

# SEEDS OF PEACE

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### Editorial Note

First of all, we would like to send our condolences to family and friends of Venetia Walkey, who served on the board of INEB since its inception. Venetia was a dedicated Buddhist who supported various initiatives that aimed to create a better society, especially through the field of arts.

As we approach the last 4 months of this year, we are planning to conduct various programs and activities in order to engage and involve more dynamic activists, the socially engaged Buddhist community and the wider public audience. The following are brief descriptions of these activities -

**INEB 2017 - 2027 The Way Forward: Engaged Buddhists for a Coming Decade** - this is the main overarching program for INEB to strategize its own framework and focus for the next 10 years. There are a number of thematic areas that we would like to focus on in this period, such as - Supporting Bhikkhunis, the Marginalized Buddhists Network, Platform for Inter-Buddhist Dialogue, Buddhism and Conflict Transformation, Asian Buddhists for Child Protection, Buddhist Economics, Inter-religious

Climate and Ecology Network, Eco-temple Community Development, Building Community Religious Leadership, and the INEB Institute of Higher Education.

The INEB Institute will also be holding a few programs -

● **Awakening Leadership Training:**

Towards a New Paradigm of Holistic Sustainability  
September 3, 2017 - January 25, 2018.

Please visit the following website for more details - <http://inebinstitute.org/blt/>

● **English for Engaged Social Service**

January 7 - April 5, 2018.

Please visit the following website for more details - <http://inebinstitute.org/eng/>

INEB and its Myanmar and International partners will hold a Child Protection Conference and Network Founding Meeting on 29 - 31 October 2017 in Mandalay, Myanmar. This event is part of INEB's Asia Network of Buddhists for Child Protection thematic area. The objectives of this conference are: (1) to formally establish the Asian Buddhist Network for Child Protection and agree on its mission, mandate and priority actions; and, to (2) develop a Myanmar-specific plan of action for ending violence against children, initially in affiliated monastic schools, Dhamma schools, and eventually in other public and private institutions, as well as in families and the community at large. For more information on this event, please contact: [secretariat@inebnetwork.org](mailto:secretariat@inebnetwork.org)

The 18th INEB Conference is to be held soon on the 22nd - 26th November 2017 at Hong-Shi Buddhist College, Taiwan. The theme of the Conference is - **Interbeing: Transforming Conflict by Compassion with Exposure**. Registration for the conference are currently open. Please visit INEB's website ([www.inebnetwork.org](http://www.inebnetwork.org)) for more information.

We are very grateful to host a public talk for the Thai audience on 2nd September 2017 at Thammasat University in Bangkok, by Ven. Pomnyun Sunim, Jungto Society, Korea. He is an inspiration for many people in Siam. INEB has translated and published two of his books into the Thai language, namely 'Awakening' and 'True Happiness: here and now'.

We are anticipating strong participation in our upcoming programs; we hope that activists, the socially engaged Buddhist community, and members of the public who join our events will take back abundant wisdom and knowledge, which will assist them in providing right direction in their personal lives and in their own respective social and humanitarian endeavours.

### Burma:

Negotiation for a peace process is a long process and negotiation towards transition is equally complex

*The Global New Light Of Myanmar, 2 July 2017*



A wide-ranging interview with South African Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Geoffrey Quinton Mitchell Doidge by the Myanmar News Agency and MRTV touched upon democratic and economic reform, peace process and bilateral relations between South Africa and Myanmar. In the course of history, we have been able to strengthen friendly ties between the two countries. And with your presence here, we hope that we will be able to strengthen friendly ties and what is your opinion over the friendly ties between the two countries?

Q: Good afternoon your Excellency, and nice to meet you. We have already known

A: Our diplomatic relations between the two countries

have been over two decades. We are very encouraged by recent developments in Myanmar since 2010. Myanmar has become transitioned into a democracy and made a very good progress. We are very interested in your Panglong Conference I and II and South Africa is eager to share with you our experience to know what South Africa did. Sharing of experience on persistent way for ensuring democracy by South Africa in the past will give Myanmar. We don't tell you what to do but we share our experience for you to learn from our mistakes.

Q: As you know, we are in the process of democratization and national reconciliation. And that process, could you please elaborate on your impression over the government's efforts toward democratization and national reconciliation?

A: Negotiation for peace process is a long process and negotiation toward transition is equally complex. And these are not easy processes and they have to be inclusive and this process can take many years. South Africa also solved these processes for many years. Our negotiations started in the late 1980 before the release of Nelson Mandela. And in 1990, Nelson

Mandela was released. That was the beginning of new process that led to the election in 1994 and that was the first democratically election. The then parliament has passed over 700 laws to transform the country and to transform the state missionary. With Nelson Mandela became the President and that was the beginning of democratization of South Africa. We are still facing inequality, poverty and other challenges and other legacies of the successive governments. Most importantly, transitions are still affecting life of South Africa and South Africa is still undergoing transition.

Although, we still have concluded our transition, we have not concluded our nation-building. We are still in the process of making peace among each other and we until achieve nation-building only then can peace be prevailing among all of us. So, my message to Myanmar is that we all need to be patient and people of Myanmar need to be patient. South Africa is willing to assess Myanmar and to share experience over the next four years.

Q: Since coming into office, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has been focusing on bringing about peace throughout the



country by holding Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong. In that regards, Could you make suggestions on our government efforts toward peace process compared with your country?

A: South Africa has advantages of handing over of one system to another system. That is not the case in Myanmar. You carry on with your system of governance. So you have to do with wide governance and the important thing is we appreciate the mandate in which Myanmar has conducted the peace conference. Yet will be challenges are always challenges. Even in South Africa, our negotiation broke down three times. The first one we failed, the second failed and the third one was successful which is known as multiparty negotiating forum. The third one was successful, two times failure and only three times we got it right. And there are still we have to like the constitution. So these processes are very complex and they cannot be rushed and we must feel everybody involve to understand that although we have made progress we must be sure that we bring people and everybody to participate. These processes can only be successful if

there is participation by everybody concerned.

Q: We have known that you used to be a minister. You have so many experiences. That's why; we would like to know your personal overview on the efforts of our new government.

A: Both myself and my government that I have represented as foreign minister we commend that the government of Myanmar for the progress that have been made. We know that these steps are with challenges. We commend and encourage the government and the participants in the Panglong Peace Conference even though it was not signed the ceasefire agreement. We encourage everybody to come and participate and that will make a comprehensive solution to the peace process. So South Africa is very encouraged by the process and we would like to see yet more participation and we would like to see progress but we are also very sensitive to the different views and the challenges that are existing in negotiating process and peace process. But South Africa is committed to sharing its experiences with Myanmar

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## Power is a Dangerous Thing

THE IRRAWADDY, 8 August 2017

Kyaw Zwa Moe: I am at the monastery of Sayadaw U Khaymar Nanda, who is better known as the 8888 Sayadaw, in Taunggyi. He served as the chairman of the Young Monks' Union during the 1988 pro-democracy uprising, and was arrested immediately after the military mounted a coup and imprisoned for six years. Today, he still believes—as he once said in a speech—that cows are the only creatures that don't want democracy, and he has continuously supported the cause. I will discuss his confidence in democracy, the involvement of authorities in the Depayin Massacre, and his views on today's political landscape. I'm Irrawaddy English editor Kyaw Zwa Moe.

“You are widely known as the 8888 Sayadaw in Taunggyi, and for the time being, I think you are the only person in the country who dares to claim that title. You served the cause of democracy long before Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's government came to power. Would

you explain how you became known as the 8888 Sayadaw?”

**KN:** During the 88 uprising, young monks from every monastery in Taunggyi gathered and formed the Shan State Young Monks' Union. The union had 11 executive committee members. We decided to serve our country and told ourselves that politics was not about getting power for ourselves; we monks had to take part in issues of livelihood, health and education for the people. I said, “If we get engaged in politics, we will die or be jailed. If we are unlucky, we die. If we are lucky, we're jailed.” So, we prepared for the worst. As soon as we formed the young monks' union, we occupied the office of the Burma Socialist Programme Party in Taunggyi. So, [party cadres] had a grudge against us. They threatened and swore at us over the phone.

**KZM:** At that time, the government was the Burma Socialist Programme Party.

**KN:** Yes, it was the BSPP. They swore at us and we let them swear, telling ourselves that they would stop when they got tired. Then, BSPP party members from the entire township handed us their party membership cards, saying they were no longer party members. We accepted the cards. We actively engaged in the 1988 democracy uprising in Shan State and my name became known as the chairman of the young monks' union.

As chairman, I had to advise junior monks. I told them that we were Buddhist monks and that there are both commandments of the Buddhist Order as well as secular law, and that we must not break those laws. We took actions that would not breach either of these laws.

The whole country wanted democracy. In a speech I said blatantly that "only cows don't like democracy." Every human likes democracy. The junior monks avoided breaking the laws, and they listened to me. The [BSPP] party cadres treated people unfairly while they were in power. And when they were about to give up their power, they didn't dare to sleep in their own houses. They asked us to protect their lives and property. I told people: "What we want is democracy. We don't want violence, death or

torture. Democracy has to follow laws and discipline." There must be respect for these values in a democracy. So, none of their homes were destroyed and none of the party cadres were attacked during the 1988 uprising.

Shan State was peaceful at that time. I dare to say that Shan State enjoyed real democracy then. So, it was convenient for us to do our tasks. At that time, soldiers were not allowed to leave their camps. Some of the soldiers had been outside the camps [before the order was issued], and we members of the young monks' union systematically brought them back to their battalions. We walked on the path to democracy with optimism.

**KZM:** So you have the title 8888 Sayadaw. But you were arrested immediately after the military staged a coup on September 18 after the 1988 pro-democracy uprising.

**KN:** Soldiers came to our monks' union building on September 19 and opened fire on us. We had blocked the gate. When I heard the shooting, I told my junior, including Maung Ottara, who is in London now: "When we formed the young monks' union, we already knew the two outcomes. Lucky, we're jailed. Unlucky, we die. We knew

the ending. So, if I am lucky, I will be jailed because many people have already been killed on the roadside."

It was about 6 a.m. We turned ourselves in and said, "You may arrest us now." But, the commander of that military column, Lt-Col Aung Hsan of Light Infantry Battalion 17, said he didn't want the other monks, he only wanted Sayadaw Khaymar Nanda.

**KZM:** They wanted to arrest only you.

**KN:** Yes. So, I said, "It is me." I don't eat meat during the Buddhist Lent and at that time I had a small blanket draped over my shoulders and was counting Buddhist prayer beads brought from Bodh Gaya [the site of the Buddha's enlightenment, in India]. Cpt Myint Lwin and Lt Naing Oo [of the Myanmar Army] pointed their guns at me. I still remember their names although I don't know their service numbers. I asked them why they were pointing their guns at me when I had no weapon. I undid my robe and only then did they put down their guns. Then, I saw a boy named Yin Maung Than dying in front of us. He ran errands for our young monks' union. He was shot from the right side and the bullet tore through his left cheek.

**KZM:** Was he shot in front of you?

**KN:** Yes. He was in ninth grade, I think. I was sad to see him dying, blood pouring out of his cheek. But I could do nothing, as I had been arrested. Then, soldiers took me. Lt-Col Aung Hsan walked in front of me and Cpt Myint Lwin and Lte Aung Naing Oo were behind.

We had a monk, U Pinnavumsa, who was responsible for security in the monks' union. Monks in the union had different duties. U Pinnavumsa was an ex-military officer; he understood military affairs and guns. So, we assigned him the responsibility of security.

At that time, police were not allowed to take their guns when leaving their stations. But the previous night, a policeman named Ko Nu took a B-52 Sten gun. My disciples in charge of security were suspicious of him, so they arrested him and seized his gun, which they handed over to U Pinnavumsa. He knew nothing about my arrest but there were many people on the street. So, when he saw the soldiers, he told them that there was a brawl between some young men and the police last night, and asked them if he was to give the gun back to the



policeman or to the soldiers. Lt-Col Aung Hsan took the gun and when we got near the Shan Mintha Teashop—today it is called Shwe Keinnar—Lt-Col Aung San told the military intelligence official that I was found with a gun and arrested.

I said, “You are a military official, why do you lie? I engaged in the democracy uprising because I don’t like dishonesty. Don’t lie. You brought the gun. I had nothing to do with it. Tell him the truth.” The intelligence official said he would handle it, and put me into a prisoner transport vehicle. Then, there was an announcement on the radio that the chairman of the Shan State Young Monks’ Union was arrested with B-52 Sten gun. I can’t accept lies, so I pushed back aggressively. They didn’t like it. At that time, the commander was Maj-Gen Maung Aye.

**KZM:** Vice Snr-Gen Maung Aye who retired with Snr-Gen Than Shwe? He

was the commander there then? How was he involved in your arrest?

**KN:** Yes, he was primarily responsible for my arrest. He was the most accountable person in Taunggyi. I was put into a prisoner transport vehicle along with Dr. Tin Win, the leader of the strike [in Taunggyi], U Cho of the EPC, bank manager U Win Maung, and teacher Ko Myint Than. They had been arrested before me. Their heads were covered in bags.

**KZM:** They were covered in balaclavas?

**KN:** Yes, but I recognized them from their clothing because they were familiar to me. U Win Maung heard my voice and asked, “Sayadaw, is that you?” I said yes, and he told me that he could not breathe. I removed his balaclava and a soldier on guard asked me why I did that. I said, “Because it is humane. He’ll die if it isn’t taken off. You can arrest

and imprison people but you should not treat them like this.”

We were brought to the Eastern Command [of the Myanmar Army]. When we arrived, they covered my head with a bag used to pack dried fish. And the balaclavas of the others were also changed. A soldier asked his senior if he had to cover the head of the monk, and he replied that I was no longer a monk after getting on that vehicle. The bag they put over my head smelled so bad that I could not breathe. Whenever I see dried fish, I remember that day. If I am offered fish curry, memories of that day come flooding back.

**KZM:** Were you put behind bars immediately? How many years were you imprisoned?

**KN:** I was released in 1993 and imprisoned for about six years. I had many troubles while in prison and during the interrogation process. I heard that military officers

didn’t use force on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi during the interrogation process in consideration of her father.

**KZM:** It has been almost 30 years since 1988, and the eras have changed – the Burma Socialist Programme Party, two military regimes, and U Thein Sein’s administration, which was a government of ex-generals. Now, the government is led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who you supported. What is your assessment of the political situation today? Do you find it satisfactory?

**KN:** No. Many reforms remain to be done in respective sectors of our constitutional democracy. We’ve only seen the dawn of democracy; the light has yet to come out.

**KZM:** Which parts need reform and how can those changes be introduced? As everyone knows, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is the State Counselor and U Htin Kyaw is the President, proposed by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. But three ministries – home affairs, defense, and border affairs – are still held by the military. Looking at the overall administrative mechanism, only the top positions are held by the NLD and the rest are the old guard. Where do you think that change should start?

**KN:** Of the many things to be changed, the Constitution should come first. Only after that happens, can other changes be introduced according to the new Constitution. Otherwise, the results will not be good.

**KZM:** Like the fact that 25 percent of seats are reserved constitutionally for the military in Parliament?

**KN:** Yes, we are building a democracy and it should be democratic.

**KZM:** I'm afraid it won't be that easy or practical. The Tatmadaw [Myanmar Army] is a powerful institution that has engaged in and taken control of all sectors including politics and the economy. It used to have complete control of these. It has reduced its control but still maintains a large hold due to the Constitution. It's not easy, is it?

**KN:** Rather than thinking about whether it's easy, we have to work for what we want. The Tatmadaw maintains its grip on key sectors, but I believe that it will let go and transfer it someday.

**KZM:** But how long will it take?

**KN:** It is difficult to predict. We will have to wait and see. Sometimes unexpected

things happen. For instance, [NLD Muslim legal adviser] U Ko Ni was assassinated. It was an extremist act. As a Buddhist monk, I don't discuss race or religious issues. They have their faith and I have mine.

A ritual was held here to mark the seventh day after U Ko Ni's death. Most of the attendees were Muslim. The ritual involved pouring water into a container [done in the manner of sharing merits for the deceased], and I asked Muslim attendees to recite after me. I told them that I was not asking them to recite the five precepts of Buddhism, but to pray and share merits, and therefore followers of any religion could do it. They were satisfied with my explanation and recited willingly after me.

There will be harmony when there is an understanding of each other. U Ko Ni was Muslim. But his death means that we lost a legal expert in our country and we regret this because he could have contributed greatly. This has nothing to do with race or religion. How smart ambassador U Pe Khin was, and how smart U Ko Ni was! We've lost the scholars who the country could use. This is a loss for the country.

**KZM:** U Ko Ni continuously talked about amending the 2008 Constitution.

And he was also a legal adviser to the NLD and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. His assassination raised questions. The assassin was arrested, but people speculate that there was a mastermind behind it. What do you think?

**KN:** As soon as I heard about the assassination, I told my laypeople that the killer was a contract killer, paid to kill U Ko Ni. This is something that requires caution in our country. I have always wanted to urge Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to take caution. She loves people and people love her.

We Myanmar people have a habit of giving away gifts and flowers as a token of love. But this is worrying from a security perspective. U Ko Ni's assassination is an example. He was shot during the day at the airport in Yangon. This is concerning. There must be a mastermind and he needs to be held accountable to avoid such cases in the future.

**KZM:** In our country, there were assassinations in successive periods, Gen Aung San and his colleagues were assassinated in 1947. Karen ethnic leader Saw Ba U Gyi was killed and there were also reciprocal killings between split communist groups. In 2008, Karen National Union (KNU) leader

Padoh Mahn Sha was killed, and nine years later U Ko Ni was killed. Is this inclination for assassination really linked with political extremism? It has persisted for a long time. When do you think it will end?

**KN:** Myanmar people are not inept, but they are naïve. We need to be able to distinguish between incompetence and naivety. Ko Kyi Lin killed U Ko Ni and Galon U Saw and his accomplices assassinated Gen Aung San. They were not incompetent people, I assess. I'm not praising them. They were competent people but they were extremists. Regarding the question of how to end this inclination, I've always said that the majority in our country is Buddhist. Our first commandment is to abstain from killing, even insects. Killing is shameful to us. Followers of Islam did not call out when U Ko Ni was assassinated, but what would have happened if a Buddhist lawyer was killed instead of a Muslim? Our people need to have a mature mentality. Unless they are enlightened, this inclination will continue.

**KZM:** Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and U Tin Oo visited your monastery in 2002. It was before the Depayin Massacre in which Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's motorcade



was attacked. What did you know about the attack, and what did you talk about with her prior to it?

**KN:** The political storm was quite strong at that time because military intelligence was so powerful. I was quite pleased that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi visited me. I warmly welcomed them. There was a Union Solidarity and Development Association office near my monastery. I heard them say they would attack her if she came to the ward. The person I heard say that is still alive. I was not shocked by what he said. They had their own views. But, I tried to provide security for her.

Some police and military intelligence officials were my disciples. They told me that her visit was worrying. I asked why, and they told me to think about it but that they could not provide details. I understood but I said there was nothing to worry about because she served the people.

