

# SEEDS OF PEACE

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The way forward

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INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF  
ENGAGED BUDDHISTS (INEB)

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and Research.

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### Editorial Note

Hello INEB Friends, to all of you who follow our activities and support us, we wish you a Happy New Year!

Last November, we organized a conference in Taiwan - The International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) 18th General Conference: A Conference on Interbeing: Transforming Conflict by Compassion with Exposure and Retreat "The Challenge for Engaged Buddhism in the Next Decade". The conference was held from November 22-29, 2017, at Hong-Shi Buddhist College in Taoyuan district of Taiwan.

During the conference, our hosts, the Taiwanese people, surprised us on so many levels. They were very warm and friendly. In addition, for a developed Asian country like Taiwan, prices were surprisingly affordable. And the street food? Phenomenal! We all were not aware

of this, which is probably why it was so surprising.

Our first visit in Taiwan was to the Dharma Drum Mountain Monastery. Master Sheng Yen, founder of Dharma Drum Mountain, dedicated decades of his life to spreading the Buddhadharma globally, guiding through his Chan practice, sharing Buddhist compassion and wisdom with people around the world. His idea of protecting the spiritual environment has been widely valued and recognized internationally.

Based on the Master's infinite compassionate vows, Dharma Drum Mountain's branch monasteries and practice centers worldwide have been promoting three-fold education and four kinds of environmentalism, endeavoring to help purify human minds and society, in hopes of sowing the seeds of world peace through joint efforts to realize the goal of "building a pure land on earth."

Our second visit was to the Tzu Chi Foundation. It was a wonderful place, the staff of the Foundation were very friendly and nice. Tzu Chi Foundation focuses on giving material aid to the needy, and inspiring love and humanity to both givers and receivers. In addition to charity, the foundation dedicates itself in the fields of medicine, education, environmental protection, international relief work, and the establishment of a marrow donor registry. It also promotes humanistic values and community volunteerism. Through helping those in need, Tzu Chi volunteers take on the path of bodhisattva practices, the way to Buddhahood.

Alongside the exposure visits, the main conference explored the aspirations and challenges for socially engaged Buddhism at a deeper level, with a series of presentations, discussions, and workshops led by members of the global INEB community on activities, projects, and initiatives in communities around the world.

The concluding three-day meditation retreat provided participants with an opportunity for reflection and self examination on the experiences and learning points shared over the preceding five days.

On behalf of all INEB staff, I would like express deep gratitude, and say "thank you very much" to our Taiwanese hosts at Dharma Drum Mountain, Tzu Chi Foundation and Hong-Shi Buddhist College, who were our main hosts of the INEB 18th General Conference.

# Ten Year Way FORWARD

It's a historic mile post, that we are here in Taiwan - Hongshi Buddhist College, by invitation of Venarable Bhikkuni Chao-hwei, to attend the bi-annual INEB conference. INEB is celebrating its 28th birthday with its founder Archan Sulak's 84 year birthday celebration.

Archan invited his group of friends - kalyanamitra to his boat house and told them his great dream of building up a movement of engaged Buddhists. Today, this movement of engaged Buddhists - our organization INEB, is looking to organize its core activities, in order to increase its strategic efficiency and impact of its work around the globe.

We need to maintain the historic values of our movement, especially INEB's unique qualities, like our kalyanamitra family values. As Archan Sulak says, socially engaged Buddhism has to be "to think and act like a Buddhist". That means using Buddhist teachings and practices to understand and engage in the contemporary World - rather than basing ourselves in other ideologies while becoming "an activist who just happen to be a Buddhist".

Buddhist social activism as a movement arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as a response to colonialism, foreign invasion, westernization, and the injustice of oppression caused by it. Many academics and activist have since tried to define and build up social movement based on engaged Buddhism - most of those initiatives did not engage with people and

communities. It is INEB and its pioneers who have given life to the Buddhist path that engages people and deals with the sufferings we encounter in our self and in others, right here and right now.

When INEB was founded, the initiate members were deeply influenced by the radical leftist, Marxist and protest movements of 60's and 70's. But going into the 21st century, there needs to be a conscious effort to create a positive frame work of engagement - not just protest, and it needs to be anchored in Bodhichiththa. While different Buddhist schools teach Bodhichiththa in various ways, for INEB, we understand that all sentient beings are endowed with Bodhichittha - the potential for enlightenment within us - and this is the basis for our mutual respect. Our engagement with society arises from Bodhichiththa. In this way socially engaged Buddhism must continually find ways to re articulate the fundamental Buddhist teachings - for example Sila/ethics, Samadhi/meditation, Panna/wisdom.

As I mentioned in the beginning, connecting through Kalyanamitra - spiritual friends - is the core value of INEB that has sustained and must maintain into the future. Our teacher, Buddha, spoke often about the value of wise mentors and admirable friends to help guide us along the spiritual path. A few days ago, we got together and agreed on our ten year strategic way forward road map. Through these years to come, our outreach, our interest and care to connect to others, to address local and global issues

must become much stronger.

We need to give more attention- to care, to connect with others using actions that are not dependent upon boundaries or identity, and thus include working with other faith and also with those without religious beliefs. INEB has and must continue to respect life in all forms. Our activism must remain progressive, and as Buddhists, we must dare to take on the responsibility for massive global issues. At the same time, we must maintain in INEB, the essence of wholesomeness (kusala) , cooperative platforms for change and valuing education at local level - all of which are essential to building sustainable communities.

Our conference will proceed from here and will go on for the next two full days; it will be based on the theme of inter-being: transforming conflict by compassion. In a way, inter beings may give us different understandings. Here, we are looking at conscious relationships between beings, carrying out interdependence, active understanding and development of relationship in a given situation.

Further, transforming conflict by compassion means re-interpretation of the five precepts as an appropriate application of the Buddha's teaching to modern socio-economic and political dilemmas.

We have walked together for the last 30 years as a family. Ten years ago, we were here in Hongshi and promised to commit ourselves to being truly engaged Buddhists. Today, here again in Hongshi, we promise ourselves that in the coming ten years we will proceed with our "WAY FORWARD" program with the same spirit and commitment. When I was welcomed by Prof. Yo, in his house with a hot cup of tea, I saw a beautiful saying hung in his tea room. It said : "No Mud - No Lotus". You may give thought and find you own meaning to that, but let me finish my speech with this saying : "No Mud - No Lotus".

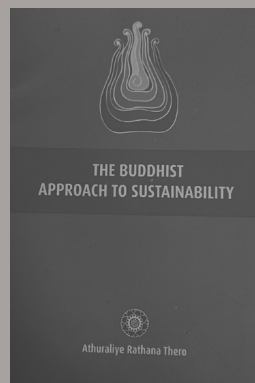
**Harsha Navaratne**

INEB's Chairperson

## Recommended Readings

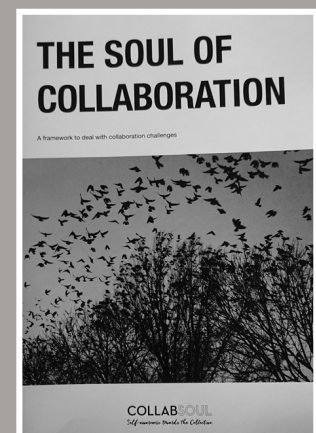


A Shung and Prince Siddhartha DVD



The Buddhist Approach to Sustainability

Author: Venerable. Athuralite Rathana Thero



The Soul of Collaboration

Publisher: Collab soul

## Pravit Rojanaphruk Receives Press Freedom Award



**K**haosod English senior staff reporter Pravit Rojanaphruk was presented a prestigious press award on Wednesday by an American organization dedicated to the freedom of journalists worldwide.

The Committee to Protect Journalists, or CPJ, presented Pravit the International Press Freedom Award at a gala dinner in New York, as recognition of his outspoken work denouncing the repression of free speech and persecution suffered by journalists in Thailand.

Pravit, who in July was tapped for the award along with three other journalists, thanked his peers and the committee for the prize, using the stage to criticize the curtailing of press freedoms.

“I’m grateful to CPJ for reminding dictators that violating press freedom is never purely a domestic affair,” Pravit said at the event, held Thursday morning Bangkok time.

“Being an International Press Freedom Awardee is like being a member of a select club of mad or daring journalists in peril,” he added.

The Thai junta twice took Pravit into custody for his criticism of its rule, suppression of free expression and a law criminalizing criticism of the Thai monarchy. He was held incommunicado on both occasions.

After the second instance, he was forced out of his longtime job at English daily *The Nation*

and joined *Khaosod English*. After being presented the award by Gillian Tett, US managing editor of the *Financial Times*, Pravit noted that the Thai junta leader and prime minister, Prayuth Chan-ocha, has joked about having reporters executed, saying he was “pleased [Prayuth] has yet to execute anyone, journalists included.”

The committee tweeted Wednesday about the difficulties “every reporter” faces in Thailand when reporting on the monarchy and the military government, adding however that “Pravit is not the usual reporter.” Also honored were Cameroonian correspondent Ahmed Abba, who was sentenced to 10 years in prison on terrorism charges earlier this year for his coverage of violent Islamist group Boko Haram. In Mexico City, Patricia Mayorga received an award for her work covering human rights issues and alleged links between those in power and organized crime. Yemeni journalist Afrah Nasser rounded out the list. Nasser fled Yemen after receiving death threats in response to her work critical of the government. Additional reporting: Todd Ruiz

Burma:

# Not all Buddhists agree with Sitagu Sayadaw's militant message

Jacob Goldberg

Burma's most revered Buddhist leader gave a speech on Monday, in which he urged hundreds of military officers to not fear the sinfulness of taking human life. Despite building a reputation on his interfaith and humanitarian activities, Sitagu Sayadaw has long made excuses for the military's abuses against Rohingya Muslims. This week, critics said the monk veered into promoting genocide.

During his speech, which was delivered at a military base in Kayin State and broadcast live in Burma to over 250,000 viewers, Sitagu Sayadaw shared a parable about an ancient Sri Lankan king who was assured by Buddhist clerics that the countless Hindus he had killed only added up to one and a half lives.

"Don't worry King, it's a little bit of sin. Don't worry," Sitagu Sayadaw said. "Even though you killed millions of people, they were only one and a half real human

beings."

The monk distanced himself from the characters in the story, saying: "I'm not saying that, monks from Sri Lanka said that." But he then added: "Our soldiers should bear [this story] in mind."

The monk's support for Myanmar's government and military in the face of international accusations of ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya have compounded the public admiration he has enjoyed for years. Earlier this year, he was awarded the title "Honorable, Excellent, and Great Teacher of Country and State" by the government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

But Sitagu Sayadaw's stature and erudition have not been enough to protect him from the ire of some Myanmar Buddhists, who believe his coziness with the military is drawing him away from the principles of Buddhism.

"This was a shocking



Sitagu Sayadaw prepares for a speech to military officers on October 30, 2017.

Photo: Facebook / Venerable Ashin Nyanissara (Sitagu/Thegon Sayadaw)

speech," said Thet Swe Win, director of the Centre for Youth and Social Harmony, an interfaith organization. "It was totally against the Buddha I understood. Buddha teaches about love, kindness, and compassion to every human being, regardless of race and religion, and also teaches that killing is a sin. But this speech said killing non-Buddhist people is not a sin."

He went on: "It's like mixing up religion with the army. It's kind of saying the army is here to protect race and religion, and it encourages them to kill people from different religions. I condemn this kind of speech."

Thet Swe Win compared the message of Sitagu Sayadaw's speech to the

doctrines of the so-called Islamic State.

"ISIS also says killing non-Muslims is not a sin."

Khin Zaw Win, director of the policy think-tank Tampadipa Institute, made similar comparisons in his reaction to the speech, which he shared on Facebook.

"It's utterly irresponsible of a senior monk to preach such things. It reminds me of bishops who fought in the Crusades and the medieval practice of selling indulgences and absolution."

In another post, he said: "It's sad, but there might soon be a Burmese equivalent of 'Sieg Heil!' What happened to democracy?"

.....

Siam:

# Why Buddhists fail the simple test of compassion

*Sanitsuda Ekachai, editorial pages editor, Bangkok Post.*

Pope Francis avoided addressing the Rohingya genocide directly during his recent Myanmar visit, questioning his silence is missing the crux of the problem.

Instead of questioning the visiting leader of the global Catholic community, we should ask instead what has gone awry with Burmese Buddhism and why the seemingly gentle and devout Buddhists there have embraced racist violence instead of the Buddha's teachings of indiscriminate compassion.

This is not only a question for Myanmar. Thailand, also a predominantly Theravada Buddhist country, is also mired in the same trap of racism -- albeit not as deeply, at least for now.

Until very recently, the global image of Myanmar is one of a devout Buddhist country struggling against atrocious military dictatorship. Despite hostility perpetuated by ultra-nationalistic history textbooks,

meditation masters and practices from Myanmar have become popular in Thailand. When the country finally opened to the outside world, Myanmar temple tours became extremely popular among Thais and significantly fostered appreciation of Myanmar's ancient culture, grandeur and religious piousness.

Then came the Rohingya ethnic cleansing.

It's one thing for the Myanmar military to defend their atrocities amid global condemnation, but it's another story when the Buddhist populace -- including ex-freedom fighters -- back up their oppressor in wiping out the ethnic Muslim Rohingya on their soil. It's clear. At work is a creed more powerful and dangerous than Buddhism.

They call it patriotism. In fact, it's racist nationalism.

Myanmar is extremely sensitive about the term Rohingya, because it implies the ethnic Muslims in



Pope Francis arrives to lead mass at St Mary's Cathedral in Yangon late last month. The 'moral authority' of Pope Francis is undiminished despite his failure to address the Rohingya crisis head-on during a visit to Myanmar, the Vatican says, defending a papal trip framed by the plight of the Muslim minority. AFP

Rakhine State are long-term residents, even natives of the region from long ago. The term is a no-no, because it undermines the country's legitimacy to "protect the motherland" from "dark-skinned, ugly Bengali invaders, terrorists and separatists" through whatever means deemed necessary in the name of patriotism.

