some of the misunderstandings. This is the least that I can do for him.

Admittedly, I hated reading books when I was a boy. (Luckily, there were no TVs and VDO games to lead me astray.) Rather, I loved listening to older people talk and to inquire them about the old days. When I was ordained as novice at Wat Thong Nopakun under the Venerable Phra Bhadramuni I learned a lot from him for he was a lively and knowledgeable speaker. He would regularly advise me to read books, but I was not entirely convinced about the virtue of reading. One day, I picked up the book *Our Wars with Burma* from the Venerable's bookshelf and began reading it. It was a two-volume tome, but I not only finished reading it but also enjoyed doing so. Prince Damrong's literary style greatly impressed me and I was pleased to know my country's history. I was then around twelve years old. As it turned out, this was my first step toward an effective learning of history outside the classroom. And reading Prince Damrong would become one of my lifelong preoccupations. I

tried to get hold of every book or publication by the prince. They were the products of the Vajirana Library and the Royal Congress, two leading institutions for the cultivation of patriotism-but not of the chauvinistic kind. For instance, W.A. Graham wrote glowingly of Prince Damrong in his two-volume set on *Siam*.

Having an opportunity to read Prince Damrong also made me more knowledgeable than my classmates, who got to read only school books. Moreover, this experience made me willing to learn and pursue further independent study. I frequented the Damrong Rajanubhab Library as well as the National Library at a time when few people paid serious attention to both of these institutions. The Americans and the British had by then built libraries for youths in Bangkok, but I wasn't interested in them. I was more interested in Thai studies than learning about the West. As such, the National Museum and various temples were also among my favorite places. Put another way, I attempted to gain knowledge about the kingdom's art and culture along the lines suggested by Prince Damrong. Subsequently, Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa's *Our Friends' Faiths* greatly impacted me, stimulating me to study Chinese, Vietnamese, Indian temples and Christian churches.

I recollected the inspirations obtained from reading books and visiting art and culture sites and reproduced them in a little students' magazine for my classmates. Later, during high school, my friends and I began recommending interesting places for students to visit such as museums and libraries and extracurricular books to read. Please note that this was a time when even leading schools didn't have a library

for students.

It was perhaps during high school that I published my first essay on Prince Damrong in *Parichart*, which was a conservative magazine for art and culture. My essay created quite a stir not only because I was still a high school student but also because I defended Prince Damrong against the criticisms of Sukich Nimmanheminda, then a member of the Royal Institute as well as Minister of Industry. (As an aside, this volume of *Parichart* also contains Jit Phumisak's article. He also wrote his impression on having an audience with Princess Poonpismai Diskul, daughter of Prince Damrong. And it was Jit who moved away furthest from conservatism.)

Prince Damrong played a central role in my intellectual formation. I'm still reading works by and on Prince Damrong to this very day. However, I must add that I have also diverged from the social, political, and historical views espoused by him. Furthermore, I hold a rather different understanding of the Thai nation and Buddhism. For instance, Prince Damrong was a staunch defender of Siamese absolutism. Like many other members of the royal family, he felt that the Thai people were not ready to rule themselves. Internationally, he advocated British imperialism in India and Burma. He believed that members of the royal family were superior to the common people and deserved to rule because of the merits they had done in previous lives. Nevertheless, and this is highly commendable, he stressed that the high-born should maintain their exclusive social status and personal dignity by leading simple, frugal, humble, honest and responsible lives. In particular, the king should be the epitome

of these values in order to be well-loved by the people. To a large extent, the prince himself was also an embodiment of these traits. As evident below, I no longer share a large part of these views.

Although I am not a progressive or radical thinker like the Marxist Jit Phumisak, I am concerned about social suffering and poverty like he was. And I've arrived at this position by maintaining absolute fidelity to Buddha's teachings on the Triple Gem. For me the Triple Gem serves as the unsurpassable guide to 'normal' personal, social and political relations. My fidelity to Buddhism has also moved me beyond the Thai-ness defended and promoted by absolutism, and by Prince Damrong himself.

I wanted to learn more intensively and extensively about Prince Damrong. I wanted to know how he was beyond the writings on and by him. From his publications, I observed that they relied on various sources such as primary documents and equally important oral statements. Prince Damrong gathered and made good use of many oral statements from his contemporaries, especially his seniors. Oral tradition was much stronger than written statement, and had he not recorded these statements, most of them would likely have been lost. This was also a distinctly Thai way of accumulating and producing knowledge, and I had learned it since I was a boy. Therefore, I talked to many individuals who had known, served under, or even criticized Prince Damrong. Some of them were my elderly relatives.

I was also fortunate to be a close friend of Princess Chongchitthanom Diskul, Prince Dam-

rong's eldest daughter. She was always friendly to me and often more frank and direct than her father was. She made me better understand Prince Damrong, especially his brilliance. However, despite her perceptive insights, Princess Chongchit rarely wrote about her father. Rather it was Princess Poonpismai who had written extensively on Prince Damrong. The problem is that most of her writings on the prince are too hagiographic. Once I asked her too many probing questions on the prince. She was duly annoyed and accused me of not being fully respectful to her father (though she had called me 'younger brother' and claimed that I knew Prince Damrong better than several of his own sons). Princess Chongchit asserted that her sister's worship of Prince Damrong was akin to "daddyism"; that is, daddy was always right, the greatest, etc. For Princess Chongchit, who possessed a more critical spirit, on certain issues her uncle Prince Naris was superior to her own father. Needless to say, she was ever loyal to and respectful of her father. She dutifully and capably served Prince Damrong—but often behind the scenes. She was in charge of the affairs of the palace while members of her family were abroad or in exile. Once, when the family was in financial dire straits Princess Chongchit even pawned some of her personal belongings in order to hold a grand reception for the family guests.

Prince Damrong was a royal who was relatively poor despite being the longest serving Minister of Interior at a time when the ministry was extremely powerful, controlling for instance the Departments of Revenue, Police, Criminal Investigation and For-

est and Mines. In other words, he would have gotten away quite easily with any corrupt activities. A true Buddhist gentleman, he did not choose the path of self-aggrandizement—rather of simplicity and humility.

When Herbert Phillips conducted research on Siamese intellectuals in the late 1960s, he clearly summarized my views thus: If good and just individuals like Princes Naris and Damrong govern the country, then it will develop in the right direction. The nature of its political regime—whether or not it is a democracy—is irrelevant. Back then I was still a conservative and a staunch and uncritical advocate of royalism. I've dealt with this admittedly embarrassing and shameful episode of my life in the short book *Powers That Be: Fall of Thai Democracy*, and therefore will not repeat it here. Suffice it to say that my intellectual tendency and upbringing conditioned my impression of the 1932 revolution and especially Pridi Banomyong. I hated the People's Party for overthrowing the absolutist monarchy, which I felt was the bastion of the kingdom's traditional values. I also despised Pridi for being the brain of the People's Party. But as Benedict Anderson puts it in a recent review of *Powers That Be*, "In this book, Sulak shows how he gradually became a champion of Pridi after careful reading of his works—wise, democratic, anti-feudal and dedicated to the education of commoners." And after the 6 October 1976 savagery "[Sulak became] a confirmed supporter of Pridi's participatory democracy as the solution to the country's deep problems, and a strong critic of those sectors of Thai society which still clung to the military, the conservative

aristocracy, the authoritarian aspects of the monarchy."

When I became more enlightened politically, I learned that Prince Damrong, returning from exile in Penang during the Eighth Reign, had met with Pridi, then Regent to the King, and admitted that he was already behind his times and that the time of absolutism was over. Prince Damrong then asked Pridi, whom he trusted, to help take good care of the country, as he had done. In other words, Damrong, a prince of the blood, did not bear any grudge toward the People's Party. He forgave and tried to forgive all those who made life difficult for him for he believed in the Buddhist law of Karma, that by good deeds alone could evil thoughts, speeches and actions be overcome.

Prince Damrong was the right-hand man of King Chulalongkorn. He had capably served his kingdom and monarch. The king even depicted Damrong as a gem adorning the state crown. Once I could only see the benefits of King Chulalongkorn's administrative reform program. These reforms led to the centralization of power at the expense of local autonomy. The education reforms along Western lines also brought several negative repercussions. Therefore, I now have serious doubts about the king's greatness; in contemporary Thai society, King Chulalongkorn is not only beyond criticism but also deified. What about Prince Damrong who capably carried out many of these reforms? I still hold him in high regard. He did not initiate these reforms but merely carried them out to the best of his ability as a servant of the king. The prince tried to reach a compromise with local rulers whose autonomy

was undermined and attempted to cultivate a new pool of capable, honest and loyal civil servants, including commoners.

In general, Prince Damrong respected the elders, royals as well as commoners. He was humble, self-effacing and non-confrontational—traits influenced by Buddhism. The prince rarely if ever criticized anyone—his contemporaries or historical figures. These are distinctively Thai characteristics. But from a farang perspective, these constituted the prince's grave flaws. He was thus accused of hiding the truth or telling half-truths. In my view, Prince Damrong shouldn't be seen as lying—and here the benchmark for outright dishonesty is Luang Wichitwathakan or M.R. Kukrit Pramoj. They are not in the same category. Prince Damrong avoided criticizing others because he didn't want to humiliate them or hurt their feelings; not because he wanted to lie deliberately. This might justifiably be seen as one of the prince's flaws, but approached from this perspective we will be in a better position to understand his writings.

Any reader of Prince Damrong's *Memoirs* knows that it ends abruptly when he entered the monkhood as novice. He admitted to his daughters that he couldn't continue writing it because to persist in doing so he would have to mention about many individuals in his life, thereby possibly undermining their reputation or that of their families and so on. Many people today might find this reasoning unconvincing. But as Phya Anuman wisely warned his students, we shouldn't use a modern ruler to measure people in the past.

Damrong was a prince of the blood. He couldn't find faults with the absolutist monarchy. Of

course, he attempted to the best of his ability to benefit the people, especially the poor—the king's subjects—as a good and highly capable servant of the absolutist monarchy. Nevertheless, I believe that he didn't understand the class system and structural violence that were the root causes of poverty and social domination and exploitation. Put bluntly, Prince Damrong was a Buddhist gentleman but not a democrat. On the contrary, as mentioned above, he initially opposed the democratization of the kingdom. He was behind his times. Attached to the good old days of the Fifth Reign, he could not understand the revolutionary wind of change. It was only after the 1932 revolution and after meeting capable and virtuous commoners like Pridi and Phya Anuman, who eventually succeeded the prince in taking charge of the National Library in the 1940s, that he became convinced that the new regime was more suitable for the changing times. At the same time, Prince Damrong distrusted Luang Wichitwathakan and opposed the latter's chauvinistic nationalism.

I've read almost every publication on Prince Damrong in various forms ranging from popular articles for the general audience to serious academic dissertations. However, none of them could really grasp his greatness. Saichon Sattayanurak's work deserves special attention for it is superior to most writings on Prince Damrong. Yet, her work relied primarily on documentary research. Her work would have been even more valuable and interesting had she also used oral statements by the prince's contemporaries. Saichon claims that the prince looked down on both women and

the Chinese. I disagree. Prince Damrong was not a feminist but he respected and honored women to a far greater extent than most of his male contemporaries did, especially within the ruling class. He cherished his mother whom he would visit every morning before going to work. He respected all of his father's wives and asked two of them to be his foster mothers when his own blood mother passed away. Prince Damrong had many wives but he honored them all equally. He even honored my maternal grandmother who was of Chinese descent. In fact, Prince Damrong was also Chinese on his mother's side. She had practiced rituals of ancestor worship throughout her life, and ordered Princess Chongchit to carry on with it. Princess Chongchit continued the practice till the final days of her life. At an intellectual level, Prince Damrong was interested in Chinese studies no less than Thai or Indian studies.

To sum up, Prince Damrong's greatness lies in being a major (hopefully not the last) figure of endogenous Thai intellectual creativity. This creativity was cultivated by Buddhism and traditional education and was also based on non-chauvinistic patriotism. Contemporary Thais have a lot to learn from Prince Damrong in this respect. Prince Damrong claimed that the three distinctive traits of Thai national identity are the love of freedom and self-rule, non-violence, and clever adaptation of new things. How these traits are articulated today is an enormous challenge for contemporary Thai society.

*A lecture delivered
at the Siam Society,
20 December 2012*

Speech on the Third Anniversary of the Death of Charoen Wat-aksorn

Today's ceremony is held not only to commemorate the passing away of Charoen Wat-aksorn—whose deed and name should be immortalized—but also to celebrate the coming 75th anniversary of democracy in the country, which since its birth has been regularly trammled by the ruling class. In other words, Charoen Wat-aksorn (and numerous other citizens) and democracy were victims of the ruling class.

On 30 June the annual Sem Pringpuangkaew public lecture will be held at the 14 October 1973 Memorial. It is a public lecture intended for the marginalized and excluded in society. In fact, these three abovementioned events symbolize the irruption of the common people who are no longer willing to obey and endure exploitation and domination by the ruling class. They aim for nothing less than victory for the people.

Although this statue has a face that resembles that of Charoen Wat-aksorn, it is really a representation of the common people who are exploited by landlords, politicians, businessmen, etc. in collaboration with TNCs and foreign capital; that is, all those who value the accumulation of wealth above other considerations.

This statue signifies pride and confidence, not overbearing arrogance. It points to the awakening and class consciousness of people of like Charoen Wat-aksorn throughout the kingdom. In other words, it doesn't represent an individual but a collec-



tive, egalitarian and oppositional subject.