Police were conducting drills with sticks and shields and I asked the police chief what they intended to do. He said they were following orders from the home affairs minister. I said she had been allowed to leave Yangon freely; what would they do to her in Taunggyi? Police said she could leave Taunggyi safely. But I told

her and U Tin Oo that I was worried for their safety. Then, I heard about the attack in Depayin.

A junior monk from Amarapura Township called and asked me if anything had happened in Taunggyi. I said no. He said some 100 monks were asked to gather in his township to attack Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. I was shocked and told him not to join or else history will remember him badly. I asked when the attack would occur and he said on the Sagaing Bridge.

**KZM:** So, they were asked to gather by the authorities?

**KN:** He said that authorities from the township peace and development council asked the monks to gather. Think about it. If someone was attacked on the Sagaing Bridge, he would die falling off the bridge, if not from the beating. Those in power used even monks in this way. Power is a dangerous thing. Those who indulge in power do not care about Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha, or their parents and teachers. They do not hesitate to exploit the Sangha to maintain power. This is evil and unacceptable.

**KZM:** Thank you.

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Siam:

# Meet the Youthful Face of Resistance to Thailand's Junta

*Time Magazine. Feliz Solomon, 28 Jun 2017*

Every year, on the first day of school, thousands of first-year students file onto a field on the campus of Chulalongkorn University, Thailand's oldest and among its most prestigious universities, in the heart of the sweltering capital Bangkok. In crisp, white uniforms with slim black belts, they kneel in neat rows in front of a bronze effigy of King Rama VI, the school's founder, and his father, its namesake. With their foreheads touching the ground, inductees pledge to honor the institution and obey the world's richest royal family, which shares prestige and power in this Southeast Asian kingdom with its chief protector, the army. Last year, two freshmen didn't take the oath.

Before he started college as a political science major, Netiwit Chotiphatphaisal read in a book that the practice of prostration had been abolished by King Chulalongkorn, who, the

story goes, believed that forcing his subjects to kneel at his feet was cruel and humiliating. Puzzled that the tradition had survived despite a royal decree, Netiwit enlisted a friend to join him in a quiet act of protest. The pair raised their hands and stood up among the sea of students prone in the summer sun. Their peers looked around confusedly as they approached the statue, where they bowed their heads for a moment and then walked away. This simple act of defiance was shocking in a country where being just seen as irreverent toward the monarchy is a criminal offense.

"I don't want [prostration] to be banned, but people need to be informed about what it means," Netiwit tells TIME on a recent visit to one of the school's libraries, saying that the act belies a "hidden political agenda."

Netiwit, who has emerged as the 20-year-old face of Thailand's nascent anti-



Thai military secure a bridge adjacent to the Bangkok sky train preventing demonstrators from protesting the ongoing coup on June 1, 2014 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Paula Bronstein—Getty Images

junta movement, looks and feels at ease in the dusty vaults. In his spare time, he works as a librarian at the Santi Pracha Dhamma reading room, a hub for social activists founded by his mentor, a well-known Buddhist scholar named Sulak Sivaraksa. This nerdy-looking kid with glasses and unkempt bangs seemed harmless enough when, at the age of 16, he founded a student group that eventually became known as Education for the Liberation of Siam (as Thailand was called until 1939). He and his loose association of a few dozen high-school students rallied for curricular reform and administered a popular Facebook page, where they outed errant adults for undemocratic “misconduct.”

In early 2014, when it seemed certain that the military was about to overthrow an elected government, the pupils shifted their target and started joining anti-coup and anti-junta protests, so becoming a blip on the regime’s radar. In May 2015, Netiwit was briefly detained along with a few dozen other kids who attended “vigils” in Bangkok and the northern town of Khon Kaen, mourning the one-year anniversary of the death of democracy in Thailand.

When General Prayuth Chan-o-cha, Thailand’s former army chief and now its self-styled Prime Minister, learned that Netiwit was elected Chulalongkorn’s student council president in early May this year, he

issued a warning. At a speech just days later at Mahidol University, Chulalongkorn’s main rival, Prayuth told an audience that “extreme thinking is not okay.” Without mentioning his name, he called Netiwit’s brand of disobedience a “disgrace to the institution” of higher learning, according to an account published by the local news site Khaosod. Everyone knew whom Prayuth was talking about. After news reports and concerned friends alerted him to the General’s remarks, Netiwit fired back to his 49,000 Facebook followers: “Who is a disgrace to the nation? ... His Excellency the Prime Minister has been destroying the reputation of Thailand for the past three years.”

Prayuth’s putsch on May 22, 2014, was merely the latest in the country’s cycle of coups — 13 successful

military takeovers have been carried out over the past nine decades — but this time may be different. The current junta, which calls itself the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO), seized power as the country’s beloved late monarch, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, was nearing the end of his life. The ascension of his son Vajiralongkorn, for whom Thais do not share the same admiration and affection, has led to a struggle between the military establishment and pro-democratic elite in the absence of a morally authoritative palace. In the name of stability, the junta spent the two years leading up to Bhumibol’s death laying the groundwork for a new constitution that expands the power of the military.

Thailand was well on the path to democracy when Prayuth seized power, ostensibly to put an end to serial protests, often violent, among rival political parties and camps. In step with regional neighbors that made similar shifts toward more conservative rule (as the Philippines has done under President Rodrigo Duterte), Thailand, under Prayuth’s junta, has abandoned commitments to human rights and civil liberties. Since the coup, restrictions on public assembly, phone and Internet use



## Country Reports

have tightened immensely, and hundreds of people have been fined or imprisoned on criminal defamation charges, for which Thailand has an eclectic prosecutorial toolkit. More than 100 of those cases were alleged violations of the country's draconian lèse-majesté law, which criminalizes all perceived insult to the monarchy and is punishable by long periods of imprisonment.

The law is among the strictest of its kind; cases can be brought by anyone, against anyone, at any time, for just about any reason. In early June, a military court sentenced a 34-year-old man to 35 years' jail for allegedly creating a Facebook account under a fake name and sharing 10 posts deemed insulting to the royal family. This ruling, the harshest to date, prompted swift condemnation from the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, which issued a statement saying the body was "deeply troubled by the high rate of prosecutions and the courts' persistence in handing down disproportionate sentences for the offense." Sunai Phasuk, the senior Thailand researcher for Human Rights Watch, says the current regime "wants to reset the political structure" entirely. "What is now being undone systematically are

the achievements of decades of liberalization and democratization," he tells TIME. "This is just one-man rule with ultimate power."

The three years since the coup have strained the special relationship with Washington, which regards Thailand as its oldest ally in Asia. The U.S. is Thailand's top trading partner by far, buying up some \$24.4 billion in Thai exports annually and counterbalancing Chinese efforts to secure a strategic foothold in Thailand and wider Southeast Asia. While Washington has been critical of the junta for curtailing human rights and failing to improve on labor and trade abuses, the election of President Donald Trump has signaled a shift in priorities. Trump, who inherited a floundering "Asia rebalance" policy begun by his predecessor Barack Obama but never quite brought to fruition, has invited Prayuth to the White House in a bid to reaffirm ties with a crucial military and economic partner as it veers toward China's embrace.

Unmolested by outside interference, the junta has gone about creating a social climate described by some as one of fear, by others as one of apathy. "It used to be that they would only go after you if you are a politician, but this time, it's bad," says



People visit the 40th anniversary memorial inside Thammasat University Campus on Oct. 6, 2016, as Thailand marks the 40th anniversary of the Thammasat University massacre. Guillaume Payen—LightRocket via Getty Images

Yingcheep Atchanont, a program manager at iLaw, an NGO that documents violations of free speech. He says the sharp rise in prosecutions and the increasing use of military courts has had a chilling effect on the public. Elections are tentatively planned for late 2018, though polls have been postponed so many times that many people no longer believe or care that they be held on schedule. "Either you feel like it's okay to live like this, or you're afraid that you will get into trouble," says Yingcheep, who says that the only choice is "better to keep quiet."

Netiwit refuses to. The youngest child of shopkeepers from a village on the outskirts of Bangkok, he views himself as a sort of messenger of social sanity. "I want to show people that they can actually do something, instead of just talking or thinking about it,"

he tells TIME. Adjusting his red-rimmed glasses, a feature that makes him immediately recognizable on campus and in newspapers, he says that his generation may be the last to remember Thailand's imperfect democracy. "Many students now, we know what it was like before the coup," he says. "We know the junta lies. We know that they create the fear."

### 'A scar on the people of Thailand'

Universities have long been the wellspring of popular uprisings in Thailand. When a snowballing student movement took to the streets for massive protests in 1973, it toppled the tyrant Thanom Kittikachorn and forced him into exile. When the palace allowed him to come back three years later — ostensibly to be ordained as a Buddhist monk but likely recalled by

the government to help stem the spread of communism from Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam — the movement reconvened. This time, the King's favor had turned against them, and the army and royalist militias were authorized to put down the unrest with lethal force.

Labeled as communists, student activists were slaughtered on the sports field, in hallways and in the elevators of Thammasat University, about a five-minute walk from the Grand Palace in Bangkok. The government says 46 students died on Oct. 6, 1976, though the toll is believed to have been far higher. Today, the killing field is a weed-strewn soccer pitch, around which homeless people nap on wooden benches with their shirts hiked up to their armpits in the scalding afternoon. There's little sign of the site's haunting history — just a small metal placard inscribed with a terse account of the uprising in 1973. No one has been held accountable for the atrocity, and talking about it is still taboo. "People are afraid that it could happen again, these things just keep repeating," Netiwit tells TIME. "It's actually a kind of scar on the people of Thailand."

This dark moment in Thailand's history shocked

many into a long state of silence, but the extreme brutality of Bangkok's version of Tiananmen Square also galvanized resistance. Last year, Netiwit organized an event at Chulalongkorn commemorating the 40th anniversary of the massacre. About 1,000 attended and more than 10,000 others watched an online live stream. Large-scale demonstrations have been rare since the coup, but this event — the first of its kind to publicly acknowledge the massacre — definitely constituted an act protest.

Without elections, it's hard to assess the scale of anti-junta sentiment in Thailand. The most outspoken objectors are either in prison or exile, while those who might have joined them are afraid to. Netiwit, for his part, draws inspiration and comfort from Hong Kong's Umbrella Revolution. Netiwit invited its best-known leader, Joshua Wong, to talk about fighting for democracy in Hong Kong at last year's Thammasat commemoration, but Wong was stopped at Bangkok airport and deported after being detained for 12 hours — a move that would have pleased Beijing, which regards Wong as a troublemaker. Thai authorities told Wong he was "blacklisted," and he ended up addressing the audience by Skype.

Netiwit has visited Wong

twice in Hong Kong, where the pair discovered they have more in common than a slight physical resemblance. Both became activists while they were still in high school, crying foul against new education policies that to them seemed like brain-washing. (In Wong's case it was "national education," which Beijing tried to impose on Hong Kong schools but relented in the face of protests organized by Wong, then just 15.) Both have been detained for

peaceful assembly and told to keep their mouths shut. And both are becoming outsiders in their own homelands.

"My views are basically the opposite of the government," Netiwit tells TIME, "but slowly, more and more young people are starting to agree with me."

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—With video produced, shot and edited by Helen Regan / Bangkok

## Thailand Monks: Wirapol Sukphol's case highlights country's Buddhism crisis

Jonathan HeadBBC News, Bangkok

The video of the monk, now known by his pre-monk name, Wirapol Sukphol, went viral after being posted on YouTube in 2013.

A subsequent investigation by the Thai Department of Special Investigations (DSI) uncovered a lifestyle of what appeared to be mind-blowing decadence. They tracked down at least 200 million Thai baht (\$6m; £4.6m) in ten bank accounts, and the purchase of 22 Mercedes Benz cars.

Wirapol had built a mansion in southern California,

owned a large and gaudily-decorated house in his hometown of Ubon Ratchathani, and had also constructed a giant replica of the famous Emerald Buddha statue in Bangkok's royal palace, which he claimed - falsely, as it turned out - contained nine tonnes of gold.

There was evidence, too, the DSI said, of sexual relationships with a number of women. One woman claimed he had fathered a child with her when she was only 15 years old, a claim the DSI says is supported by

DNA analysis.

Wirapol fled to the US. It took four years for the Thai authorities to secure his extradition. He has denied criminal charges of fraud, money laundering and rape.

### Monks behaving badly

How had a monk acquired so much influence, even in his early twenties? How was he allowed to behave in ways which clearly violate the patimokkha (the 227 precepts by which monks are supposed to live)? Monks are not even supposed to touch money, and sex is strictly off-limits.

Monks behaving badly are nothing new in Thailand. The temptations of modern life have thrown up many examples of monks with unseemly wealth, monks taking drugs, dancing, enjoying sexual relations with men and women or abusing girls and boys.

There are also temples which have attracted large and dedicated followings, through skilful promotion of charismatic monks and

abbots, said to have supernatural powers.

These have capitalised on two aspects of modern Thai life; the yearning for spiritual succour among urban Thais, who no longer have a close relationship with a traditional village temple, and a belief that donating generously to powerful temples will bring success and more material wealth.

It appears Wirapol tapped into this trend. He arrived in the poor North Eastern province of Sisaket in the early 2000s, establishing a monastery on donated land in the village of Ban Yang. But according to the sub-district head, Ittipol Nontha, few local people went to his temple, because they were too poor to offer the kind of dona-

It was a jarring image; a group of Buddhist monks, with shaven heads and orange robes, sitting back in the soft-leather seats of an executive jet, passing luxury accessories among themselves.



tions he expected.

The monk started holding elaborate ceremonies, he said, selling amulets, and built his replica of the Emerald Buddha, to attract wealthier devotees from other parts of the country.

These followers have described being beguiled by his soft, warm voice, and convinced by his claim to have powers - like the ability to walk on water and talk to deities. In turn, Wirapol gave generously to those with influence in the province; many of the cars he bought were gifts for important monks and officials.

Even today he still has supporters, who argue he is at heart a good man, entitled to enjoy donated luxuries.

### Plagued by scandals

After a succession of scandals, people are openly talking about a crisis of Buddhism in Thailand. Numbers of ordained monks have been falling steeply in recent years, and many smaller village temples are unable to support themselves financially.

The body which is supposed to govern the Buddhist clergy is the Supreme Sangha Council, but this comprises a group of very elderly monks, and until this year had not had a properly functioning Supreme Patriarch for more than a decade. It has proved ineffective.

The National Office of Buddhism is also supposed to regulate the religion, but it too has been plagued by leadership turmoil and allegations of financial irregularities.

The government has now introduced a law requiring temples, which collectively accumulate \$3-4bn (£2-3bn) in donations every year, to publicise their financial records. It is also talking about introducing a new, digital ID card for monks to ensure those tainted by malpractice cannot be ordained again.

The faltering morality of monks, though, is partly rooted in the way Buddhism has evolved in Thailand.

For 150 years there have been two quite different forms of Buddhism; that of the more austere, Thammayut tradition, practised in the elite, palace-backed temples of Bangkok, which upholds the strict rules about monks detaching themselves from the material world; and the looser Mahanikai tradition of the provinces, where monks are part of the community, joining neighbourhood activities, sometimes in violation of the patimokkhai.

In the villages, temples have served as schools or traditional centres of medicine and venues for local celebrations. The advice of monks has been sought on



a range of worldly issues; in this environment the line between what is and is not acceptable behaviour can become blurred.

### 'Building cases against themselves'

The other source of the problem is the hold that superstition has over many Thais, and the way this has become commercialised.

Monks are these days often used more as deliverers of semi-religious rituals - like blessing new cars or houses for good luck - than practitioners of the 227 precepts. No-one in Thailand bats an eyelid at the sight of lottery tickets being sold inside temples.

This love of superstition extends to rich Thais, who are happy to donate generously in the belief this will ensure greater fortune in the future.

Phra Payom Kalayano, the abbot of a temple north of Bangkok well known for his criticism of the commercialisation of Buddhism, has appealed to Thais to be more thoughtful about donating.

"Nowadays people think

good karma is about throwing money at temples - especially rich people. They have faith, but they don't think. That is not practising good karma, smartly. That is just blind faith.

"At the same time, some monks are stupid. They don't know how to manage the donations they receive. Instead of managing the money to build karma and prestige for the temple, the monks end up building criminal cases against themselves," he said.

In a simpler age, before the arrival of globalisation and its many consumer distractions, it was easier to advocate a monastic life that disavows all material pleasures. But it is harder today to insist that monks should forego technological conveniences like smartphones and air travel.

It is even harder to define what role monks should play in 21st Century Thailand, beyond the provision of services like amulets and good luck blessings, which can so easily turn into a money-making business.

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## Drop Bogus Charges Against Thai Studies Academics

Conference Organizer, Attendees Accused of Violating Public Assembly Ban

Thai authorities should immediately drop charges against a prominent academic and four conference participants for violating the military junta's ban on public assembly at a conference at Chiang Mai University in July 2017, Human Rights Watch said today. The International Conference on Thai Studies included discussions and other activities that the ruling National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) junta deemed critical of military rule.

Professor Chayan Vaddhanaphuti, who faces up to one year in prison if convicted, is scheduled to report to police in Chiang Mai province on August 23. Four conference attendees - Pakawadee Veerapatpong, Chaipong Samnieng, Nontawat Machai, and Thiramon Bua-ngam - have been charged for the same offense for holding posters saying "An academic forum is not a military barrack" to protest the military's surveillance of participants during the July 15-18 conference. None are currently in custody.

"Government censorship and military surveillance

have no place at an academic conference," said Brad Adams, Asia director. "By prosecuting a conference organizer and participants, the Thai junta is showing the world its utter contempt for academic freedom and other liberties."

Since taking power after the May 2014 coup, Prime Minister Gen. Prayut Chan-ocha has asserted that the airing of differences in political opinions could undermine social stability. Thai authorities have frequently forced the cancellation of community meetings, academic panels, issue seminars, and public forums on political matters, and especially issues related to dissent towards NCPO policies or the state of human rights in Thailand.

Frequently, these repressive interventions are based on the NCPO's ban on public gatherings of more than five people, and orders outlawing public criticisms of any aspect of military rule. The junta views people who repeatedly express dissenting views and opinions, or show support for the deposed civilian government, as posing a threat to national





Thai authorities charge Professor Chayan Vaddhanaphuti and four participants of the 2017 International Conference on Thai Studies at Chiang Mai University with violating the junta's ban on public assembly. © 2017 Private

security, and frequently arrests and prosecutes them under various laws.

Over the past three years, thousands of activists, politicians, journalists, and human rights defenders have been arrested and taken to military camps across Thailand for hostile interrogation aimed at stamping out dissident views and compelling a change in their political attitudes. Many of these cases took place in Chiang Mai province in northern Thailand, the hometown of former prime ministers Thaksin Shinawatra and Yingluck Shinawatra.