Genocide apologists often argue that Rohingya is a newly invented term, that the ethnic Muslims there were actually brought in by Britain during colonial days. That they were taking locals' lands and were intent on taking over the state, or even the country, by breeding indiscriminately and taking up arms.

The Rohingya have a different version of history, which apologists immediately debunk as fake. The

horrific treatment of the Rohingya in camps, systematic measures to rid them of citizenship and basic rights, and ensuing massive arson, murder and rape -- if not dismissed as fake news or sheer exaggeration -- are viewed as necessary to push the "outsiders" where they belong.

Cruelty is an understatement.

How can anyone who calls themselves Buddhist support such atrocities?

The successful dehumanisation of the Rohingya Muslims, fuelled by the hate campaigns of racist Buddhist monks, demonstrates the danger of patriotism rooted in race, ethnicity and beliefs. It's both maddening and heartbreaking to see the normally kind, temple-going people brush the Buddha aside to become



## Country Reports

cheerleaders for a blood-thirsty military and militia.

Myanmar is not the only country guilty of such racist patriotism, though. What keeps it relatively under control elsewhere is probably the notion of statehood, who is allowed to be part of it -- and how. Equally important, if not more, is the level of respect for human rights which is pretty much determined by how open and equal that society is.

Here, southern Malay Muslims have long been treated as "outsiders", thanks to the constructed notion of "Thainess", which requires one to be ethnic Thai and Buddhist in order to be an "owner" of the country. It does not matter that racial purity is a myth, and most Buddhist Thais are far from being Buddhist, you just have to play the game. That is how Thais of Chinese descent -- through inter-marriage and wealth -- have come to feel fully Thai with the right to discriminate against other ethnic minorities.

The southern Muslims are never called invaders for a simple reason; it was Siam which invaded and annexed the Malay Muslim principalities over two centuries ago. Despite this discrimination and injustice, the southern Muslims are citizens with equal opportunities

and rights, on the books, at least.

Despite lax legal enforcement, citizenship becomes their best protection, for the state may legitimise violence against separatists, but never the civilians, thus pre-empting an all-out crackdown.

True, deep prejudice against Muslims exists in the Thai clergy, bureaucracy and the general population, but it comes in whispers and side glances. A hate monk who followed Burma's toxic Virathu was not tolerated, and was recently disrobed to nip the problem in the bud. The move, interestingly, was made by the government for security reasons, and not by the clergy.

While citizenship provides some level of protection to the southern Muslims, this cannot be said of millions of stateless, displaced persons and migrant workers in the country. As a result, they are subjected to labour exploitation and human trafficking. Many of them are children, robbed of their childhood, education and life opportunities.

Thailand may not violently persecute Muslims like Myanmar does, but the world is also asking how on earth a country which takes pride in being the centre of Buddhism has become a hub of slave labour and the sex industry. What's more,

the clergy is totally indifferent to such oppression.

How indeed? The answer is simple. Thailand ignores slave labour because the slaves are not Thais, so they do not deserve to be treated as equal human beings. As for prostitution, why should we be bothered about "bad girls" when men need to satisfy their sexual urges?

In short, racist nationalism and sexism are the country's real creeds, not Buddhism. As for silence to social injustice, I have long harboured questions over whether the clergy's indifference has anything to do with Theravada Buddhism's inward-looking ideology which concentrates on an individual's sole pursuit of spiritual liberation. Of course, such commitment to spiritual pursuit -- if real -- can certainly legitimise monks' aloofness, because their practices can save many souls. The simplicity and compassion true to Buddhism can also strengthen public confidence in the spiritual path. But when non-attachment has become only an excuse for monks not to challenge the system so they can enjoy the privileges and the perks that come with the monkhood, then they become mere freeloaders.

In Myanmar, the pontiff stressed the need to "respect

the rights of all who call this land their home", without using the word Rohingya to protect minority Christians, setting off a barrage of criticism from rights groups. But once in Bangladesh, the pontiff followed his heart when he declared: "The presence of God today is also called Rohingya." He also honoured them by asking them to forgive the sinners. That won't change minds in Myanmar. But at least the leader of the Catholic world has shown what leaders of all religions should do -- speaking up for the oppressed and inspiring compassion to end suffering.

It pains me deeply to see our clergy, blinded to violence and oppression, adopting racist nationalism. It also confirms my belief that any religious garb, any number of hours in meditation, or any amount of donations do not indicate the quality of one's heart. How you treat the less fortunate regardless of their race and creed does.

It is so sad that many religious leaders and self-proclaimed devout Buddhists fail this simple test.

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# 112 Case Moves Forward Against Historian

Pravit Rojanaphruk, *Khaosodenglish*, 6 October 2017

A famed social critic and intellectual elder accused of defaming the monarchy by questioning whether a royal elephant battle really happened four centuries ago, said he's been ordered to appear before military prosecutors.

Sulak Sivaraksa, 84, said Thursday night that he's been told to report Monday morning to police who will take him to a military court to meet with prosecutors preparing a case against him for allegedly criticizing a king who reigned from 1590 to 1605.

"If the country was normal and there existed rule of law in this country, then there won't be problems. The lese majeste law protects the current monarch and if someone is charged for criticizing a king who reigned 500 years ago, then something is not normal," said Sulak, sounding disturbed and worried.

Read: *Lese Majeste Filed Against Historian For Questioning Ancient 'Elephant*

*Battle'*

Sulak was referring to the specifics of Article 112 of the criminal code, which forbids defaming, insulting or threatening the current king, queen, heir apparent or regent. Although the law is narrowly written, it has been broadly interpreted in recent years as prosecutions surged following the 2014 coup.

Under the draconian law, anyone found guilty faces a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison per offense. Sulak said he was told by police they will recommend he be prosecuted by the military tribunal.

Defendants can languish in jail for years awaiting trials that are conducted in secret. Many confess in return for resolution and lighter sentencing. Puangtip Boonsanong, Sulak's lawyer, said Friday she didn't understand how comments about a king who lived four centuries ago could ever be construed as violating the lese majeste law, which explicitly

A painting depicts a famed tale of King Naresuan claiming sovereignty for the Ayutthaya kingdom by defeating a Burmese prince while mounted atop an elephant.



Historian Sulak Sivaraksa before a painting of King Bhumibol on Oct. 26, 2016, at his home in Bangkok's Bang Rak district.

is written to cover only the reigning monarch, queen, heir apparent and regent. "I don't know too," Puangtip said.

The lawyer added however that there are people who construe any criticism of past kings, no matter how remote, as criticism of the reigning monarch.

The case stems from comments Sulak made three years ago on Oct. 5, 2014, during a history discussion at Thammasat University. He questioned

the historical accuracy regarding King Naresuan, who at the time was the subject of nationalist epic period films then being promoted by the newly installed junta.

He specifically cast doubt about whether the story of Naresuan routing an enemy army by defeating a Burmese prince in an elephant duel was true or an apocryphal tale and urged people "not to easily believe in things. Otherwise they will fall prey to propaganda."

He was accused of defaming the monarchy after the military regime ordered that such cases be tried by military tribunals rather than civilian courts. Although the junta rescinded that order a year ago, it was not retroactive, meaning existing cases would remain in the military system. A self-proclaimed royalist, Sulak has often said he believes loyalty demands dissent. He's been charged and acquitted of lese majeste twice in the past. Sulak also helped inspire a generation of students to overthrow a military dicta-

torship back in 1973. Though retired, Sulak remains active and is involved with a foundation he founded, the International Network of Engaged Buddhists.

Clarification: This story was originally published with a headline stating prosecution of Sulak was certain. While the police have recommended he be prosecuted, the final determination is up to military prosecutors.

non-governmental organizations, and human rights campaigners have pressured Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, the Ministry of Justice, and the military public prosecutor not to proceed with the criminal charges against Sivaraksa.

"I wish to thank you sincerely for your campaign to free me from the unjust law of lese-majeste against me," Sulak wrote in an email to the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB).

Back in October 2014, Sivaraksa advised a group of historians at Thammasat University in Bangkok to "not easily believe in what you are told. Otherwise, then you fall prey to propaganda." Sivaraksa's suggestions that the official account of King Naresuan's royal elephant battle is likely a myth was the basis for the lese-majeste charge, which was being prosecuted in Bangkok's military court.

The crime of lese-majeste in Thailand forbids criticism of the king, queen, crown prince, or regent, and is punishable by up to 15 years in prison.

"To prosecute a scholar for comments he made about a battle that took place more than four centuries ago would be patently absurd. This case is an ugly reminder of the Thai authorities' increasing use of the lese majeste law as a tool

of suppression," wrote James Gomez, Amnesty International's Director of Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

Sulak has for decades called to abolish the criminal lese-majeste, known as Article 112. He has been charged with lese-majeste on four previous occasions (1984, 1991, 2006, and 2008) but has been acquitted each time.

Sulak's longtime colleague Roshi Joan Halifax, founder of the Upaya Zen Center and a member of INEB's executive committee, responded in an email today to the news of the charges being dropped by writing, "Sulak's vision and work for the well-being of others has touched all of us. It would have been a tragedy for him to be imprisoned for speaking truth to power."

Since the military coup in 2014, Article 112 has been used regularly to silence critics of the military junta and monarchy. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights said in June 2017 that they were "deeply troubled" by the increase in prosecutions and severity in sentencing since 2014, noting that the rate of conviction since the coup increased to 90 percent from a 76 percent rate between 2011 and 2013.

Despite an increase in lese-majeste charges and convictions in the last year,

## Socially Engaged Buddhist Sulak Sivaraksa Cleared of Defamation Charge

Matteo Pistono

Sivaraksa, 84, was facing up to 15 years in prison for suggesting a historic duel on elephantback never happened.

Sulak Sivaraksa, the 84-year-old scholar and outspoken socially engaged Buddhist, wrote in a public letter today that the latest case against him for criminal lese-majeste—defamation of the monarchy—has been dropped.

Sivaraksa was charged in October 2014 after he questioned the historical accounts of a 16th-century royal duel on elephantback between the Siamese King Naresuan and Burmese Crown Prince Mingyi Swa. The Thai government and military promote King Naresuan as a patriotic hero based upon his victory in this battle.

Western governments,

# Country Reports



Sulak Sivaraksa at Plum Village, Thailand, 2016.  
Photo by Matteo Pistono

Sivaraksa told *Tricycle* in a phone interview that he believes his exoneration of the latest charges “could indicate a positive step forward” toward abolishing Article 112.

There has not been any official statement from the Thai Ministry of Justice or military public prosecutors, and it may not come until mid January, when Sivaraksa

has been ordered to appear before the military court.

“In the many years I have known Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa, he has clearly held to a principle that ‘loyalty demands dissent,’” Rev. Hozan Alan Senauke, vice-abbot of the Berkeley Zen Center, told *Tricycle*. “Too often Ajahn Sulak’s run-in with Thailand’s Article 112 law, *lèse-majesté*,

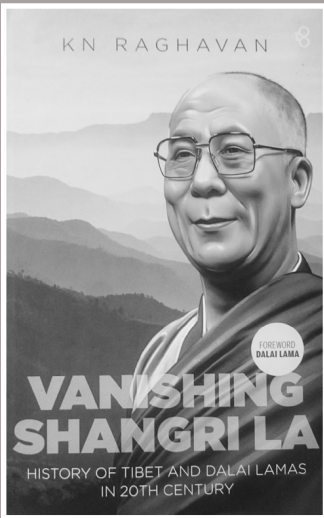
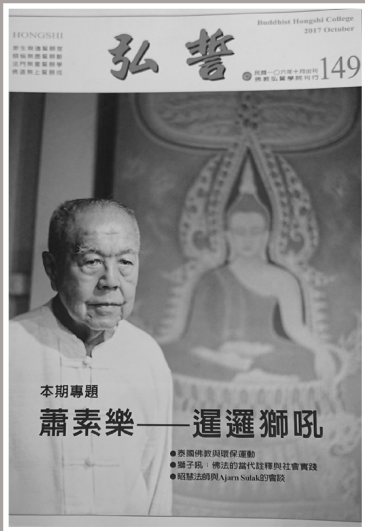
has been the government’s attempt to suppress his dissent from state corruption and repression of the Siamese people. Ajahn Sulak’s friends and students around the world celebrate his courage and—today—his freedom.”

Sulak concluded his message to INEB by writing, “H.M. The King has graciously advised the Prime Minister to instruct the

military public prosecutors not to pursue the case any further. I am therefore a free man legally. I shall be more careful with my speech and action, but will always speak truthfully, especially to the powers that be.”