The ruling class has long distorted history to intoxicate the masses. But the practice of venerating ruling class figures in mural temple paintings is a relatively new phenomenon. It began during the Seventh and Ninth Reigns. That Wat Si Yaek in Bonok chose to depict the courageous acts of common people in its mural paintings is thus a commendable exception. Unfortunately, most ecclesiastical officers in the country have chosen to side with the forces of greed, hatred and delusion.

There are still many statues in various other provinces that essentially symbolize how dictatorship or absolutism exploited and oppressed the common people. To name a few random examples: those of Phibunsongkram in Lopburi province, of Sarit Thanarat Khon Khaen province, and of Phao Sriyanond at the Royal Police Cadet Academy in Nakornpathom province. They were all violent, brutal and cor-

rupt figures.

The Prince Prajak Silpakhom statue in Udonthani province and the Prince Sappasit Prasong monument in Ubonratchathani province are symbols of the kingdom's expansionism and hatred of local tradition and autonomy. Even the so-called father of Thai law or Prince Ratchaburi Direk Rit was on the whole dictatorial.

The statues of several royal family members have also been divinized; for instance, those of Prince Chumphon and King Rama V. Some statues of commoners who were granted with special titles such as Thao Suranari were also deemed sacred.

Even Somdej Toh of Wat Rakang who served as the kingdom's voice of conscience during his lifetime, who used the Wheel of Dhamma to counterbalance the Wheel of State, and who fought for equality, solidarity and freedom from greed, hatred and delusion, was appalling transformed into a supernatural symbol.

Statues of common people like the one we are witnessing today will gradually emerge in other provinces, replacing those of dictators and oligarchs. In Khon Khaen province, the Sarit Thanarat should be brought down and that of Asapha Mahathera should be created instead. In Sakon Nakhon province, a statue of Tiang Sirikan should be erected. Likewise, statues of Chamlong Daoruang in Mahasarakam, Tawin Udul in Roi Et, etc. should be constructed. Increasingly, universities in the future

will also be named after commoners. For instance, Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University should be renamed Tiang Sirikan University.

We must honor the common people. Many had been massacred in the past, including Charoen Wat-aksorn and a number of good politicians. Here we also need to mention the name of Pridi Banomyong. Even Lady Poonsukh Banomyong had been imprisoned. And when she passed away the ruling class hardly paid any tribute to her. We must force the ruling class to confront the truth and make them respect the common people, on whose backs society is built. We must liberate them from their servility to the mainstream West. The Crown Property Bureau must stop chasing away tenants like animals in the name of land or property development. Likewise rich temples such as Wat Yannawa, Wat Kanlayanamit, and Wat Bowonivet must stop this horrendous practice. Admittedly, it is very difficult to change the mentality of the ruling class. Thus for starters we can begin with changing ourselves. We must be morally courageous and confident in our opposition to mainstream ideas. We must stop obeying and respecting the upper classes.

There are two antagonistic trends in contemporary Thai society. On the one hand, there's the mainstream, which is being promoted and defended by the rich and powerful. This is the stream of capitalism, militarism, technocracy and self-aggrandizement. Sometimes it is also called 'globalization.' Proponents of this stream seek to emulate the mainstream West in every possible way.

The mainstream proponents



transformed Nation, Religion, King and Constitution into the main pillars supporting the ruling class and a hierarchical and unequal society. Among them are many politicians, academics, corporate leaders, bankers, and media owners. They argue that if the ruling elites are 'good' and capable then they have the right to decide matters for others in the name of the country's progress. The lower classes merely have to obey and sacrifice for the well-being of society—in particular for the security of Nation, Religion and King. The mainstream proponents hate criticisms and often confuse Buddhism with magic or superstition.

The alternative or minority stream is largely made up of the poor and 'grassroots'. They have to confront against numerous forms of injustice and exploitation in their daily existence—to an even greater degree in the past 2-3 decades. They generally live in harmony with nature, practice communal solidarity and non-violence, and uphold local wisdom and traditions, which are influenced by Buddhism or other religions. The ruling elites don't see any virtue in these people.

Segments of the middle class are also part of this mino-

rity stream. They have distanced themselves from the mainstream and are increasingly willing to learn from the poor. They have courageously confronted and challenged the technocracy and development projects of the ruling class, which are seen as destroying the natural environment. Good examples include villagers from Baan Bonok and Baan Krut, the Kanchanaburi Conservation Group, the coalition against the Thai-Malaysian gas pipelines in Songkhla province, and the coalition against potash mining in Udonthani province.

A number of youths have also risen up to challenge the values of the mainstream.

As long as human beings emphasize living more than possessing, they will be givers more than takers. Generosity will become an important part of life. And so will solidarity, egalitarianism, and relations of non-domination. They will also be able to live more harmoniously with nature.

24 June of every year is an important day for the common people in the country. Remembering the 24th of June is important because it reflects the hope that over-turning the mainstream is possible and reveals the class antagonism at the heart of Thai society. Unfortunately, many people in Thai society don't see it this way. For the ruling elites, the 5th of December is the most important day—it has become the national day instead of 24 June. But didn't the Constitution say that the common people are the actual owners of the country?

*Excerpts from a speech
delivered at Baan Bonok,
21 June 2007*

Dhammayatra in India

Vinoba Bhave, the spiritual successor of Gandhi, believed that to foster social wellbeing the rich should voluntarily redistribute their lands to the poor rather than be forcefully dispossessed along communist lines. His voluntary land reform movement in India was known as the Bhoodan movement. As spiritual leader and devoted reformer, he attracted many rich landlords to donate lands to him. But due to mismanagement and to the fact that several landlords ultimately took back their lands, Bhave's project eventually folded.

Rajagopal is a young and dedicated activist who wants to revive Bhave's Bhoodan movement, adapting it to contemporary conditions. Rajagopal and his fellow young activists, Indian as well as foreign, have spent years cultivating the consciousness of the poor and landless and mobilizing them to defend their basic rights over land and resources, which are being threatened by privatization or undermined by local and international capital with the assistance of the Indian state. The main objective of their movement is not to make the poor and landless hate capitalists or government officials. Rather, it is to facilitate dialogues between the two sides in the hope of narrowing the socioeconomic gap. In 2007, it organized a massive nonviolent landless march.

The movement works under the auspices of the Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi. Disliking administrative work, Rajagopal focuses on grassroots activism. He has expanded the Foundation's activities, linking them with those of the South



Asia Peace Alliance and Swaraj Peeth Trust. The latter is based on Gandhi's vision of self-rule and non-violence.

The movement led by Rajagopal has been established for several years. Its members do not travel by foot throughout India as in Bhave's movement. Rather, they travel by jeep to an area and attempt to mobilize the local communities. Generally, when Rajagopal arrives a meeting is held with local inhabitants along with musical performance and religious ceremony. The poor and landless, including tribal people and members of the lowest caste, are made to feel that they have equal dignity to the rich and powerful. In this sense, the movement has surpassed that of Gandhi in the past.

At present, the movement has hundreds of thousands of supporters throughout India. Rajagopal argues that a compromise can be reached between, on the one side, the poor and landless, and on the other side, the government, capitalists, and big landowners provided that the latter don't serve as obedient lackeys of transnational corporations. The movement's supporters and members have threatened to march to the capital during the next election year if the govern-

ment is unable to come up with concrete and satisfactory solutions to their problems.

Small wonder that the Indian prime minister had invited Rajagopal to a face-to-face meeting to discuss the land problem. The prime minister even ordered a number of his ministers such as those from the Ministries of Rural Development, Home Affairs and Commerce and Industry to take part in Rajagopal's movement in order to seriously discuss land matters with the relevant stakeholders and come up with viable solutions. Big investors like Tata Motors and Bella corporation have also held serious talks with Rajagopal on how to minimize or control the "externalities" involved in their production process. If these corporations do not even have the most rudimentary understanding of the social and environmental repercussions of their business activities, the people will rise up against them. Gandhi's swaraj means self-reliance. Obstacles to self-reliance must be overcome at the individual and structural levels. The movement led by Rajagopal is democracy and nonviolence at work.

I have long admired Rajagopal's work. Thus, when he organized a conference on

“ahimsa” to provide an overview of his movement’s activities and to obtain advices from foreign kalyanamitta, I readily agreed to take part in it in Delhi during 27-29 September 2012. An official closed-door meeting was held at Vishwa Yuvak Kendra or International Youth Center.

The public session was held on the last day of the conference at India Habitat Centre, which is not a conference hall but an amphitheater. Hundreds were there, including the Minister of Rural

Development. I was invited to deliver the keynote address on “Between Silence and Violence, is there Active Nonviolence?” Several other discussants were also present. Some were my old friends such as Kamala Bhasin and Swami Agnivesh.

At the event, Institute of Human Rights of Switzerland also presented Rajagopal with the 2012 Human Rights Award. (Previous awardees include H.H. the Dalai Lama and the Falun Gong movement in China.) The

international conference ended on 29 September. They planned to initiate a nonviolent foot march from Gwalior to Delhi on 2 October—on the day Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated.

Thai red and yellow shirt leaders and supporters have a lot to learn from Rajagopal’s movement. They should cease their quarrel, join hands, and reach out to and work for the poor.

A Thai version appears in Pacarayasara, January 2556

Siam’s Lese Majeste Law from a Historical Perspective

I’m honored to be here today. I was asked to speak on “Thailand’s lese majeste law from a historical perspective,” which is part of the plenary session on legal and social frameworks for freedom of expression.

Let me begin with a few basic facts, many of which have been frequently cited in the mass media. The notorious Article 112 of the Thai Criminal Code clearly states: *Whoever defames, insults or threatens the King, Queen, the Heir-apparent or the Regent, shall be punished with imprisonment of three to fifteen years.* In terms of its enforcement, between 2005 and 2011, the country’s Courts of Appeal found the accused guilty in more than 400 cases of lese majeste. About ten or more cases are still pending in the Supreme Court. In 2006, only 30 cases of lese majeste reached the Courts of First Instance. By mid-2011, however, the number jumped to almost 500 cases—an increase by 1,500 per cent! Not surprisingly, during the same period, the country’s

ranking in the Reporters Without Borders’ World Press Freedom Index also took a sharp dive—for instance from 59 in 2004 to 153 (out of 178 countries) in 2010.

As depressing as these facts are, the problem with the lese majeste law however is far greater than about the freedom of expression per se. In my view, the lese majeste law has been fetishized: it has taken a life of its own, moving far beyond its original intention or *raison d’etre*, threatening the security of the very institution it professedly protects, being highly resistant to change and impervious to reason, and therefore being a potential threat to anyone and everyone. No one seems able to stop its destructive motion, not even the monarch himself. The harshness of the punishment—three to fifteen years imprisonment—logically implies that there’s an equally strong desire to break it. This does not bode well for the monarchy, especially symbolically as the so-called unifying factor. Moreover, in general the

harsher or more authoritarian the lese majeste law, the more socially dangerous the law-breaker must be assumed to be. For instance, the law-breaker must be presumed to be an existential threat, a terrorist, a national traitor, a foreign agent, a subhuman, etc. This assumption fans social hatred and paves the way to all kinds of human rights abuses and violations—beyond undermining the freedom of expression. At stake also is the future of the monarchy. Hence there’s an urgent need to abolish or amend Article 112.

How then did we get to this point? I will attempt to partially answer this by providing a few historical snapshots, beginning with the present.

Let me begin with an English book that was published recently to mark the auspicious occasion of the King’s 7th cycle birthday anniversary. The book was entitled *King Bhumibol Adulyadej, a Life’s Work: Thailand’s Monarchy in Perspective*. It was by and large intended as a hagio-

graphy and a rebuttal of arguments made in the three English books on the Thai monarchy banned in the kingdom.

Interestingly, a section of the book dealt with the issue of lese majeste. Of particular concern is the King's view on this matter. This was made clear in a royal speech that was delivered on the eve of his birthday anniversary in 2005. In the speech, the King emphasized that (1) a monarch is an ordinary human being who can and should be criticized; (2) pending lese majeste cases must be put to an end and individuals imprisoned on this charge should be released; and (3) the use of the lese majeste law would ultimately hurt rather than benefit the monarchy.

The King also clarified the meaning of the English saying "The King can do no wrong." He pointed out correctly that this saying implies that the monarch is not an ordinary human being—it is as if the monarch is faultless, omniscient, divine, and so on. Instead, the King insisted that as an ordinary human being "the King can do wrong" and therefore can be criticized. He stated, "If someone offers criticisms suggesting that the King is wrong, then I would like to be informed of their opinion. If I am not, that could be problematic.... If we hold that the King cannot be criticized or violated, then the King ends up in a difficult situation." The King further pointed out that if it is legally prohibited to criticize the monarch and individuals are imprisoned for perpetrating the crime of lese majeste "the monarch would have to bear the negative consequences." It is

worth quoting His Majesty thus: "If they get sent to prison, I pardon them. If they don't go to prison, I won't sue them, because those who violate the King and are punished are not the ones who are in trouble. It would be the King who was in trouble. It is strange, but the lawyers like to send people to prison (for allegedly violating the King)."

The opinion of Anand Panyarachun, former prime minister and a principal advisor to the book's editorial board, made to foreign journalists was also reproduced. He stated:

The King never said anything to me, but my own personal view is that I do not like the law. Yet, I think you have to understand that in this country the King is held in a certain position which is inviolable. I am sure the King does not mind whether the law exists or not, but the Thai people will never, never tolerate criticism of the King. That is their feeling. Sometimes I wonder about the Thai people, that they are more Catholic than the Pope. I always believe that the Thais are more royalist than the King.