Most of those released from these interrogations, which the NCPO calls "attitude adjustment" programs, are forced to sign a written agreement that state they will cease making political comments, stop their involvement in political

activities, or not undertake any actions to oppose military rule. Failure to comply with these written agreements can result in being detained again, or charged with the crime of disobeying the NCPO's orders, which carries a sentence of up to two years in prison.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Thailand is a party, protects the rights of individuals to freedom of opinion, expression, association, and assembly. The UN committee that oversees compliance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which Thailand has also ratified, has advised governments that academic freedom, as an element of the right to education, includes: "the liberty of individuals to express freely opinions about the institution or system in

which they work, to fulfill their functions without discrimination or fear of repression by the State or any other actor, to participate in professional or representative academic bodies, and to enjoy all the internationally recognized human rights applicable to other individuals in the same jurisdiction."

"Academics worldwide should call for the trumped-

up charges against Professor Chayan and the four conference attendees to be dropped immediately," Adams said. "Thailand faces a dim future if speech is censored, academic criticism is punished, and political discussions are banned even inside a university."

### Art Exhibition Following Fua Haribhitak Initiative Improving Society Through Arts

22 September - 8 October 2017  
at RCB Galleria 2 Floor,  
River City Bangkok

Grand Opening:

Friday 22 September 2017 at 18:00

- Panel discussion "Following Fua Haribhitak Initiative and Art Conservation" by Santi Leksukhum, Tepsiri Suksopho, Hongjorn Sanehngamjaroen.
- Opening remarks by Sulak Sivaraksa.

Sunday 24 September 2017 at 18:00

- Panel discussion "84 Years Sulak Sivaraksa and Thai Art and Artists" by Dr. Harsha Kumara Navaratne and Pracha Hutunuwat, moderated by Wallapa van Willenswaard (the INEB Institute).

Saturday 7 October 2017, 10:00 - 15:30

- Art Demonstration Activity by Surichai Siriboon and Students from Pakchong School, Thanprasatphet Witthaya School and Soeng Sang School, Nakhon Ratchasima.

The income from this exhibition will be partly contributed to the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB)



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# The Way Forward— the International Network of Engaged Buddhists 2017 to 2027

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Outcome of INEB retreat March 14 - 16,  
Wongsanit Ashram, Siam

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## The Story of INEB

Shakyamuni Buddha advised how monks, nuns, and lay people should work to benefit society with ethical and altruistic intention and actions. Despite the Buddha's clear counsel, Buddhists today do not always apply the Dhamma for social change. Instead, Buddhists around the world often focus only on their own meditation or ritual practices, scarcely recognizing the suffering just beyond the walls of their temple or Dhamma center. Indeed many teachers and senior Sangha members only teach or preach and choose not to meet suffering face to face. Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa reminds us that, "Buddhism by definition is engaged. Meditation without social engagement is escapism."

Buddhist social activism as a movement arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century with Sangha member's reaction to colonialism, foreign invasion, Westernization, and the injustices of oppression. We see examples in China, Burma, Sri Lanka, India and elsewhere, Angarika Dharmapala and Dr. Ambedkar's extraordinary efforts are worth noting, and we see other examples by individuals in Sri Lanka, India, as well as China and Burma.

The Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat

Hahn coined the English phrase "engaged Buddhism" in the 1960s. Thich Nhat Hahn stressed in his writings in Vietnamese the need for "renewing Buddhism" and "a Buddhism updated" (the translated title of his 1965 book *Dao Phat Hien Dai Hoa*), and concepts that he combined with the French phrase *le bouddhisme engagé*. While many academics and activists have since tried to define what engaged Buddhism is, Thich Nhat Hahn is clear that what the Buddha taught more than 2,600 years ago was an ideal of acting within society, not retreating from it. The Buddhist path is by definition engaged with people because it deals with the suffering we encounter in ourselves and in others, right here and right now.

Ajahn Sulak first met Thich Nhat Hahn in 1974 in Ceylon at an interfaith gathering. Their camaraderie and work created the foundation for the International Network of Engaged Buddhists. While Thich Nhat Hahn's articulation of Buddhist activism arose as a response to war, Sulak's Buddhist engagement evolved in response to globalism, the rise of transnational corporations, military dictatorship, and absolute monarchy.

Ajahn Sulak worked with other Buddhist trail blazers throughout the 1970s and 80s. In



Thailand this included working with Buddhadasa Bhikkhu on Dhammic education, and Phra Payutto on Buddhist economics, in Cambodia with Maha Ghosananda on promotion of peace and reconciliation, and in Sri Lanka with Dr. Ariyaratne on sustainable communities. Ajahn Sulak was also deeply drawn to the non-violent struggle that His Holiness the Dalai Lama led and especially his power of forgiveness. Ajahn Sulak has maintained a close personal friendship with other Tibetans, namely Professor Samdhong Rinpoche and Lodi Gyari Rinpoche. These are just a few of the many individuals who Ajahn Sulak worked with and learned from, and who helped shape innovative ways to apply the Buddhist teachings in contemporary society.

By the late 1980s, Ajahn Sulak recognized a need for a vehicle to bring Buddhists together across tradition and borders to cooperate for social change. He organized a meeting on his in-laws houseboat in Uthai Thani. Among those who attended, there were monks and nuns, meditators and radical leftist activists, professors and bureaucrats—in all, three dozen individuals from eleven countries, mostly though not exclusively Buddhists. Clerics from three Japanese Buddhist sects were represented, as well as a group of Burmese monks, a handful of English, American, and German Buddhists, and a number of Ajahn Sulak's acolytes were present. The result of the three-day meeting was the creation of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), the organization that has since had the widest worldwide reach of any of Ajahn Sulak's endeavors.

There was a lively debate at the time about the organizational structure for INEB. Ajahn Sulak's past experience of running overlying compartmentalized organizations gave him the idea of having almost no regulations for INEB, which would be instead a "loose network of spiritually

connected friends with no central authority." Ajahn Sulak convinced others that a network of *kalyanamitta*—spiritual friends—should be the central organizing principle. Along with *kalyanamitta*, Ajahn Sulak said, "I wanted to organize the network the way the Buddha had established the Sangha. I think the Buddha would agree with equality, fraternity, and liberty as our guiding principles."

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Thich Nhat Hanh, and the Dalai Lama accepted Ajahn Sulak's invitation to become the patrons of INEB, representing the three Buddhist vehicles, or routes to enlightenment—the Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. All three have attended INEB gatherings over the years but their participation has been more by association than participation.

INEB's growth started with individuals and groups in Southeast and East Asia, and spread to encompass other countries. After 26 years of its founding, INEB has members and organizations in nearly thirty countries. The Bangkok-based INEB secretariat office coordinates activities, with a handful of staff. The organizational structure remains decentralized. The focus of INEB arises from the concerns of the network members, not from Ajahn Sulak or others who are seen as elders of the organization. As the network is vast and diverse, so too are its projects, actions, and interests. INEB has supported human rights and social justice for the Burmese during the Saffron Revolution, the Tibetans' right of self-determination, for the Chittagong Hill Tribes in Bangladesh, and continued discrimination against the Dalits ("Oppressed"), even though India's caste system has long been outlawed. INEB has advanced peace and reconciliation efforts in Sri Lanka and elsewhere, interfaith and Buddhist-Muslim dialogue, and worked on various environmental campaigns including addressing the effects of climate change,

as well as opposing dams, mines, and deforestation. INEB has advanced the equality of women, especially supporting Buddhist nuns, and has created platforms and tools for socially engaged Buddhist youth to engage in civil society, protest, and advocacy.

### **INEB, Structural Violence, and the Three Poisons**

Throughout the 1990s, INEB was part of worldwide movements on socially engaged Buddhism that gathered strength and shared methods and resources. Among the socially engaged Buddhists, there were different ways of expressing, countering, and offering methods to overcome personal and societal suffering to uproot greed/consumerism, anger/militarism, and ignorance/mass media. Ajahn Sulak's articulation of the Buddha's teachings to modern society was influenced by the work of the Norwegian polymath Johan Galtung, who pushed Ajahn Sulak to take on the system of injustice rather than focus on individuals. Galtung began writing about "structural violence" in 1969 to describe the institutionalized ways in which suffering is perpetuated in modern society, and Ajahn Sulak fused this concept with his analysis of socially engaged Buddhism. Ajahn Sulak summarizes structural violence as the "systematic ways a society's resources are distributed unequally and unfairly, preventing people from meeting their basic needs." To explain how these structures are maintained, Ajahn Sulak brings in the fundamental Buddhist teaching how three "poisons," or mental factors, are the root causes of suffering for every individual: ignorance (delusion about the nature of reality), hatred or anger, and greed. These poisons are at the root of personal, and structural violence in the modern world.

Ajahn Sulak explains that personal greed—the insatiable desire for accumulation, an ever-expanding possessiveness—manifests on the

societal level as capitalism, consumerism, and the extraction of natural resources in a manner that ignores the limits of the environment. He sees individuals' seeds of hatred manifesting in the world as militarism and all the support structures for war. Ajahn Sulak's harshest critique is reserved for the peddlers of delusion, which is the primary origin of all our troubles—advertisers and the popular media, which promote useless products and unwholesome ideas that lead people away from a meaningful life of contentment and towards poverty and a sense of separation and alienation.

"If we are serious about getting rid of greed, anger, and ignorance in ourselves," Ajahn Sulak says, "we must inquire how we actively or passively take part in perpetuating the three poisons in society as 'structural violence.' Once we see the interconnections, we can work simultaneously on our own spiritual development and to dismantle the structural violence in society," Ajahn Sulak wrote in *The Wisdom of Sustainability* (2009)

### **Reinterpretation of the Buddhist Precepts**

Various INEB *kalyanamitta* have been on the forefront of enacting modern reinterpretation of the five Buddhist precepts—that is abstaining from killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct, and intoxicants. By extending these guidelines beyond an individual's personal practice to society at large, the socially engaged Buddhist works at once on herself or himself and at the same time for the benefit of others. For example, while we might not be killing outright, we must examine how our own actions might support war, racial violence, or the breeding of animals for human consumption. Regarding the precept to abstain from stealing, we are called to question the moral implications of our participation in capitalism and of the depletion of natural resources. Ending political structures of



male dominance and the exploitation of women is a natural extension of the precept to abstain from sexual misconduct. And the vow to abstain from false speech naturally raises questions about the false and biased views voiced by mass media and mainstream education. Finally, the fifth precept, to avoid intoxicants, deals with nothing short of international peace and justice, since, as Ajahn Sulak has said “the Third World farmers grow heroin, coca, coffee, and tobacco because the economic system makes it impossible for them to support themselves growing rice and vegetables.” Such a reinterpretation of the Five Precepts is an appropriate application of the Buddha’s teachings to modern socioeconomic and political dilemmas.

### The Core Values and Culture of INEB

Connecting through *kalyanamitta*—spiritual friends—is the central core value of INEB that has sustained and must be maintained into future work. The Buddha spoke often about the value of wise mentors and admirable friends to help guide us along the spiritual path. Ajahn Sulak likes to quote from the *Upaddha Sutta*, in which his close disciple Ananda asks the Buddha whether maintaining admirable friends and camaraderie is “half of the holy life.” The Buddha responds, “Don’t say that, Ananda. Don’t say that. Admirable friendship, admirable companionship, admirable camaraderie [*kalyanamitta*] is actually the whole of the holy life. When a monk has admirable people as friends, companions, and comrades, he can be expected to develop and pursue the noble eightfold path.”

One of the keys to being an authentic *kalyanamitta* is to remain honest with oneself and others. “Good friends will tell you what you don’t want to hear,” Ajahn Sulak often says. In Ajahn Sulak’s book *Religion and Development* (1986), he writes, “A Good Friend—*kalyanamitta*—would be one’s ‘other voice’ of conscience, to put one on the

proper path of development so that one would not escape from society, nor would one want to improve society in order to claim it as one’s own achievement.”

This *kalyanamitta* network is what created the original organizational structure for INEB; and it remains so today. This is unique, precious, and must be maintained. At the same time, there are limitations to a loose network, and for the next decade of INEB work, we must consider how to create a more structured organization. As this structure is created, communication within and outside INEB and branding must be consciously approached, including having a common vision and mission statement, clear priorities, guiding principles, and understanding how our “network” and “actions” create the INEB brand. Innovative ways must be sought to bring our *kalayamitra* family into a more prominent, cohesive, and professional network. It will be a challenge to find effective modern management tools, ones that do not set up internal power dynamics, and ones that will not corrode the original values of INEB’s core foundation. Yet, in order for INEB to have a wider reach, impact, and ultimately relieve the suffering of more individuals, we must accept the challenge with an ever-expanding vision and defined structure.

INEB was founded by individuals with deep influence from the radical left, Marxist, and the protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s. As INEB moves into the second decade of the 21st century, there needs to be a conscious effort to create a positive framework of engagement, not just to protest, and one that is anchored in *bodhicitta*. While different Buddhist schools teach *bodhicitta* in various ways, for INEB we understand that all sentient beings are endowed with *bodhicitta*—this potential for enlightenment within us—and this is the basis for our mutual respect. Our engagement with society arises from our *bodhicitta*. In this way, socially engaged Buddhism must continually find

ways to rearticulate the fundamental Buddhist teachings, for example:

- **Sila/ethics**—this is not only abstaining from harmful behavior, but sila is an expression of INEB's solidarity of renouncing individual concerns and working for the benefit of the community. This is how we serve others in our family, community and beyond in ever more appropriate, and mindful, and non-violent ways;
- **Samadhi/meditation**—this is not only about cultivating right mindfulness and calm abiding meditation practice, but it is where we open and learn with our heart, to go beyond our comfort zone, and be with and serve those who are experiencing suffering;
- **Panna/wisdom**—this is not only about cultivating the insight to cut through delusion by seeing the inter-relations between our mind, our perception, and the world around us, but it is to act upon that to remove the cause of suffering for oneself and others.

Regarding INEB's outreach, our interest and care to connect to others to address local and global issues must become stronger. We need to give more attention—care—to connect with others with action that is not dependent upon boundaries or identity, which includes working with other faiths and those without religious belief. INEB has and must continue to respect life in all its forms. Our activism must remain progressive, and as Buddhists, we must dare to take on the responsibility for massive, global issues. The core value, study, and understanding of interdependence/*paticcasamuppada* will guide us to see and realize fraternity, equality and liberty. *Paticcasamuppada* can be seen as our effort to see others' varied perspectives and let go of

our own ego-grasping position. At the same time, we must maintain in INEB the essence of wholesomeness (*kusala* oriented), cooperation (platform to be a change maker), and valuing education at the local level—all of which are essential to building sustainable communities. Additionally, INEB must keep equality as a top priority, especially in regard to addressing the various issues surrounding women's rights.

The multifaceted nature and speed at which suffering is being wrought in the world demands INEB to step to the next level as an organization. As we define and coordinate in a more structured manner, we can create a stronger sense of belonging to our *kalyanamitta* family. Not only will this support us as we take on ever-increasing responsibility, but we will be sustained by support of our INEB Sangha. With deep respect for Ajahn Sulak and the trailblazers of socially engaged Buddhism in the last half of the century, may INEB's work into the next decade—2017-2027—truly alleviate the suffering of the world. As the 8th century Indian saint Shantideva wrote:

*Whatever joy there is in this world,  
All comes from wanting others to be happy.  
Whatever suffering there is in this world,  
All comes from wanting oneself to be happy.*

*What need is there to say a whole lot more?  
Buddhas work for the benefit of others,  
Ordinary people work for the benefit of themselves,  
And just look at the difference between them!*



# Interfaith Rainforest Initiative

Phra Paisal Visalo

Nobel Peace Center, Oslo, 19 June 2017



Without nature, human beings are nothing. Our existence is possible because of air, water, food and other requisites provided by nature. Not only survival, our well-being also depends on the generosity of nature. We feel relaxed and become peaceful when we are surrounded by forest, sitting near the rivers, or are touched by the wind from the sea. Even spiritual development is attainable when our mind is open for the ultimate truth that is manifested through nature.

We, the Buddhists, owe a great deal to nature. The origin of Buddhism was found in nature, as the Buddha attained enlightenment under a tree in a forest on the bank of a river. His first

sermon was delivered in the forest. Many of his disciples achieved enlightenment in the forest as well. It is not as exaggeration to say that the connection between Buddhism and nature is inseparable.

Nature deserves our respect and gratitude. Even the Buddha expressed his appreciation for the tree that sheltered him during his practice for enlightenment. Buddhists are therefore obliged to conserve the nature out of gratitude. According to Buddhism, even breaking the branch of a tree that has given one shelter is as vicious as harming the friend who helps us.

The Buddhists are advised to live in harmony with nature. Though we need nature to sustain our

life, we should do it gently in the same way as a bee collects pollen from the flower, neither polluting its beauty nor depleting its fragrance.

But what is happening now is quite alarming. Nature is being destroyed all over the world, even in Buddhist countries. Forests are being slashed and burned in the name of development. A lot of living species, which we Buddhists regard as friends in cycle of birth and death, are becoming extinct. And now we are going to reap what we sow. We are facing an ecological crisis that is threatening our survival as a species.

The ecological crisis we are facing now is fundamentally a spiritual crisis. Deep in our mind we are disturbed by the sense of lack, but in our quest for fulfillment we get lost. We mistakenly believe that material acquisition will fulfill our life. So we try to accumulate material wealth as much as possible, at the expense of harming nature. But in spite of gaining enormous material wealth, we never become fulfilled. We are not aware that this sense of lack will disappear only when we attain inner peace, not by having more material wealth.

Without inner peace and fulfillment, human beings will not stop destroying the nature for

material gratification. This is one of the issues where all faiths can play a significant role in order to protect nature. Each faith emphasizes the importance of inner peace and spiritual fulfillment. Religion can help people realize inner peace and get free from excessive material desire. Cooperation among various faiths are badly needed since faiths are vital elements in the struggle against extreme materialism, which is the main reason behind global environmental destruction, especially massive deforestation.

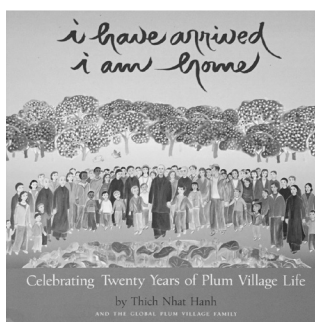
Different religious faiths are also one of the most powerful cultural and social forces that can inspire people all over the world to work together to protect nature for the common good of humanity. Faiths can join hand in hand in supporting sustainable development, and half any policies that destroy nature permanently for short term benefits. Any attempt to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor should be sanctioned by all faiths, as such gaps contribute to environmental destruction in many ways. All faiths should consult and come up with an alternative economics framework that aims for the enhancement of well-being-physically, socially, and spiritually, through moderate consumption.

There are a lot of Buddhist communities in Thailand, especially Buddhist temples, that are working to protect the forest in different parts of the country. Many Buddhist traditions are applied to instill in people a sense of respect and gratitude towards the forest. They are also mobilized to stop illegal logging and deforestation.

However, these attempts are not enough. More initiatives need to be implemented, and they should be carried out in cooperation with other faiths in the near future.

Interfaith alliance is an important contribution to forest protection. I am happy and feel honored to be part of this initiative.

## Recommended Reading



I have arrived  
I am home

Author: Thich Nhat Hanh  
Publisher: Parallax Press





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# Statement of Participants of The Interfaith Rainforest Initiative<sup>1</sup>

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21 June 2017

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## **The Earth's rainforests are an irreplaceable gift.**

They support boundless biodiversity, a balanced climate, and the cultures and communities of indigenous peoples who live in them. They generate cooling air and rains that water the Earth. They are spectacular, and vital to all life.