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## Recommended Reading



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

Author: Kn Raghavan  
Press: The Book People

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# Press Release from the 18th Biennial Conference of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB)

*on Interbeing: Transforming Conflict  
by Compassion*

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Socially Engaged Buddhism has flowered over the last three decades into an incredible diversity of movements, for example: holistic community development in Sri Lanka and Thailand, gender rights and equality in Taiwan, meditation for application in modern medical science in the U.S and Europe, social justice and human rights in India, suicide prevention and psycho-spiritual care in Japan, Buddhist & Muslim relations in South and Southeast Asia, and a growing movement for environmental justice world wide. The International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), founded in 1989, has been an integral part of many of these developments, identifying and nurturing grassroots initiatives in localities all over Asia and linking them together in a global network for holistic, inclusive, and non-violent social transformation. The immense complexity of our worlds—so interconnected by internet technology yet so fragile, as seen in recent political and cultural shifts away from this interconnectedness—have more deeply awakened those of us at INEB towards taking new steps in our collective struggle. We feel we must now redouble our efforts to realize over the next decade four essential goals for the livelihood of our planet, which make up our *Roadmap for Socially Engaged Buddhism for the Next Decade*:

- Transformative Learning – developing Buddhist pedagogy to integrate inner cultivation with social transformation
- Cultural Inclusivity & Diversity – using a wide variety of cultural means to transform the barriers created by greed, anger, and delusion
- Social Justice – engaging with structural violence for comprehensive social transformation and the ending of all forms of discrimination
- Ecology & Economy – transforming our approach to the material world and our planet through social enterprise

From November 22-26, 2017, over 210 people from 23 countries came together at INEB's biennial conference, hosted by the Buddhist Hongshi College under the leadership of Ven. Chao Hwei to forward these goals and to create more in depth strategic plans for their realization. For INEB, these are just the first steps in this roadmap for the coming decade, and we will go forward from here with a new set of initiatives for year two and onwards. During this time in Taiwan, we have learned so many lessons and gotten inspiration from the dynamic bhikkhuni movement, the cooperation between Buddhist and medical worlds for end-of-life care, and the immense volunteerism to care for the environment and those in suffering. we express gratitude to our Taiwanese hosts and the wider communities of Taiwan who have welcomed our visits in their country.

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# International Network of Engaged Buddhists Focuses on Conflict, Compassion, and Interbeing at 18th Biennial Conference in Taiwan

Craig Lewis Buddhistdoor Global



Conference participants attend the symposium on “Buddhist Approaches to Dying and Hospice Care in Taiwan” at Dharma Drum Mountain.  
Photo by Craig Lewis

The International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) hosted its 18th general conference in Taiwan from 22–29 November, under the theme “A Conference on Interbeing: Transforming Conflict as Compassion,” aiming to provide platform for broad-based dialogue and cooperation to address the challenges facing engaged Buddhism over the next decade.

INEB co-founder Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa underscored the fundamental Buddhist elements of bringing about social change at a global level to create the necessary conditions for a more peaceful, equitable society. “The word ‘interbeing’ is very much a Buddhist word coined by Thich Nhat Hanh,” he explained. “In the West, ‘being’ is about being an individual, but if you understand interbeing, we are

Photo by Craig Lewis



Ven. Chao Hwei, INEB patron and chair of the Religion and Culture Department of Taiwan's Hsuan Chuang University, speaks at the forum on "Human Care and Environmental Protection with the Tzu Chi Buddhist Order" at Taipei Tzu Chi General Hospital. Photo by Craig Lewis



all connected, which goes right to the fundamental teachings of the Buddha. Not only personally, but social and environmental interbeing—if we understand that, we can solve issues globally.”

The eight-day conference, a part of INEB’s 10-year strategic plan to strengthen socially engaged Buddhism worldwide, was divided into three distinct components. The intensive event began with a two-day tour of Buddhist social engagement and outreach projects in Taiwan. Highlights included a symposium on “Buddhist Approaches to Dying and Hospice Care in Taiwan” at the headquarters of the Dharma Drum Mountain movement founded by late Chan Master Sheng-yen (1930–2009), and onsite visits to Buddhist initiatives of the Tzu Chi Foundation—Taipei Tzu Chi General Hospital, which aims to provide holistic, patient-based medical care with an emphasis on acute and critical treatment, and a large-scale recycling project initiated by the foundation and run by elderly community members.

Building on these inspiring examples, the main conference explored the aspirations and challenges for socially engaged Buddhism at a deeper level, with a series of presentations, discussions, and workshops led by members of the global INEB community on activities, projects, and initiatives in communities around the world. Participants and delegates broached such themes as conflict resolution, compassion and social engagement, social welfare, and social justice. The concluding three-day meditation retreat, led by three female Dharma masters—Ven. Shing Kuang, Ven. Dhammananda, and Ven. Tenzin Dase—representing the major Buddhist traditions of Mahayana, Theravada, and Vajrayana, provided participants with an opportunity for reflection and self examination on the experiences and learning points shared over the preceding five days.

“We must go back to the fundamental

teachings of the Buddha,” Ajahn Sulak observed. “The Buddha said in our lives, [we should seek] not fame, not fortune, not power, not money, but good friends—kalyanamitra.\* Ananda asked the Buddha, ‘Is kalyanamitra half of the holy life?’ The Buddha replied, ‘No, kalyanamitra is the whole of the holy life.’

“Together, we can change conflict—dhukka—personally, and together we can work for change socially and environmentally. This is important,” he noted. “The Dalai Lama said the world will change only through ahimsa—nonviolence; the world will change only through loving-kindness. The Chinese way, the American way, the Trump way will not change the world, it will spoil the world.”

“The Buddha said metta [loving-kindness] can save the world; loving yourself, loving your neighbor is important, but karuna [compassion] is much more important. Karuna doesn’t just mean being compassionate, helping others, Karuna means you go and share the suffering of those who suffer. Sometimes we are the creators of that suffering—we, the middle class and upper class, our lifestyle helps create the suffering of the people, the suffering of the environment. So we have to go out and learn from the poor, the suffering ones—and they need not be Buddhists, they could be Rohingya, they could be minorities anywhere—you go and share the suffering with them. That is the root of changing the conflict.”

INEB was established in Thailand in 1989 by the prominent Thai academic, activist, and social critic Sulak Sivaraksa and a group of Buddhist and non-Buddhist thinkers and social activists, with the aim of connecting engaged Buddhists around the world and promoting understanding, cooperation, and networking among inter-Buddhist and inter-religious groups to address global issues, such as human rights, conflict resolution, and environmental





Tzu Chi Foundation spokesman and associate professor of the Institute of Religion and Culture, Tzu Chi University, speaks on “The Experience of Social Welfare in Tzu Chi.” Photo by Craig Lewis



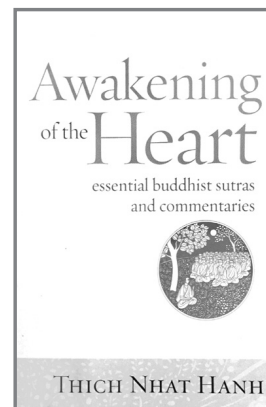
Ven. Athuraliye Rathana Thero, Sri Lankan Buddhist monk, politician, and member of parliament, gave a keynote address on “Transforming Conflict by Compassion in South Asia.” Photo by Craig Lewis

concerns.

Founded as an autonomous organization under the Bangkok-based Sathirakoses-Nagapradeepa Foundation, INEB’s members include monks, nuns, activists, academics, and social workers from more than 25 countries in Australasia, Asia, Europe, and North America. While a Buddhist organization, INEB welcomes members from other spiritual traditions, and recognizes the importance of interfaith activities, stating: “INEB’s philosophy and practice is based on compassion, social justice, non-violence, and co-existence, as put forth by Gautama the Buddha. The network’s core mission is to confront and end suffering using analysis and action guided by the Four Noble Truths.” (INEB)

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## Recommended Reading



Awakening of the Heart  
essential buddhist sutras and  
commentaries

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

# The welcome speech for the 18th INEB Biennial Conference

Ven. Shi Chao-Hwei

The Honorable Ajarn Sulak, INEB chairperson Mr. Harsha, the Venerable Bhikkhunis and Bhikkhus, ladies and gentlemen:

Today, we are gathered here to commence the 18th Biennial Conference of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, which will take place in Hong Shi Buddhist College in Taiwan. On behalf of the local organizer, I hereby give the warmest welcome to all honorable participants from 23 countries around the world!

With active participation in social

movements, INEB advocates for human rights, peace, gender equality and environmental justice, as well as opposing capitalism and consumerism. There's one man who unites all Dharma friends. Although he came from a privileged background, yet, he fights against any injustice and stands up for the vulnerable ones. This man is Mr. Ajarn Sulak.

To express our utmost support to INEB's vision, all teachers, students, supporters and volunteers at Hong Shi Buddhist College, we take on the task to organize this conference and related events prior and after the conference - despite our limited resources and funds.


Moreover, to express our admiration and support to INEB's spiritual leader, Ajarn Sulak, we have published a special feature on him in the October issue of Hong Shi Bimonthly Magazine. This is to introduce Ajarn Sulak to more of the Chinese speaking population as the founder of INEB and a remarkable Buddhist revolutionist. We have also spent 6 months to translate his English Biography in Chinese language for publishing.

Although there's very little we can do, however, I feel encouraged to know that an organization like INEB stands with us on equality within Buddhist traditions and social justice. We are not alone.

I hereby give my best wishes to the conference, may we have a successful one and that all participants be healthy, happy and full of the joy from dharma immersion!

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法界出版



**Roar**  
Sulak Sivaraksa and  
the Path of Socially Engaged Buddhism

**蕭素樂**  
Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa

**獅**  
Lion

**暹**  
Siam

**羅**  
Lao

## 新書發表會

# 蕭素樂

# 獅暹羅

**本書介紹**  
阿姜蕭素樂 (Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa)，偉大的佛教改革家、領導泰國民主化及「國際入世佛教運動」的先驅、曾獲諾貝爾和平獎兩度提名。本書講述蕭素樂從暹羅到美國的一生：無畏強權、發獅子吼、再度流亡海外的艱難歷程；對宗教實踐與社會變革的理念；與家人、師友、弟子門生的深刻情誼。藉由本書，得以一窺當代泰國與全球的入世佛教運動發展史。

**《蕭素樂——暹羅獅吼》**  
中文版新書發表

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發表人：阿姜蕭素樂 (Ajarn Sukak)  
與談人：昭慧法師、Ven. Dhammananda  
Mr. Lokamitra、游祥洲教授  
簽名會：11:00~11:20

英文原著 / Matteo Pistono  
陳雄財 初譯

**推廣價：250元**



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# The Story of INEB

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## The Roots of Engaged Buddhism

Shakyamuni Buddha advised monks, nuns, and lay people how to work to benefit society with ethical and altruistic intention and actions. Despite the Buddha's clear counsel, Buddhists today do not always apply the Dharma 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 Dharma center. Indeed, many teachers and senior Sangha members only teach or preach and choose not to encounter intimately those in suffering through deep listening.

Buddhist social activism as a movement arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century with both ordained Sangha and lay responses to colonialism, foreign invasion, Westernization, and the injustices of oppression. We see examples in China, Burma, Sri Lanka, India and elsewhere, with the notable contributions of Angarika Dharmapala and Dr. Bimrao Ambedkar.

The Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh coined the English phrase "engaged Buddhism" in the 1960s. Thich Nhat Hanh 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*), 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 Hanh is clear that what the

Buddha taught more than 2,600 years ago was an ideal of acting within society, not retreating from it. Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa reminds us that, "Buddhism by definition is engaged. Meditation without social engagement is escapism." 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's Kalyanamitra Network & the Birth of INEB

Ajahn Sulak first met Thich Nhat Hanh in 1974 in Sri Lanka at an interfaith gathering. Their camaraderie and work created the foundation for the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB). While Thich Nhat Hanh'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 trailblazers throughout the 1970s and 80s. This included working with Buddhadasa Bhikkhu on Dhammic education and Phra Payutto on Buddhist economics in Thailand, with Maha Ghosananda on promotion of peace and reconciliation in Cambodia, and with Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne on sustainable communities in Sri Lanka. Ajahn Sulak was also

deeply drawn to the non-violent struggle that His Holiness the Dalai Lama has led among Tibetans and especially the 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 has worked with and learned from, and who have 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 traditions and borders to cooperate for social change. He organized a meeting on his in-law's houseboat in Uthai Thani in central Thailand. Among those who attended were monks and nuns, meditators and radical leftists activists, professors and bureaucrats—in all, three dozen individuals from eleven countries, mostly though not exclusively Buddhists. Priests 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 global reach of any of Ajahn Sulak's endeavors.

There was a lively debate at this time about the organizational structure of INEB. Ajahn Sulak's past experience of running overly 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 *kalyanamitra*—spiritual friends—should be the central organizing principle. Along with *kalyanamitra*, 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. 26 years after 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 and the outcaste Dalit peoples of India as well as the right of self-determination for the Tibetans, the Buddhist peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tribes in Bangladesh, and other marginalized groups. INEB has advanced peace and reconciliation efforts in Sri Lanka, Cambodia and elsewhere, interfaith and Buddhist-Muslim dialogue, and various environmental campaigns including addressing the effects of climate change while opposing dams, mines, and deforestation. INEB has supported the equality of women, especially the full ordination of Buddhist nuns, and has created platforms and tools for socially engaged Buddhist youth to engage in civil society, protest, and advocacy.



## The Reinterpretation of Core Buddhist Teachings for the Contemporary World

### 1. The Three Poisons & Structural Violence

Throughout the 1990s, INEB was part of a worldwide movement of socially engaged Buddhism that gathered strength and shared methods and resources. Among socially engaged Buddhists, there were different ways of expressing, countering, and offering methods to overcome personal and societal suffering, to uproot greed, anger, and delusion, and its structural parallels consumerism, militarism, and mass media. Ajahn Sulak's articulation of the Buddha's teachings in modern society was influenced by the work of the Norwegian polymath Johan Galtung, who pushed Ajahn Sulak to take on the systems of injustice rather than just 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 of the three "poisons" of greed, anger, and delusion, and how they 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 toward 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).

### 2. The Buddhist Precepts & Social Systems

Various INEB *kalyanamitra* have been on the forefront of enacting modern reinterpretations 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. 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.

### 3. The Three Trainings, *Bodhicitta* & Positive Engagement

INEB was founded by individuals with a deep influence from the radical left, Marxist, and protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s. As INEB moves through 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 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, mindful, and non-violent ways.

- ***Samadhi/meditation***—this is not only about cultivating right mindfulness and calm abiding meditation practice, but is where we open and learn with our heart, to go beyond of 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-relationship between our mind, our perceptions, and the world around us, but is to act upon this insight to remove the causes of suffering for oneself and others.