Thus it seems that the King has little say over the law that is allegedly protecting him and his family. Article 112 is really harmful to the King. The King is well aware of this fact. Perhaps, an ordinary anti-defamation law is sufficient to protect the royal family. The King is also concerned about international public opinion on this matter. Yet he cannot will Article 112 away. Perhaps, many Thais don't want

to abolish or amend Article 112 because they are more royalist than the King as Anand asserted. They know full well the King's expressed desire since it's regularly repeated in the mass media but they continue to act as if they don't know—yet at the same time they claim to be his loyal subjects. Unfortunately, many political parties have also expressed their opposition to amending Article 112 despite the fact that the law violates the people's freedom and rights as well as jeopardizes the monarchy. A number of politicians probably want to use Article 112 to silence their critics or bring down their opponents. They want to reap the most personal benefit out of this Article in their political struggle. It is a powerful political weapon indeed. I myself have had the privilege of being falsely charged with lese majeste for three times due to my criticisms of General Arthit Kamlang-ek, General Suchinda Kraprayoon and Thaksin Shinawatra. The high number of lese majeste cases in the last few years must also be analyzed in the context of the life-and-death struggle among the oligarchic groups and political factions in the kingdom.

Going back further in time, more than one century ago, King Chulalongkorn wanted Siam to be admitted into the international society of civilized states. He thus embarked on various reforms, some of them quite progressive. In 1873, he stated¹:

In other major powers, in other great capitals of the world, in other kingdoms in East Asia, such as in China,

¹ The two quotes below have been translated into English by Pavin Chachavalpongpun. See his "Chulalongkorn abolished prostration." Available at <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/2011/05/14/chulalongkorn-abolished-prostration/>.

Yuan (Vietnam), Japan, and in West Asia, such as India—these countries once enshrined the practice of prostration, commanding the subordinates to prostrate before their superiors (chao-nai) and the nobles, just like what is currently experienced by Siam. But now, those countries have abolished the prostration practice. The reason behind this is that they acknowledged the necessity of rebuilding a more equal relationship between different groups in society—no more class oppression. Since the abolition, those countries have become more prosperous. In Siam, the practice of prostration reaffirms the existence of oppression which is unjust. Furthermore, there are other practices that must be abolished or at least reduced in their degree of strictness. But to eliminate all the practices at once will be impossible. The process has to be gradual and timely. At the end of the process, Siam will re-emerge as a much more prosperous kingdom.

As such, the *Royal Siamese Government Gazette* in 1873 summarized his wish thus:

From now on, Siamese are permitted to stand up before the dignitaries. To display an act of respect, the Siamese may take a bow instead. Taking a bow will be regarded as a new form of paying respect. The dignitaries may first question the reason behind the abolition of prostration practice. They may ask: How will the change assist in developing

Siam? They must know now that the abolition of this practice is indeed to show the world that Siam rejects any oppressive and unjust practice. Powerful countries which have been successful in refraining from oppressing their own peoples are now enjoying prosperity. Henceforth, members of the royal family and senior and junior bureaucrats who wish to have an audience with the King at his residence, or in public places, please adopt this new recommended practice as instructed by the King. His Majesty the King has assigned Than Chao Phraya Srisuriyawongse, his Regent, to enact this new practice for the Siamese kingdom.

It is clear that King Chulalongkorn wanted Siam to be governed according to the standard of civilization. He didn't seem to think that Siam should deem itself as absolutely unique and swim against the currents of international norms and practices. But when Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat came to power in the late 1950s via a coup d'état, which was called a revolution, King Rama V's intention was brushed aside. Many practices abolished by the King such as prostration and crawling returned with a vengeance and have remained in place ever since. Aided by his chief propagandist Luang Wichit Wattakarn, Sarit resorted to the protection of the monarchy and religion as his primary source of legitimacy. Today, many Thais have deified King Chulalongkorn—which must be pointed out that this isn't a Buddhist practice—but they have willfully forgotten his

wish to keep up with the changing times and to make the necessary changes “to show the world that Siam rejects any oppressive and unjust practice.” The amendment of Article 112, which is oppressive and unjust, will be a right move in this direction.

The 1932 Revolution abolished absolutism and transformed Siam into a constitutional monarchy. The new constitution however still contained a clause prohibiting lese majeste. All subsequent Siamese constitutions have the clause, “The King shall be enthroned in a position of revered worship and shall not be violated. No person shall expose the King to any sort of accusation or action.” Yet, during the time of absolute monarchy the punishment for lese majeste was up to three years imprisonment. During the Sarit dictatorship, it was increased to be up to seven years. In 1976 during the Thanin Kraivixien premiership the punishment was 3-15 years imprisonment. At least three years imprisonment was unprecedented! This also means that there will be no suspension of the punishment because the suspension only works for crimes that face up to 2 years imprisonment. In other words, one has to go straight to prison. The military removed Thanin from power a long time ago, but the draconian law is still with us. To briefly sum up, the lese majeste law today is even harsher than during the time of absolutism, and the harsh punishment is a direct by-product of the country's military dictatorship. Although we claim to be a democracy and that our government had ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there has been no serious attempt to alter the amendment made to Article 112 by a dictato-

rial government.

If the monarchy wants to be a part of Thai society in the future, it must undertake numerous reforms. If Thais, especially those who declare themselves to be the king's loyal subjects, want the monarchy to be part of their society in the future then they must allow for the amendment of Article 112. If Siam claims to be a constitutional monarchy, then we must use the law and the judicial system to enable the monarchy to exist with dignity under the Constitution. The monarch and members of the royal family must not have any special privileges outside of the law. The law must grant justice to all. Everyone and anyone can be subjected to criticism. In particular, this will help ensure the accountability and answerability of important public figures.

The amendment of Article 112 can take various forms. I propose a "compromised" version. It goes as follows: In the short run, the severity of the punishment must be drastically reduced. As it stands, Article 112 is a threat to the monarchy's survival. I suggest that the minimum three-year imprisonment clause be revoked. And a maximum sentence of three-to-seven year imprisonment should more than suffice. The whole process of charging someone with lese majeste must also be made a lot stricter. It's literally free for all now; and the police must automatically press charge. Rather, every accusation must be carefully scrutinized. This will help lessen the burden on both the people and the police. The Nittirat Group has suggested that the Office of His Majesty's Principal Private Secretary be in charge of screening lese majeste charges. I

find this to be a plausible suggestion given that there are a lot of legal experts in the Office.

In the long run, however, the meaning of having a democracy with the monarch as the head of state must be carefully and clearly unpacked. The people must be clear about the monarch's role, duty, etc. The point is how to make the monarchy most beneficial to the people. We have many existing models to learn from—e.g., those of Japan, England, Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, etc.

As for the question why we need to preserve the monarchy and keep it under the constitution, George Orwell provided an illuminating answer several decades ago.

The function of the King in promoting stability and acting as a sort of keystone in a non-democratic society is, of course, obvious. But he also has, or can have, the function of acting as an escape-valve for dangerous emotions. A French journalist said to me once that the monarchy was one of the things that have saved Britain from fascism. What he meant was that modern people can't, apparently, get along without drums, flags

and loyalty parades, and that it is better that they should tie their leader-worship onto some figure who has no real power. In a dictatorship the power and the glory belong to the same person. In England the real power belongs to unprepossessing men in bowler hats: the creature who rides in a gilded coach behind soldiers in steel breastplates is really a waxwork. It is at any rate possible that while this division of function exists, a Hitler or a Stalin cannot come to power. On the whole the European countries which have most successfully avoided fascism have been constitutional monarchies. The conditions seemingly are that the royal family shall be long-established and taken for granted, shall understand its own position and shall not produce strong characters with political ambitions. These have been fulfilled in Britain, the Low Countries and Scandinavia.

*Speech for the European Union,
Dusit Thani Hotel, Bangkok
31 January 2013*

Suksit Siam

has now moved to its new location at
117-119 Fuang Nakorn Road, Bangkok 10200

Tel: 02-225-9536-8, Fax: 02-222-5188
email: suksit-siam@gmail.com
www.kledthaishopping.com

- Open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. except Sunday •
- English books on Engaged Buddhism are available.

From Puey to Mod

Human beings have one major flaw in common: the tendency to forget, especially the deceased, who had even been our significant other, our beloved, and so on. As Shakespeare put it in *Henry V*: “Old men forget: yet all shall be forgot.”

The ruling elites have their way of being remembered, especially as saviors and great figures, and not forgotten. The great historical feats, real or made up, of many Thai ruling figures were recorded in the *Pongsawdarn* (Chronicles). In these chronicles, enemies of the ruling elites were depicted as uniformly evil, and common people were conspicuous by their absence.

Later, other means or media were used to produce remembrance on a mass scale: hagiographies, films, monuments, temple mural paintings, historical novels, etc. It seems that the Charoen Wat-aksorn monument is the only one dedicated to a commoner—who courageously struggled against the rich and powerful. Not only do the ruling elites want to be remembered, they also don’t want individuals who are beneficial to their wealth, status and power to be forgotten. They have relied on the mainstream mass media and the education system to realize this.

Fortunately, there are still people who deemed it essential for society to recognize and learn from a variety of important and illustrious personalities, regardless of their class. The Sathira-koses-Nagapradipa Foundation has set up a committee preparing for the birth centenary of Puey Ungphakorn. The committee have come up with the “Ideals



and Hope” 2013 calendar series. Each calendar in the series is devoted to a great figure. Thus far there are 12 individuals in the series, namely: 1) Phra Bodhiyarntera (Cha Supatto); 2) Phya Pahon Phonphayuhasena; 3) M.C.Chongchit-Thanom Diskul; 4) Fua Haripitak; 5) Direk Jayanama; 6) Sem Pringpuangkaew; 7) Puey Ungphakorn; 8) Komol Keemthong; 9) M.C. Sithiporn Kridakara; 10) Arom Pongpangan; 11) Kularb Saipradit; and 12) Wanida Tantiwittayapitak. These names are meant to be representative rather than exhaustive. They include men as well as women, the lay as well as the ordained, and the royal as well as the commoner.

Wanida or “Mod” was born into a middle-class, Thai-Chinese family. She had devoted her life to serving the poor, the majority living in the northeastern provinces of the country and being of Lao descent. Wanida didn’t speak Lao, but she respected the

local inhabitants and was willing to learn from them. In time, they reciprocated her respect and were willing to learn from her too. Wanida did not hate the people against whom she struggled. Rather she relied on the dhamma and nonviolence in her fight against the exploiting and dominant class.

At least Wanida’s alma mater, Thammasat University, has paid tribute to her by setting up the Wanida Tantiwittayapitak awards for authors of theses that benefit the poor. On the occasion of Wanida’s 5th death anniversary, a book was also published as a monument to her work for the poor. And during 14-16 December 2012 various activities were held in the Pakmoon community to commemorate her death.

A Thai version appears in Sara Puey, December 2555

The Immortality of Angkarn Kalayanapong

It was already very late at night when I heard the bad news that Angkarn Kalayanapong had passed away. I was deeply moved to compose a poem in Thai to mark his remembrance (even though he had always been the better poet of the two of us, a fact I realized ever since we first met in 1958.) Anyway, it was written from the heart but will not be reproduced below because more time is needed to capture it in English.

People in mainstream Thai society prioritize form over substance, means over ends. The mainstream is disciplinary like a military phalanx formation. It's difficult for anyone to be out of place, so to speak—unless of course, one possesses moral courage and exceptional talents and abilities. These individuals stand out and fear not power and money like the vulgar or docile masses.

Who dares to challenge the practice of respecting the national flag and singing the national anthem twice daily? Isn't this mindless as well as an indicator of misguided nationalism? Don't we know that the ideas of Luang Saranuprapan, who wrote the lyrics of the Thai national anthem, were often half-baked and ethically ambiguous? And so were the ideas of Luang Wichitwathakan and Kukrit Pramoj. To put it mildly, these three men were propagandists of the powers that be—whether it be the military dictatorship or absolutism.

However, Angkarn was also wrong to loathe the red shirts. Perhaps, the mainstream mass media had led him astray on this matter. But eventually Angkarn

got to his senses because deep down he was on the side of the poor, the exploited and the oppressed; that is, the majority of the people in society.

I bet no one in their right mind will propose Angkarn's name to UNESCO to be recognized as one of the world's great personalities on the occasion of his 100th birth anniversary. (The third-rate Kukrit Pramoj however got this posthumous international recognition.)

Angkarn was also a talented albeit unlucky mural painter. His murals deserved greater and wider recognition. Most people however couldn't see his brilliance in this field. For instance, his wall painting at the President Hotel on Ratchaprasong road was demolished to make way for a bigger and more luxurious hotel. Likewise, his mural paintings elsewhere had been torn down or erased.

In 1971, on the recommendation of three brilliant individuals—Bunleau Thepsuwan, Prakin Chumsai, and Chetana Nagavajara—the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation recognized Angkarn as a great national poet. Of course, Angkarn later became a national artist too. But many national artists were mediocre at best.

It is difficult if not impossible for the ruling class or the mainstream to properly honor Angkarn as befitting a great man—a rare genius. They could only pay him formal respect, often done perfunctorily. When he was alive, they gave him a little sum of money to sustain his family and pay for his hospital fees. When he was dead, they gave him royal-sponsored

funeral rites. Undoubtedly, the royal-sponsored funeral service was a great honor to Angkarn's family. But many mediocre and ethically ambiguous individuals had also received it.