And they are at grave risk.

**We, people of many faiths and spiritualities, gathered in Oslo** to hear the cry of Earth's rainforests, their flora and fauna, and the people who live in them. We are Indigenous, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Daoist, joined by scientists who share with us, and open for us, a deeper appreciation of the miracle of the forests. We are from 21 countries – from Amazonia, the forests of Indonesia, the Congo Basin, Meso-America and South and Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands, and from the US, Canada, Europe, and China. While from many places, we recognize that we are one human family, that we share one Earth.

These glorious forests make our lives possible. They provide clean air and abundant water. They store carbon and stabilize the climate around the globe. They provide homes, food, medicines and livelihoods for hundreds of millions of people.

They are dependent on the health and well-being of their indigenous and forest-dwelling peoples, just as these people, and all the rest of us, depend on the forests. We are in this together – humanity and forests, people and planet. If forests thrive, we will thrive. Without forests, we all perish.

During our time together, we spoke frankly. We recognized that unrestrained consumption, lifestyles of the global north, and irresponsible financial systems, devastate the rainforests' biosphere and ethno-sphere. We listened to accounts of the persecution and murder of indigenous peoples and others who protect the forests. We learned about governments unwilling to pass or enforce laws needed to ensure the future of rainforests and the rights and traditions of those who continue to be their guardians.

These realities are haunting. This destruction is wrong. As we formed a community, becoming one out of many, a resolve emerged among us.

## **We will not allow this to happen.**

Together, we affirm the gift of life, our reverence for our common home and for the miraculous manifestation that rainforests embody. We affirm that we are all caretakers of Earth's rainforests, just as the forests care for us. We embrace

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<sup>1</sup> This statement is addressed to leaders in government and business, to leaders and followers of our spiritual and religious traditions, and to the wider human family.

the responsibility for ongoing action which that entails.

We commit to form an international, multi-faith rainforest alliance, devoted to the care of these forests and the people who protect and live in them.

**We pledge to rally our spiritual and religious communities to act.**

We will train our leaders and educate our followers about the urgent need to protect rainforests, sharing the insights of traditional knowledge and science in the service of truth, knowing that without protecting, restoring and sustainably managing forests, we cannot save Earth from the ravages of climate change.

We will advocate for the restoration of rainforests and the rights of indigenous peoples, sharing with leaders in government and business that protecting the forests is a moral duty, and that failing to do so is an offense against life itself. We will support indigenous and forest people to assert and secure their rights, including their free, prior, and informed consent to development on their

territories. We will advocate for increased access to finance for the ongoing protection of rainforests. We will work for an end to the criminalization of forest protectors and for their safety.

We will change our own lifestyles, including our diets and consumption patterns, learning to live in harmony with the rainforests.

**Finally, we pledge to continue to work together, to strengthen our resolve, and to act boldly** in the months and years to come.

A spirit of compassion and truth has been with us as we have met. This spirit awakens hope. It calls to us.

We have listened together and learned together. In this statement, we have spoken together. Now, we will act together. For the sake of the rainforests and the people who live in them, and for the future of the planet, we commit to respond.

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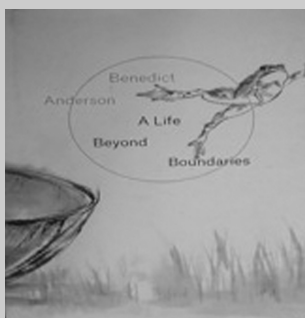
## Recommended Reading



Charismatic Monks of  
Lanna Buddhism

**Edited:** Paul T. Cohen

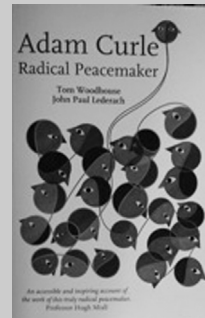
**Publisher:** Nordic Inst of Asian Studies  
(February 28, 2017)



A Life Beyond Boundaries

**Author:** Benedict Anderson

**Publisher:** Verso (April 26, 2016)



Adam Curle

Radical Peacemaker

**Authors:** Tom Woodhouse and  
John Paul Lederach

**Press:** The Book People

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## New Opportunities for Work, Study, & Training - Update on the INEB Institute

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### I. New Staff, Positions Available, & Outreach

Following INEB's 10-year strategy meetings, the INEB Institute has focused on creating a strong funding base for its various programs. To help us with this work, Arjun Kumar has joined our staff on a part-time basis. Welcome Arjun! For the summer, we have had two interns from Princeton, Erin Lynch (UK) and Stephen Chao (US). Arjun, Erin, and Stephen have done good work in unearthing many potential funders, and we have moved that work forward significantly. As Erin and Stephen return to the U.S. this August, we thank them for their conscientious and helpful work, and wish them well in their ongoing studies.

We have an opening for one very important position: Assistant Director of the English for Engaged Social Service program starting January 2018. Nilanjana Premaratna has done great work in that position for two years; in fact, she is likely to join us in January for a few weeks. However, a postdoctoral program has her commitments for the next year. Therefore, we are looking for someone with excellent English skills and a deep commitment to transformative learning to assist us with the English course for 2018. If you are interested, please contact: [director@inebinstitute.org](mailto:director@inebinstitute.org).

Finally, the INEB Institute has been selected to send a representative to a special meeting on transformative learning in Southeast Asia, entitled "Civic Engagement for a Just and Sustainable

ASEAN: Our Stories and Practices." Ted will attend this meeting, sponsored by the Institute of Asian Studies of Chulalongkorn University, and hosted in Yogyakarta by the Indonesian Consortium of Religious Studies, August 11-15, 2017.

### II. English for Engaged Social Service - 2018 is Season Three

With each round of our English course, it continues to improve in various dimensions. Many students feel a big shift in their levels of confidence as a result of the course, and English skills go up, sometimes dramatically. A number of students have carried on the work they started with us, especially in the areas of leadership, climate change, translation, teaching English, and co-counseling.

Our big news is that this coming January (2018) we will offer the third season of this course from 7 January to 5 April. If you would like to join as a student, or know of others who could benefit from this course, we urge you to apply immediately. The application is now up at our website: [www.inebinstitute.org/apply](http://www.inebinstitute.org/apply). Earlier applications will receive priority, so please do follow through if you are interested.

If you represent a foundation or NGO who has sent students before, or who would like to send students for the first time, please contact us soon so that we can respond to your questions and begin the process of selection for your nominees.

### III. Training of Trainers for the 2018 English Program

For the first time in January 2018 we will be offering a Training of Trainers program, designed for those who would like to adapt the English course to the needs of their home community. English skills must be excellent (though they needn't be perfect) and you must have a genuine desire to become involved in the leadership of transformative learning, in this case built around English language skills. You will learn through observing and assisting in the course, and you will receive a certificate as a first level trainee. The skills we teach in the course are quite diverse; they include course design, practical knowledge of what works in language learning, social analysis and critical thinking, co-counseling or a similar listening/healing practice, meditation, leadership facilitation, and sufficient knowledge of the realities of climate change. For this reason, it may take you more than one time through the course to feel ready to lead your own course. We also know and expect that you will need to think through how the course will need to be modified to meet the needs of your target community. Nevertheless, we are sure of two things: 1) if you love language and teaching, and are committed to working for change, you will be preparing yourself for work that is deeply enjoyable and rewarding; 2) if you do carry through and start your own English for Engaged Social Service course (under whatever name), you will be making a huge impact.

You may apply as a trainee at the website cited above. Trainees must be available from 5 January to 12 April. You will also need to pay tuition at the same rate as students, because you will be receiving our personal attention and guidance throughout the program. However, your organization may be happy to support your fees, and if you are selected we will also assist you in finding donors to support your study. Scholarships are likely to be available, but cannot be guaranteed as of yet.

### IV. MA in Socially Engaged Buddhism

Here news is mixed. We are very far along in our work for this program within the Thai system. We began a process of review by committees, for which we had qualified and in some cases prestigious scholars. But differences of direction emerged with our primary collaborator, and we are now in a temporary hiatus. We are looking for universities, institutes, and departments—anywhere in the world—who would like to work with us on a program that is refined to a high degree, and which we are ready to set in motion.

### V. Adult Education for Transformation

At the March 2017 10-year strategy meeting of INEB leaders, I commented that the INEB Institute grew not only out of INEB's extensive experiences in alternative education, but also directly out of the INEB conferences. Those conferences bring people face-to-face to learn and share, and to explore the achievements and challenges of INEB affiliates on their home ground. In the context of discussing challenges we faced in implementing the MA program, Ven. Zinai of Luminary Nunnery in Taiwan and Chisa from Japan, suggested that we should perhaps focus on Adult Education programs that might be built around INEB conferences. I liked this idea very much, but felt it was likely too much to take on this year (for the conference in Taiwan).

Now with new challenges around the MA, our team is very interested in developing Adult Education courses focused on your work. Here "you" means socially engaged Buddhists who are part of the INEB network, whether in India, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Myanmar, Japan, or elsewhere. We are thinking of courses that might involve a few weeks of distance learning—reading and discussion—followed by 3-6 weeks of on-the-ground visits with Buddhist leaders as well as scholars and activists. We know from experience that wherever we study socially engaged Buddhism,





Princeton Interns Erin Lynch (right), Stephen Chao (center), with U. of Wisconsin researcher Jordan Baskerville.

Participants in the 2017 English Course.

we also need to study the milieu within which different groups have emerged. Thus, studying the work of Ambedkar Buddhists at all thoroughly absolutely requires the study of caste and the structures of violence built around caste. Similarly, a visit to Japan would likely focus on nuclear issues, the emergence of eco-temples, and perhaps the development of Buddhist hospice programs. Visits would occur within the context of reading and background study not only about such issues, but about the practices and perspectives of the primary engaged Buddhist groups involved in these issues.

We have the capacity to organize such a course for the summer or fall of 2018, and we would welcome any inquiries and ideas from INEB members that would help us identify and move in a practical direction. I'm not convinced that it is essential to build such a course around an INEB conference, though I think doing so would also be a good idea. Any group that is ready to work with us, that has a clear issue to explore or an event to organize a class around, would be of great interest to us.

In fact, for me the design and the implementation of the course, perhaps even funding, would not be the most difficult challenge. For me the key challenge would be in framing the course publicly in such a way that it would reach likely

adult students (of any age). Such students would be interested in a) reflecting on how to integrate personal and social transformation; b) helping to cultivate mindful leadership to confront the oncoming crises we face; and c) learning from the contributions of the ethical tradition we represent—socially engaged Buddhism; d) as it has developed in one of the specific local, regional, or national contexts of Asia. I suspect that university extension courses, or existing adult education programs, would be extremely valuable partners in recruiting for such a course. If any of you have connections with or ideas about such programs, we would love to hear from you.

Two final comments: 1) For the Adult Education for Transformation courses, we at the INEB Institute can do much of the work, but we would of course need to do that work in close cooperation with you; 2) Doing such courses will also give us practical and in-depth experience that we can apply to the MA in Socially Engaged Buddhism, whenever conditions become ripe for realizing the vision for that program that we have already developed to a very high degree.

**Ted Mayer**

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**Dear Friends and Family of Reverend Saboi Jum,**

It is with great sadness that all of us associated with the Grassroots Leadership Training heard of Rev. Saboi's death. His vision and courage spearheaded a movement of empowered leadership that has influenced many levels of governance – from communities and CBOs to local and national NGOs, church and sangha leadership - towards sustainable development, environmental awareness and peaceful discourse, and more recently, opening doors for advocacy to influence local and national government, not only in Kachin but all over Myanmar.

From the early days, Rev. Saboi had a vision for inter-ethnic and inter religious collaboration and a dream for peace in Kachin State, Myanmar and beyond. He was so brave, a true Kachin warrior. Without his timely invitation after the 1994 ceasefire, his huge encouragement, deep trust and unerring support, we would never have been able to navigate the seemingly impossible task to bring 20 Kachin leaders to Thailand for the first 3-month GLT residential training in 1996. We can be very clear here - none of the GLT trainings that have multiplied over the years would have happened without him.

We never asked or knew how he used his unfathomable influence to get the early groups passports and visas. We do know it was a lengthy process that took many months and many trips to Yangon that he masterminded with great skill and understanding of how to make things work in very challenging circumstances. The same tenacity was applied when several of us came and led follow up workshops for 1 alumni of GLT and subsequent groups. Somehow, he ensured appropriate permits and we were able to visit alumni without interference in Myitkyina and Banmaw, and later Lashio

and other places. In those early years, we consulted frequently on how to navigate challenges – he was with us at the start and end of the GLT training to brief participants, ensuring their safety in those difficult times.

In 1995, when we first started out, we were taken aback when Rev. Saboi asked Pracha and Jane for SEM to devote at least 10 years to support Kachin leaders for sustainable change. He felt this kind of education for social change and empowerment would take at least a generation to show results. So we added in follow up trips and visits over many years to all the GLT alumni, culminating last year in the 20 year anniversary of the GLT programme, where we had alumni representing all groups meeting in Pyin Oo Lwin. It has been a great journey with many people engaging over the years. That the 20 year celebration was attended by many Christian and Buddhist alumni of multiple ethnicities in a Buddhist monastery that supported marginalised Muslims was a great reflection and celebration of Rev. Saboi's long held dream towards inter-ethnic collaboration for peace in Myanmar.

We have been humbled to witness Shalom Foundation and Metta Development Foundation emerge and grow alongside the GLT efforts, and know very well that these institutions and their work bear the fruit and impact of Rev Saboi's courageous, far sighted vision.

A deep and grateful thank you Rev. Saboi for your input, leadership and inspiration over the years that will continue to reverberate over the coming generations.

With love from all of us at SEM.

**Sulak Sivaraksa,**

**Pracha Hutauwatr,**

**Jane Rasbash and**

**Somboon (Moo) Chungprampree**

Bangkok, June 29, 2017

## Blazing a Trail to a New Future

Between 28 March and 13 April 2017, I was in Europe. I visited six countries namely, Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. My Thai friends who drove for me on this trip then went on to Switzerland and Liechtenstein while I headed back to Bangkok.

The primary purpose of my European trip was to attend the 10th anniversary conference of the World Future Council (WFC). Unlike in previous years, the 2017 conference took place in Berganz, Austria. Traditionally, the venue was in Hamburg, Germany.

Today, WFC also has an office in Beijing. This excited many of its founding members. Moreover, the Chinese representative from Beijing seemed well-connected to the authorities there. This made me recall an incident with the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP). WCRP was founded in Japan approximately 5-6 decades ago. Homer Jack, an American, was the director. He established contacts with Beijing and succeeded in bringing the president of a Buddhist Society in China to a conference in Japan. This was even before Nixon met Mao in China. In any case, Jack saw it as a major accomplishment. However, this eventually led WCRP to be cool toward H.H. the Dalai Lama, throwing into question its stated mission on religion and peace. This incident became the source of my open disagreement with WCRP.

A similar incident took place at the WFC meeting this year. The Chinese representative spoke glowingly about China—how modern it is, etc. This

compelled me to remind her that Beijing probably has the worst air pollution in the world and that the majority of Chinese are exploited and oppressed. Jakob von Uexkull, the founder of WFC and the Right Livelihood Award, claimed that the freedom to lead a way of life is most important. I replied that if this is so, must we accept an authoritarian way of life that benefits a few and excludes the majority? Or take the case of Singapore. Although Singapore enables the majority of its citizens to have a decent standard of living and even supports arts and culture, its inhabitants lack fundamental human rights such as the freedom of expression. Does WFC envision Singapore as the future of the world?

For me, freedom of thought is most important. This is because today capitalism exerts enormous influence on our thoughts and way of life. We uphold consumerism, competition, and individual achievement. We believe that technology will solve every problem. We believe that we already have the best economic system. And so on. In Buddhism, these beliefs constitute the wrong view. If we still cling on to them, we will never be able to solve the problems of socioeconomic inequality, structural violence, and climate change. I challenged the participants to debate openly on these issues, to practice meaningful democracy.

In Siam today, it is difficult to find individuals who possess sufficient courage to challenge the rich and powerful. Most mainstream reporters and journalists do not have it. Neither do university presidents.

The case of King Naresuan provides a good example. King Naresuan is the ultimate hero in the mythology promoted by the Thai military. The military is the deep state in the Thai kingdom. Any critic of King Naresuan, who passed away five centuries ago, is thus also depicted as an opponent of the military. Military figures have not been shy to charge these critics with lese majeste. This is a kind of lawfare to say the least.

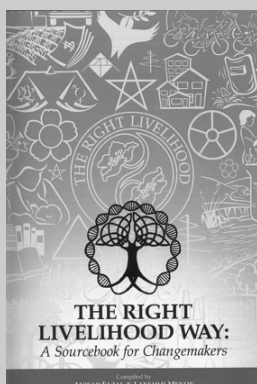
If the military gets its way, we will not be able to teach history in this country. If we are not even allowed to find factual truths from the historical past, how can we discover any of them in the present? If truths are expunged from the study of the past and present, how will we be able to create a new future? Recently, the memorial plaque at the Royal Plaza mysteriously 'disappeared' and was replaced by a new one with a completely different inscription. Is

this not a way of signifying that democracy has never taken roots in the kingdom? Or that the 1932 Revolution, an event that ended absolutism and led to constitutional monarchy, did not even happen? Note well that the political change in 1932 was seen as a stepping-stone towards more far-reaching social and economic changes in the country. Perhaps, the 'lost' plaque is merely another attempt to make the people forget their real power and the spirit of egalitarianism.

To cut a long story short, blazing the way to a new future that upholds egalitarianism and a less violent mode of production and exchange requires freedom of thought and expression.

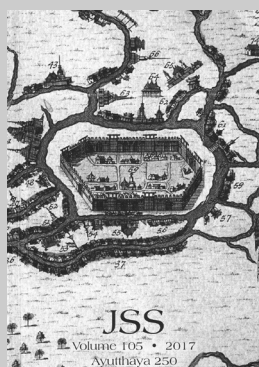
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## Recommended Reading



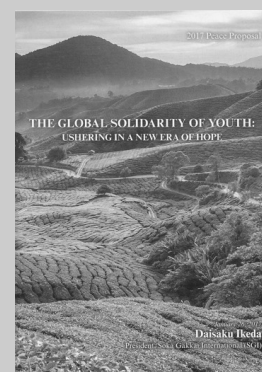
The Right Livelihood Way:  
A Sourcebook for Changemakers

**Compiled:** Anwar Fazal & Lakshmi Menon  
**Publisher:** Right Livelihood College (RLC)



JSS  
Volume 105, Ayuthaya 250

**Honorary editor:** Chris Baker  
**Editor:** Pual Bromberg  
**Printed:** Amarin Printing  
**Publisher:** Public Company Limited



The Global Solidarity of Youth:  
Ushering in A New Era of Hope

**Publisher:** Soka Gakkai International (SGI)  
**Compiled:** Daisaku Ikeda

## “Take back the NCPO, just return our democracy”

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There is a sizeable Thai community in Chicago. Its population is second only to the one in Los Angeles. There are many progressive people living in these Thai communities. They are truly concerned about the situation in the country. In 1992, the Thais living in the US celebrated the 60th anniversaries of the revolution in Siam and of the founding of Suan Mokh. The former was a great secular event, while the latter was a great Dhammic event.