### The Culture of INEB & the Challenge of the Way Forward

Connecting through *kalyanamitra*—spiritual friends—is the central core value of INEB that has sustained and must be maintained into the 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 [*kalyanamitra*] 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 *kalyanamitra* 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— *kalyanamitra*—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 *kalyanamitra* 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 must be consciously approached, including having a common vision and mission statement, clear priorities, guiding principles, and understanding how our "network" and "action" creates INEB's public identity. 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, new management tools, ones that do not set up internal power dynamics and ones that will not corrode the original values of INEB 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.

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 using action that is not dependent upon boundaries or identity, and thus 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/*paticca samuppada* will guide us to realize fraternity, equality, and liberty. *Paticca samuppada* 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*), cooperative platforms for change, 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 *kalyanamitra* family. With deep respect for Ajahn Sulak and the trailblazers of socially engaged Buddhism over the last half of a 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!*







Nov. 23. 2  
at Taipei Tzuch





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# The Way Forward

## A Strategic Roadmap for INEB in the Next Decade

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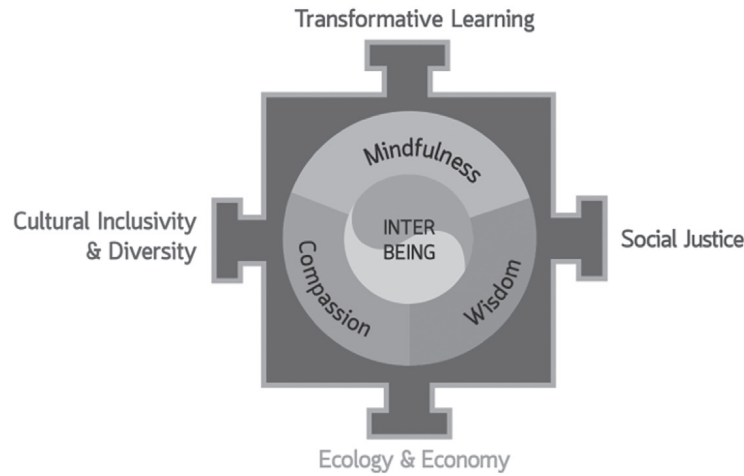
From *The Story of INEB*, we can appreciate the fundamental understanding of society and the collective values of INEB as the network has developed over the past almost 30 years. In order to move into this next ten-year era, INEB needs to build on these foundations and to understand more clearly how to organize its core activities to increase the strategic efficiency and impact of its work. When we speak of “strategic efficiency”, however, we cannot follow traditional or mainstream strategic planning techniques. Instead, what needs to be done is while maintaining INEB’s unique qualities, like our *kalyanamitra* family values, INEB must also identify on-going crises, issues, and challenges and then answer them with well planned programs and activities. The goal of this strategic process is to find a synergy between building organizational capacity, inculcating efficient management tools, and developing self-reliance in the programs and projects that we engage in.

One of the most important themes in INEB, and in socially engaged Buddhism, has been “to think and act like a Buddhist”. This means using Buddhist teachings and practices to understand and engage in the contemporary world – rather than basing ourselves in other ideologies while becoming “activists who just happen to be Buddhist”. In this way, we would like to draw on one of the most powerful conceptual tools in Buddhism, the

mandala, which provides a non-linear way of understanding how various phenomena interact and interpenetrate. The mandala reflects the core Buddhist concept of total interconnectedness and the core practice of the transformation of unskillful or neurotic behavior – rather than a dualistic approach of destroying “the bad/evil” and championing “the good/holy”. The INEB network has such a vast and interconnected group of activities and activists that a mandalic approach is a very fitting way to organize and schematize our work. While certainly not fully comprehensive, the four following areas summarize the core INEB areas of strategic engagement for “going forward” in the next decade:

- **Transformative Learning** – developing Buddhist pedagogy to integrate inner cultivation with social transformation.
- **Cultural Inclusivity & Diversity** – using a wide variety of cultural means to transform the barriers created by greed, anger, and delusion.
- **Social Justice** – engaging with structural violence for comprehensive social transformation.
- **Ecology & Economy** – transforming our approach to the material world and our planet through social enterprise.

## A Strategic Roadmap for INEB in the Next Decade



### Transformative Learning

Right View or Right Understanding is the first step of the Buddha’s Noble Eightfold Path. Throughout its history, Buddhism has always emphasized proper education, understanding that the core human problem is not evil but rather ignorance. The proper response then to individual, inter-relational, and global problems is not the eradication of “evil”, but the transformation of unskillful and ignorant behavior. INEB has been a pioneer in the Buddhist world for developing workshops and conferences focused on such transformational learning, and this will be a continued emphasis in basically all of our action groups, whether it is working to promote bhikkhuni ordination, Buddhist chaplaincy formation, Buddhist-Muslim harmony, alternative economics and development, ecological awareness, etc.

The newly formed INEB Institute provides a strategic base for this work. While still in its developmental stages, the Institute—as presently based at the Wongsanit Ashram outside of Bangkok—provides a center to host INEB’s wide ranging programs in transformational learning.

While it is important to understand what the Institute provides the network, the Institute also gathers its strength from the wide variety of transformational leaders in the INEB network who act as speakers, educators, and spiritual mentors to those who join the programs. In this age where the educational paradigm of industrial modernism is in deep crisis, INEB’s transformational education programs provide a major educational resource to not only Buddhists, but people of all walks of life. This is already in evidence in the students who have participated in the early stages of the Institute. In terms of the ten year strategy, the vision is not only to develop a centralized Institute in Thailand, but to nurture a “network university” with the hosting of INEB Institute programs at other such centers in the network, such as in Sri Lanka, India, Myanmar, Taiwan, Korea, and Japan.

### Cultural Inclusivity and Diversity

The increasing polarization of the world over the last decade has become one of the dominant issues



of our time. In many nations, for example Thailand and the United States, we are seeing a cultural stalemate between those who espouse tribalistic forms of ethnic nationalism and those who espouse comprehensive cultural inclusivity based in our interdependence. The cost of these conflicts has been a wide variety of human rights violations and a deterioration of key democratic institutions and systems. While political engagement and social justice work are essential, cultural engagement is equally as important. INEB's Honorary Advisor and Ecosattva, Joanna Macy, has called this "shifts in consciousness" in her threefold articulation of the Great Turning, noting that "structural alternatives cannot take root and survive without deeply ingrained values to sustain them." In terms of Buddhism, this is the ongoing historical struggle to realize Buddhism as a civilizational movement, like under the great Ashoka of India, rather than a force of ethnic nationalism as we see in much of Asia today.

INEB's leading founder Sulak Sivaraksa and its chairman Harsha Navaratne have both devoted significant portions of their activist lives promoting the arts as a means for building bridges across divided communities. For the next ten years, INEB will develop a Global Revitalization of Buddhism project, which specifically seeks to engage in the resurgence of Asia's two great civilizations, India and China. While Buddhism is on the rise in both of these countries, INEB plays an essential role to support a revival of Buddhism that builds bridges and is not used as a political force for the mutual antagonism of these two giants towards themselves or any other nations. INEB's continual stance – as influenced by the non-aligned stance of Vietnamese Buddhists during the Vietnam War – is one of total social engagement while avoiding politicalized engagement. As INEB Advisory Committee Co-chair Lodi Gyari Rinpoche advises, the only way to

deal with these two emerging nations is through culture, religion, art, and music. In this way, INEB will seek to develop various cultural programs through its transformational learning mandate to build a world of cultural inclusivity and diversity.

## Social Justice

One of INEB's great friendships has been that between Ajahn Sulak and Norwegian peace activist Johan Galtung, who developed the seminal concept of structural violence. Under their influence, INEB has continually defined socially engaged Buddhism as working on the deeper causes of suffering, and not just engaging in more simplistic forms of social welfare that religious organizations embrace – sometimes to cover up their complicity with powerful institutions that create structural violence and social injustice. Since its beginnings, INEB has developed a variety of programs in conflict transformation, such as its work in Cambodia with Maha Ghosananda in the early 1990s. In the last five years, INEB has made Buddhist-Muslim relations a central part of its network activities. INEB has reached out to make partnerships with progressive Muslims in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka to work on conflicts in those nations, and to build the civilizational culture that both Buddhism and Islam embrace.

However, INEB has always been concerned with regressive elements within our own Buddhist tradition, and has sought to also develop dialogue with Buddhists in those countries who have espoused Buddhist ethnic nationalism. Indeed, in the work for social justice, there is much "inner work" that needs to be done, and so INEB is expanding its work on gender justice with more active support for bhikkhuni development in the Theravada Buddhist world. Child rights and



protection are also a new area of engagement for the network. Finally, from its long standing commitment to marginalized people, INEB will continue to support marginalized Buddhists in Tibet, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and other regions. Our deep commitment to the Dalit Buddhist movement in India will also continue, with the immense task of the Buddha's own work to develop a civilizational ethic for the Indian subcontinent.

## Ecology and Economy

The marriage of these two themes is fundamental in our present world, for without the proper economic design we will not be able to properly address the global ecological crisis. From the environmental side, INEB moved forward in 2012 with the formation of the Interfaith Climate and Ecology network (ICE), which combines the above themes of developing transformational learning with other like minded religious groups for the conscientization of their communities to live sustainably and work for climate justice. One of the sub-networks that emerged out of ICE has been the Eco-Temple Community Development Project. With a core group of member temples, this project is developing an eco-temple community design system integrating transformational education, rehabilitation of the environment, ecological temple design, clean energy development, and sufficiency economy in organic agriculture and consumer products.

In this way, work for ecology centrally includes work for a new economic paradigm. In these eco-temple projects, we can see how a temple at the center of a local community can promote the design system of "local production and local consumption", creating a key fulcrum to practice the principle of subsidiarity. This forms the basis for participatory development and the building of more

decentralized and truly democratic socio-political units in place of the massive centralization of the present industrial growth economy. INEB has also been a part of nurturing the development of Good Markets, which "operate as self-financing social enterprises to support an emerging new economy that is good for people and good for the planet." The concept and practice of social enterprise is another core theme for INEB in the next ten years. In recalling the overall goal of this strategic process as stated at the beginning, INEB needs "to find a synergy between building organizational capacity, inculcating efficient management tools, and finding self-reliance in the programs and projects that we engage in." Social enterprise is one of the key strategies to empower our many network members to take their organizations beyond the limited world of NGO activism propped up by donor funding, and into this emerging new economy that has inner and outer ecology as core foundations.

## Conclusion:

In the following section, you will find more detailed explanations of the many projects mentioned above. As always, the INEB Secretariat will continue to be the main coordination point for network linkages. However, like an ever-developing spider's web – Indra's Net – these main working groups will provide new centers of linkage and coordination, being run as decentralized, self-financed programs and projects. Flipping the current paradigm of hierarchical power on its side and emptying out the center of its "self", we seek to build an empowered webbed system of networks and alliances, working collectively but always providing space for new voices and initiatives.



งานปาฐกถาเสวนา ประชูปวงแก้ว  
ครั้งที่ 24

**THE 24<sup>th</sup> SEM PRINGPUANGKÉO  
PUBLIC TALK**

วันเสาร์ที่ 3 กุมภาพันธ์ 2561

เวลา 14.00 – 18.00 น.

ห้องประชุมจิต เศรษฐบุตร (LT1) คณะนิติศาสตร์  
มธ. ทจพระจันทร์

Sat 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2018, 14.00-18.00 hrs.

at Jid Sethaputha Meeting Room (LT1),  
Faculty of Law, Thammasat University  
[Tha Prachan] Bangkok

ปาฐกถา

# จากนักสู้เพื่อปลดแอก สู่ผู้เยียวยาสังคม

โดย บาทหลวงไมเคิล แลปสลีย์

สถาบันเพื่อการเยียวยาความทรงจำ, แอฟริกาใต้

PUBLIC LECTURE

## A JOURNEY FROM THE FREEDOM FIGHTER TO HEALER

by **FATHER MICHAEL LAPSLEY**

Institute for Healing of Memories, South Africa

กล่าวปิด โดย  
ส. ศิวรักษ์  
CLOSING REMARKS:  
SULAK SIVARAKSA



วงสนทนา

### สันติวิธี วิถีเพื่อคืนความเป็นมนุษย์

● พระไพศาล วิสาโล ● ศ. ดร. ชัยวัฒน์ สถาอานันท์

● คุณอวยพร เชื้อนแก้ว

ดำเนินรายการ โดย ญัฐฐา โกมลวาทิน

DIALOGUE

### NON-VIOLENCE: THE WAY TO REGAIN HUMANITY

● VEN. PAISAL VISALO ● CHAIWAT SATHA-ANAND

● OUYPNORN KHUNKAEW

MODERATED by NATTHA KOMOLVADHIN

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With simultaneous translation from English to Thai & Thai to English  
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0 2314 7385, 08 9499 0490





## The 44th Komol Keemthong Foundation's Annual Lecture

**On Saturday, February 24, 2018**

The lecture will be held at Prakob Hutasingh Meeting Room,  
3rd Floor Multi-Purpose Building, Thammasat University,  
Tha Phra Chan Campus, Bangkok

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12.00-1.00 p.m.	Registration and Reception
1.00-1.10 p.m.	An Introduction of Komol Keemthong Foundation By <b>Mr.Werapong Kriangsinyos</b> , Managing Director of Komol Keemthong Foundation
1.10-1.50 p.m.	Musical Performance by <b>Mr.Chaiyaporn Namprathip</b>
1.50-2.10 p.m.	Dramatize Poems by <b>Mr.Sakul Boonyatat</b>
2.10-2.40 p.m.	Honor Recipients Foundation Announce 2018 1. People's Health Systems Movement 2. <b>Mr.Khrueang Sribuapan</b> (A man with unimpaired vision)
2.40-2.50 p.m.	An Introduction of Annual Lecturer 2018
2.50-4.10 p.m.	Annual Lecture 2018, <b>Mr.Kasidit Anantanator</b> will address the theme "Why do we need ideology in our lives? The moral from the life of Mr. Komol Keemthong"
4.10 -4.20 p.m.	Closing Ceremony Speech By <b>Dr.Wichai Chokevivat</b> , President of Komol Keemthong Foundation



## Reflections on the Royal Funeral and Cremation

The royal funeral was befitting for the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej. Some Western journalists have called it “lavish” or “extravagant”. They simply don’t understand our tradition and culture. They focused on the price tag and used it to judge our tradition. This is lamentable, but understandable. Today, everything has a price, including things that are beyond monetary calculation.