Should we consider erecting a monument for Angkarn? Perhaps not. In this country, far too many monuments were built for mediocre or outright oppressive figures, royals as well as commoners. Monuments of Plaek Phibunsongkram, Sarit Thanarat and Phao Sriyanond come to the mind. Above all, Angkarn's deeds themselves were monumental and immortal. In Horace's timeless words,

*I have created a monument
more lasting than bronze
and loftier than the royal
structure of the pyramids,
that which neither devouring
rain, nor the unrestrained
North Wind
may be able to destroy nor the
immeasurable
succession of years and the
flight of time.
I shall not wholly die and a
greater part of me
will evade Libitina [Goddess
of Death].*

When we are no longer attached to the class system, dare to think and act against the grain, and have peeled off mediocrity, we will be able to truly honor the worthy of honor. This will be a true blessing. It is only then that we will be able to perceive the immortal beauty of Angkarn's artistic creations and feel great pride in being his contemporaries.

*A Thai version appears
in Pacarayasara,
January 2556*

Global Warming versus Dharma Cooling

Revered monk Phra Paisal Visalo, the abbot of Wat Pa Sukhato in Thailand's Chaiyaphum Province, has devoted his life to nonviolence, to reforming corruption and nepotism among the clergy, and to protecting the forest. He is committed to empowering both monks and the lay society against the dangers of a consumer culture. Phra Visalo teaches that as the world's temperature steadily soars, the temperature inside our mind is also heating up. Global and mental warming are not so different. They need to be cured simultaneously.

This excerpt is adapted from a longer piece by Chompoo Trakullertsathien published in the Bangkok Post on August 20, 2009.

A student once asked the venerable monk Luang Pu Mun

how he learned so much about Dharma, since he didn't study much. Luang Pu Mun answered, "For those who have wisdom, Dharma can be found in every nook and cranny." Likewise, the reformist monk, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, suggested that visitors to his forest hermitage, Wat Suan Mokkh, learn how to listen to the trees and rocks that teach Dharma all the time.

Several revered monks became enlightened when out in nature. When they saw a falling leaf or a wrinkled lotus, they realized that their time in this world is limited. They saw both Dharma and our inner nature, and understood the truth of life.

Nature has been giving for so long, while humans have been taking. It is now time for all of us to take care of our generous provider. As nature

is in great peril, we should not take advantage of her but fully safeguard her through reforestation, recycling, protecting wildlife and raising awareness of environmental problems.

At the same time, nature lovers need to be patient. We should not be disheartened or feel uncomfortable. If we understand that protecting nature is like practicing Dharma, we will feel more peaceful. While the world's temperature is soaring, we should not get frustrated. If we protect nature with a suffering mind, everything will turn out to be harmful to ourselves. Dharma is indispensable during this time. Before restoring nature, we should restore Dharma in our mind. We should not become hotter like our world. With a calm and cool mind, we can create good things for the Earth.

Perspectives on a Buddhist Economic System

Four Dharma Seals and Social Sciences

A Bhutanese Buddhist monk called Dzongsar Jamyang Khyemtse declares "Morality feeds the ego, leading us to become puritanical and to judge others whose morality is different from ours. Fixated on our own version of morality, we look down on other people and try to impose our ethics on them, even if it means taking away their freedom." Previous ventures to construct Buddhist economic

theory in many cases began with certain sets of ethical code like the satisfaction with minimum living requirement, and often associated with nothing beyond vegetarianism, nonviolence, peace and meditation.

According to this learned monk, however, one is a Buddhist if he or she accepts the following four seals;

1) All compounded things are impermanent. If you cannot accept that all compounded or fabricated things are imperma-

nent, if you believe that there is some existential substance or concept that is permanent, then you are not a Buddhist.

2) All emotions are pain. If you cannot accept that all emotions are pain, if you believe that actually some emotions purely pleasurable, then you are not a Buddhist.

3) All things have no inherent existence. If you cannot accept that all phenomena are illusionary and empty, if you believe that certain things do

¹ Dzongsar Jamyang Khyemtse, *What makes you not a Buddhist*, Timless Books, New Delhi, 2007, p.117.

not exist inherently, then you are not a Buddhist.

4) Nirvana is beyond concept. If you think that enlightenment exists within the spheres, time, space and power, then you are not a Buddhist.

We should reconstruct economic theory on the basis of the above four seals. They are secular truths based on wisdom, and wisdom is the primary concern of Buddhism. Morals and ethics are secondary. The fourth seal is not in the reach of human language.

For the past 2500 years, the way of thinking on the basis of the above four seals has spread in most parts of Asia. On the extreme opposite, however, modern nation states have been created in Europe since the Great Lisbon earthquake in 1755. Then, modern social sciences have followed and been implicitly founded upon a pair of postulates. One is the framework of the modern nation state. Social sciences as established against the background of modern Western history are inseparable from the formation of the nation state. Specific fields in the social sciences have accordingly been devoted to the analysis of social problems arising within modern nation states, and to the elucidation of international relations between modern states.

Human society in the 21st century, on the contrary, attempts to overcome the modern nation state and the limits of her institutions. While regionalism in its broad sense as in the case of the European Union is integrating nation states into a multi-national federation and pointing towards a new kind of unity, the narrow sense of regionalism as in the case of Yugoslavia is heading

towards ethnic independence, local autonomy and the dissolution of the modern state. The existing academic disciplines like economics, sociology, jurisprudence, political science and so forth were formed on the basis of the implicit ideology of the nation state and thus cannot adequately take as their object of study the direct interchange of people belonging to different cultures.

The second postulate is the methodology established on the model of classical Newtonian physics. This research method excludes interaction between the observer and the observed, through which modern social science boasted that it acquired the means to objective research which would be free from the subjective view of social value. In order to overcome the shortcomings of objective research without participation, an endless process of specialization proceeded to create minute branches of an academic discipline. But, in fact, people need to participate in the solution of social problems and to take a role in the reorientation of the social sciences. Common people, who have been the object of study, will make them knowledgeable by research in their own society, will dismantle the objectivity of the specialized academic system, and will reconstruct research designed for, rather than against, the people. Going beyond the classical framework of social science since the 19th century, participatory research will grow rapidly to answer the demand of a new era while transcending the subject/object dichotomy.

Participatory studies for inter-community affairs (cross-civic relations) are a social

science that deals with problems spreading beyond the boundaries of nation states such as ethnic problems (both minority groups within a nation state and ethnic groups beyond national boundaries), modes of development (for both depopulated and overpopulated areas), environmental problems (with regard to both waste disposal and resources management), regionalism (tendencies for federal formation and community orientation), economic organizations (new forms of co-operative enterprises), non-violent movement (disarmament and peace keeping systems), human rights (freedom from discrimination based on birth place, nationality etc.) and gender issues (reflections on the social relations of men and women). A new research institute for people-based studies should be established so as to organize research in the above mentioned inter-community issues. Through this venture, we must build a study of people-to-people relations, which is a new field of study demanded by our new era.

Nothing Permanent (anicca)

All the living systems on Earth possess the virtue of maintaining a steady entropic state. Despite the working of the law of entropy, the system can keep itself alive by maintaining a steady entropy state. This is possible because it has the ability to discard its excess entropy into the environment, which can absorb the discarded entropy without affecting its own steady state.

Environment can be understood as an external milieu where a living system can obtain low entropy (matter or energy) and discard high entropy (matter or energy). If this

milieu were closed, then by interaction with the living system its entropy stock would increase, and it would eventually be unable to sustain life within. Thus, for the environment to function as an environment, it must likewise have its own larger environment where it can receive low entropy and discard high entropy. In fact, life has existed on Earth for 3.5 billion years because the planet itself is nested in a hierarchical, multi-layered system of environments.

At each level of this multi-layered structure, the lower (internal) constitutes the living system and the upper (external) layer its environment. The upper layer is larger, and changes more slowly than the lower layer. If the rate of changes of environment increases, the living system, being unable to adapt to new conditions, may jeopardize the living system's existence. In that sense the environment in the upper layer must remain in a steady state.

The economic process of human life consists fundamentally of circularity, diversity and relationship. The more cyclical, diversified and inter-related human life is, the more sustainable development will be in the coming generations. However, the existing indicators of economic development do not differentiate between circular and throughput, diversity and uniformity, and social relations and commoditization. The latter set of features characterizes economic process in Japan and generates advantages that make it supreme in market competition, it but tends to cause serious environmental destruction. Until and unless people come to realize the importance of the former set of features in

economic life and proceed to establish more satisfactory indicators of sustainable development, the self-reliance of the local economy will be overwhelmed and disintegrated by market forces and state power.

The sustainability of the material circular flow is indispensable for future environmental conservation in the world. We have to learn from the efforts made against the gravity of the earth by salmon or eels who carry non-organic nutrients accumulated at the bottom of the Pacific and Atlantic oceans up rivers on to the land surface, so that they may keep up the cycle or recycle the flow of nutrients required for the existence of other living systems on the earth. Far from doing so, our modern civil engineering works have destroyed the ways used by salmon or eels through the construction of dams and weirs in order to promote the one-way movement of economic goods. The modern transportation system needs to be altered in a way that would discourage the distance which heavy commodities are transported, while encouraging global human interaction and travel: study abroad, overseas technical training, marriage beyond national and ethnic boundaries, adoption of foreign children, religious pilgrimages and other types of non-commodity human exchange should be made accessible to everyone. For that purpose, economic reforms must increase freight charges and lower passenger fares.

Painful Emotions (dukkha)

As for the development of diversity, a shift away from the mere concentration on economic life as *homo economicus* to the

integration of multidimensional lifestyles would engender favorable conditions for voluntary activities. Equality between breadwinners in the economic organizations and non-earners like pregnant women, children, the elderly, the sick, the handicapped etc. will be accepted in the 21st century. Everybody performs, at least, four kinds of tasks in a self-reliant society:

a. Roles as a family member (formation of basic social relations, sharing, cooking, washing, child care, cleaning etc.)

b. Roles as a member of the local community (maintenance of local facilities, mutual help for the needy, education, security, festivals etc.)

c. Roles as a member of an economic organization (production and commerce for the local population, distant markets, inter-regional activities etc.)

d. Roles for broader cultural activities (cutting across generations, gender, ethnicity, regionalism, nationalism etc.)

As for the creation of relationships in the field of economic activities, a new alternative co-operative society and its federal organizations will be the key factor to generating well-coordinated interdependence among community, private and public sectors. It is regrettable to note that most of the existing co-operative societies are mere substitutes for private and public sectors (consumer co-operatives vs. supermarkets, credit co-operatives vs. commercial banks, agricultural co-operatives vs. agricultural bureaucracy etc.). In our people-oriented economy all the industries are classified into three alternative categories according to their basic relationship with local

communities, as follows:

a. Living system-related industries run by the community sector (including agriculture, forestry, fishery, animal husbandry, food processing, internal trade, hospitals, kindergartens, elementary schools, funeral services, land management, water supply and drainage, internal finance, waste treatment, local police, fire brigade etc.)

b. Industries catering to outside populations and run by the private sector (production meant for the market, mining and manufacturing industries, handicrafts, souvenirs, travel agencies, tourist hotels, long distance trade, mass-communication, newspapers, publishing press etc.)

c. Inter-community industries run by the public sector (air lines, marine transport, railways, highways, canals, telecommunications, postal service, electric power supply, energy resources management, environment management, higher education, academic exchange etc.)

No Inherent Existence (anatta)

The activities of people in the local community are becoming increasingly diversified and multidimensional through the participation in many kinds of organizations by a single individual. The conventional decision-making procedures in co-operative societies (i.e. one vote per member) is no longer ideal nor realistic at all since most individuals are members of several societies, and attach unequal importance to the different societies. Voting rights may be given according to the average number of hours per week spent by the particular member on the particular acti-

vities. At the same time, more and more decentralization of co-operative management would be imperative and diverse self-management units should be formed for substantial democratization.

A people-based economic order could exist in a community where landed property, labor power and credit are gradually decommoditized, and ultimately cease to be a commodity sold in the market. One long-range goal is to place all land resources under the control of the local autonomous body. Labor forces are to be mobilized by co-operative self-management enterprises. Local government will issue internal local currency (a kind of prepaid cards) and systematize the circulation of the funds needed for local investment. Inter-community organizations will play the role of currency exchanger for currencies between community and external currency, and the experiences of Islamic banks could be useful in minimizing interest rates.

We have to admit that the market system is not only very powerful as an economic force but also very significant for supporting cultural interchanges among human communities in different areas on the global map. Long distance trade relations between ancient China and Rome did not bring out any exploitation on either side, but materialized the exchanges of different cultures. Very unfortunately, however, European trade relations across the oceans since 16th century brought out the exploitation of people on the other side of the world. There must be certain fundamental regulations to limit commoditization in the construct-

ing of a self-reliant economy. In a people-based economy all tradable commodities in a market transaction must,

a. Be reproducible by human labor.

Landed property, labor power and credit are not reproducible by labor itself, but are the merely institutionalized forms of social relations among people concerned. Blood and human organs are not reproducible using human labor either.

b. Be produced for the sake of sale.

Food grains are originally produced to feed producers themselves, their families, relatives and people in the same locality. Only when surplus grains is available, it is sold in neighboring markets.

c. Not be harmful to human life.