Many Thais from all states in the US, except for Hawaii, took part in these twin celebrations. Quite a few also came from Canada. These celebrations took place when the country was under the iron fist of the NPKC dictatorship.

In 1990, the Thais in Chicago held a massive campaign demanding the Art Institute of Chicago (AIC) to return an ancient stone lintel—the so-called Phra Narai lintel—from Phanom Rung temple to the kingdom. AIC is a world-renowned institution. It claimed that it had obtained the stone lintel legally. The Thais however contended that the lintel had been stolen from the Phanom Rung temple before it was either sold or donated to AIC.

The Thai government sent a delegation to negotiate with AIC, but to no avail. As a result, the Thais in Chicago launched a campaign against AIC, which attracted a sea of people, both Thais and non-Thais. They made famous the chant “Take back your

Michael Jackson, just return our Phra Narai.”

In the end, AIC yielded to the demand of the demonstrators and returned the stone lintel to the Thai government. This shows that AIC knew the importance of ethical responsibility. If AIC’s mission is to exhibit Beauty, then it could not do so while lacking Truth and Goodness. Without Truth and Goodness, art could easily be corrupted and turn into something ugly at least in the eyes of the public. We are three years into the NCPO dictatorship. Is it not high time to start chanting, “Take back NCPO, just return our democracy”? Will this work? At least the AIC board members had shown that they possessed moral shame and moral fear (e.g., something that is legal may not be moral). I hope that the NCPO chief would likewise demonstrate these two traits, which are divine virtues. Without divine virtues, humans would be reduced to evil beings. For example, they would be thick-skinned and impervious to the negative consequences of their deeds.

Ever since the time of absolutism, the Thai ruling class has always maintained that the people are ignorant and could not be trusted to govern themselves. As such, democracy is seen as impractical. The 1932 revolution partly cracked this myth of the ruling class. But democracy in Siam has never found firm roots. It has faced numerous and



continuous obstacles and oppositions.

For instance, some of the 1932 revolutionaries themselves became autocrats who cooperated with the foreign invasion and occupation during World War Two. Fortunately, there were a sufficient number of patriots and democrats inside and outside of Siam. They formed the Free Thai Movement and enabled Siam to maintain its independence after WWII—unlike its fascist wartime allies.

Military figures who sided with the fascists in WWII eventually seized power from the democratic forces in 1947. The Thai military gradually became a deep state during the ensuing Cold War. At times, the military might also talk about protecting or promoting democracy, but this should be interpreted as window-dressing at best.

The 14 October 1973 movements grew out of youth groups that cherished democracy, believed in the freedom of expression, perceived the importance of engaging with people who think differently, identified with the excluded and marginalized in society, and so on. The 1973 movements ultimately gained momentum and culminated in the demand for a new constitution. Not only that! The movements also helped to topple the dictatorship. But the military remained a deep state despite paying lip service to democratic values. Furthermore, the political opening enabled the bourgeoisie to engage openly and directly in politics. The Communist Party of Thailand was still also a relevant political actor.

Then came the tragedy known as 6 October 1976. After the 1932 revolution, the militarist and royalist forces coalesced to demonize Pridi Banomyong. After 6 October, Puey Ungphakorn was demonized. In truth, it is difficult to find someone as dedicated to peace, social justice, and nonviolence as these two individuals.

As a state within a state, the military has worked closely with the absolutist forces. Also, it has been a faithful servant of capitalism and consumerism. It mistakenly believes that technology will solve every problem. Yet it still upholds and promotes various superstitions. It pays lip service to serving the people, but is unwilling to learn from the poor and the excluded in society. It promotes a deformed and corrupted form of Buddhism (how else could the Dhammakaya sect have flourished in the country? The Thai Sangha too is increasingly deviating toward a corrupt form of Dhamma!) The Thai military also serves empire, traditionally the US, and now increasingly China. It is a good friend of TNCs and a bad friend of the natural environment. The mainstream mass media intoxicates the masses with capitalism and consumerism. Mainstream education teaches students to be solitary, selfish, competitive, atomistic, distrustful, and cynical. It works to distance the mind from the heart.

Twenty-five years ago the people demanded for democracy to return to the kingdom. Many had been butchered in this process before a 'solution' to break the political deadlock was reached. The 'solution' was of course a royal-appointed prime minister. But how many Thais have truly questioned the democratic nature of this 'solution'?

In the past, the kingdom had many progressive students who attempted to think outside the box and rupture with social conventions. For instance, there were students who were active in the discussion platforms of the *Social Science Review* and Suksit Siam bookstore. They constituted a vital force contributing to 14 October 1973. These students groups deserved to be studied, and their strengths and weaknesses analyzed.

Will students today be able to surpass the achievements of their counterparts in the 1970s? If they are ready to take this leap, they would already

be chanting something like “Take back the NCPO, just return our democracy.”

Sooner or later, the NCPO will have to go in the way of the NPKC. But for democracy to return, it's not enough to simply hold elections, which will likely lead to a change of no change. The Democrat Party is not substantially better than Thaksin Shinawatra's parties. They are all detrimental to democracy. And so on.

Meaningful democracy will have to start with a combination of critical thought, mindfulness, sincerity, and open-mindedness. We have to be willing to listen to viewpoints different from ours as well as criticisms. When people swear at us, just think that they are doing it because they cannot swear at far more powerful people for fear of Article 112.

Not only do we need to cultivate meaningful words and thoughts and the respect for differences, we also must learn to speak with our hearts. We must realize that the marginalized and excluded in society can also be our teachers.

Mahatma Gandhi rose to prominence in India because he was willing to learn from the ordinary people. Moreover, he lived like an ordinary person. He was certainly not without serious flaws. For instance, Gandhi condoned the hierarchical and oppressive caste system in India. Put another way, if the younger generation wants to learn about Gandhi, they must also take into consideration his flaws and mistakes, not only his accomplishments and greatness. Ambedkar, who converted to Buddhism, is also worth studying. Compared to Gandhi, Ambedkar was a far more radical and egalitarian thinker. Moreover, he had relied on Buddhism to further the cause of social justice.

The younger generation has many more role models to look up to. Closer to home there are Pridi Banomyong, Puey Ungphakorn, MC Sithiporn

Kridakara, and Wanida Tantiwithayapitak. They should also learn from the successes and failures of the Assembly of the Poor (AOP).

The AOP's way of life is firmly rooted in our traditional wisdom, which upholds Beauty, Goodness, and Truth. This way of life can also be found in other grassroots communities throughout the kingdom. I propose that the younger generation and grassroots communities respect and learn from one another. They should act as one another's *kalyanamitta* or virtuous companions. This will be a relationship based on liberty, equality, and fraternity. I will not mince any words. We need another revolution in Siam. Over the decades, counter-revolutionary and reactionary forces have worked to 'dis-eventalize' the 1932 revolution. They have denigrated it in various ways through coercive and subtle means. They have robbed the memory of the revolution from the people. Even the memorial plaque at the Royal Plaza that signified the revolution and the birth of a new Siam had mysteriously 'disappeared' and was replaced by a new one with a completely different inscription. They have sought to make the people forget that democracy also has a long tradition in this country. But the spirit and essence of democracy cannot be easily diluted or erased despite concerted attempts to indoctrinate the masses with reactionary messages through films and soap operas and the promotion of false ancient heroes. These are false things that do not have lasting power. Truth, however, is lasting, and it will eventually disperse the fog of falsehood.

## Be determined to push for true democracy

The Sunday Nation, 25 June 2017



Sulak spoke at a seminar at Thammasat University on the 85th anniversary of the Siamese Revolution, saying the revolution would truly return to Thai society if there was a strong intention to step past dictatorship and capitalism and move towards democracy.

As such, he called on the ruling National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) to return to where it came from in order to allow a return of true democracy to Thai society.

Some successors of the People's Party, which revolutionised Siam 85 years ago, joined the seminar yesterday. They included Lt Col Buddhinart Paholpolpayuhasena, son of Phraya Paholpolpayuhasena, the party's leader.

The bloodless revolution on June 24, 1932, launched parliamentary democracy in Thailand, but the eight and a half decades since then have been punctuated by frequent military coups, including the latest one in 2014 that brought in the current

government.

Sulak said yesterday society must learn from the past and confront the truth. It should also dare to speak to those in power – to help them see the truth and not get lost in illusion.

He asked if it was appropriate to lay hope on one person or group. Coup-makers in the past, he said, were under an illusion that they were better than others, when in fact the essence of democracy was people having freedom and liberty in various aspects of life, such as freedom of expression.

Buddhinart, meanwhile, said he was proud of the People's Party for risking their lives to bring democracy to Thai society. This was because they believed that power belonged to the people.

Meanwhile, police yesterday detained a man who attempted to install a mock-up of the missing historical plaque marking the Siamese Revolution at the Royal Plaza.

The man, identified as Ekachai Hong-

kangwan, said he wanted to reinstall the plaque at the same spot but was picked up by police and taken to a military compound, Prachatai online news agency reported.

A police officer contacted by the agency said they had not charged Ekachai but only detained him for “some talk” for an understanding of the situation.

The venue was secured yesterday as the police have banned political activities there following the junta’s ban on political gatherings.

On Wednesday, the Metropolitan Police said it would keep a close eye on any activities planned for June 24, which marks the 85th anniversary of the revolution in 1932.

Police said they knew of at least five activities expected to take place in Bangkok on the day, besides academic seminars by experts and students. But the police made it clear they would not allow political activities at the Royal Plaza, where the 1932 plaque was embedded to mark the revolution. The plaque has been missing since April, and has been replaced by a “Na Sai” plaque, inscribed with ultra-royalist messages. Police said the Plaza was due to be cleaned in the morning and live music would be played there

in the evening.

In a related development, student activist group Serinonsi, of Kasetsart University, joined their fellows in commemorating the 85th anniversary of the Siamese Revolution yesterday.

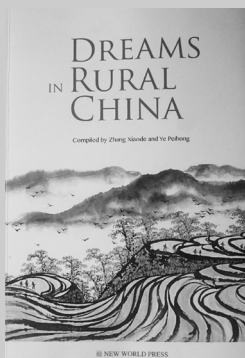
The group issued a statement to express their gratitude to the People’s Party who revolutionised Siam, while denouncing the ruling government for allegedly using excessive force to suppress the people and destroy democracy.

The group also expressed their support to those who stand up for liberty while opposing any use of excessive force by the government to suppress the people. They also asked the government to return democracy to the country quickly following the will of the People’s Party. Representatives read the statement before dispersing.

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social thinker Sulak Sivaraksa called on Thai society yesterday to learn from the past and have strong determination in revolutionising the country for a “true democracy”.

## Recommended Reading

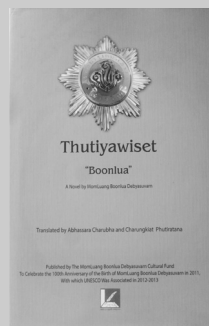


Dreams in Rural China

**Compiled:** Zhang Xiaode and Ye Peihong

**Translated:** Zhou Gang

**Press:** NEW WORLD PRESS



Thutiyawiset “Boonlua”

**Author:** Momluang Boonlua Debyasuvarn

**Publisher:** Abhassara Charubha and Charungkiat Phutiratana

**Press:** The Momluang Boonlua Debyasuvarn Cultural Fund



Vanishing Shangri La  
History of Tibet and Dalai Lamas  
In 20th Century

**Author:** Kn Raghavan

**Press:** The Book People

Closing Speech in Regional Expert Meeting  
“Revitalizing Rural Development  
for Poverty Eradication in Asia”

The Celebration of Dr. Puey Ungphakorn’s 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

August 4, 2017. Udon Thani

It is an honor to be here today, as we discuss the issues that so concerned one of Siam’s truly great individuals, Dr. Puey Ungpakorn. In keeping with the spirit of *Santi Pracha Dhamma*, I bring to you the perspective of someone who takes the teachings of the Buddha seriously and sees these teachings as stressing the importance of personal and societal change in order to eliminate the suffering.

In the spirit of Dr. Puey, who saw clearly the injustices in our society, I share a quote from the radical historian Howard Zinn who said:

I start from the supposition that the world is topsy-turvy, that things are all wrong, that the right people are in jail and the wrong people are out of jail, that the wrong people are in power and the right people are out of power, that the wealth is distributed in this country and the world in such a way as not simply to require small reform but to require a drastic reallocation of wealth.

Any fair-minded person can see that poverty is deeply connected to inequality – that is, there is a small group of people at the top who own and control most of the wealth, while the rest of us are left to struggle with not enough.

The modern capitalist system has lifted

people in parts of the world out of poverty and made others rich. Yet, for all of its supposed benefits, capitalism, in its current form has led to extreme levels of wealth concentrated in the hands of a tiny fraction of the global population. According to a recent study, the richest 85 people in the world have as much wealth as the bottom 3.5 billion people – about half the global population. And another fact: About half of the world’s wealth is owned by a tiny one percent of the population.

Research has shown that when small groups of people control huge portions of wealth, all kinds of problems arise – wealth inequality in a society is closely tied to health problems, violence, drug abuse, obesity, poverty and lack of social mobility. In a situation like this, improving one’s financial status becomes very difficult because of an unfair system. Instead of working to change the system, people often turn to magical thinking, and spend their hard-earned money on gambling and the lottery, looking to get rich quick. Despair and depression become rampant when so many have to work 12 hours a day or more, 6 or 7 days a week just to meet basic needs, with no time for inner development.

This is true in modern-day Siam. Look at how the ultra-wealthy corporations and narrow-minded business leaders use their influence to shape the law.



Our leaders in government often claim to care about Buddhism and Buddhist values. Can this be true when they help perpetuate an unfair system designed to keep the poor in poverty and the rich richer? Did the Buddha promote such values?

### Structural Violence

When the Buddha taught about the importance of non-violence, implicit in this message is the need for a non-violent society at all levels. Our current system is unfortunately, one built on structural violence – defined as the often hidden forms of violence and oppression within our political, legal, economic and societal structures that keep people disadvantaged and in poverty. This system of structural violence leads to the quiet violence of infant mortality, disease, and shortened lives filled with struggle and hardship.

From a Buddhist standpoint, structural violence, including the vulgar levels of inequality that exist today can be traced back to individuals whose minds are filled with greed, hatred and delusion. These poisons then become the basis for our economic, political and social structures.

Seeing the issue of inequality from a broader perspective, we can see that it is directly linked to climate change. Some of the largest corporations in the world with the richest board members, shareholders and CEOs also happen to be some of the largest contributors to global climate change. These companies make fortunes polluting the planet and selling things such as oil, gas, weaponry, meat and other useless things. They in turn use their financial influence to change laws so that they can make even more money at others expense by working to cut taxes and reduce the amount of public money spent on things such as health care, education and social security. Does the average Thai have this kind of power?

In the *Anguttara Nikaya*, the Buddha

stressed the need for obtaining wealth in ways that do not violate the precepts: that is to say without violence, theft, manipulation, or lying.

With a correct understanding of *paticasamutpada*, or interconnectedness, poverty becomes not just a problem for the poor, but also a problem and source of suffering for everyone else, including all living beings on the planet.

Dire poverty from a Buddhist perspective is not a virtue. Even monks and nuns, who take vows that include possessing only a few necessary things – must have food, clothing and shelter so that they can successfully practice the Dhamma.

All humans must have basic needs met, including adequate leisure time to spend with friends and family. Without leisure time, art and other important cultural aspects of any great society cannot be created.

A reasonable level of wealth in and of itself, is not necessarily a problem – but, attachment to money and devoting one's life to getting rich leads to many problems, including increasing poverty and greater levels of structural violence. Yet, basic needs must be met before inner development can take place.

### Dr. Puey

So how do we begin working towards an Asia without poverty? I suggest we look back at the wisdom of Dr. Puey.

In 1973, Puey wrote a short but powerful poem called “**The Quality of Life of a South East Asia: A Chronicle of Hope from Womb to Tomb**”. In it Dr. Puey outlines a modest but profound vision of life for all in South East Asia. His poetic proposal does not seek riches for all but instead, following the Buddha's Middle Way, aspires for sufficient material prosperity for humans to flourish. We can take this document as a practical, but still visionary guide for future development in South East Asia.

Dr. Puey begins with a wish for mothers to have access to good nutrition and child care so that a child's **"capacity for future mental and physical development is determined."** Puey then requests that schools "impart social values" – something that, unfortunately for us here in Siam, is sorely lacking in our school systems. Instead of quality social values, schools here impart submissiveness and unquestioning trust of authority figures, leading to true impoverishment of the mind. At INEB, we have started a different kind of school, The INEB institute, that teaches values such as critical thinking and compassion for others – no matter who they are or where they are from. We aim to teach not just the intellect, but also the heart-mind.

Returning to Puey's poem – in it he speaks of the need for law and order in society – something that the ruling elites have repeatedly failed to deliver. When a few super rich individuals have so much power, the rule of law will never be fair; there will always be unequal treatment for those with money and those without. We need only open the newspaper on any given day and see poor, oppressed people getting locked up for all kinds of minor offenses while the rich, the powerful commit much greater crimes yet continue to walk free.

Puey speaks to the need for **"free preventative medical service"** – something that has been identified as necessary for ending poverty across the globe. Instead of spending millions of baht on useless military equipment like submarines, and then threatening to cut funding of our already inadequate health care system, the government should be using that money to expand free health services for all and to promote our inexpensive, traditional herbal medicines that have worked for centuries.

## Buddhism's Role

I return now to the basic Buddhist teaching that

asserts every individual has within them, seeds for greed, hatred, and delusion — the three poisons. These three poisons are at the root of our own personal suffering. Yet we also possess, within each of us, the capacity to uproot these poisons. Through the practice of meditation and the rest of the Buddha's Eight-fold Path, the Three Poisons can be transformed completely and replaced with generosity, loving-kindness, and wisdom. This is an integral part of holistic development. Development that ignores the heart-mind, will ultimately lead to suffering.

We, here in Siam, like so many other parts of the world, are too caught up in materialism and consumerism. Even our practices of Buddhism are not immune from these forces. One way each of us can help eliminate poverty is to change our thinking about what merit making should be. Instead of constantly giving money to temples and hoping for future rewards of wealth, we can see that positive karma is generated when helping others. I and many others would argue that giving to non-profit organizations that work with for the poor generate more merit than simply giving to temples. That is not to say we should abandon alms-giving, but we should also donate our time and effort to groups that work for society and for the common good. It is vital to also take the time to study the great interpreters of Buddhism like Bhikkhu Buddhadasa and Bhikkhu Payutto, and come to a deeper understanding of what the Bhudda Dhamma can offer us, our society and the world.