We can leave the king’s funeral aside. Even ordinary Thais try to the best of their ability to make the funerals of their parents as dignified as possible in order to pay their last respect to them. Some might even borrow money to hold these funeral services. A price tag cannot be put on the respect we have for our parents or their dignity. Likewise, a price tag cannot be put on the love people have for their king. The year long mourning and funeral of the late king had clearly shown that a vast majority of Thais loved King Rama IX. H.M. the King had also graciously allowed the creation of crematoriums nationwide so that people could go make offerings of sandalwood flowers. A massive number of people went to make these offerings throughout the country. What could be a better index of the people’s loyalty to their late king?

There is an important lesson that the government should learn from the royal funeral ceremony. It is this: King Rama X’s coronation ceremony too has to be fit for a king. A good way to prepare for this ceremony is to follow His Majesty’s footsteps. His Majesty has called for the dredging of the canals in Bangkok. The government should follow through this initiative and expand it to cover the country’s river system. It will be a costly project, but will be worth it. Remember that the waterways

have served as the vital arteries of not only the present kingdom but also of Ayutthaya and Thonburi. Equally important, the coronation ceremony involves the use of waterways for the royal procession. It is therefore essential to take good care of them.

An even better way to pay proper homage to the new king is to emphasize on moral development. What do I mean by this? The government can start by pardoning those who have been imprisoned (often unjustly) because of the draconian lese majeste law. Most of them were imprisoned for defaming the late king. Since Section 112 of the Thai Criminal Code should be interpreted as applying only to the present monarch, those who were imprisoned for insulting King Rama IX should be pardoned. This would be an auspicious way to begin the new reign. Also, it will help shore up the people’s loyalty to the monarchy.

Further, the government should do more than merely promising to hold national elections sometime in the future. For starters, it should grant the people freedom of expression. This will be a crucial step in the transition (back) to democracy, and the construction of what Puey Ungphakorn called “santi pracha dhamma.”

If society is guided by “santi pracha dhamma”, the people will be happy, and they will praise the new king for being a virtuous monarch. And, the new king too will be able to rightly claim, as did his father in 1950, “We shall reign with righteousness for the benefit and happiness of the people of Siam.”

## Globalization, Extreme Capitalism, Addiction, and Surplus Inmates: What Can the Dhamma Teach Us About These Problems?

### I

I am a Buddhist who has openly claimed to be a disciple of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu teaches us to grasp the essence of Buddhism, which is as follows: the transformation of greed into generosity, of hatred and anger into loving-kindness and compassion, and of delusion into wisdom and holistic knowledge. ‘Know thyself’ is a maxim that any Buddhist should abide to. The Buddhist must examine to what extent greed, hatred, and delusion has dominated her or him. At the same time, s/he must cultivate the Buddha-nature inside, because it will contribute to the reduction of selfishness, the care for all sentient beings, and, ultimately, the building of social peace.

This essence can be found in other religions as well, though they might explain it differently. As such, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu encourages his disciples to respect all religions. In other words, they are of equal worth to Buddhism. We can all work together to challenge greed, hatred, and delusion in society or the world. This ‘we’ is also extended to include atheists. Hatred is often expressed through the abuse of state power and militarism, greed through capitalism and consumerism, and delusion through mainstream education and mass media.

Greed, hatred, and delusion are flourishing under globalization. Many people associate self-

worth with greed (e.g., having ever-increasing fortunes), hatred (e.g., the accumulation of power), and delusion (e.g., attachment to false ideas and prejudices).

In this context, the very first thing a Buddhist should do is to develop reflexivity. We should learn to detect our prejudices. Another way of saying this is: how have hatred, love, fear, and/or delusion dominated us—our feelings, thoughts, and actions? And how can we overcome them?

We must also remember that inner peace goes hand in hand with social peace. In order to build social peace, structural violence must be challenged and dismantled. Structural violence leads to the reproduction of class inequality. Structural violence kills. Under structural violence, many people are put in situations in which their lives are deemed worthless, expendable, or superfluous; or, they are reduced to means to achieve certain ends, especially profit-making.

In short, any practicing Buddhist must seriously examine herself or himself. S/he must be concerned about reducing selfishness, nurturing humility, and cultivating *kalyanamitta* or virtuous companions. The Buddha even states that having *kalyanamitta* is most important for leading a noble life.

In general, a *kalyanamitta* is someone who says things that we don't want to hear; that is, we often don't want to learn about our prejudices resulting from hatred, love, fear, and delusion. A *kalyanamitta* thus acts like an external voice of conscience that enables us to develop critical self-reflection, improve ourselves, and access our Buddha-nature. We need to have *kalyanamitta* to be awakened from greed, hatred, and delusion.

This necessarily means that the Buddhist should also act as a *kalyanamitta* to others in society, including, or especially, the rich and powerful. They too need a chance to cultivate their Buddha-nature. The Quakers have taught us to speak truth to power despite the consequences. Since it is the truth that we speak, we cannot NOT speak it. This is what moral courage is truly about.

## II

Defeating extreme capitalism is very difficult but not impossible. Capitalism has even become something like a new religion. Many people have put it on a pedestal—from judges to military generals, politicians to university professors. In various ways, subtle or otherwise, they are saying “greed is good.” They may even be unconsciously enjoying social inequality. They forget a simple lesson of uneven development: the greater the opulence, the greater the misery. As Eduardo Galeano nicely explains why poor people are poor in the form of a question: “Could it be because we are clothed by their nakedness and nourished by their hunger?” And we should also not forget the stress our ways of life and modes of economic growth put on the natural environment. For instance, we have to consume a lot of electricity. This leads to the construction of big dams, which in turn leads to the dispossession of lands belonging to rural villagers or indigenous

peoples, the destruction of jungles, the loss of biodiversity, the extinction of animals, etc. Building nuclear power plants may be even worse. Just witness Fukushima in 2011.

Many of the problems in the world today are interconnected and can be traced back to the (normal) workings of global capitalism. Humanity's most pressing problems are universal problems that require universal solutions. The Buddha calls this condition *paticcasamuppada*, which is often translated as the Dependent Origination or the Chain of Causation. At the basic level, we must never forget that personal and social sufferings are interconnected. Therefore, a problem like mental depression may be linked with the stress, anxiety, and precarity that capitalism creates.

As for the problem of addiction, it does not only concern drug addicts. Under capitalism, many of us are addicted to money, commodities, immediate satisfactions, etc. We are attached to a system that ultimately hurts us.

Concerning the inmates my naïve question is: have the judges and the attorneys ever visited the prisons? Do they actually know how inmates live? The Prince Father (Mahidol Adulyadej) had visited the prisons. He was concerned about the size of the prison cells and the ventilation system. He cared about the well-being of the inmates. The judges and the attorneys should follow the footsteps of the Prince Father.

When Prince Yugala Dighambara (Prince of Lopburi), as Minister of Interior, visited a prison, he was appalled by its conditions. Subsequently, he asked a chaplain to teach the Dhamma in prison. Of course, this didn't help improve the prison conditions. Perhaps, however, it was better than not caring about the inmates at all, than treating them as disposable and inconsequential people.

Attempting to minimize suffering is laudable, but the root causes of suffering must also

be tackled and eradicated. For me, these root causes are related to structural violence. Systemic injustice is responsible for large-scale imprisonment. The inmates are often poor, socially excluded, etc. A number of the inmates are also opponents of the military dictatorship. The dictatorship regularly relies on section 112 of the Thai criminal code to silence dissent and maintain a façade of social peace. It is well-known that King Rama IX had stated clearly during a televised speech on the eve of his birthday in 2005, that invoking the lese majeste law would ultimately hurt rather than protect the monarch and the monarchy. It seems that most of his loyal subjects have yet to heed his words—they are more of a royalist than the king.

Section 112 of the Thai criminal code is an index of injustice in Thai society. It was amended during the Thanin Kravixien dictatorship in the 1970s to be even more draconian. The minimum sentence was raised to three-year imprisonment and the maximum to 15 years. There would not be any suspended sentence. Moreover, anyone could file a lese majeste charge. The police would accept a lese majeste charge often without any scrutiny—for not doing so would be interpreted as a dereliction of duty. They would rather err on the side of ultra-royalism.

Section 112 states that anyone who “defames, insults, or threatens the king, the queen, the heir-apparent or the regent”, will be punished with a jail term of 3-to-15 years. In other words, it applies only to the king, the queen, the heir-apparent or the regent in the present reign. It does not cover the protection of past or deceased monarchs. There’s a legal precedent. In the Reign of King Rama VIII, a newspaper headlined that a female nurse slept on the king’s bed, implying that something salacious was taking place in Boromphiman Throne Hall. The police wanted the attorney to charge the newspaper’s editor with lese majeste. By the time the case reached

the Chief Attorney, the king had suddenly passed away. The Chief Attorney said that the case had to be dropped because Article 112 no longer applied to the protection of the late king.

However, in 2013, the Supreme Court found a person guilty of defaming King Rama IV. The Court reasoned that King Rama IV was the great-grandfather of King Rama IX. Many years ago the Supreme Court also found someone guilty of defaming the Grand Palace. Small wonder that I am facing a lese majeste indictment for defaming King Naraesuan who ruled Ayutthaya from 1590 to 1605; that is, over 400 years ago. Today, the number of people charged with lese majeste is increasing at an alarming pace. If the government strictly upholds the substance of the law and has a modicum of compassion, all of the convicted should be pardoned. This may be a proper way to honor our new king, to begin the Tenth Reign.

### III

The basic teachings of Buddhism involve generosity, moral training, and mindfulness practice.

Generosity means giving. It means giving things to other people—things that we have in excess, that we don’t truly need, or even that we love. Giving these things, including even our own lives, is called *amisadana* (material gifts). While important, *amisadana* is lower than *dhammadana*. (*Dhammadana* should not be confused with the free distribution of dhamma books, an act should be seen as *amisadana*.)

Dhamma means truth. *Dhammadana* means the gift of truth. This is truly important for a society that is full of deceits, prejudices, mediocrities, and so on. The gift of truth will enable the people to access excellence. Excellence is comprised of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. Let’s return to the Quakers’

expression “to speak truth to power.” In doing so, power may punish the speaker of truth. But the speaker cannot Not do it. Why? Because if no one speaks truth to power, the people will not be able to access excellence. Thai society is facing a crisis. It seriously lacks people with moral courage to speak truth to power. It has forgotten or betrayed many speakers of truth in the past, such as Pridi Banomyong, Puey Ungphakorn, and MC Sithiporn Kridakara.

At the same time, to dwell in moral cowardice shamelessly, we have put a number of brutal men on a pedestal. Think of Sarit Thanarat, P. Phibunsongkram, and Phao Sriyanond. We have even built monuments for these men. Conversely, to what extent, are we familiar with the names of Komol Keemthong, Wanida Tantiwittayapitak, or Charoen Wat-aksorn? There were ordinary people who challenged systemic violence and fought against the brutalities of men like Sarit, Phibun, and Phao.

The case of Charoen Wat-aksorn is one of the numerous cases in which ordinary people are doubting the justice system. Charoen was assassinated on 21 June 2004, after he testified to the Senate in Bangkok about the ecological destruction in Bo Nok and Ban Krut in Prachuab Khiri Khan province. He was an activist and conservationist who fought against coal-fired power and industrial shrimp-farming for more than a decade. The two hitmen who had confessed to killing Charoen died in prison. The person who hired the hitmen to kill Charoen initially received a death sentence, but the Appeals and Supreme courts ultimately dismissed the case in 2015. Many people are therefore questioning the transparency of the justice system. Charoen was survived by his wife who is still fighting against the construction of coal-fired power plant.... Perhaps a way to regain the trust of the people is to make the justice system more transparent. For instance, court decisions in important cases should

be publicized. Students, intellectuals, and ordinary people should have a chance to deliberate and debate on these decisions.

I am speaking as a *kalyanamitta* of the judges. I am attempting to speak truth to power, to provide the gift of truth. I ask for your forgiveness if you found what I just said an affront to your dignity. I simply want the justice system to be back on the right track and play a crucial role in the checks and balances mechanism in the country.

Although *dhammadana* is crucial, it is still not the highest form of giving. The highest form of giving is *abhayadana*. It is about training the self to overcome fear. In Buddhism, fear is our greatest enemy. We are haunted by fear (along with greed, hatred, and delusion). We fear losing our social status. We fear that we won't be popular. We fear old-age, illness, death, and so on. If we are able to overcome fear, we will overcome greed, hatred, and delusion. Put another way, our primary enemy is internal. Once we have no fear, we will be able to forgive our (external) enemies. We will see them as fellow travelers on the path to the cessation of suffering, which as abovementioned, is linked to the challenging and dismantling of structural violence. The point is thus to destroy the violent structures without hating and destroying the individuals or class of people who are prospering from them. Rather, we should act as their *kalyanamitta*. Hopefully, they will eventually join us in the common struggle for the cessation of suffering based on nonviolence and *santi pracha dhamma*.