Presently, agro-chemicals whose sale is forbidden in the market of the producing countries because they are harmful to human organisms, are still exported to some developing countries. Such trade should be prevented so as to make such goods non-exportable even to the third world. This is the principle to prohibit the trade of arms and weapons.

Unspeakable Concept of Nirvana (moksha)

We cannot talk of life before birth and the life after death. Nobody can narrate his/her experiences in paradise, hell, moksha, svarga and so on. When every one of us collapses and dies, the entire world and universe for him or her will collapse and expires.

Nakamura Hisashi
(Ryukoku University)
2012/11/12

Corruption: A Buddhist Perspective on Causes, Impacts and Solutions

This paper sets out some reflections on the Buddhist faith and the issue of corruption in the State sector, with particular reference to South Africa. The aim of the paper is to share Buddhist theological and philosophical insights and tools about the significance of corruption and some of the pathways out of the problem. The material is offered for the Buddhist and inter-faith networks to raise awareness amongst members and to contribute to a society that is more conscious of its behaviour, upholding values of integrity, wisdom and good governance.

....

This paper looks specifically at corruption in the public service, the theme adopted by the Western Cape Religious Leaders Forum. The principles elaborated apply to anyone who takes what does not belong to him or her, particularly through coercion or the abuse of power. There are many forms of corruption, in one's personal life, in the family, in the private sector and so forth. However for the purposes of this paper, the focus is on those who work for the State and are meant to adhere to ethical and moral norms and standards associated with public service and the protection of the Constitutional order and democratic values and procedures.

The emphasis on the State sector needs to be immediately contextualised by South Africa's past. South Africa has moved



through a wide range of different systems of governance and social organisation: from traditional hunter-gatherer band societies... to more stratified societies and the rise of powerful kingdoms ...with accompanying wars, conflicts, periods of peace and co-existence, and the formalisation of principles of Statehood and citizenship. This was followed by several centuries of colonisation by Europeans, with complex patterns of Statehood designed by the colonisers, and expressed as de-humanisation and dispossession of local and indigenous peoples, including genocide against the original hunter-gatherer peoples.

This violent colonial regime began to mollify in the 20th century with the advent of human rights, but suddenly swerved into a particularly systematic and dehumanising regime...known as 'apartheid'. Any discussion of contemporary behaviour needs to take into account this particular history of violence, discrimination, colonial occupation and the struggle for both human dignity and universal adult suffrage.... Whatever one's

perspective, we start with a foundational set of Buddhist premises—*nothing happens without previous conditions giving rise to the current situation (paticcasamupada/ dependent origination)*; and secondly, there is an ultimate moral logic to the universe, the law of *kamma*, which is a law of cause and effect....

....

In the context of a previously racist, sexist, violent and dehumanising regime...the actions of citizens and civil servants need to be understood as necessarily needing to address the previous negative *kamma* and its results (*vipaka*). These results include poverty, inequality, and other related dependently originated outcomes, including family violence, extremely high incidences of rape and child abuse, other forms of crime, widespread problems of anger (both suppressed and expressed), and complex mental states and identities linked to shame, senses of inferiority and superiority, victims and perpetrators, and those struggling to shift to a new consciousness.

Corruption in this context is both a manifestation of the previous bad kammic forces and the results of such mental states; as well as generating fresh forms of suffering, bad *kamma* and negative results. If we do not root out the underlying causes as well as the practices of corruption, we continually renew the cycle....

On the one hand then, we can

see that corruption is hardly surprising and emerges from a painful history, fed by opportunism and self-rationalisations ... and at the same time, permitting corruption maintains the poisons of the past and infects the quality of our future, not to mention the quality of life of those who are the perpetrators and the victims. Ultimately, corruption is associated with the three core poisons identified by the Buddha, and hence needs to be targeted for elimination, both for the good of the individual and for the society.

....

The unwholesome roots are accompanied by generally unwholesome mental factors associated with all unwholesome actions (volitions), these being 1) lack of moral shame (*ahirika*), 2) lack of moral dread (*anotatappa*), 3) restlessness (*uddhacca*) and 4) delusion (*moha*).

We can conclude from this, that an individual who engages in corruption is suffering from several underlying problems—he or she is craving something—this could be wealth and materialism, or it might be about the exercise of power and the temporary burst of confidence it gives. He or she is likely engaging in some form of hatred or at least a lack of compassion for the victim of his or her crime, implying a further state of mental and emotional damage. There is a serious absence of moral insight or wisdom. He or she is likely to have levels of torment about this practice (fear of being discovered, guilty feelings, anger, shame, defensiveness, a will to commit other crimes to keep from being caught out). And, evidently, he or she is wilfully engaged in sustaining ignorance

about the world and the impacts of his or her actions.

...

Solutions

The Eight Fold Noble path explains quite clearly how one can free oneself from suffering and ignorance....

Central to the path of liberation is ‘right understanding’ (*samma-ditthi*)—one must understand the difference between right and wrong, and the consequences of our actions. If we understand the causes of suffering, and that there is a path to freedom, happiness and ultimate enlightenment, then we also see the benefit of living a wholesome life and committing to the path.

Hearing the *dhamma* is an important step in developing right understanding, but then there is the will to embrace the teachings and put them into practice. Another directly evident element of the path to liberation is ‘right effort’ (*samma-vayama*). Right effort helps us understand the types of efforts which we need to develop. These include avoiding unwholesome intentions, habits and actions; overcoming existing bad habits; deliberately developing oneself as a wholesome being; and maintaining good habits and purity of heart.

For Buddhists, we have an opportunity to continually review our conduct on the occasion of taking the Five Precepts, obligatory for all practicing Buddhists. Precept 2 ...requires us to consider whether things that come into our possession are indeed meant for us, or have been taken against the will of others, and are not duly ours. This is an obvious violation of our ethics, and if we reflect on how we came to breach such a

precept, the investigation leads back to the other Precepts and the message of the Eightfold Noble Path.

Developing mindfulness (*sati*) and equanimity (*upekkha*) are practices which help us recognise unwholesome mental states, intentions, habits and actions, and develop the skills and will to adjust these appropriately. Equanimity acts as an antidote to unresolved issues of anger, a sense of victimhood or the need to blame others....

Though it is normal in Buddhism that we expect the individual to awaken to his or her own suffering and ignorance, it is also the case that we need to recognise the systemic character of such corruption—both its institutional manifestation and its psycho-social basis. This behoves us to sustain checks and balances that constrain the behaviour of those who are deluded....

Without resorting to violence or other transgressions of our ethical system, Buddhists should consider the importance of resisting State-based corruption, reducing the opportunities for its manifestation, and taking time to engage with those around us to help promote an understanding of why this practice is so toxic to the individual and the society....

Our response to corruption does not need to be anger and condemnation, but rather correct analysis and compassionate support for those who need to stop this practice, or recover from its consequences.

...

*Nigel Crawhall,
Hout Bay Theravada Buddhist Centre
for the Western Cape Religious
Leaders Forum*

Mekong Youth Alliance for Organic Agriculture and Agro-ecology —Occupy Your Life Manifesto—

The *Towards Organic Asia* (TOA) project organized a young organic farmers gathering at Tha Tang farm in Paksé, PDR Laos, October 2012. From Paksé the group travelled by bus to the Asia Europe Peoples' Forum (AEPF) in Vientiane, the capital of Laos, and presented its 'Occupy Your Life' Manifesto. The full text of the Manifesto follows here.

The TOA project was initiated in the framework of the School for Wellbeing after the visit of Vandana Shiva to Thailand in 2010. The TOA movement is developing gradually from a Mekong region + Bhutan partnership into an Asia-wide network. CCFD-Terre Solidaire supports the School for Wellbeing and its TOA programme.

[Vandana Shiva, founder of Navdanya, will speak in Bangkok and Chiangmai, Maejo University, again in December 2012.] A major TOA activity in 2013 will be an international consultation with URGENCI Asia and the global IFOAM PGS Committee. The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) promotes increasingly an approach to quality control of organic products based on participatory interaction, so by direct cooperation and mutual support between local producers and consumers, without the need for "third party" inspection. Social enterprises can play an important facilitating role. URGENCI is the global network of 'community supported agriculture' (CSA) initiatives with a growing network in Asia including the Teikei pioneers in Japan



Young organic farmers gather at Paksé, PDR Laos.

and 'networks of networks' formed by small-scale farmers and local consumers' associations in India. The first CSA initiative in Thailand celebrated its 10th anniversary on 7th December 2012.

We are the Mekong Youth Alliance for Organic Agriculture and Agro-ecology. We write this manifesto in support of happiness in a system of agriculture, which includes healthy and abundant nature, healthy communities and a thriving economy.

Occupy Your Life follows the general principles of the Occupy Wall Street movement but focuses on the regaining of livelihoods of young farmers. Taking back responsibility and reclaiming our role in food production, instead of outsourcing to supermarkets grow our own food and get close to our food source. We should reclaim our health and consume healthy food rather than relying on hospitals and medicine.

Innovative, young, small-scale, diversified farmers are the future of agriculture. In order to

secure our agricultural future we need to preserve biodiversity and manage the landscape in harmony with nature, use waste wisely and ensure fair access to fresh and clean water, offer respect for people to work with dignity.

We need to build on the creative potential of youth to solve global crises. Small-scale farms that work in harmony with nature and are run by young farmers are the solution to many global crises in that they offer climate change adaptation and mitigation, stop erosion, create sustainable and healthy local food systems, keep young people in rural areas and prevent urbanization, and stop the loss of cultural diversity and traditions. These small farms help to change the course of things for rural people by alleviating poverty and creating food sovereignty.

Nature

Nature is beautiful and has a value in itself.

Forests are a source of food. They are the mothers of rivers

and they form the foundation of watersheds. They are an important source of medicine, culture, and spiritual fulfillment.

We need integrated holistic thinking and philosophy in farm design, utilizing synergistic relationships within farming systems and in harmony with nature.

Our health, and the health of our communities, depends on healthy soil. Farming should work toward building soil organic matter, preventing and controlling erosion, preserving soil biodiversity and respecting soil life. We should practice farming with a long term focus, using more permanent crops and poly cultivation.

We need to preserve the genetic diversity of seed and livestock through building and supporting regional connections for small-scale diversified farms.

Economy

Young farmers are redefining economy with respect toward the values of nature and society. We need to change the way we think about economy. We are part of an interconnected web of life—exchanges are more than just monetary units. We need to work together, focusing on cooperation and friendliness rather than competition.

We should strengthen networks and offer support for grassroots actions for farming with dignity, integrity and self-reliance and to promote a pro-farming society that makes wise use of resources including wastes.

We envision a world where the producer and consumer choose health and happiness; they should feel a kinship. People should eat healthy local food and get to know their farmer. Farmers should care for consumers and produce wholesome food. Mind-

ful marketing, community supported agriculture, and farmer's markets can support the relationship between the producer and consumer.

Small-scale farms should have access to fair and reliable funding, building up wealth for their families and in the farming landscape in the form of healthy communities and abundant biological resources.

Society

Viable agricultural systems require strong communities, grassroots movements and young farmer networks. These communities form their own agreements based on self-regulation and open systems of management according to tradition and local knowledge. They agree on clear and pertinent rules to follow that help guide community actions and serve as a fundamental building block for food security and access to healthy living.

Traditional belief and wisdom gives meaning to life offering insights for living together with nature and creating ecological farming practices. Farming systems should have respect for culture and traditional beliefs and thereby see an intrinsic value in the landscape.

We need clear information sharing and transparency in education. Schools should serve to support and increase traditional agricultural knowledge. Young people should have access to information and training about farming sustainably.

Education is a fundamental aspect of small-scale diversified farming. It provides young people with opportunities for growth and personal development, cultivating not just food but people. These farms operate within a participatory learning process where farmers share methodolo-

gies and skills and help to convey the mindset of an occupied and active life.

There is an intrinsic value in animals. They deserve to be treated as friends and with respect and care. Food from animals is a gift. They deserve fair treatment, good health, and good living conditions. We need localized closed systems where healthy feed comes from a diverse farm and local community.

Happiness

We should promote happiness as a fundamental pillar of life. Our lives are dependent on all other life forms, when eating we should be aware and thankful for the hard work of farmers and to the web of life and society that brought us the food. Farmers are amazing people in that they work so hard to grow our food and get so little in return. We need to create agricultural chains and systems that support and acknowledge the hard work that farmers are doing and help create good conditions for them to work with dignity. Through their hard work farmers bring others happiness while fostering their own contentment like roots in the soil.

We should take care of people in need and 'share the abundance' through fair resource distribution.

Conclusion

We support happiness in farming, including healthy and vibrant systems of nature, community and economy. We need to take back the roles of young farmers in food production, reclaiming right livelihood.

Young farmers are the future of agriculture, which preserves biodiversity and an occupied life. They practice natural harmonious farming and offer respect and dignity for commu-

nities.

We need small and slow solutions in agricultural development and design in order to deal with the global challenges we are facing. Innovative young farmers offer those solutions and we should support them.

In a world where resources are dwindling young farmers offer an abundant agricultural future and wish to share in the bounty.

Signatories

Bhutan

Tshering Yangchen, National Organic Programme (NOP).
Yangre Lhamo, Center of Bhutan Studies (CBS).

Cambodia

Sok Savuth, International Volunteer of Yamagata (IVY).
Sophy Chay, Cambodian Center for Study and Development in Agriculture (CEDAC).
Vichith Khoun, CEDAC.
Sie Daravichea, Tekdeysuvanphum (TDSP).