At a personal level, the Jataka Tales remind us that supporting those in need, selflessly, without hope for reward – in other words, practicing in the spirit of a Bodhisattva – is one of the most important things we, as Buddhists, can do in this life. The Bodhisattva, one dedicated to serving all beings, is not just important in the Mahayana traditions but is central to the Jataka tales and therefore to the

Theravada. We should never forget that in the Vessantara Jataka, the evil Jujaka is a symbol for greed, hatred and delusion, not someone to be worshipped and revered. I have seen a disturbing trend in this country, even at temples, of people hoping for financial gain making offerings to Jujaka statues! To worship the greedy Jujaka is to miss entirely the message of the Buddha Dhamma. This trend is a disturbing symbol of just how much greed and lust for money is taking over our value system. Yet, at the same time, this can also be seen as a desperate act by people who are not given a fair economic chance in a society awash in inequality and unfairness.

Although acts of charity can be important, they are not enough to achieve a fair society. Empowering women is an essential step toward eliminating poverty: women must be given equal opportunities such as proper education, equal wages, and free quality healthcare. Furthermore, an increased minimum wage coupled with strengthening workers' rights through the power of unions has, throughout modern history, proven to be an effective antidote to poverty. People must also have reasonable work schedules that are enforced by law so that they don't have to work long hours that interfere with raising their children, taking care of their parents as well as time studying the Dhamma and practicing inner-cultivation. The government has, in its power, the ability to create thousands of new jobs for Thais that take into account the fragile environment and build a green economy that is not dependent on fossil fuels that contribute to global warming and environmental destruction.

The government's inaction on these matters of supreme importance will likely continue until we can achieve true democracy in Siam. Until that happens, the burden is on us to do what we can to act together with compassion and solidarity, in the spirit of Puey and the Bodhisattva path, to do what

we can to help the poor and oppressed, and to fight against injustice and inequality. We can support small, local businesses and reject mega-businesses that harm animals, pollute the environment, and produce useless products. We can vote with our dollars by rejecting the use of poisonous chemicals in our food, and by buying organic food and goods from local farmers and local sellers whenever possible. And when elections return to Siam whether in two years or two hundred years, we should support those candidates who have the common people in mind and a broader ethical vision for the planet, and reject those who are filled with greed, hatred and delusion.

I want to reiterate the fact that contrary to widespread belief, poverty is by and large, not the fault of the poor, but rather the fault of a modern system of structural violence that all of us here participate in to some extent. It is up to us to collectively wake up and understand how structural violence works and how we all, together, in solidarity, can reform this brutal system so that it reflects Puey's vision of *Santi Pracha Dhamma*, allowing people the right to speak truthfully and freely, to participate in government, to have meaningful employment, healthcare, and decent wages, while preserving Siam's environment and assuring that the next generation will inherit a society that embodies the teachings of the Buddha, and the path laid out by great moral visionaries like Puey, Pridi, Prince Sitthiporn and Bhikkhu Buddhadasa.

Thank you.

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I would like to thank Jordan Baskerville for drafting this speech for me.

# Adam Curle

4 July 1916–28 September 2006

We held a big ceremony to observe the 50th anniversary of the Thai Peace Day on 16 August 1995. Princess Sirindhorn presided over the ceremony, which was held at Thammasat University. The keynote speaker on that special day was Adam Curle.

It is likely that the majority of Thais did not (and still don't) know him. Only one of his many books had been translated into Thai: *Education for Liberation* (1973). Puey Ungphakorn gave me a copy of this book. Subsequently, I asked Wisit Wangwinyoo to translate it into Thai. The book was published by the Foundation for Children.

Curle was not only a brilliant educationist but also a committed peace activist. For Curle, peace is much more than the absence of war. As he put it, "I prefer to define peace positively. By contrast with the absence of overt strife, a peaceful relationship would, on a personal scale, mean friendship and understanding sufficiently strong to overcome any differences that might occur... On a larger scale, peaceful relationships would imply active association, planned cooperation, and intelligent effort to forestall or resolve potential conflicts." Peaceful relationships would also facilitate development.

Curle did not neglect the role of love in peacemaking. Love helps to cultivate inner peace or *metta* (loving-kindness). If we don't love our own selves, how can we possibly love others? Self-love is not narcissism but *metta*. Buddhists should make sure that they grasp this important point. Curle affirmed that love and peace lead to solidarity and

the overcoming of suffering. This condition would enable us to be fully human.

Also, Curle asserted that the root causes of conflict are anger, hatred, fear, and desire for power and money. All of them can be found in our minds. If they are not properly disciplined or taken care of, they would lead to unbalanced social structures. As a result, power struggles are endemic in social relations. Curle stated that often times the powerful don't listen to others. When this happens, they become narcissistic and hubristic.

Curle was born into a well-to-do family with respectable social standing. He wasn't an aristocrat. However, he was related to many important figures in British society such as artists, writers, composers, Oxbridge academics, etc. Curle himself had taught at Oxford and Harvard. However, he realized the drawbacks of being attached to prestigious education institutions in the West. Therefore, he went to teach at a university in the newly independent Pakistan instead. He wanted to guide higher education in Pakistan away from Western domination because education in the West had not paid sufficient attention to peace and nonviolent studies.

Curle's hope materialized in 1973 when he was invited to be the first professor of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford, England. Unfortunately, internal feud at the Peace Studies program frustrated Curle. He soon handed in his resignation. Curle felt that professors in the Peace Studies program should learn to cultivate inner peace and to communicate nonviolently. They should also be willing to listen to

their students with an open-mind. If they are able to build relations with students based on nonviolence, the latter may come to value peace, inner as well as outer. This would help lay the groundwork for a peaceful society.

Curle travelled extensively, especially to developing and conflict states. He worked selflessly behind the scenes. Contemporaries who are in search of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness can still see in Curle an exemplary model.

Curle was not a Christian, but he was a deeply spiritual person. When he moved to Ghana, he met the Quakers there, and was influenced by them. The Quakers are officially known as the Religious Society of Friends. The Quakers don't emphasize beliefs, doctrines, and rituals. Rather, they see the importance of every human person and stress the value of nonviolence and deep friendship. They also practice mindfulness. Mindfulness will empower a person to speak the truth to power and confront social injustices.

The Quakers in England treated Curle as an unofficial leader. They often supported him in various peacemaking activities in many countries.

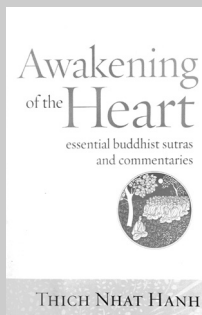
Subsequently, Curle gravitated toward Tibetan Buddhism. He greatly valued its mindfulness practices. He felt that they were profound. Moreover, he felt they had enabled him to reduce self-attachment and become better at serving all sentient beings. Curle thus openly stated that he was both a Quaker and a Buddhist.

I don't know Adam Curle well personally. But he had always treated me as a kalyanamitta. He gave me many invaluable advices when I planned to establish the Spirit in Education Movement. When he came to the Thai Peace Day ceremony in 1995, I took him to Chiang Mai University later on too.

On the occasion of Curle's 100th birth anniversary (apparently he was born in the same year as Puey Ungphakorn who gave me a copy of his book 'Education for Liberation') I would like to invite Thai people to learn more about this truly venerable person. Curle is an inspiration for anyone interested in, what Ajarn Puey calls, *santi pracha dhamma*.

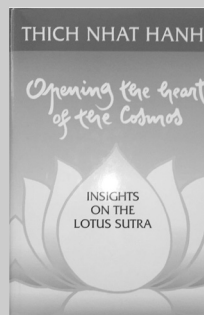
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## Recommended Reading



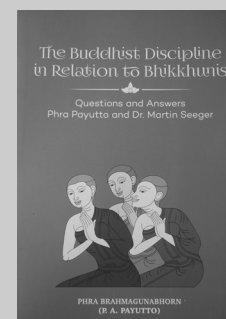
Awakening of the Heart  
essential buddhist sutras  
and commentaries

**Author:** Thich Nhat Hanh  
**Publisher:** Parallax Press



Opening the Heart of the Cosmos  
insights on the lotus sutra

**Author:** Thich Nhat Hanh  
**Publisher:** Parallax Press



The Buddhist Discipline in relation to  
Bhikkhunis

**Author:** Phra Brahmagunabhorn  
**Publisher:** Phliddham Publishing



# ‘GREAT DICTATOR’ OFF-LIMITS

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Reference: Bangkok Post, 24 Jun 2017

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YouTube has blocked viewers in Thailand from watching a version of ‘The Great Dictator’ at the government’s request, on a day that featured a few subdued observances of the 85th anniversary of the Siam Revolution.



A screenshot taken from ‘The Great Dictator’ film.

Access to the video with Thai subtitles was blocked after the Thai Academic Network for Civil Rights on June 12 announced plans for a synchronised viewing and sharing of the movie, and the Thai documentary ‘The Six Principles’ at 7pm on Saturday, to mark the anniversary of the end of absolute monarchy.

‘The Great Dictator’ is a 1940 political satire starring the legendary comedian Charlie Chaplin, who also wrote and directed the film to express his dismay at the rise of Adolf Hitler and fascism.

‘The Six Principles’ was produced by the Pridi Banomyong Foundation and Thai Film Foundation about the first declaration of the People’s Party when Siam changed to constitutional

monarchy in 1932. It remains accessible on YouTube.

It was found on Saturday, however, that The Great Dictator could not be viewed, as per the following message, because “this content is not available on this country domain due to a legal complaint from the government”.

It was not clear whether the reason was the content of the film or the subtitles later added to it. Other versions of the film are still available on the video-sharing network.

Despite increasing efforts by authorities to downplay the significance of the 1932 event and even to discredit some of its participants, activists, academics and students went ahead with low-key



Flowers are placed on the replica of the People's Party plaque in Thammasat University on Saturday to mark the 85th anniversary of the Siam Revolution. (Photo by Pattarapong Chatpattarasill)



"Is it proper to place all hopes on a single person or group of people?" asks Sulak Sivaraksa at a seminar at Thammasat University on Saturday. (Photo by Pattarapong Chatpattarasill)

commemorations on Saturday.

One act that did not escape the watchful eyes of the military government was an attempt by an activist to place a replica of the missing People's Party plaque in the Royal Plaza. Its disappearance in April and replacement with a plaque bearing a royalist message remains a mystery.

Ekachai Hongkangwan was reportedly taken by the military at 8.30am on Saturday after he tried to install the replica, according to Anon Nampa, an activist lawyer.

Earlier, Mr Ekachai wrote on Facebook that he would reinstate the plaque at 9am on Saturday.

At Wat Phra Si Maha That in Bangkok's Bang Khen district, a group of Kasetsart University students paid their respects to the People's Party and made merit. They later walked to the Constitution Protection Monument at Phranakhon Rajabhat University and held some activities to mark the arrest of some members of their group during a protest on this day two years ago.

They then read a declaration, condemning any act by the state to destroy or topple democracy, to use violence against people or subvert the right and freedom of people to express political views.

Their every move was watched by military

officers who also took pictures of them.

At Thammasat University on Saturday afternoon, security officials invited the 10 scheduled speakers for a 10-minute talk about the framework and content of their seminar before they could begin. Their event was titled "Uprooting of the Legacies of the People's Party".

Maj Puttinart Pholphayahasena, a son of Phraya Phahonphonphayuhasena, the leader of the People's Party, said: "Of all Thailand's many coups, the only one I can accept is the one staged by my father and other People's Party members. This is because they didn't pardon themselves. They did it knowing it they could face high treason charges. They did it with sincerity for the people."

Ekachai Chainuwat, an independent law academic, said the People's Party chose the parliamentary system for the country with three branches to protect sovereignty, but said that in his view the judicial branch was the one in dire need of reform.

"Unlike the other two branches, it is not linked to the people and is the only organisation that hasn't been touched, even after the rule the country changed," he said.

In addition to the concept that people are



Flowers are placed on a People's Party plaque in Thammasat University on Saturday to mark the 85th anniversary of the Siam Revolution. (Photo by Pattarapong Chatpattarasill)



A woman looks at memorial plaques of some members of the People's Party at Wat Phra Si Maha That in Bangkok's Bang Khen district. (Photo by Tawatthai Kemgumnerd)

the owners of sovereignty and the parliamentary system, another legacy of the People's Party is the rule of law.

"Although the principle of the rule of law was not written in the first constitution, it appears on the six principles of the People's Party," Worachet Pakeerut, an academic with the Nitirat group, wrote in a book titled 80 Years of Democracy.

Despite the fact that the political ideologies of the People's Party have been transformed and replaced gradually by another set of ideologies from opposing political forces, the contribution of the People's Party in trying to establish the democratic system of governance with the rule of law cannot be forgotten although it is incomplete, Mr Worachet wrote.

In an interview with Prachatai, Thongchai Winichakul, a well-known Thai historian, said: "The greatest failure of the rule of law in Thailand is legal inequality in which the judicial system has helped to establish that certain groups of people are above the law.

"The revolution of 1932 is not yet finished, not merely with regard to the political system, but with regard to the establishment of the rule of law."

Sulak Sivaraksa, a writer and independent academic, said the 1932 revolution would bear fruit if people learned from the past and had the courage to face the truth.

"We need to find allies. We need to tell the truth to those in power so they won't get carried away," he said. "Is it proper to place all hopes on a single person or group of people? All sectors should be able to check those in power.

"If we're determined to move on from capitalism and dictatorship to democracy, the 1932 revolution will return and the far right will lose. I therefore urge us to take back the junta and bring us the essence of democracy."

Coupmakers from past to present truly believe they are good people so they are more fit to rule. They view politicians as immoral people, he said.

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# World Tibet Day Statement

Issued by World Tibet Day Foundation Wed, June 28, 2017

On the auspicious occasion of the 82nd birthday of Tibetan spiritual leader, HH the XIV Dalai Lama on July 6, 2017, celebrated worldwide as World Tibet Day, Tushar Gandhi, Great-grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, launched Friends of Tibet's 'Vision Wellbeing' in Mumbai.



'Vision Wellbeing', the 18-minute long film by C-Wing, a Mumbai-based design firm in solidarity with Tibet and Tibetan people was produced using selected images from various activities of Friends of Tibet and the philanthropic work carried out by Friends of Tibet Foundation for the Wellbeing since 1999.

World Tibet Day (WTD) was initiated in Chicago in 1997 at an informal meeting between Tendzin Choegyal, the Dalai Lama's younger brother and Richard Rosenkranz, a Pulitzer Prize nominee in history and a former correspondent from the US Senate. Rosenkranz proposed the concept of WTD, saying it could become an annual worldwide event, aimed at helping the Tibetan people regain essential freedom. Believing in the potential of the proposed event, they offered the idea to His Holiness, who unanimously gave them his blessing and warm support. Founded in 1998, World Tibet Day has grown into one of the most important events on the Tibetan calendar.

Sethu Das, Director, World Tibet Day Foundation, says "one positive action each of us can take on World Tibet Day, no matter which country we live in, is to urge our government and our elected representatives, to approach the Chinese Government on behalf of the Tibetan people in order to restore its lost religious, social and political freedom. One of our goals with World Tibet Day is to put pressure on decision makers in China to agree to negotiations with the Tibetan government in exile in India without any preconditions."

Friends of Tibet, one of the principal organisers of 'World Tibet Day' worldwide, expects more than 40 countries to join the event with various events and related activities in July this year.

Do join this global event on Thursday, July 6, 2017 by doing whatever you can in order to spread the message of Tibet and the purpose of observing the day as World Tibet Day!

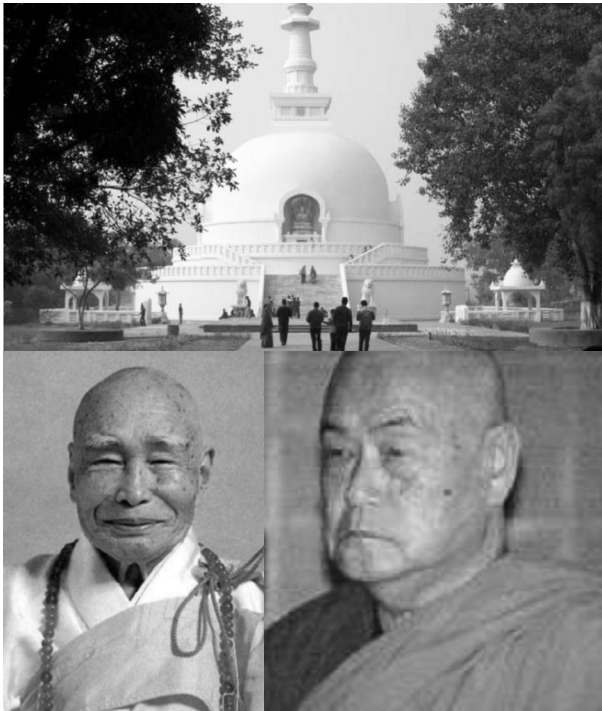




# Shakubuku! The Advent of Nichiren Buddhism in India

Aspi Mistry, Buddhistdoor Global, 18 08 2017

Peace Pagoda in Rajgir. From [travelagencyindia.wordpress.com](http://travelagencyindia.wordpress.com)



Nichidatsu Fujii.  
From [blackcablondon.net](http://blackcablondon.net)

Surai Sasai.  
From [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org)

When one looks at the revival of Buddhism in India, it seems remarkable that of all the various Buddhist schools that sprouted up in Japan during the Kamakura period—including the numerous variants of Pure Land, Nichiren, and Zen—it was Nichiren Buddhism that took root in India. This is due to the forceful and spirited campaigns of the Soka Gakkai organization and their application of the principle of *shakubuku*—“conquering evil aggressively”—which the founder of the sect, Nichiren, introduced as a method to correct Buddhist schools that had lost their way.

Just as remarkable is the fact that while Nichiren Buddhism was established in the 13th century in Japan, it continues to appeal to the same social groups in India today as it did in feudal Japan. In those days, Nichiren Buddhism was mainly practiced by the rising middle

class of merchants and craftsmen, and Nichiren continues to be popular among India’s middle class today, the professionals of modern society having replaced the craftsmen.

Most young Nichiren Buddhists in India, many of them Bollywood stars, business managers, models, professionals in metropolitan centers, will swear that “*Nam Myoho Renge Kyo*” was brought to the shores of India at some point in the 1960s, by their beloved sensei, Daisaku Ikeda, the present and “Eternal President” of Soka Gakkai International.

The story of Nichiren Buddhism in India, however, begins in the year 1931.

Nichidatsu Fujii was born in Japan on 6 August 1885. He was ordained as a monk at the age of 19, and at the age of 28 he had a dream that his destiny was to spread the teachings of Nichiren. Relying on a prophesy in the *Lotus Sutra* that Buddhism would spread from East to West, he decided to travel West. Unfortunately, the imperial government convinced him that West was Manchuria and China. Together with a group of like-minded disciples he formed the *Nippon-zan Myohoji Dai-sangha* (Japan-Mountain Wonderful Dharma-Temple Great Sangha), funded by the government, and the members of the sangha were given military titles.

During his time in China, Nichidatsu sent dispatches to the imperial government, providing them with valuable intelligence on the movements of Chinese troops and other logistics. This arrangement, however, came to an abrupt end when the disastrous earthquake of 1923 struck Japan. Nichidatsu attributed the earthquake to the sins of the Japanese government—as Nichiren did in his time when disaster struck Japan—resulting in him breaking ties with the government. It was during this time that it dawned on Nichidatsu that “West” might refer to India, the land of the Buddha.