.....  
Sulak Sivaraksa, a talk given at a conference held by the Ministry of Justice on 2 October 2017, Bangkok

## Where should Thais be heading?\*

Traditionally, we Thais had relied on both the right and the left in governing the kingdom. The Ministry of Defense was on the right, while the Ministry of Interior was on the left. During the reign of King Trailok, Defense was designated an area for soldiers, and Interior for civilians. However, the division was never strict. Defense was in charge of the southern areas or provinces, while Interior was responsible for the northern ones. Subsequently, the port authority was created to control the seaboard provinces. The various government departments and divisions were also always divided into right and left. It was only during the Fifth Reign that this administrative practice came to an end. The king had wanted to centralize all power as befitting an absolutist monarch. All power in governing the royal kingdom then went into the hands of the Ministry of Interior.

For *farangs*, the Right is associated with conservatism and is therefore linked with the preservation of the status quo, of an unequal and hierarchical class system. The people who oppose this class structure are called the left. An early expression of this opposition is the Magna Carta of 1215. One of its objectives is to limit the power of the Crown vis-à-vis the barons. This was a struggle within the ruling class, and it was not concerned about the rights and interests of the ordinary people. A large part of *farang* political history is about elite power struggles—between Catholics and Protestants, King and Parliament (composed of Lords and patricians, not commoners or plebeians),

and so on.

France was the first country in Europe to successfully overthrow absolutism. The French revolutionaries rallied under the flag of liberty, equality, and fraternity. However, these universal values failed to materialize, and became pure hot air. Napoleon later transformed them into the cavalry, the infantry, and the artillery soldiers. It seems that many recent Thai military coup-makers unwittingly emulated Napoleon, even though they were not educated in France.

At least, the struggle for (political) liberty, (human) rights, and egalitarianism first began in France. England had rejected these ideals. Burke opposed the French Revolution. Locke valued liberty, but claimed that an unequal class system was necessary for the preservation of society.

King Rama V, who accepted the West as the standard of civilization, likewise believed that class inequality was necessary for society. Class equality would bring about social dissolution. As such, Siam needed neither a constitution nor a parliament. They were seen as 'luxury' goods from the West. The king's position is evident in his written rejection of a draft constitution, proposed by a reformist faction of the ruling class in 1885 (ror sor 103). This faction was spearheaded by Prince Pritsadang. They were quite progressive for their times, but they probably did not see themselves as belonging to the left. What about Tienwan who proposed a parliament made up of royals and commoners? Was he a leftist? And

remember that he was imprisoned for 14 years for the crime of what is known as lese majeste today. Can we not conclude that the drive to democratize Siam began already in the Fifth Reign?

In the Sixth Reign, a group of young military officers attempted to seize power. They felt that the new king had exercised royal power excessively. They wanted to curb the monarch's power and increase that of the common people. Should the monarch refuse to compromise, they were ready to push for the creation of a republic. There was a regional precedence. The Qing Dynasty, which had reigned for almost three hundred years, gave way to the Republic of China.

The young military officers failed in their endeavor. They were branded as traitors and rebels. But the idea of 'democratic' society that they had implanted, bore fruits in 1932. The demands made by the People's Party in 1932 were essentially the same as those of the young military officers.

The first announcement of the People's Party proclaims thus:

The People's Party has no wish to snatch the throne. Hence, it invites this king to retain the position. But, he must be under the law of the constitution for governing the country, and cannot do anything independently without the approval of the assembly of people's representatives. The People's Party has already informed the king of this view, and at the present time is waiting for a response. If the king gives a negative response, or does not reply within the time set, for the selfish reason that his power will be reduced, it will be regarded as treason to the nation, and it will be necessary for the country to have a democratic form of government; that is, the head of state will be

an ordinary person appointed by parliament to hold the position for a fixed term.

Note well the word 'democracy' above. Does it refer to 'republic' or a 'state for the people at large'?

The People's Party's announcement served as a manifesto. It manifests the political ideology that I claim could still provide us with an answer to the question which serves as the title of this talk. I will thus continue reading from the announcement.

By this method, the people can hope to be looked after in the best way. Everyone will have employment, because our country is a country which has very abundant conditions. When we have seized the money which those of royal blood amass from farming on the backs of the people, and use these many hundreds of millions for nurturing the country, the country will certainly flourish. The government, which the People's Party will set up will draw up projects based on principle, and not act like a blind man, as the government which has the king above the law has done.

What were the immediate consequences of the revolution on 24 June 1932? What happened on the morning after the successful revolution? I think one of its most important impacts is that for the first time in Thai history, everyone became equal under the law. Moreover, Pridi Banomyong wanted to create economic equality in society. For instance, the new government would create employment and devise a national economic plan that would radically improve the well-being of ordinary people. Pridi's Outline Economic Plan envisioned the country as a welfare state.... There was also universal suffrage in the election of members of parliament. Thai

women got the right to vote even before their Swiss counterparts. In England, women had to engage in long struggles before they won their political rights and the right to attend universities.

Unfortunately, Pridi could not push through the Outline Economic Plan. Absolutist and anti-democratic forces in the country were fiercely opposed to it. We can call these forces the extreme Right. They depicted Pridi as an extreme leftist and ultimately a communist.

Pridi understood that education was central to moving Thai society in the direction of democracy. As you all know, he thus founded the University of Moral and Political Sciences (Thammasat University) as an institution in which anyone could attend—even the rural folks. They would all have a chance to be educated to be ‘truly human.’ Put another way, students must learn to go out and serve politics. Politics is no longer the exclusive domain of the privileged. People who are educated to love justice would naturally be concerned about the poor and the excluded, and would struggle to dismantle and replace an unjust social system. Pridi felt that democracy must be fused with the Dhamma to be able to operate in Thai society. Therefore, he sought the wisdom of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa in this respect.

Pridi believed that it is possible to actualize ‘Dhammic Socialism’ in Thai society. At the same time, he helped to establish the Southeast Asia League to unite the democratic forces in the region. The League was comprised of Burma, Vietnam, Laos, Indonesia, and the Philippines. The members voted Tiang Sirikhan as president. Prince Phetsarath Ratanavongsa of Laos served as secretary.

In sum, this was the direction that the Thai leaders chose when they experimented with democracy in the aftermath of the 1932 Revolution. It was filled with a lot of obstacles from the military dictatorship to the Japanese occupation during

World War Two. But the civilian leaders managed to overcome them by joining hands with many other patriotic and freedom-loving Thais....

The Thai experiment with democracy as spearheaded by the People’s Party lasted for approximately 15 years. The military coup in 1947 brought back to power the absolutist and counter-revolutionary forces. The role of the United States in Thai politics during the Cold War years must not be underestimated. In October 1973, ordinary people and students drove out the tyrants. But when they looked forward to creating a democratic society, they completely forgot about Pridi Banomyong and the People’s Party.

Puey Ungphakorn was probably the last significant figure who attempted to defend and revive the aims and projects associated with Pridi and the People’s Party. This can be seen in his promotion of ‘santi pracha dhamma.’ He did not succeed. We must remember that the absolutist forces claim that only their class can lead the country. There is no alternative to their class. If absolutism is restored in the country, so much the better. Even the brass plaque that proclaims “Here on 24 June 1932 at dawn, the People’s Party proclaimed a constitution for the country’s advancement”, has gone missing.

The military figures who have taken turns in ruling the country since 1947 do not possess democratic consciousness, nor do they care about the people’s rights and freedom. They were once subservient to the American empire. Now they are doing the same to the Chinese empire. In short, they cannot provide the solutions we are looking for. We have to realize that we are the solutions that we are looking for. Together, despite our differences and conflicts, we can head toward ‘santi pracha dhamma’, which was also the horizon of the People’s Party in 1932.

In order to move in this direction, the



young must also learn to cultivate moral courage. I feel that university education in this country is quite hopeless. None of the universities could teach students about Goodness, Beauty and Truth. This is not to say that there is no good professor in the country. There are also promising students every now and then, but they still lack moral courage. Also, the young must be willing to meet the destitute, the marginalized, and the exploited. The point is not to teach these people, but to learn from them. Why? Because many of them still have not been uprooted from traditional wisdom—unlike most of us who have been indoctrinated by the mainstream mass media and higher education institutions to serve capitalism, consumerism, and absolutism.

A point that cannot be over-emphasized is that suffering is not only personal, but also social and environmental. In fact, personal, social and environmental sufferings are interconnected in the web of life. It may not be readily apparent, but capitalism and consumerism are the leading causes of suffering in the present world. We must learn to see systemic or structural violence. When we can see through all these, a possibility to end suffering through wisdom may emerge.

The reduction of class inequality is

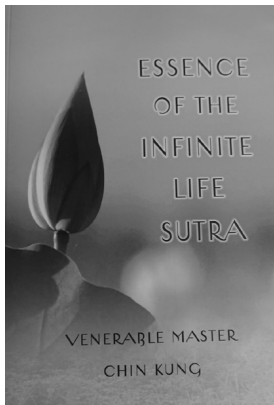
important. This is a matter of political economy. Aside from having the basic necessities that sustain life, both rich and poor however also need contentment. A lid must be put on surpluses and excesses. Mental development will help us to attain wisdom and transcend our animal, mundane or mediocre nature. We can be more than just economic or political animals. We can live authentically. We can have inner beauty, happiness and peace, and we can use this inner peace to drive for harmony and justice, socially and environmentally.

If you found my talk full of prattle, I'm sorry to have wasted your time. I hope some of you would find some of the things that I have said beneficial. I hope you will have the time to reflect on my words, and to adapt them to the present contexts so that we can move forward with mindfulness and wisdom.

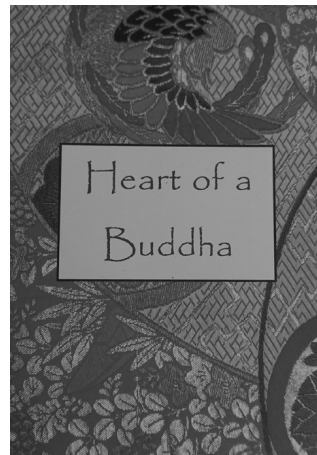


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\*Revised and excerpted from the speech "From Charlottesville to Bangkok: From 'the Right' in the West to the 'Extreme Nationalist' in Thai Society", 16 September 2017, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University

Recommended Reading



Essence of The Infinite Life Sutra  
Author: Venerable. Master Chin Kung  
For Free Distribution



Heart of a Buddha  
Author: Venerable. Master Chin Kung  
For Free Distribution

## Are Cause and Effect Coming Full Circle? What Do We Do Now?

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Seventy-six years ago, the international community, led by the United States, launched a harsh economic embargo against Japan, which had invaded other countries. The embargo, however, triggered Japan's pre-emptive strike on Pearl Harbor. We cannot help but think that the conditions currently surrounding North Korea are quite similar to prewar Japan's, and that North Korea is following the same path that Japan did in the days leading up to World War II.

At the United Nations General Assembly, Japanese Prime Minister Abe said, "We have tried, over and over again, to solve the problem through dialogue with North Korea, but it has brought us nothing. What we need is not talk, but pressure." The day before, delivering his first address to the UN General Assembly, US President Trump said that if the United States "is forced to defend itself or its allies, we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea."

It seems that cause and effect are coming full circle—Japan is now joining the US in leading the international community in deploying economic sanctions and an oil embargo designed to increase the pressure on North Korea and restrain it. Clearly, applying greater pressure is risky. In fact, as the war of words between America and North Korea is escalating, we can easily imagine how much greater is the danger of provoking the same result as in the case of Japan. Few countries understand, as well as Japan does, what it means to experience the tragedy of war and the danger of the current situation.

Therefore, we wonder why our country is joining in the effort to push North Korea into a corner. We should stop and think about whether this is really the best approach for Japan to take.

When Rev. Nikkyo Niwano, Founder of Rissho Kosei-kai, addressed the first Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament in 1978, he said to the leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union, "Instead of taking risks with arms, please take major risks for peace and disarmament." Founder Niwano devoted the last half of his life to realizing world peace through inter-religious dialogue and cooperation, because, as a Buddhist, he vowed to keep the precept to not take life and to realize the ideals taught in the Lotus Sutra. However, was that all that he accomplished? Founder Niwano spoke about this as follows. "The inspiration for the ideal of world peace, which I am presently giving my all to build, is, of course, the Buddhist precept against taking life. However, the inspiration that roused my passion and compelled me to take action is the agony of having experienced

those terrible days of acutely feeling, ‘no more war.’ And on the day on which the war did end, I felt I had reached the level of indescribable tranquility” (Kosei magazine, August 1979).

Today, are we reliving prewar Japan, and is our country about to repeat “those terrible days” that followed? Is it no longer possible to change course?

We can transcend cause and effect. The “cause” of the present situation is not only political leaders, it is we Japanese citizens as well. We must make every effort not to repeat the same mistakes of the past. For example, when a similar situation is about to occur, we know from experience that the outcome will differ, depending on our attitude and our course of action. All of us share the responsibility to learn from the past, to use its lessons to put an end to a cycle of negative cause-and-effect, and to provide leadership that produces a different outcome in our world.

True dialogue has the power to change the world. We know that instead of strategizing against and putting pressure on another country, dialogue is extremely effective when it gives us the courage to face each other and to build a relationship that eases each other’s anxieties and fears. Taking time to

search out the way to avoid conflict, and to coexist will lead to greater security for Japan, and in turn, greater stability for the entire world.

We are living in a time of historical importance. Whether we build a culture of peace through dialogue or we usher in an era of conflict through the use of force—which will be Japan’s path forward? With the Japanese House of Representatives having been dissolved, this is the choice in the hands of each and every voter.

Although social systems may differ from one country to the next, there are many people in North Korea as well as in the world who continue to lead humble lives from one day to the next, always thinking of the happiness of their family members as we do. Now is the time to dedicate ourselves to heartfelt prayer for peace, for a world without war. Let us join forces, expand the circle of dialogue for the sake of the happiness of all life everywhere, and work together.