Myanmar

Myo Aung, Phekhon Buddhist Youth for Development.
Khin Maung Win, Kalayana Mitta Foundation. Maung Khae, Metta Development Foundation.
Zau Nam, Metta Development Foundation.

Thailand

Nakorn Limpacuptathavon, Veggie Prince City Farm Learning Center.
Thanakorn Jiankamonchuen, Suan Nguen Mee Ma Social Enterprise.
Phumpunya Mudlee, Alternative Agriculture Network.
Apagon Khrueang-ngoen, Mae Tha's Young Farmers Group.
Phairat Deankasai, Alternative Agriculture Network (AAN)

Vietnam

Anong Soukphaphone
Fa Lee
Phonh
Vilay
*Laos students at the Human Ecology Practice Area (HEPA), a farmer field (FFS) school in Vietnam.

Laos

Ms. Lamngeun Manivong
Mr. Vongtavanh Muengchan
Mr. Khaikeo, District agriculture, Pakse Agriculture University—
Local farmer from Thateng

Towards Organic Asia (TOA)

Thanapol Kheolamai—Thailand
Sarin Rattanapibal—Thailand
Stephanie Genteuil—France
Loc Van Vin—Vietnam

Participatory Development Training Centre (PADETC)

Chanthalangsy Sisouvanh—Laos

Social Policy and Ecology Research Institute (SPERI)

Cory W. Whitney—United States
Duong Quang Chau—Vietnam

Volunteers

Jens Kremer—Germany
Robert Gray—Australia
Chainat Jitwatna, Ministry of Public Health—Thailand

Contact

mekongyoungfarmers@gmail.com

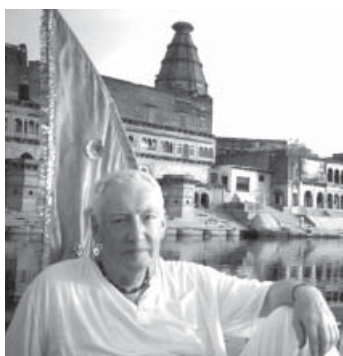
Hans van Willenswaard



John Lane

(10 July 1930 - 17 August 2012)

I first met John Lane in 1994 at the Dartington Trust, which had been established by Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst. The Elmhirsts were close friends of Rabindranath Tagore. In India, Tagore had founded Santiniketan, and he encouraged the Elmhirsts to create a similar one in England. Dorothy's large fortune enabled her to buy tracts of land in the Devon area, including farms and old buildings—some of which had been around since the time of King John and the Magna Carta. Maurice Ash, who was the Elmhirsts' son in law, served



as chairman of the Dartington Trust. John was a trustee at Dartington. And it was during Ash's chairmanship that John

played a pivotal role in finding the necessary funds for Satish Kumar to set up Schumacher College. The Dartington Trust also regularly held conferences and cultural activities that challenged the mainstream, that were geared towards Truth, Beauty and Goodness. Moreover, the Dartington Trust was the first in England to establish an alternative school. Bertrand Russell sent his children to study there, and he ultimately established his own alternative school.

At the Dartington Trust in 1994 I met John while partici-

pating in an anti-consumerism and anti-capitalism conference. Although few in number, the participants were well-known figures in the alternative stream such as Helena Norberg-Hodge, Jerry Mander, and Cliff Cobb (whose father, a highly respectable theologian, was a close friend of mine). Cobb himself was involved in efforts to “redefining progress”, which is also the name of one of his books. The conference took place in a small room with a view of a beautiful park and one of Henry Moore’s masterpiece sculptures. There was also a poem by William Blake inscribed in the park.

All the participants convincingly and forcefully made their points. I merely reminded them not to rely too much on the head at the expense of the heart—in other words, that they should also speak from their heart. Hearing this, Cliff Cobb poured out his heart. I also asked the participants to stop talking for a while, practise breathing mindfully and listen to the birds chirping outside the conference room.

My little speech greatly satisfied John, and there began our friendship. John later introduced me to Maurice Ash, who also became a good friend of mine. When we decided to establish the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) we invited

educationists from both the mainstream like Bob McCloy and the alternative stream like Adam Curle and not to mention Rajani Dhongchai from the Children Village School, to engage in a lengthy conversation at Ash’s splendid Sharpham House, which was later handed over to the Sharpham Trust. At Sharpham House, Ash created the first Buddhist college in England. It focused on the three-fold training. Stephen and Martine Batchelor were among the faculty members.

As writer, John focused on Beauty, linking it to the sacredness of nature and religious places, both in Europe and Asia. John and his wife were also talented painters. Subsequently, I became well acquainted with their children, especially Nathaniel and Jacob—both of them visit my family in Bangkok every now and then. My daughter and I had also been guests at the Lanes’ elegant house in England. John himself had also visited me in Siam—although infrequently. I had pushed for the translation of several of his books into Thai such as *Timeless Beauty*, *The Spirit of Silence*, and *The Art of Ageing*. The last title is in fact the bestseller of Suan Ngern Mee Ma Publishing House.

Originally, John had wanted me to contribute to the writing of *The Art of Ageing* since I’m

also an old man as he was. Unfortunately, I declined the offer.

At *Resurgence* John was the art editor—with Satish Kumar as the chief editor. The beauty of *Resurgence* was largely due to John’s impeccable taste.

When John was 80 years old he resigned from active duties as art editor of *Resurgence* and trustee of the Dartington Trust. A private birthday celebration was held for him. Although invited, I couldn’t make it to John’s birthday celebration.

In the final years of his life, John was generally healthy although he suffered from mild senility such as forgetfulness. He passed away peacefully.

John had a good English sense of humor. He lived simply and always had excellent taste in music, literature, painting, and architecture. He was also admirably at one with Nature.

I’ve lost another *kalyanamitta*, a unique and insubstitutable person. The world has lost another important commoner whom the people are hardly aware of. But commoners like John make this world pleasant and agreeable to live. His life and work will continue to inspire anyone seeking for excellence in life.

Sulak Sivaraksa

A Thai version appears in *Pacarayasara*, September 2555

Angkarn Kalayanapong

Angkarn Kalayanapong, generally acknowledged as dean of contemporary Thai poets, passed away on 25 August 2012. He was 86.

A native of Nakorn Sri Thammarat, he received his school education in his native town, but he owed his early poetic tutelage to his home

environment, especially to his mother, who introduced him to traditional Thai literature. By the time he came to Bangkok to study art, he was already a well-read youngster who was thirsting for more. The formative years at Silpakorn University opened up new horizons. While being formally trained in

Western-style visual art and aesthetics by Prof. Silpa Bhirasri, he accompanied one of Prof. Silpa’s close associates Prof. Fua Hariphitak to Ayuthaya to copy murals in the ruined temples of the old capital. It was this exposure to traditional Thai art that was to guide him in his creative work as a painter. Angkarn was

equally recognized as a poet and a painter, (and let us face it, in contemporary Thai society, he could only physically survive as a painter!)

As a poet, he was originally anathema to Thai academia. His innovations were regarded as a breach of our revered traditional prosody as well as of good taste. It took him decades before he could find entry into school and university curricula, and this was due to the combative efforts of only a few scholars, notably Mom Luang Bunlua Debyasuwan. Whereas most Thai *literati* were (and still are) familiar with poetic works of the early Bangkok period, especially Sunthon Phu, Angkarn was reaching back to the mid-Ayuthaya period, whose prosodic freedom and rugged masculinity were dear to him. Angkarn's poetry could be considered as a renaissance of traditional Thai poetry (before it settled down to mellifluous regularity), and it was this irregularity that he very well exploited to reflect the spirit of the tumultuous new age. (The "mellifluous school" is still very much present, even in political verse which is meant to be belligerent. It simply does not work!) Angkarn's irregular rhythm has to be *heard* in order to take its full effect, and he loved to read (or rather chant) his own poems in public. His poetry is the meeting place of the old and the new: poetic expressions (and vocabulary) akin to Ayuthya poetry are interwoven with present-day conversational language, including rude words, that infuriate traditionalists and purists. All this was deliberate. He wanted to prove that the august lineage of Thai poetry is an uninterrupted process. Another innovation of his is prose poetry (or what is known in French as "*poésie en prose*"). He used it with utmost



finesse to tell moral tales that seek to emulate Jataka stories.

The technical innovations were not an end in themselves, but a vehicle to transmit contemporary message to contemporary society. Angkarn was very much our contemporary poet. First and foremost, he did not take poetry as a leisurely pastime and was dead serious about the poet's vocation. Traditional Thai poets were already occasionally expressing their desire to remain immortal, but they were mostly thinking in aesthetic terms. Angkarn was unashamedly didactic: he viewed the role of the poet as that of a seer, a spiritual leader, and above all, a missionary. The poet was to act as a voice of conscience, not only to his own society, but to the human race. Like a Bodhisattava, he announced in one of his best-known poems, "The Poet's Pledge", that he was prepared to renounce *Nirvana* in order to be able to care for his fellow human beings. Again, this typical "Oriental" artist was ready to learn from the experience of the West: the idea of the apotheosis of the arts, which his Italian professor must have shared with him, conspired with the ideal of a Bodhisattava to construct an impregnable bastion of belief in

the power of the arts to shape human conduct and to forge a solid foundation for society. This quest can express itself in a negative way: Angkarn censured vehemently those who reject or fail to recognize the value of art. Only a great poet can turn irascibility into exquisite poetic expression.

Scaling metaphysical heights did not prevent Angkarn from taking issue with mundane realities. He was a socially engaged poet. A supreme nature poet, he never remained on the descriptive level, but took on an activist stance. Decades before the advent of "Green" movements in Thailand, Angkarn saw through the impending environmental dangers and could already pinpoint their root causes, as can be witnessed in his magistral work, *Lamnam Phu Kradung* (1969). He was alert to the political machinations of corrupt governments and never hesitated to take to the streets, when parliamentary means had been exhausted. Armed with his poetry, he combated corrupt politicians with his words, as was the case with his poem "Makawan", which he delivered live at Makawan Bridge during a demonstration and was subsequently published. His brand of activism was not motivated by political partisanship, but governed by moral rectitude. More than half a century, his social and political stand never suffered shifts and changes, unlike with some of his colleagues of the mellifluous school. An honest man like Angkarn had no need to mince his words. Rarely do we see the likes of him. But surely, one in half a century is too little for a "failed state" like ours.

Chetana Nagavajara

28 August 2012

Dear Prof. Samalavicius,

Thank you for your inquiry. Koa Books hereby grants your nonprofit journal *Kulturos Barai* permission to publish one or two chapters in Lithuanian from Sulak Sivaraksa's book *The Wisdom of Sustainability: Buddhist Economics for the 21st Century* in one of your autumn issues. Please credit the excerpt as follows: Excerpted with permission from *The Wisdom of Sustainability: Buddhist Economics for the 21st Century*, by Sulak Sivaraksa, published by Koa Books (www.koabooks.com).

When the article has been printed, can you send two copies to Ajarn Sulak and one copy to me?

Thank you,
Arnold Kotler
Publisher, Koa Books, www.koabooks.com

1st September 2012

Dear Ajarn Sulak,

We the Board of Directors and Staff of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship send you our greatest wishes for the well-being of yourself, your loved ones and your community. We write this letter to seek the confirmation of your interest in being on our International Advisory Board.

Though dormant in recent years, the original Advisory Board included many of the world's best-known Buddhist priests and teachers. Their early endorsement of BPF helped make social engagement the important element of Buddhist practice it is today. At the same time, their duties to their own large sanghas in most cases precluded close collaboration with BPF.

BPF now hopes to recruit Advisors who have provided world-class Buddhist leadership through their writings or programs in the specific areas to which BPF has dedicated itself: peace, social justice, and environmental sustainability. The decision to reinstate the International Advisory Board is part of a larger shift by BPF. Briefly stated, BPF has moved from providing its own in-house Buddhist social service programs to providing a much-needed Buddhist influence in the broad movements for social transformation. To this end, our Turning Wheel Media website (turningwheelmedia.org) is dedicated to becoming an important source of Buddhist perspectives on social issues for Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike.

The responsibilities of Advisors are meant to be substantive but not overly demanding. In general, it is hoped that Advisors will provide suggestions as to writers, topics, blogs, opinion pieces, studies, or pilot projects in their area of interest for possible coverage by TWM. In addition, we are asking that Advisors offer TWM a piece (written, video, art work, audio, etc.) for publication. (The piece can be one that has been published elsewhere but that can be republished or excerpted for TWM.) Alternatively, Advisors would be welcome to speak at BPF-sponsored events: in person, online, or on national phone calls.

Ajarn Sulak, we are hoping that you will continue to be on our Advisory Board because of your notable contributions of a Buddhist perspective to discussions of so many important socially engaged Buddhism issues. We would like to highlight some of your experience and current projects in an interview for Turning Wheel Media, which we would hope to publish in October/November of this year.

We hope you will be happy and enthusiastic in joining us as we continue to move forward with our work. We look forward to hearing your confirmation and please let us know if you have any questions you might have regarding this request.

Sincerely,
Anchalee Kurutach
Member, BPF Board of Directors

4 October 2012

Dear Sulak,

Thank you so much for being with us during our Fall Academy "The Economies of the Commons. New Places of Socio-Economic Education" last month! It was great seeing you again and having you back at Alanus University at least for a few hours.