Nichidatsu arrived in Calcutta in 1931, and met Mahatma Gandhi at his ashram in Wardha in 1933. Their first meeting was very short, but “Nichidatsu was so



overcome with emotion at being in the presence of Gandhi that he could only stand with his hands pressed reverently together while tears of joy poured down his face... It is thanks to Gandhi that Nichidatsu became completely dedicated to the cause of non-violence.” (Montgomery 1991, 256) After the meeting, Gandhi asked Nichidatsu to remain at his ashram and gave him the name “Fuji Gurui.”

The experience of Gandhi picking up Nichidatsu’s drum and chanting, left a deep impression on Nichidatsu. He writes in his memoirs, “When Gandhiji beat the Dharma-drum of *Namu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo* . . . the independence of India was assured in the near future. . . . We were drawn into the laughter of Gandhiji and laughed rejoicingly together. It was like a dream.” (Fujii 1980, as quoted in Montgomery 1991, 257)

Nichidatsu is best known for constructing pagodas all over the world as symbols of peace. He started the initiative after World War II, and the first peace pagodas were erected in the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, where more than 150,000 people, mostly civilians, perished due to the atomic bombs. After building these two pagodas, Nichidatsu returned to India to build a peace pagoda in Rajgir, in 1965. Probably the first *gohonzon*<sup>1</sup> in India was enshrined in this pagoda.

In addition to the pagodas, Nippon-zan Myohoji has been involved in various movements for peace and justice around the world.

“We must go out among the people.” Nichidatsu taught. “In the sutra there is a line that states, ‘So this man, practicing in the world, shall disperse the gloom of living.’ Religion, which does not ‘go’ will not be able to provide the relief which must be brought about. . . . Religion becomes isolated from the happenings of the world because it tends to be occupied in seeking solutions to one’s own spiritual matters. If we fail to prevent a nuclear holocaust, one’s desire for security is nothing but a dream. All must be awakened.” (Dharma Walk)

Almost 30 years after Nichidatsu first set foot in India, another Japanese monk, Surai Sasai, followed in his footsteps. Bhadant Nagarjun Arya Surai Sasai was born in 1935, and went to India in 1966. In India, he met Nichidatsu Fuji, whom he helped to build the Peace Pagoda at Rajgir. After a disagreement with Nichidatsu, Surai Sasai originally intended to return home to Japan, but a dream stopped him. In the dream, a figure resembling

Nagarjuna<sup>2</sup> appeared, saying: “Go to Nagpur.”

In Nagpur, Surai Sasai met Wamanrao Godbole, who had organized the mass conversion ceremony in 1956, with Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. According to Surai Sasai, a portrait of Dr. Ambedkar in Godbole’s home, made him realize that it was in fact not Nagarjuna, but Dr. Ambedkar who had appeared in his dream. Surai Sasai built the second Myoho temple in Nagpur, the first having been built by Nichidatsu in Rajgir, and was granted Indian citizenship in 1987. He is one of the main leaders of the campaign to “liberate” the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya from Hindu control—the law governing the administration of Mahabodhi Temple ensures that the committee in charge of the temple will always have a Hindu majority.

Many years ago, I was travelling in the region of Nagpur, visiting various historical and archaeological sites. At one point, we stopped at a little house at the foot of a hill that was thought to house a temple with the remnants of Nagarjuna’s alchemical laboratory. The man living in the house with his family was called Angulimala by the locals and was the caretaker of the monastery across the road. Over a cup of tea, we learned that before he converted to Buddhism, Angulimala was a “bill collector”—a contract killer. Like the Angulimala of legend, he had stopped in his tracks when he encountered Buddhism. In one corner of the humble abode was a small shrine with a Nichiren *gohonzon* given to him by Surai Sasai. His daughter was keen to do some chanting with me, so we sat crosslegged in front of the shrine and chanted “*Nam Myoho Renge Kyo*” for about five minutes.

In his case, *Shakubuku* had worked.

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<sup>1</sup> A *gohonzon*, an object of veneration in Nichiren Buddhism; a calligraphic mandala inscribed by Nichiren.

<sup>2</sup> One of the most important Mahayana Buddhist philosophers.

*Aspi Mistry is a coordinator and founding member of the Dharma Rain Centre for Buddhist Studies in Mumbai. A book and poetry lover, a practicing Buddhist interested in all spiritual traditions, and a Free Tibet and human rights activist, who likes to say, with apologies to Shantideva, “May I be a thorn in the sides of those who desperately need a thorn in their sides . . .”*

## References

- Montgomery, D. B. 1991. *Fire in the Lotus: The Dynamic Buddhism of Nichiren*. London: Thorsons Publishing.
- Fujii, N. 1980. *Buddhism for World Peace*. Translated by Y. Miyazaki. Tokyo: Japan-Bharat Sarvodaya Mitrata Sangha

Dear Ajarn Sulak,

Thank you very much for your kind message directed to me via your personal Facebook page on Tuesday, 27 June.

And please excuse my writing in English. I am abroad and do not have access to a Thai keyboard.

I take your query as a valuable hint of advice. And if and when the final decision is made after taking in consideration of all factors and circumstances (i.e. when, what other conditions and restrictions being put on the Bangkok gubernatorial election, will there be a new law stipulating limitations on the roles and responsibilities of BMA, etc.), a detailed policy platform will be spelled out. Clean, green and flowery Bangkok is certainly one important feature marking a high quality of life in a livable city Krub.

My interest in BMA is driven by a proposition that after many years of divisive and contentious politics, a “genuine democracy” has never been put into practice! In fact “democracy” has been given a bad name.

In this uncertain period waiting for the promised return to democracy, the framing of the country’s political challenge has been off the mark and rather unfair, i.e., that the Thai people are not ready for democracy, that open politics always leads to violent confrontation and instability, that all politicians are corrupt and political parties are full of people with conflict of interest !

Therefore, there has to be an ironclad firewall against open, participatory and competitive politics in the form of new restrictive organic laws and suffocating administrative measures. I am afraid that this will be counterproductive and a source of a new cycle of a new conflict.

I happen to be a firm believer in the good sense of the people, that they know best about their own affairs, that their ownership of and participation in the political process is a necessary condition for good governance, that only through a genuine democratic framework will the many challenges, economic woes, social malaises, that we are facing as a nation would be effectively resolved.

So, in my humble opinion, there is an urgent need for a new “Dusit Thani” of H.M. King Rama VI, where a space for a decent and effective democracy can be experimented in its fullest form possible.

I see Bangkok and its citizenry as that suitable platform to redeem the good name of democracy and to demonstrate, that contrary to what some have claimed, an effective and participatory form of democracy is doable in the Thai political landscape. And once Bangkok has been nurtured to full democratic health, the City of Angels can serve as a spearhead in our efforts to reform and rescue Siam-Thailand to its rightful place in the international arena, with its full glory as a country that had survived the destructive gales of colonialism in 18th-19th Centuries.

In recent years, I have observed that on the global platform, our country has been punching below its weight, not commensurate to its past achievements !

If the genuine democratic experiment in Bangkok proves successful, a coalition of major cities and provinces around the country could be established in order to bring necessary reform to the entire nation. Bangkok can serve as an Incubator of Good Governance !

For this to happen, the entire citizenry has to be engaged and energized to bring out their best civic qualities onto the open platform of a decent, open, transparent, participatory, and accountable politics with a strong mechanism of check and balance.

I believe, based on the forgoing assumption, turning Bangkok into a fertile ground for a decent democracy to flourish is a worthy cause for our collective pursuit. After a solid foundation has been established, a coalition of decency has emerged, it will be for others, or the next generation to carry the torch of reform forward Krub.

You kindly asked in your message directed to me if I had big ideas and big projects to turn Bangkok around, my sincere answer is: If together we can reform Bangkok to realize its full potentiality, together we can reform Siam-Thailand to achieve its full Glory that it deserves!

If together we can turn every sacred word

contained in the formal name of Bangkok (กรุงเทพมหานคร อมรรัตนโกสินทร์ มหินทรายุธยา มหาดิลกภพ นพรัตนราชธานีบูรีรมย์ อุดมราชนิเวศน์มหาสถาน อมรพิมานอวตารสถิต สักกะทัตติยะวิษณุกรรมประสิทธิ์) into reality, reflecting its highest aspiration enshrined in it by the Founding Father of this City of Angels, I think the task will have been accomplished Krub.

This cannot be achieved by any one person alone, or in a short period of time. There is an urgent need for civic volunteers, enlightened citizens and committed groups of people, old and young, from different walk of life, to dedicate themselves to this worthy cause.

And the desirable consequences will be far reaching, even beyond the confines of the City of Devas Krub.

Sincerely yours,

**Surin Pitsuwan**

@ Geneva

27 June 2017

Dear Sulak,

I just returned from Donegal, Ireland where I went for a week after spending four days at a Conference in the UK. I thought you might be interested in reading a summary of some panel speakers on the 1st day of the "Oxford Conference on Animal Ethics". I wrote up two more days of talks that summarized some more of the presentations. Let me know if you are interested in receiving them. My own presentation was on the 3rd day, and was titled "A Buddhist Interpretation of Animal Suffering". I was reminded, during the conference, that Leo Tolstoy at one time wrote that until the indiscriminate slaughter of animals stops taking place, mankind will continue to have wars.

Hugh

**Hugh J. Curran**

4 April 2017

Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa

International Network of Engaged Buddhists

Dear Mr. Sivaraksa,

I have had the honour and privilege of serving as Executive Director of the World Food Programme for five years. During these years, I was extremely fortunate to work very closely with many distinguished colleagues from around the world, including you.

Please accept my sincere gratitude and appreciation for all your cooperation and support. Our close coordination and consultations in addressing the challenges of providing food assistance to the world's most vulnerable people helped ensure fewer people went to bed hungry. Even more importantly together, we began the critical work of delivering upon our shared goal of achieving a zero hunger world.

I do hope we remain in touch in the future. I pray as always for your good health and prosperity.

Best

**Ertharin**

*It is with gratefulness and love that we announce the passing of*  
**Rev. Dr. Alfred Bloom**

Al moved on to the next step of his journey the evening of August 25, 2017. Earlier in the day he was surrounded by his family and several close Dharma friends; family was present at his passing. Al was comforted by the love of his community, who shared the nembutsu together and assurance of the boundless compassion of Amida Buddha.

Our treasure is but an earthen vessel, and now Al is at peace. We are deeply saddened by our loss but are so filled with love and gratitude—for the life he gave us, for his presence in the world to share his thoughts, for the amazingly generous hearts who have shared this time with us in thought and action and prayer.

*The Bloom Domingo Family*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE MEMORIAL SERVICE  
WILL BE FORTHCOMING

Dear Ajarn Sulak:

I am happy that you liked the books, and I have some great news for you! That is, I was able to order the five books that you requested and will send them as I receive them. This way, certain that you can continue on your exploratory journey traversing and meandering through analytical historical discovery.

As I read Ben's book—I felt that he opened a completely new arena of ideas, some of which I had contemplated during the early stages of writing my theses. That is to say, the Thai heritage of Neo-Colonialism and a Semi-Feudalistic Society. I, however, was not able to develop the ideas I had—directed to narrow down my thesis. It was a good thing that I did, or I would never have finished it. I really enjoyed Ben's book too! There is another book that I ordered with a forthcoming release soon; namely, Loos, Tamara. In Plain Sight: Impunity and Human Rights in Thailand (New Perspectives in Se Asian Studies). Perhaps, you will need a copy too!

On another note, I purchased one of Ben's lectures from the Siam society—you introduced Ben and the discussion gave me much insight about Ben and into his thinking. Since then, I ordered an additional thirty-three lectures on DVD from the Siam Society through my daughter.

Ajarn, I am glad that you always think of me often while reading the New York Review of Books, and the friendship that we have over the years. I daily think about you and your family—you are always in my prayers and thoughts. I look so forward to seeing you and engaging with you in conversations and discussions.

Thank you for the renewed best wishes for Noi and me, as I send them back to you and your family!

With Warmest Regards,

**Noi and Tom**

## Pa Mem

10 May 1932 - 30 May 2017



Aunt Mem was a British. We fondly called her Anty Mem, her name was Venetia Walkey. She lived in Siam for a long time, and was married to Inson Wongsam. Both of them were artists and spent time together at Dhamma Park and the Art Gallery in Lamphun.

She was a Buddhist for social engagement, i.e. She did not only practice the dharma for her own survival, she wanted to help all living creatures. She joined INEB (International Networks of Engaged Buddhists), and attended meetings with this organization both in Siam and abroad.

No matter what INEB was doing for society, she would join with strong willingness. Whether it was an Interfaith pilgrimage or seminars about bringing good news to apply for the benefit of others. She often also wrote for *Seeds of Peace*.

As an artist, she helped INEB open to beauty promoting goodness and truth. She made her own sculpture, in order to disseminate the law of dependent origination (Paticca-samuppada). She exhibited a sculpture at the birthday celebration of the Supreme patriarch at Bowonniwet Temple. Her sculpture was exhibited at other places as well.

When we organized world sacred music festival in Chiang Mai in 2000 A.D. with almost all the artists around the world, she welcomed the artists to perform at her Dhamma Park in Lamphun too, coordinating Lamphun and Chiang-Mai to be linked with each other. She was always generous with me.

She was older than me by one year. She spent her time with her husband happily. Both understood each other, even after ill health was dominating. She practiced the dharma to heal herself, until her death on 28th May 2017.

Sulak Sivaraksa

## Francois Houtart



Francois Houtart (Brussels, 1925 - Quito, 6 of June of 2017) was a Catholic priest and sociologist Marxist Belgian, founder of the Tricontinental Center (CETRI) operating in the Catholic University of Leuven and the magazine *Alternatives Sud*. He was a recognized figure of the altermundista movement.

He was the grandson of Count Henry Carton de Wiart (1869-1951) - who was one of the leaders of the Catholic Party and a pioneer of Christian democracy. Houtart was initially formed at the seminary in Mechelen.

He was ordained a priest in 1949. He held a degree in political and social sciences from the Catholic University of Louvain, and was a graduate of the International Institute of Urbanism applied in Brussels. He was also a doctor in sociology at the University of Louvain, where he was a professor from 1958 to 1990.

Between 1958 and 1962, Francois Houtart coordinated the work of the International Federation of Socio-Religious Research Institutes, which carried out an extensive analysis of the situation of Catholicism in the demographic, social and cultural context of Latin America, published in 43 volumes.

When Pope John XXIII announced the Second Vatican Council, Dom Hélder Camara, then vice president of the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM) jointly with Monsignor Larrain, Chilean bishop, asked Houtart to synthesize that study to distribute to all the bishops at the time of the opening of the Council, with the idea of presenting the problem of Latin American Catholicism to the world episcopacy. Since then, Houtart had been an advisor to these and other bishops in the organization for pastoral plans and

working documents for Episcopal Conferences (CELAM III, CELAM IV).

Houtart also had the opportunity to participate in the formation of a generation of Latin American sociologists, who studied at the University of Louvain between the years 1960 and 1980, laying the foundations of the studies of sociology of the religion in this continent. Houtart was strongly linked with the Liberation Theology movement, of which he was considered one of its most radical exponents, to the point of having been linked to the Sandinista revolution of Nicaragua. Therefore, Houtart did not escape the controversy that was generated in the years 1980 and 1990 before the condemnation and sanction that the Holy See carried out towards that current of thought.

He settled in Ecuador in the last years of his life, in which he collaborated with the Pueblo Indio Foundation, founded by Monsignor Leonidas Proano. Until the day of his death, he was a professor at the Institute of Higher Studies (IAEN) and a professor of the Master of Political Sociology at the Central University of Ecuador.

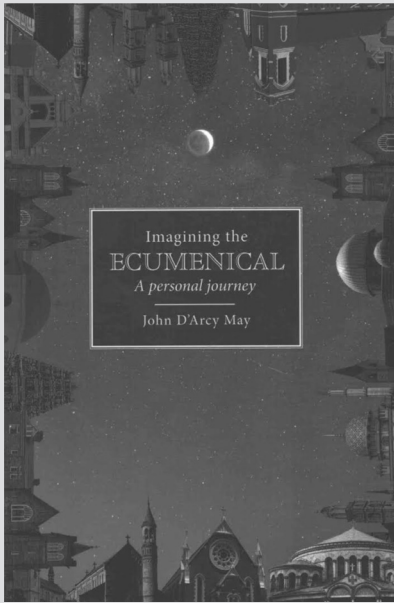
In 2010, on the occasion of the attempt to nominate him for the Nobel Peace Prize by some social organization, one of his cousins demanded the withdrawal of the candidacy because, he claimed that 40 years before, Houtart had raped his eight years old brother. Houtart acknowledged that he "touched the boy's genitals twice", and called the event "an unthinking and irresponsible act." However, a year and a half later, he went against the rejection of feminist organizations of their presence in Nicaragua, which he backed by arguing that the indictment was the result of emotional imbalance of the complainant.

In 2010, he was chair of the Permanent People's Tribunal in Dublin, of which Sulak Sivaraksa was a member to condemn the then President of Sri Lanka for committing crime against humanity, as the then President had ordered the killing of more than fifty thousand Tamils---women and children in hospitals and schools---although the Tamil Tigers had already accepted defeat.

There are a few Thai priests who were students of Houtart, and still belong to the Theology of liberation.

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# Imagining the Ecumenical: A Personal Journey

*Paul Collins*

In its twentieth century history, Ecumenism was called both 'the great new idea of our time' and 'the big bore of our time.' Perhaps because the ecumenical idea remained the property of the Christian churches as they entered a period of steady decline in the West. The wider dimensions of the ecumenical are only now receiving the theological attention they deserve.

Theology is originally and essentially narrative, and one of its most effective media has traditionally been story. In telling the story of his journey from an unquestioning Catholicism through Christian ecumenism to the developing relations between the world's religions, John D'Arcy May brings into sharp focus the questions raised by interreligious relations for theology. Despite their neglect by much of academia

and the media, the religions are an integral component of the post-9/11 world. Better known for their bitter and often violent conflicts than for promoting peace, they are nevertheless prominent participants in the emerging global civil society.

May's encounters with religious diversity lay bare the inadequacies of Christian theology as it tries to come to terms with this new ecumenical situation—in the original meaning of the word in the New Testament: relating to the whole inhabited earth. In seminary studies coinciding with the Second Vatican Council, there were hints of a Catholicism more open to the whole of humanity and its aspirations; postgraduate studies in Germany provided the intellectual equipment to begin formulating a more explicitly

ecumenical response, as well as the occasion to chart a new course as a lay theologian.

If that was the theory, the opportunity to do ecumenical work in Papua New Guinea was a practical test of just how effective Western-style ecumenism could hope to be in the Asia-Pacific context. The limitations of traditional theology were confirmed by the encounter with Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism throughout Asia and reinforced by the experience of teaching interfaith dialogue in Ireland during the Troubles.

Hence the challenge of this book: are we yet capable of truly imagining the ecumenical in all its implications for our religious convictions and the future of the world? Beginning and ending at home in Australia, this journey raises questions no thinking

Christian can avoid.