.....  
 Rissho Kosei-kai’s Statement on  
 Japan and the US Policies against North Korea



## Recommended Reading



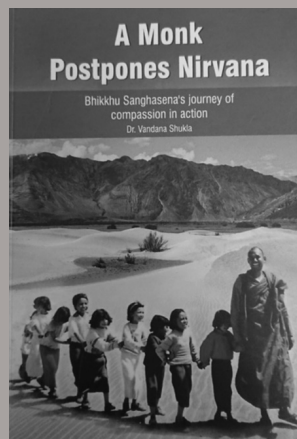
BUDDHADĀSA BHIKKHU  
*Translated, edited, and introduced by Santikaro*

### UNDER *the* BODHI TREE

*Buddha’s Original Vision  
 of Dependent Co-arising*

Under the Bodhi Tree

**Edited:** Santikaro, Bhikkhu  
**Publisher:** Wisdom Publications



### A Monk Postpones Nirvana

*Bhikkhu Sanghasena’s journey of  
 compassion in action*  
 Dr. Vandana Shukla

A Monk Postpones  
 Nirvana

**Authors:** Dr. Vandana Shukla  
**Publisher:** Mahabodhi Int’l  
 meditation Centre (MIMC)



अस्पृश्यता ईश्वर और मानवता के प्रति अपराध है। -गाँधीजी

# Harijan Sevak Sangh

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI IN 1932)

Kingsway Camp, Delhi-110009

Ref. No. HSS(D)/SKS/905/58/2017-2018

Date : 12.10.2017

To, Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa,  
Founder, International Network of Engaged  
Buddhists Bangkok, Thailand

Sub : A write-up for the All India Gandhian  
Constructive Workers' Conference

Respected Mr. Sulak,

**Greetings from Harijan Sevak Sangh !**

Perhaps you are aware that Harijan Sevak Sangh, founded by Mahatma Gandhi in 1932, having its Headquarters at the verdant green woodland known as Gandhi Ashram at Kingsway Camp in North Delhi, has been working for the upliftment of the downtrodden and weaker section of the society since its inception. It has also been working relentlessly for promotion of peace, harmony, and universal brotherhood in the country and abroad.

The Gandhi Ashram is a sacred and historic place. Gandhiji had lived in this Campus during his sojourn to Delhi in the 1930s and 1940s. Several important meetings during India's freedom struggle were held here. All the then national leaders, including Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, Sardar Ballav Bhai Patel, Badshah Khan, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, C. Rajagopalachari, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and others had visited Gandhiji here and stayed in this Campus. Kasturba, whenever she accompanied Gandhiji, had also stayed here.

While recalling your affectionate relationship with our Late President, Mentor and our beloved Didi, Padmabibhusan Nirmala Deshpande, I beg to inform you that Didi had organized numerous National Level Gandhian Constructive Workers' Conferences on Peace,

Harmony and National Integrity.

Presently, I am the President of the Sangh, and we are glad to inform you that we are going to organize an All India Gandhian Constructive Workers' Conference at the sacred place of Gandhi Ashram, Kingsway Camp, Delhi from 25th to 26th November 2017.

We would earnestly request you to send a Write-up on Gandhiji, his constructive work philosophy and his broader vision on peace, non-violence and communal harmony, or any other

subject which appears suitable to you for the occasion. These write ups will be published in our souvenir.

We would be glad if you can send your write-up within 20th of October 2017, and to confine it preferably within 1000 words in English or Hindi for our convenience.

Hope we would not be deprived of your kind gesture.

With highest regards,

Yours sincerely,

( **Sankar Kumar Sanyal** )

President, Harijan Sevak Sangh founded by  
Mahatma Gandhi in 1932 Mb. +91 9831224445  
e-mail : sankar\_sanyal@yahoo.co.in,  
Website : www.sankarsanyal.com /  
www.gandhicationhss.org  
Facebook : Sankar Kumar Sanyal

**Dear Ajarn Sulak:**

Thank you for the book. I will call Sombat, get Don Swearer's phone number, and call him to get his address and post the book to him.

Ajarn, you have never been a bother to me. I am eager and honored to do anything that I can to be of assistance to you. Sorry to hear that this regime is so obsessed with pursuing and charging you with Lèse-Majesté! For me, the regime does not intend to allow direct elections, not now or ever. They need to justify their position, and they will make every attempt to do so. After the passing of five-hundred years, they are so desperate to pursue and bring anyone, and more specifically you, on trumpeted up charges that hold no merit. In fact, for me, all of the Lèse-Majesté charges are obsolete today! They have been doing this over the years and will continue to do so. It justifies both their existence and their place at the forefront of society, coupled with the elite's that own and control Siam. Together, they own, control, and have a chokehold on Siam and the Siamese and they are not willing to let go, now or ever!

It is just like the period that I studied for my M.A. thesis! All the subsequent coups after will continue into the next millennium. Those who committed all the atrocities, and all of those atrocities following the 1932 revolution, were never held accountable for them. In short, they committed crimes against humanity with no accountability. They only moved up in society, and increased their chokehold on it justifying their position in it.

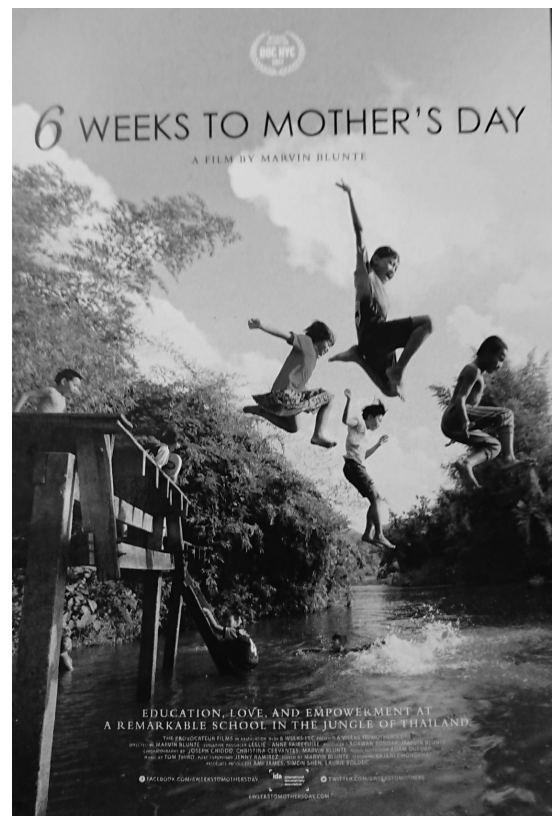
Ajarn, sorry for rambling on. Sometimes I get very upset at the direction that Siam is going. I was optimistic! Yes, you are right! We must all be patient living in an insane society—Siam and America! I will give my wife, Noi, your best

wishes and likewise, they go out to you, your wife, and family, too! Thank you!

I am glad that you are enjoying the book. We will be in Thailand around 28 December for two days. Then, we travel to Phitsanulok to spend a week with our family there. We will return to Bangkok on 8 January 2018 and remain through 20 January. Will certainly see you then, and hope to spend some time with you. Additionally, you need to identify a few books that I can bring to you for the New Year.

Warm regards,

**Tom and Noi**



6 Weeks To Mother's Day

A Film by remarkable school in the jungle of Thailand



Dear Mr. Sivaraksa:

As your term on the Asia Society Global Council concludes, the Asia Society Board of Trustees and I thank you for your service. During your time on the Council, the Society has become more active than ever, and expanded our institutional presence in Asia and beyond.

Asia Society now thrives with centers in Hong Kong, Houston, Los Angeles, Manila, Mumbai, San Francisco, Seoul, Shanghai, Sydney, Washington DC, and Zurich. Our rich and varied programs in both the United States and Asia continue to be of high quality and relevance. Our Global Council members have been a vital part of this organization's success.

We are deeply grateful for your service on the Council, and very much hope that you will continue to keep in touch with the Society whenever possible.

We look forward to seeing you, either in Asia or when you travel to the United States.

Sincerely,

**Josette Sheeran**

President and CEO

**To Whom it Concerns,**

I am writing for multiple reasons. To begin and give information about me, my name is Stephen Drena, and I have been a Buddhist for a few years since around the time I turned sixteen years old. I am almost twenty-one and currently a college student on an education track to teach social studies. I live in the outer Milwaukee area in the state of Wisconsin. I also work at the Wisconsin International Academy as a Student Adviser, assisting high school students that come from China to study and prepare for college through our partner schools in the area.

It pleases me to know that there will be steps taken within the International Network of Engaged Buddhists to create a more active and organized operating system. I write to ask what decisions about structural changes have been or will be made, as well as what I can do to help or take part in this transition. If there is anyone I can contact specifically to find out more information, I will do so gladly. I want to do what I can with the time and energy that I possess to help.

The last thing that I wanted to inquire about is regarding the social engagements classes. Unfortunately in my current situation, I do not have the time or money to travel abroad to take part in the courses offered for training or education. Even so, I would love to somehow offer such education and training to those in my area, whether adults or students who are interested. If possible, would there be information regarding these courses and training that I can utilize? Be it curriculum or training structures as well as engagement platforms that suit the model that the INEB is striving for. I would love to talk to the students I work with as well, and get them engaged not only to understand and help combat structural violence, but to better their education and provide a way for them to work in an organization and think critically about world affairs. I think working with students and youth is vital to the efforts that the INEB tries for, and doing such is a great way to foster new generations.

Thank you, and I look forward to hearing back and doing what I can to help.

Sincerely,

**Stephen Drena**



December 12, 2017

Dearest Sulak,

We hope you, Nin, and your whole family are well and not too stressed by the lese majeste trial proceedings.

We often think of you with profound gratitude, remembering your kindness throughout the decades, and especially during the most challenging times with Thich Nhat Hanh. Your persistence with him in his tent at the Oakland day of mindfulness, calling him to listen to his students, stands out as one of the most dramatic demonstrations of enacting the Dharma, speaking truth to power on our behalf.

Working on your timeless books of practical wisdom, hearing your lectures, spending time with you in Bangkok, Berkeley, San Francisco Zen Center, Hawai'i Island, Oahu, are treasured jewels in our hearts. Thank you, dear Sulak, for all you have given us and so many on your bodhisattva path.

With profound honoring and abiding love.

**Arnie and Theresa**

PO Box 822  
Kihei, HI 96753

12 December 2017

Dear Aj Sulak.

I write to congratulate you on receipt of an honorary doctorate from Thammasat University. This is a great honour for you, a well-deserved honour, and one that has taken too long to be conferred. I see from one of the articles that you are using Prince Damrong's cane in memory of his passing in 1943. – you are ever the radical conservative!

Our brief meeting at the end of April last year, when *A Sarong for Clio* was launched, is lodged in my memory. You told some exaggerated stories about my work! But seriously, the flute pieces played by the young musician at the end of the proceedings were a gift I shall never forget.

You and I are comrades from many years ago, I remember the introductions you gave me, especially to the family monastery in Thonburi, Wat Thongnoprakhun, when I was a nobody. You set me on my journey in Thai studies.

**Craig Reynolds**

24 Rockhmds Street  
Duffy, ACT 2611  
AUSTRALIA

Dear Sulak and Nilchawee,

We very much hope this finds you well, despite the stupid charge that still is unresolved. Our thoughts are always with you.

2017 has proven to be a watershed year for us.

We celebrated my 80th beginning in September. Nick and Mem joined us from DC, and along with Jon, Kate, Isabel and Ava, we all spent a delightful few days at a rural rental property near Hood River. We then returned to Portland, and were joined by my sister Marilyn and her husband Chuck, and then with a gaggle of Portland relatives, we enjoyed a sumptuous banquet of Indian food at Jon and Kate's house.

This celebration was offset by Biff's diagnosis of ALS (a motor neuron disease also known as Lou Gehrig disease) in midyear. Fortunately, the disease seems to be slower moving than for some others similarly afflicted. But I do have significant mobility issues.

We will celebrate Christmas-New Year with Portland relatives (all on Kate's side). Nick and Mem, after spending a week in Mexico, will come to Portland in early January. They will help us sort through some of our stuff in anticipation of our moving to Holladay Park Plaza, a Continuing Care Retirement community, in April.

I keep occupied in part by work on my memoirs – with great assistance from Jane – and on sorting through old letters and other records we have kept, and deciding what to scan and what to toss.

With best wishes from Biff and Jane

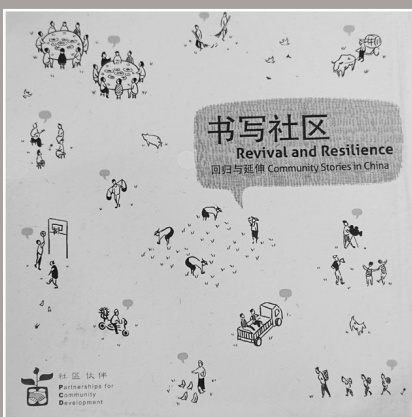
สวัสดีปีใหม่

Happy New Year 2018

Yours truly,

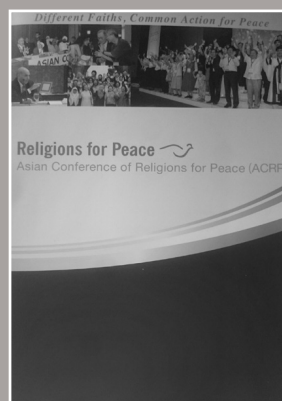
**Charles Keyes**

## Recommended Readings



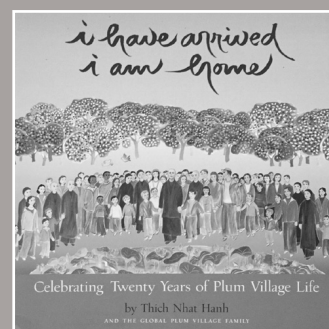
Revival and Resilience  
Community Stories in China

Publisher: Partnerships for Community  
Development



Religions for Peace  
Asian Conference of Religions for  
Peace (ACRP)

Publisher: Centre for Peace and conflict



I have arrived  
I am home

Author: Thich Nhat Hanh  
Publisher: Parallax Press



## In memoriam of U Kyaw Than

Wolfgang Schmidt



On 30. April 2017, Prof. Dr. U Kyaw Than passed away in Bangkok. Born in Pakokku in Myanmar in December 1923, his ecumenical involvement started with the Student Movement in his country, followed by his election as General Secretary of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) in 1950.