Your presence has been a source of inspiration to all of us and your speeches have touched me and the young students very deeply. I hope we are going to meet again soon.

Thanks again.

All the best to you and your family,
Graupe Silja, Germany

26 October 2012

Dear Ajarn Sulak,

How nice to hear from you!

My wife and I are currently in California, where I was recently able to purchase a copy of your book *The Wisdom of Sustainability*. It is a wonderful book, bringing hope in these dark times. You were able to expand upon Schumacher's work, whose work was so influential for me. I am currently working on a monograph on sustainability and ethics based on my teaching of the last few years.

The situation of AIT is indeed of great concern. I was privileged through your good offices and generous help to benefit from the support of Khun Anand. At a time when higher education is reconsidering its model, AIT has failed to recognize the significant changes in the higher education landscape in South East Asia, such as those described in a recent *New York Times* article:

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/15/world/asia/15iht-educlede15.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 showing the emergence of research in countries such as Lao PDR, Cambodia or Myanmar. This is very sad. I am actively involved in the Bridge Fund Europe. This is also thanks to you. You have had such a positive influence in my life: it was an immense privilege to get to know you and your friends.

I wish you a pleasant visit in Japan. Please let us know should you plan to visit California or France.

With warmest regards.

Jean-Louis Armand

18 September 2012

Dear Sulak,

Surprise! Your postcard - from inflight from Myanmar to Bangkok? - has arrived. Thanks also to the German post-service.

Thank you for the greetings.

Who could anticipate, even a year ago, that it should be possible to meet Aung San Suu Kyi! A decade ago, I got to read her speech on "Freedom from Fear". There is an impressive way, she told the world that it is not power which corrupts minds but fear! I took this very personally, because it was precisely what I experienced all the time working with BfdW and WCC.

Now she is a free person and elected MP! Are you going to write about your encounter in "*Seeds of Peace*"? or elsewhere? I am eager to read your report. Did you meet some of the political class? And how do people feel about the new politics? Is there significant change in their lives?

In our media here is not much to be read. Some politicians are eager to teach them democracy!! But as you know, we Germans had only little colonial ties with "Birma", and only a few missionaries came from here, mostly of fundamentalist origin and spirit.

I hope to learn from your experiences!

Hope also you are fine and of good health! Are you planning for a visit to Europe before the end of the year? You remember: there is still a bottle of Italian red wine "San Pedro" with me, which belongs to you!

Greetings of Peace,
Wolfgang Schmidt

3rd September, 2012

Dear Prof. Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa,

The Central University of Tibetan Studies is going to organise the second international conference of Asian Buddhist Forum on **13-15 January, 2013**. The first conference was held in Taiwan in 2011. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has kindly consented to inaugurate the conference.

The theme of the propose conference is "Buddhism and Society". Various dimensions of the relationship between Buddhism and social life will be discussed in this conference. Scholars from India and other Asian countries will participate in the conference and exchange their ideas. The three sub-themes which will be discussed in the conference are:

- (A) Contribution of Buddhism to Social Life
- (B) Interaction of Buddhism with Different Societies, and
- (C) Engaged Buddhism: Thought and Activities

Apart from regular paper reading sessions there will be two panel discussions, one on "Social Dimensions of Buddhism" and the other on "Engaged Buddhism: Present and Prospects."

I am also enclosing a concept note which gives a clearer idea of the nature and scope of the theme.

Since you epitomise profound Buddhist scholarship with active involvement and leadership in the socially engaged Buddhism, your presentation can give proper direction to the conference proceedings. I earnestly believe and feel that you are the most suitable person to give key-note address in the inaugural session of the conference.

I therefore invite you to the conference and request you to grace the conference with your valuable key-note address. It will be much appreciated if, in addition, you participate in the conference for all the three days and illuminate the paper readers and discussants through your interventions.

You are requested to present the soft copy of the key note address in advance (by December 15) so that copies can be made available to the participants during the conference.

The Central University of Tibetan Studies will reimburse your Air fare (Economy class) and make arrangements for local hospitality during the conference.

Your early response will be much appreciated.

With kind regards,
Yours sincerely,

Ngawang Samten
Vice Chancellor

Dear Mr. Sivaraksa,

This is Stephen Crooms, writing from Buddhist Peace Fellowship in Berkeley, California. I want to say thank you for taking the time to answer the questions in the interview e-mail I sent you. The fact that someone as wise and respected as you took the time for our interview will be much appreciated by our readership. Thank you again!

Stephen Crooms

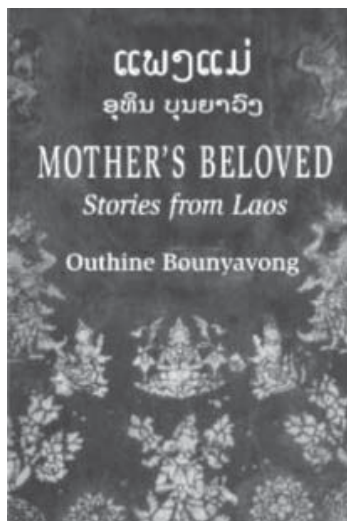
Short Stories from Laos

Introduction

by Roger Rumpf and Jacquelyn Chagnon

We first “met” Outhine Bounyavong twenty years ago when our Lao language teacher had us read some of the newly published short stories. Compared to the stiff political rhetoric of the postwar era, Outhine’s writings were a burst of refreshing reality. As is evident in the four selections published below, Outhine draws out of simple vignettes of ordinary Lao life poignant messages about the consequences of war, the dilemmas provoked by modernization, and the constant strains on the disadvantaged in a fast-changing world.

Outhine’s writings and life remind us of Mark Twain. Both display a writing style that is simple, straightforward, and unusual in comparison with the writings of their contemporaries who favored flowery words and sentence structures that were confusing and seemingly never-ending. Like Twain, Outhine captures the pace, quality, and conflicts of everyday life. Even Outhine’s life mirrors Twain’s. He grew up in a rural village, attending a school where books were scarce and teachers barely had any pedagogical training. Both Twain and Outhine became journalists by a happenstance that gave each of them an opportunity to travel and learn about their country’s rich variations in nature and culture. Like Twain, Outhine’s writings in all their forms have influenced several decades of budding writers and will likely continue to do so for



many years to come. In a country not noted for personal library collections, Outhine managed to amass a remarkable one. Like Twain, he loved books, art, and architecture; he designed his own house to reflect those fascinations. He traveled and studied abroad several times in order to widen his world perspectives as Twain did.

And again like Twain, Outhine writes in a way that subtly but bravely raises key issues facing his native land — ranging from unexploded war ordnance to the preservation of the environment.

Mother's Beloved: Stories from Laos (University of Washington Press, 1999) makes available fifteen of Outhine’s finest short stories in side-by-side texts, Lao and English. Outhine himself began translating his stories into English during a short-term teaching assignment at the University of Washington. For almost a decade afterward, a host of admirers donated their time and energy to prepare the collection for publication. Bounheng Inversin, a Lao living in

the United States, contributed significantly to the English translations, ensuring that the nuances of oral and written Lao emerged. Peter Koret’s introduction provides both Lao and English readers with an unparalleled history of modern Lao literature and describes Outhine’s place within it.

For anyone wishing to become sensitized about Lao culture Outhine’s short stories is required reading. We can think of many types of people who would benefit from reading *Mother's Beloved*: Lao-English teachers and students, social workers involved with the new Lao-American community, and tourists wanting to enhance their cultural awareness. But, let’s go even further.

Imagine what kind of history would be available today on the CIA’s “secret war” in Laos if historians had interviewed ordinary farmers like Mai Daeng (see Outhine’s “A Voice from the Plain of Jars,”). Instead of page upon page of writings about battles and bombing raids we would understand the real life consequences of those wrenching years of displacement and destruction. Imagine if history teachers in the United States were to use the four dramatic pages in this one story to stimulate class discussions about the most intensive air war in world history and about why U.S. history books do not even give one sentence to that dirty “inconsequential” ten-year war. Imagine if each member of the U.S. Congress who refuses to ratify the international treaty to ban landmines were to read

about Mai Daeng's struggles against the anti-personnel bomblets that are still buried in his fields.

There are other reasons why Lao around the world can take pride in this work. It is the first literary work to come from the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) to be published in the United States. Furthermore, the side-by-side text in Lao and English broadens the audience that can appreciate this work: Lao who want to practice their English, foreigners wishing to master Lao reading skills, and overseas Lao wanting more facility in going back and forth between the two languages.

Outhine Bounyavong died of cancer in January 2000. To continue his literary efforts, the Outhine Bounyavong Memorial

Fund has been established to set up "reading rooms" in Lao schools in order to help cultivate good reading habits among the young. Donations will also be used to build Outhine's lifelong ambition of establishing a library in honor of his mentor, Maha Sila Viravong. The library will house the collection of Maha Sila Viravong's old and rare writings, especially manuscripts of the original research in his handwriting and revisions of texts that have not been published for circulation, so that the public can have easy access to these valuable research materials. In addition, it will be a center for gathering and collecting both contemporary and classic Lao and foreign documents on history, education, religion, language, literature, as well as materials on the socioeconomic

development of the Lao PDR.

For more information on the Outhine Bounyavong Memorial Fund and the Maha Sila Viravong Library project or to obtain copies of *Mother's Beloved* please contact Roger Rumpf and Jacquelyn Chagnon at <rojacmir@earthlink.net> or Bounheng Inversin at <hanu manh@tidalwave.net>. Copies of the book are also available for \$14.95 each from the University of Washington Press (Seattle and London): *Mother's Beloved: Stories from Laos*, by Outhine Bounyavong. Edited by Bounheng Inversin and Daniel Duffy. Introduction by Peter Koret.

Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars



When Worlds Collide

A new film explores human frailties as people from different countries cross paths in Pattaya



Wandering the streets of Pattaya, you can encounter people from all over the world. The city is popular with tourists and expats for its beaches, its nightlife, and its women.

The plot of *In A Small World* circles around characters' relationships with masseuse and companion Jade, played by first time actress Srisanoy Jiraporn.

The ladies of the nightclubs

and bars have been portrayed in countless movies and books where the moral questions of their occupation are a hot topic, but a new movie is going beyond the shining lights and short skirts to look at the journey that has brought different people to vacation or to stay.

In A Small World brings characters from Japan, Belgium, Austria and India on a journey

that ends with them crossing paths in Pattaya. It attempts to take a different outlook on the characters by focusing on the choices they have made—whether it is leaving their life at home, pursuing a career, or not knowing how to say “no”.

Directed by Samy Pavel, a Belgian director based in Sri Lanka, the film tries to avoid the debauchery and look for the humanity.

“I think that people are going to be shocked,” Pavel said. “We don’t go inside the people’s brains to see the failures that lead them places.”

The idea for the film came from producer Harsha Navaratne. He thought it would be interesting to bring people from very different countries together because each culture has different ways of thinking and reacting.

Pavel was intrigued and after his first trip to Pattaya and began developing a screenplay.

The Japanese character, Hiroki, is a young journalist sent by his boss (who is also his girlfriend’s father) to cover Thai cuisine. His desire to compete in the business makes him vulnerable to the fact that he has been sent to find temptation beyond the food.

In India, Chennai, a software engineer and newly married Brahmin is pressured by his boss to go and relax at the beach. Struggling with pressures from his wife and religion, Chennai hesitantly bends to the demands of his employer leading to mistakes, frustration and an unwanted visitor at his hotel door.

An Austrian painter has decided to abandon his marriage after 30 years to be with his Thai girlfriend. He moves to the beach to avoid his failures and forget his past.

Pavel decided to connect the different storylines with each man’s relationship to a prostitute named Jade. Described as a masseuse, a companion, and a comfort, Jade is pulled in different directions by her obligations to her daughter, her husband,

and the different men that pay for her attention. Pavel focuses on this character showing the deceptive way she manipulates her clients, but also the effects of the daily judgements from her family, friends and community.

“I didn’t want to just look at the relationship she has with the men as bad. I also wanted to look at the relationship she has with her daughter. How can she bring her to school? How normal people look at her and condemn her with their eyes,” Pavel said.

“It is a reaction to a human being who does not know how to defend herself. She cannot write or read in her own language.”

With a directing career starting in the 1960s, Pavel has plenty of experience in the industry but decided to change his usual format to take a risk and find “something genuine”. He chose many first-time actors from the area.

“I picked people who had never acted before, and they acted perfectly,” Pavel explained.

“It was so beautiful because they were not acting anymore. I brought them together one by one, a mixed pot of people from all over the world, and got something that is genuine.”

It is filmed almost as if it were a documentary, following the characters actions and their emotions. Pavel encouraged the actors to be free and real with their responses to the situations. To make the viewer feel a part of the community, he left much unwritten dialogue in the movie.

“I must accept that I have to lose my control and trust the people I have chosen. If you have the right casting and you have the right person, that is what makes your movie,” he said. “It’s not my film at all, it is their film.”

An example he used was when Jade, played by first-time

actress Srisanoy Jiraporn, becomes upset at a disapproving teacher. He said that while filming the scene, he directed Jiraporn to follow her emotions and to speak and move naturally.

“When she watched the scene later she didn’t recognise herself,” he said.

“When you can get to that point where you can just feel it, well, that is real acting.”

For Jiraporn, the transition between character and reality proved challenging.

“When I was acting, I just filled the role. I thought of myself as that lady,” she said. “But when I walked away to watch, I couldn’t believe it was me. It was difficult to watch.”