Under the guise of an autobiography, this book is in reality a sensitive biography of modern Ecumenism in the Christian Church. It traces, via John D'Arcy May's own interesting life story, the Christian Ecumenical movement's awkward beginnings and its expansion to embrace the religious life of the whole of humanity. Through John's eyes, we can view his own confrontation particularly with the Catholic Church's reluctance to accept the reality of interfaith dialogue and its own perpetuation of church divisions. His odyssey leads us from the intellectuals of Rome, Germany and Ireland to the maelstrom of today's New Guinea. A fascinating book.

**Robert Crotty,**

Emeritus Professor in the School of Education, University of South Australia.

John May has played a significant role in building understanding and empathy between faiths, and in this book gives a captivating account of his experiences drawn both from his personal life and his long and distinguished academic career: It is an important contribution to inter-faith studies.

**Mary Ryllis Clark,**

Freelance writer, journalist and historian.

John May is one of the church's leading ecumenical scholars with an international reputation. But ecumenism is not just a field of study for him; it's a way of life. It is a real joy and privilege to be given an intimate insight into his personal evolution not just as a scholar; but as a man. This is precisely what this book does. A must-read for anyone interested in religious reconciliation.

.....  
John D'Arcy May was born in 1942 in Melbourne, Australia, where he now lives in retirement. He received doctorates from the universities of Munster (Ecumenical Theology, 1975) and Frankfurt (History of Religions, 1983). He taught at the Catholic Ecumenical Institute, University of Munster, 1975-1982, and was Ecumenical Research Officer with the Melanesian Council of Churches, Papua New Guinea, 1983-1987. He was Director of the Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin, 1987-1990 and 1995, where he was Associate Professor of Interfaith Dialogue, 1987-2007. He is a Fellow Emeritus of Trinity College. He has honorary affiliations with Australian Catholic University, the University of Divinity and Monash University.

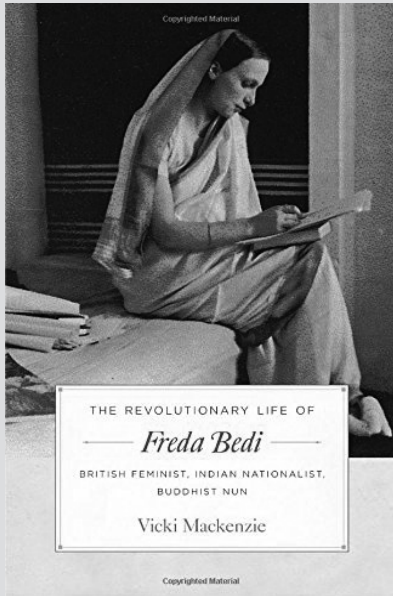
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English books on Engaged Buddhism are available.



## The Revolutionary Life of Freda Bedi--British Feminist, Indian Nationalist, Buddhist Nun by Vicki Mackenzie (Shambhala Boulder 2017)

*Sulak Sivaraksa*

When the Tibetan refugees went to India, *The Middle Way* journal of the Buddhist Society of London, usually posted news for Buddhists to help the Tibetans. An English woman named Freda Bedi wrote about young people in exile, novices that could recall their past life, they were known as "Tulku". At that time, I was in England, I was sending some money to help them for several months for supporting these Tulku ... Freda Bedi often kept in connection with me. Later, she became ordained as the first Bhikkhuni in the Tibetan tradition.

She dressed with her Tibetan Bhikkhuni, covered thick robes and came to visit me. At that time, I worked at the Thai Watana Panich Publishing house. She came up to see me on the 3rd floor without using the elevator, which surprised staff working in the firm.

I met her only once, but corresponded with her several

times. I knew that she was an important lady like Anny Bissan of England, Alexandra David Neel of France and Mme Blavasky of Russia. I used to read biographies of the three persons mentioned, now I am happy to read the biography of Freda Bedi. It was a remarkable biography by Vicki Mackenzie. Hopefully, there will be a Thai version of the biography, which would help for to know the wonderful lady.

Freda was born an English, in Derbyshire, to a family selling watches. She studied hard to an extent that her French teacher helped her and encouraged her to get in to Oxford. She was born before the First World War. It is worthy to mention that her father had to serve in the battle field, and was killed in action. For this reason, her mother renounced Christianity, seeing that both the British and Germans were fighting, and they all prayed to the same God.

When Freda was studying at Oxford, she met an Indian boy, who was also studying there. He was a descendent of Guru Nanak of Sikhism, but he was not religious.

She married him and used the family name "Bedi" from her husband. She went to India with him. Both of them were traveling around India together, in order to resist the British Empire under the direction of Mahatma Gandhi on the way of Satyagraha, adhering to non-violence. Both of them were arrested and put in different jails. They had children together, and the eldest son became a movie star. Freda knew many Indian elites, she was close to Nehru and Indira.

When the Tibetans emigrated from China to India, Freda started to help them, in particular the novices who were diseased and malnourished. She even set up schools for the

## Book Reviews

novice's, and entertained them warmly as if they were her own children. She especially helped Trungpa Rinpoche and Ako Rinpoche, who went on to establish the first Tibetan temple in Scotland. In particular, Freda helped Trungpa Rinpoche studies at Oxford, and got him a scholarship. Later, Trungpa Rinpoche moved to the United States and established the Naropa University.

Freda separated from her

husband, but was always in touch with him. She might have been the first lady to see that Vajrayana Buddhism should deepen its roots in Europe and America. She decided to be the last Karmapa's disciple, as he ordained her as a novice, and encouraged her to become a Bhikkhuni in Hong Kong. The King of Bhutan paid for all of her expenses to travel to Hong Kong. She offered her service to the Karmapa, and pleaded for him to propagate

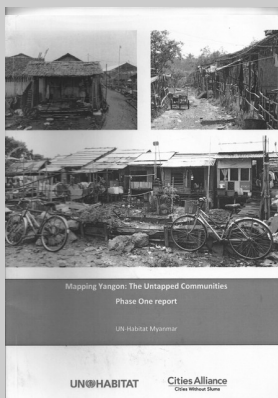
Buddhism in Europe and the United States.

As a Bhikkhuni, she remained in touch with her son and daughter until her death. Before her death, she gave a banquet for a group of Tibetan girl novices, who she recalled she had supported in a previous life.

This book gave us to profound understanding in to the life of our heroine, who was a commoner who contributed so much to the world.

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### Recommended Reading



Mapping Yangon:  
Untapped Communities



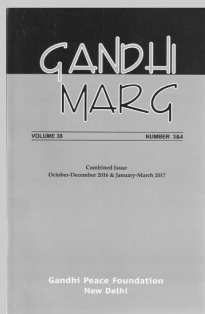
Agroecology and Sustainable  
Development

**Production:** Secours Chtholique-  
Caritas France  
**Publishing director:** Marc Laroche



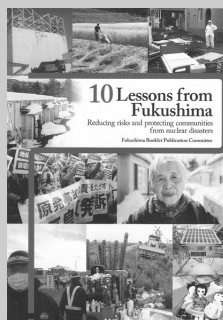
Political Feminism and the  
Women's Movement in Thailand:  
Actors, Debates and Strategies

**Author:** Duangthai Buranajoenkij



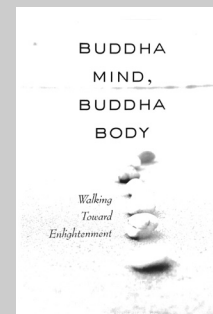
Gandhi Marg

**Editors:** Kumar Prashant  
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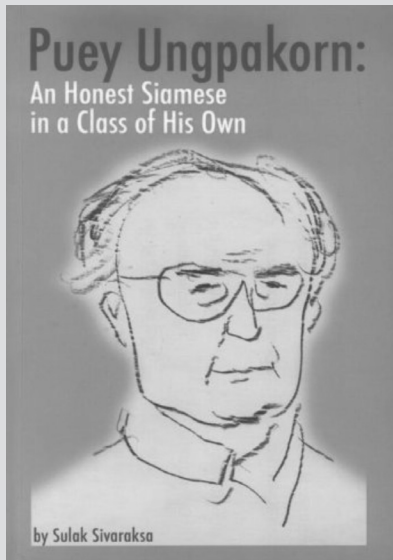
10 Lessons from Fukushima

**Editor:** Takashi Kuroda  
**Publisher:** Fukushima Booklet  
Publication Committee



Buddha Mind, Buddha Body  
Walking Toward Enlightenment

**Author:** Thich Nhat Hanh  
**Publisher:** Parallax Press



**Puey Ungpakorn:  
An Honest Siamese in  
a Class of His own.  
By Sulak Sivaraksa<sup>1</sup>**

*Jeffery Sng*

There is a growing perception that Thailand's modern history suffers from a dearth of heroes. Thais hunger for heroes, as Chinese people hungered for religion in the People's Republic of China (PRC). There has been a recent movement to create new heroes from Thailand's modern history, through a series of seminars, articles, books and study trips to celebrate the legacy of Pridi Banomyong, Jit Phumisak and Dr. Puey Ungpakorn. The 100th anniversary of Puey's birth was celebrated in 2014 with a series of events and activities at landmark sites throughout the country, reaching out to all sectors of society. The English edition of Sulak Sivaraksa's memoir, *Puey Ungpakorn: An Honest Siamese in a Class of His Own*, published in 2014, belongs to this genre.

The people of Thailand are not alone in their quest to invent heroes to enrich national

consciousness. Following the recent death of former President SR. Nathan in August 2016, the Singapore Government has begun a propaganda campaign to glorify the late president. Reacting to a meager turnout at his funeral, a Singapore newspaper, *The Straits Times*, ran repeated stories praising Nathan as a "hero" of the republic. Unlike in Singapore, the Thai movement to create heroes is not a state-centered initiative. In Singapore, the movement to ennoble Nathan represents the government's attempt to create a place in history for one of their own. Nathan, who enjoyed a distinguished career as head of the Security Intelligence Department (SID), Singapore's equivalent of the CIA, later became President of the Republic

(Head of State) and was the perfect embodiment of the state-centered actor. In contrast, the movement to create heroes in Thailand is a society-centered initiative that came in the wake of the toppling of Thailand's electoral democracy by a succession of military coups, the last of which installed a military government in 2014. Spearheaded by student groups, leading academics, social critics, religious activists and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the movement to edify the legacy of Pridi Banomyong, Jit Pumisak and Dr. Puey emanates from outside the state sector, and is dominated by NGOs.

The celebration of commoner heroes in the kingdom's modern history, as opposed to royal heroes embodied in the

<sup>1</sup> Bangkok: Foundation for Children Publishing House, 2004.  
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ancient chronicles, reflects the dynamics of class antagonism between state and society and commoner and royalty. It is society centered in the spirit of social revolution, as opposed to palace coups and state-sponsored counter revolutions. Embodying an emancipatory social impulse, these new heroes are claimed by civil society to fortify itself against the resurrection of an oppressive militarist state apparatus. Against this backdrop, Sulak has written a wonderful book on Puey, that is intended to introduce Puey to the Thai public: he is a man of integrity and a paragon of virtue amidst a sea of corruption, dishonesty, selfishness and personal aggrandizement in Thai public life. Establishing the image of Puey as a knight on a white horse, coming to save the Thai public officials from their moral and personal failings, Sulak master-fully uses a simple, but very effective narrative technique - the anecdote.

Through a series of anecdotes, Sulak establishes the many different aspects of Puey's character: as a student, teacher, academic, philanthropist, intellectual and public official. Like his previous book, titled 'The Powers That Be: Pridi Banomyang through the rise and fall of Thai democracy', this book is as much about Sulak as it is about Puey, as Puey is observed through Sulak's eyes

through his numerous encounters with the author. Sulak judges his audience well. For the average Thai, who reads fewer lines per year than his ASEAN counterparts, the anecdotal approach is probably more effective than an academic, analytical biography. Besides employing a simple storyteller's anecdotal narrative technique, Sulak has deliberately written a short book, at just 161 pages, which is only slightly longer than Niccolo Machiavelli's 'The Prince'. Addressing men of power and practical affairs rather than scholars, Machiavelli (1469-1527) wrote 'The Prince' in the form of a manual, on how to be a ruler, rather than as an abstract philosophical treatise. Indeed, clarity and simplicity are the hallmarks of both books, while another commonality is that they speak to the issue of public morality.

It is apparent that Sulak is using this book in support of the broader society- centered NGO movement's crusade against the corruption of state actors, including party politicians, military-cum-bureaucrat officials and holders of public office. In Thailand's corrupt political landscape men of integrity like Puey are few and far between. Sulak thus holds up Puey as an embodiment of the wholesome moral values that are sadly and conspicuously missing among

our political leaders and military dictators. Sulak would like Thailand's contemporary political leaders and all holders of public office to emulate the moral example of Puey. In praising the exemplary moral character of Puey in the same way that Confucius praised the principled actions of the legendary Duke of Zhou, Puey has become a 20th century commoner reincarnation of the 11th century Mandarin. It should be noted that both Puey and the Duke of Zhou were loyal servants of the respective states they served. Puey was a loyal servant of the Sarit-Thanom and Praphat military dictatorships, although he subsequently served the democratic Prime Ministers, Seri and Kukrit Pramoj, while the Duke of Zhou was a loyal servant of the state of Zhou. Ironically, the moral virtue of each was subsequently hijacked by those who sought to raise the standard of rebellion.

Sulak uses the moral values personified by Puey to reflect on the shortcomings of contemporary Thai political leaders, hoping to undermine their legitimacy and topple them from power. Analogously, in Chinese history, weak or evil emperors are held up to measure against the incorruptible moral virtues of the Duke of Zhou. If they fail to measure up, they are alleged to have lost The Mandate of Heaven

and hence their legitimacy to rule. Thus arises the tradition of the morality of rebellion, which has throughout history been used to serve as a check on power, to legitimize rebellion and to effect regime change.

Modern examples are abound: Egypt (the Arab Spring in Tahrir Square in 2011); Bangkok (14 October 1973 and in 1992); Iran (the Khomeini Revolution in 1979 and the Green Revolution in 2011); Beijing (Tiananmen Square in 1989); Greece (2010, 2012), Libya (2011), New York (Occupy Wall Street in 2011), Brazil (2013), Turkey (Taksim Square in 2013), Ukraine (2014), and Hong Kong (the Umbrella Revolution in 2014). In the antagonism between civil society and the state, the latter also has its own ideological defenders. The strongest moral ease in defense of the state is made by Niccolo Machiavelli in his book, *The Prince*.

Just as Sulak's memoir has been widely praised for commending the wholesome moral values embodied by Puey, many who read 'The Prince' for the first time have been shocked and fascinated by Machiavelli's ap-parent immorality. Still others have found his lack of humbug refreshing. Machiavelli is notorious for his cynical insights into the ruthless nature of politics. He is invariably remembered for

offering shockingly frank political advice to would-be rulers: that it is better to be feared than to be loved, that one should keep one's word only when it is in one's interest to do so, especially when the reasons for making the promise in the first place, are no longer relevant. The morality embodied in 'The Prince' is in direct opposition to the moral ground represented by Puey. Sulak emphatically claims that Puey "lacked the ability to put on a show or to deceive; it was not his nature to dissemble or to be tricky in his personal and professional relationships." (p. vi)

Just as Sulak holds up Puey as a model for emulation by political leaders and holders of public office, 'The Prince' also has its cast of exemplary characters. But historians have judged them so harshly that few have been persuaded to admire the models held up by Machiavelli, such as the lecherous Pope Alexander VI (1492-1503) and his son Cesare Borgia (1498-1507). But Machiavelli praised Pope Alexander for the very qualities that conventional public opinion would have him condemned: "No man was ever more effective in making promises or bound himself by more solemn oaths or observed them less." Similarly Cesare, who resorted to bribery and assassination to unify Central Italy under the Borgias, was not

condemned by Machiavelli. Far from criticizing the evil man, Machiavelli saluted his immoral methods as a model worthy of emulation: "Perceiving thus all the actions of the Duke, I find nothing to blame; on the contrary it seems proper to hold him as an example to be imitated." Why does Machiavelli praise leaders and rulers who are absolutely unscrupulous? For Machiavelli, to have scruples may be an asset for the ordinary man; but in a ruler it becomes a lethal liability.

When a ruler is faced with a political decision, on which the safety of the state depends, no attention should be paid either to justice or injustice, to kindness or cruelty, to praise or shame. All other considerations should be set aside, and that course of action adopted, which will ensure the survival of the state and the sovereign independence of the country. He adds that the safety of the ruler and the welfare of the state must trump all other considerations. To this end, the ruler may in appropriate circumstances ignore legality, morality, public opinion, violate faith and sin against charity, humanity and religion.

So where does this long argument lead? Ultimately, to irreconcilable differences between the Puey camp and the Machiavellian camp. These boil down to fundamental philosophical assump-

tions about human nature. Sulak believes that man is essentially good. Evil deeds and moral lapses spring from ignorance. By highlighting the lives of good men like Puey and promoting broad based moral education, we can eventually raise ethical standards in electoral politics, public policy, commercial dealings and public administration.

Unlike Sulak, Machiavelli believes that man's nature is bad and he cannot be educated. He adds that the successful ruler, who ultimately survives challenges and threats to his power, is the one who does not take his cue from the way men ought to live, but the way they actually live. Given that man is greedy, cruel, ambitious, untrustworthy and moved only by self-interest, it is useless to try to make human beings good through education. Since human nature is bad, any attempt to create a viable political order must take into account this fundamental truth. Paradoxically, Machiavelli seeks to create a good political order out of man's badness, which may be harnessed to serve good ends. Ironically, in this imaginary altercation, Machiavelli does not appear to have the last word. His exhortation to the Prince to be evil, cruel, faithless and unscrupulous is only delivered behind closed doors in the corridors of power. In public, he would have his Prince pay lip

service to the very conventional morality he privately denounces. Indeed, he insists that a prince must appear to have the virtues of mercy, good faith, humanity, integrity and piety; nor should he ever let a word escape his mouth which is not full of those estimable qualities.

While the world pays lip service to conventional morality, Machiavellian morals remain alive and well in the 21st century. The Obama Administration's public condemnation of ISIS whilst covertly arming, training and supplying the jihadists through Turkey is vintage Machiavelli. Similarly, signing the September 2016 Syrian ceasefire agreement with Russia, and breaking it before the ink is dry, is yet another leaf taken out of the pages of 'The Prince'. True to Machiavellian form, the unsavory alliance with terrorists was conducted under an elaborate cloak of deniability through the

collaboration of mainstream media to obfuscate the identity between "moderate rebels" and ISIS/Al Nusra terrorists. How, could the world be deceived so easily by such a blatant outright lie? Machiavelli's answer is that people are gullible. History has repeatedly shown how rulers break their word with impunity. It's simply a matter of skill in deception. Anyone who has a mind to deceive will have no trouble finding people who are willing to be deceived.

In a hypocritical world, Machiavellian morals cannot be openly embraced. It remains fashionable to pay lip service to conventional morality. In this sense, the Puey camp may have the last word: they have won the public argument, but have they lost the war in private?

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