Although it may be a difficult movie to watch at times, she feels that it is important to look beyond labels and instead at what makes people real.

“In Thailand there is a bad side and a good side as well, but before you make a judgement you have to look at it all, and this is a real side,” she said. “Whatever people do, they have a reason behind it. They are forced in some sort of way to do it—they make the choice because they have a reason to do it.”

That is the message behind the film: choices. It is a different take on the prostitutes and their clients because it does not give a moral judgement on the people or their actions, but instead follows their choices.

It is those choices, good or bad, that makes all of the characters human and vulnerable to the consequences.

Award winning director Samy Pavel’s film about humanity and choices in Pattaya will be screened at the Berlin International Film Festival in February.

Bangkok Post
26/10/2012

Pridi, Sulak and Thai Democracy

“In writing about Pridi’s political fall from grace, Sulak weaves links between events to create a panoramic vision of contemporary Siamese history”

Power-that-be: Pridi Banomyong through the Rise and Fall of Thai Democracy by Sulak Sivaraksa, translated with introduction by S.J., the first edition was published by Committees on the Project for the Nation Celebration on the Occasion of the Centennial Anniversary of Pridi Banomyong, Senior Statesman in 1999. The second edition in 2012 is to mark the 80th anniversary of the Siamese revolution of 24th June 1932 which transformed absolutism Siam into a democratic constitutional monarchy.

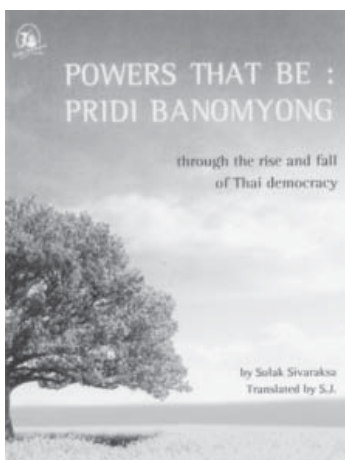
One fine June evening, Sulak Sivaraksa asked me to his Baan Thai house in Soi Santipap. He handed me a manuscript. “This is my new book,” he said.

I took the book home. It had not yet been published at that time. As far as I could divine from the title, the book was about Pridi Banomyong, the leader of the 1932 revolution which overthrew the absolute monarchy in Siam. But early into the book Sulak disabuses the reader’s biographical expectations: *Let it be clear from the outset that I do not attempt to write a biography of Pridi.*

If the book is not about Pridi, what is it about?

Sulak tells the reader that the book is essentially about himself: *{t}his essay charts my arduous and tumultuous intellectual journey from conservative elitism to participatory democracy.*

Sulak concedes, for the benefit of puzzled readers that, *Pridi played a central role in*



this journey.

Actually, it is more than that. The book is about many things woven together into a rich Siamese tapestry. It is a tribute to Sulak’s skill as a writer that by holding up Pridi’s political fall from grace, he could manage to reflect within the compass of his narratives various interwoven links between events and individuals to create a panoramic vision of contemporary Siamese history.

The title enables Sulak to build up the reader’s expectation in the manner of a detective story. He plants a misleading clue and subsequently redirects the reader’s curiosity and suspicion towards a rewarding revelation.

Are historians permitted such rhetorical liberties? Is Sulak writing conventional history or recording the transformations of his soul and seeking to ground it in contemporary Siamese historical events? Much of the interest in the book stems from its topicality. Its publication in 1999 coincides with the celebration of the centenary of Pridi Banomyong’s birth held in Paris and it came off the press just in time for Sulak’s departure for the celebrations with a dramatic group to stage the play

The Revolutionist. The play was written by the well-known playwright Kamron Gunatilaka based on Pridi’s life.

But the main character of Sulak’s narrative is not Pridi but Sulak himself. Pridi serves as a mirror reflecting Sulak’s journey out of ignorance into knowledge. Although the book provides substantial information, including interesting personal details, about Pridi, it is the latter’s supporting the story of his intellectual evolution that is more important.

In this book Sulak intimately reveals himself—his ethnic Chinese ancestry, class background, social aspirations, moral struggles and doubts.

He also expresses his instinctive empathy for the underdog, innate aggressiveness when provoked, capacity for compassion and contribution, as well as his unspeakable arrogance, evident when he attacked Pridi in the pages of *Social Science Review*.

The technique of oblique autobiography is well established. In the Asian cultural milieu, with its deference towards elders, it is considered bad form for an upstart young writer to make a literary debut by unabashedly writing about himself. Many Asian intellectuals became known through writing about others, including Sulak himself:

I have commented on various personalities in numerous essays and books, he wrote.

Among his earlier writings was *Krom Muen Pityalarp* (1985). In that book, Sulak wrote about Prince Dhani, in a manner which characteristically celebrated the master-apprentice relationship which existed between them.

At no time did Sulak’s rela-

tionship with Pridi conform to the master-apprentice model. In many respects, both men served as mirrors reflecting the other's life and views, though Sulak's translator S.J went a step further to suggest, in the introduction to the book, that the former's contributions to Siamese society should perhaps be ranked on equal terms with Pridi's.

The narrative is also informed by the presence of a dark secret which permeates the realm, poisons the atmosphere of Siamese politics and eventually destroys Pridi.

At the heart of contemporary Siamese history lies the secret surrounding the alleged regicide of the young king Ananda on June 9, 1946. The mystery casts its shadow up to present.

Sulak's metaphorical journey also represents an inward spiritual struggle to break the spell cast over him by this secret which divides families and friends and creates a conflict within an individual's own heart.

The secret of the alleged regicide stands between Sulak and Pridi. Only after Sulak has

come to terms with it could he become reconciled with Pridi.

Sulak attempts to recount the circumstances surrounding the alleged regicide. He cites the vague, conflicting and at times questionable authenticity of the witnesses' accounts.

He suggests that Pridi's political enemies might have sought to capitalise on the ambiguity of and to size the aristocracy's fear of Pridi's political radicalism to hang the allbatross of a conspiracy theory around his neck. Sulak seeks to reconstruct the crime scene against Pridi by identifying the suspects, exposing their motives and producing the metaphorical murder weapon, in the form of a leading conservative newspaper, used to stab Pridi in the back.

To find out who, in Sulak's eyes, are the villains who masterminded Pridi's downfall and condemnation to a life on exile in China and France, you'll have to wait to read Sulak's next book.

Sulak is at his best when writing about people, while demonstrating lucidity when he discusses economic and philo-

sophical issues. His strong prose is ideal for unmasking hypocrisy, double standards, pretensions, bad faith and moral weaknesses of the elite.

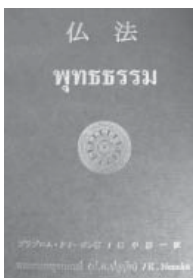
Powers That Be does not shrink from naming names and cutting the high and mighty down to size. The late M.R. Kukrit Pramoj is one of the book's targets, as Sulak attempts to establish the former's alleged guilt in the character assassination of Pridi.

Sulak turns the same critical spotlight that he uses on others upon himself. The foibles and prejudices of his family and social class are dissected. If anything, *Powers That Be* is a confession to grievous and colossal mistakes in his judgment of Pridi, rather than a celebration of his moral triumph.

Despite Sulak's controversial stance, the persuasiveness of his argument stems from his immersion in Siamese reality and his unerring sense of Siamese patterns of subtlety, depravity, and integrity.

Jeffrey Sng

Recommended Readings



Buddhadhamma (in Japanese)

By P.A. Payutto
Translated by K. Nonaka

Buddhist Dictionary (in Japanese)

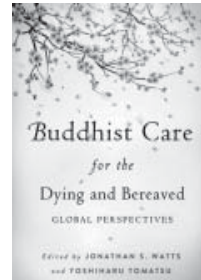
By P.A. Payutto
Translated by K. Nonaka



***The Ordination of a Tree:
The Thai Buddhist Environmental Movement***

By Susan M. Darlington
Published by SUNY Press

***Buddhist Care for the Dying and Bereaved
in the Modern World : Global Perspectives***
Edited by Jonathan Watts and Yoshiharu Tomatsu,
Jodo Shu Research Institute, Tokyo, Japan
Published by Wisdom Publications (USA)



Recommended Readings



Metta Development Foundation Rehabilitation, Reconstruction & Development
A Post Cyclone Nargis Initiative
 (01 Aug 2008 - 31 July 2011)



Bangladesh IWGIA Report 14
Militarization in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh
The Slow Demise of the Region's Indigenous People
 Edited by IWGIA
 Published by EKS Skolen Trykkeri,
 Copenhagen, Denmark



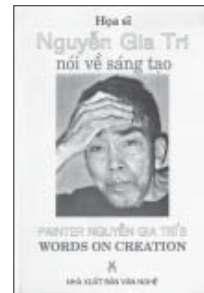
GAIA Trust 25 Years
 Edited by GAIA Trust



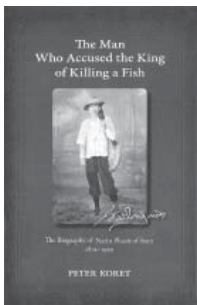
KITEZH
A Community Approach to Raising Children in Russia
 By Dimitry Morozow
 Published by Navarra, Spain by GraphyCems



One Hundred Bangkok Big Trees



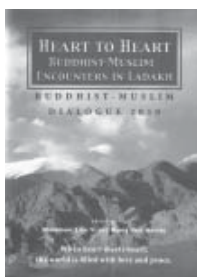
Nguyen Gia Tri's Words on Creation
 By Nguyen Xuan Viet
 Published by Nha Xuat Ban Van Nghe



The Man Who Accused The King of Killing a Fish
The Biography of Narin Phasit of Siam
 By Peter Koret
 Published by Silkworms Books



Taiwan Since Martial Law
Society, Culture, Politics, Economy
 Edited by David Blundel
 Published by Shung Ye Museum of Formosan Aborigines University
 of California, Berkeley & National Taiwan University Press



Heart to Heart
Buddhist - Muslim Encounters in Ladakh
 Edited by Bhikkhuni Yi and Maria Reis Habito
 Published by The Museum of World Religions Development
 Foundatio



Time and the Sea
Poems
 By Việt Nguyễn
 Published by Nha Xuat Ban Van Nghe



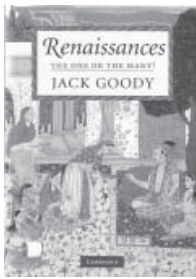
Garden in the Sky

By Don Brech, Records Management International
Published by Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden



Addressing Climate Change

Can We Reduce Carbon Emission While Increasing Quality of Life?
Published by WBB Trust Bangladesh



Renaissances

The One or the Many?
By Jack Goody
Published by Cambridge University Press



Right Mindfulness

Memory & Ardency on the Buddhist Path
By Geoffrey DeGraff
Published by Metta Forest Monastery



Policies of the Thai State towards the Malay Muslim South (1978 - 2010)

By Arnaud Dubus and Sor Rattanamanee Polkla
Published by IRASE

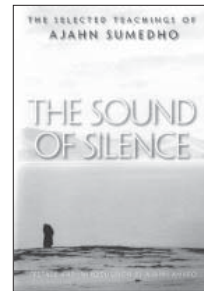


Vietnamese magazine



Don't Say No to a Tibetan
Dharamsala Chronicles

Published by The Library of Tibetan Works and Archives Dharamsala, H.P



The Sound of Silence

The selected teaching of Ajahn Sumedho
Edited by Ajhan Amaro
Published by Wisdom Publication Boston



Not For Happiness

A Guide to the So-called Preliminary Practices
By Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse
Published by Shambhala Publication U.S.A



View

The Rigpa Journal
Edited and published by RIGPA



Think

The Global Issue
Published by Qatar Foundation

ENOUGH !
NO MORE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN !

ON 14TH FEBRUARY 2013
 THERE WILL BE
 ONE BILLION RISING IN EVERY
 CORNER OF THE WORLD

In Preparation,
 Let Us Start Mobilising People and
 Organizing Activities Now!



ONE BILLION RISING
 उमड़ते सी करोड़
 STRIKE | DANCE | RISE
 विरोध करो | नाचो | उठो!

Contact us: sangat@sangatsouthasia.org/www.sangatsouthasia.org,
 Like us at www.facebook.com/OneBillionRisingSouthAsia
 To sign up click ONEBILLIONRISING.ORG

 <p>RIGHT LIVELIHOOD FUND</p> <p>We live in an interconnected and interdependent world. The decisions we make affect our fellow human beings and our natural ecosystems, not only in the present, but also for generations to come.</p> <p>Each of us has the ability to make decisions that make the world a better place. We make choices between different products and services, we make choices about how we acquire the resources we need to sustain ourselves, we make choices about how we invest any surplus, and we make choices about how we work with others.</p> <p>A Right Livelihood means considering the impact of these choices on oneself, on other people and on the planet.</p>	<p>the Right Livelihood Fund is a platform that brings together people committed to mindful, ethical living. How will you get involved?</p> <p>INVEST in Right Livelihood enterprises that use ethical business models to address social and environmental issues</p> <p>Find your passion and CREATE your own Right Livelihood enterprise</p> <p>Use your professional and technical skills to SUPPORT Right Livelihood entrepreneurs around the world</p> <p>CHOOSE products and service from Right Livelihood enterprises that share your values</p> <p>Travel and LEARN about local and global issues and the Right Livelihood enterprises that seek to address them</p> <p>To find out more, contact us at info@rightlivelihoodfund.org</p>
--	---