In 1956, Kyaw Than joined the World Council of Churches (WCC). In that capacity, he was assigned to organize the Asian Church Leaders Conference, held in Parapat, Indonesia in 1957 under the theme, "Our Common Evangelistic Task in Asia". This historical conference led to the formation of the East Asia Christian Conference (EACC), later named Christian Conference of Asia (CCA). After being its Associated General Secretary (1959), he succeeded D.T.Niles in 1968 as the second General Secretary, a position held until 1973. In 1975, he was elected as member of the Central Committee of WCC, and subsequently, member of the WCC-Executive Committee.

In 1978, U Kyaw Than returned to Myanmar

and began teaching until 1984. He served as Director of the Training Institute of Christian Participation in National Development (TICPINO), with a special responsibility for the development of the Chin ethnic minority in the North Western border region of the country.

In 1984, U Kyaw Than joined the faculty at the College of Religious Studies of the Mahidol University in Bangkok. Before this, he taught history and Christianity, serving as Guest professor at various universities in Southeast-Asia, Canada, USA, and Europe.

U Kyaw Than was widely recognised as a stalwart of the Asian Ecumenical interchristian and interreligious movement. He was an ardent promotor of Buddhist-Christian relations and inter-religious dialogue, and he represented his country and church for more than half a century at various Asian and global bodies and international gatherings around the world. He was deeply respected, admired and loved by those who knew him. He influenced generations of young Asian Christians, and enabled them to shape their ecumenical values over the decades. U Kyaw Than as a proud son of Burma, he was an authentic Asian and dedicated Asian Christian, respected by and respecting his Asian fellows.

In 2017, CCA will celebrate its 60th anniversary, and thereby remember how deeply indebted Asian Christianity is to U Kyaw Than for building CCA and giving it a human face, from its very inception in 1957 through his tireless efforts. Thanks to his leadership, Asian Christianity has avoided to deteriorate to a postcolonial outpost of Western interests, but instead has liberated itself toward an authentic Asian christian identity in contextual participation with the people of Asia ancient religions.

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# In Memoriam of Somkid Srisungkhom

1 August 1917- 3 October 2017

Sulak Sivaraksa



Khun Somkid had led a long and venerable life. He grew up in a poor family and made his way in the world through education, particularly at the University of Moral and Political Sciences (Thammasat University). Thammasat University had inculcated in him the love of

justice and the desire to lead a political life. In this respect, Khun Somkid had trodden on the same path as the university's founder, Pridi Banomyong.

Khun Somkid had served in the military. He received a scholarship to study in England. He eventually married an English woman. After returning to Bangkok, he had a stint as a civil servant, and later moved on to work at the Bank of Thailand. Puey Ungphakorn had asked Khun Somkid to work for the Bank. However, Khun Somkid ultimately resigned from the Bank to run in an election for member of Parliament. Khun Somkid was a very successful MP, consistently being voted to office. He was an 'old-school' politician who didn't depend on the power of money during election campaigns. Rather, the people had voted for him because he was virtuous as well as a committed socialist. Khun Somkid was also sympathetic to Ajarn Puey's notion of "santi pracha dhamma."

Khun Somkid's wife was a good Christian, and he was a good Buddhist. As such, they had lived together for a long time with great understanding and love.

With his passing, Thai society has lost another good man. We should attempt to learn from his simple but morally courageous life in our quest for the return of democracy to Thai society.

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## Recommended Readings



**SUBJECT SIAM**  
FAMILY, LAW, AND COLONIAL  
MODERNITY IN THAILAND  
TAMARA LOOS

Subject Siam

Author: Tamara Loos

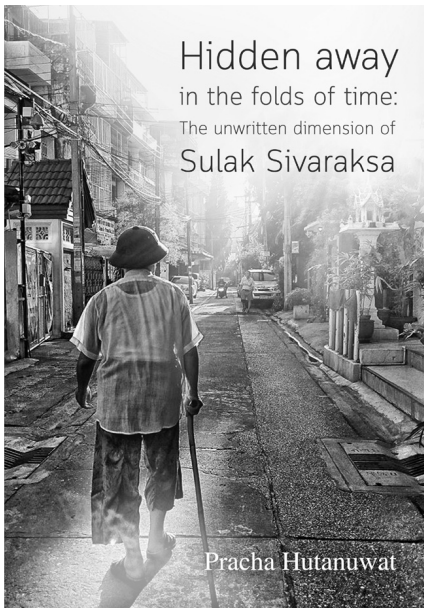
Publisher: Cornell University Press



Democracy and National  
Identity in Thailand

Author: Michael Kelly Connors

Publisher: Nordic Institute of Asian  
Studies (NIAS) Press



## Hidden away in the folds of time : The unwritten dimension of Sulak Sivaraksa

Review by Wolfgang Schmidt

I just finished reading the *Hidden away in the folds of time*, and I would be eager to continue reading and reading more and more! It is really an exciting piece of a fascinating dialogue on a vision-to-vision harmonious proceeding life in tension. Reading this book was a singular experience, because it brought to the open the secrets and dreams, all, what has formed the everyday's details into a stream of love and truth. Thank

you for this open and colourful script.

Most of the Thai persons mentioned, I don't know, but were given a face by your words. Others, like Nicholas Bennet, Thich Nhat Than, David Chappell, Abdul Rahman Wahid, I remembered while reading, and situations attached to them returned to my mind. I saw even my name -- and I was happy to be one of your "public" friends!

I don't know, where you are and what you are doing these days, whether you are free moving or forced to stay outside your home, be sure that many are very close to and in solidarity with you as true kalyanamitta. I do hope, that you are in good health, together with your family. Greetings from both of us, Inge and Wolfgang.

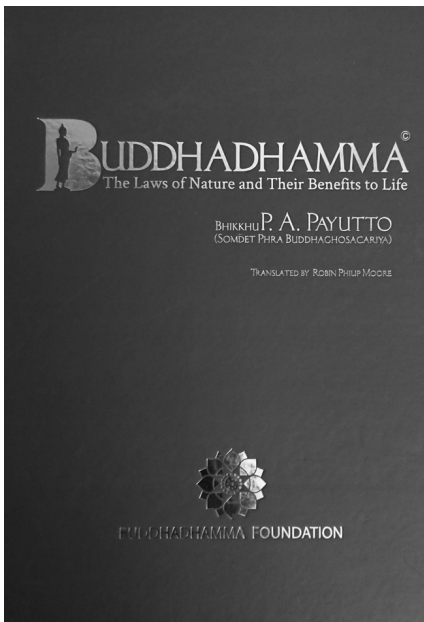
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### Suksit Siam

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 email : suksit-siam@gmail.com  
 www.kledthaishopping.com

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



## Buddhadhamma

Review by Sulak Sivaraksa

The English edition of *Buddhadhamma* has the subtitle *Natural Laws and Values for Life*. P.A. Payutto wrote the Thai edition when he was Phra Sriwisuttimolee, in order to honor the 80th birthday anniversary of Prince Wan Waithyakon. It was first published by The Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project. Puey Ungphakorn was the Foundation's then president.

Subsequently, Venerable Payutto revised and greatly expanded the book. It not only grew in size, but also became even more profound. The English translation was published by New York University Press a long time ago. It was based on the first Thai (slim) edition. Needless to say, the final edition of *Buddhadhamma* is very substantial and useful. It is invaluable to anyone who wants

to know how to live well, and how to find happiness with and serve others in society. And society includes all sentient beings in the universe. The book explains the benefits of the buddhadhamma for this world, as well as the next. Moreover, it discusses the highest good (*paramattha*) or *nibbana*, which brings incomparable happiness.

Any Buddhist who wants to understand life should seek to attain excellence. Real excellence is peace. No joy is higher than peace. Most people associate happiness with carnal pleasures, which are attached to material consumption, sex, prestige, and so on. But there is a higher form of happiness that transcends these things, that is truly independent. It is based on the absence of selfishness. In short, this is *nibbana* or enlightenment. When

knowledge is real, true, holistic, and 'self-less', it will be transformed into compassion. Compassion is unselfish love, so to speak. It is love that is extended to all sentient beings, Nature, and even the enemy.

*Buddhadhamma* is a real gem. Small wonder that it is often considered as the most important Thai (Theravada) contribution to Buddhist studies and practices in a very long time. Beautifully written, it contains an incisive and highly informed exegesis of the essential doctrines of the Pali Buddhist canon. Hopefully, it will be translated into many other languages, since it will be of great interest to Buddhists from other schools.

Simply put, this excellent book is the best that the Theravada Buddhist community has to offer in many centuries. Over a thousand years ago, there was a Theravada Buddhist scholar named Buddhag-

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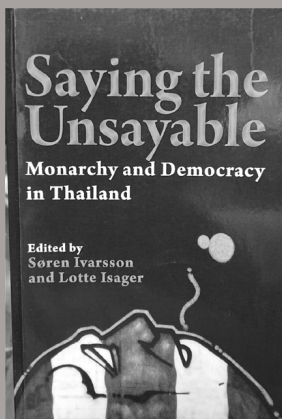
hosa. He wrote important commentaries on the *Tripitaka*. His most important work is the *Visuddhimagga*, which literally means the path to purity. This was the essential reading for Theravada monks who wanted to study the Scriptures. Understanding the *Visuddhimagga* was perhaps seen as even more crucial than the *Tripitaka* itself.

In my view, the significance of P.A. Payutto's *Buddhadhamma* is comparable to Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*. Commendably, Venerable Payutto now holds the rank and title of Somdet Phra Phuttakhosachan [Buddhaghosacaraya]. What a happy coincidence!

Thais who read English should obtain a copy of *Buddhadhamma*. The good news is that it can be obtained freely from Wat Yanawetsakawan. Thais whose English may not be proficient may try to read it alongside the Thai edition. In this way, you will not only get a clearer understanding of the dhamma, but will also get to improve your English—and Thai. As mentioned earlier, the book was beautifully written in Thai. We can say that P.A. Payutto is a genius who was born to serve Buddhism. We should honor him and his book forever.

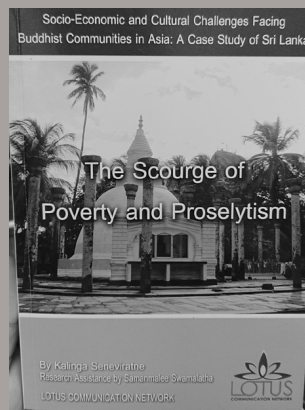


### Recommended Reading



Saying the Unsayable  
Monarchy and Democracy in Thailand

**Editors:** Soren Ivarsson and Lotte Isager  
**Publisher:** Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS) Press



The Scourge of Poverty and  
Proselytism

**Author:** Dr. Kalinga Seneviratne  
**Publisher:** Lotus Communication Network



Mahakaruna Compassion in Action  
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**Organized:** Mahabodhi International  
Meditation Centre,  
Leh-Ladakh



## Laos, the Silent Repression

Review by John Berthelsen

In December of 2012, Laotian authorities expelled Anne-Sophie Gindroz, the country director of the Swiss development organization Helvetas from the poverty-stricken nation, giving her 48 hours to get out, allegedly because she was disseminating anti-government propaganda.

Gindroz, now 50, has written an uncompromising 145-page account *Laos, the Silent Repression*, describing her experience. It is really more of a diary than an actual book. But it is a sad and dispiriting story of how the Laotian people are pushed from one corner of their landlocked country to another, with little regard for their well-being. Their lives, according to Gindroz' account, are being sacrificed to progress, and progress emphatically necessitates the despoliation of the environment.

Central to the story is the disappearance of Sombath Somphone on Dec. 15, 2012 – a week after Gindroz had been ordered out of the country. A popular and inter-

nationally known development expert and recipient of the 2005 Ramon Magsaysay Award and many other prestigious honors, Sombath disappeared almost prosaically as he was on his way home to dinner from his office, followed by his wife in another car. He stopped at a police checkpoint and was never seen again. There are suspicions that Sombath had aroused the antagonism of major land interests over his attempts to protect the interests of the largely rural peasant population. Because of his prominence, the disappearance has grown into an international issue that has deeply discredited the Laotian government.

But while the disappearance forms a major part of the book, chapter after chapter, Gindroz details the disheartening wreckage of a once-pleasant country that is being destroyed. Each day, without warning, the bulldozers would appear. Villagers would be given a few hours to collect belongings from homes they had lived in for

decades and to get out. Their homes would be torn apart before their eyes.

“We arrive(d) full of confidence, due to our experience of living in this part of the world, and with a strong desire to discover new horizons. And also with a few idyllic preconceived notions collected from travel guides. Of course, since I have come here for work, I was briefed by my organization — with, I must add, some details that rather puzzled me.”

She was informed about the Communist system, she said, and was well aware that power was concentrated in the hands of a political party. There were no alarming reports of human rights abuses. At the time, Myanmar, the neighboring country, was the focus of human rights concerns.

But she found herself in the middle of a nightmare. In her job as development director for Helvetas, she said, Laotians never spoke spontaneously about land-grabbing issues or repression.

“It is a very deceiving picture,”

she told an interviewer. “Laos is a beautiful country exuding social harmony and serenity. But when we dig a little deeper, there is a very dark side about which almost nothing is said, because there are no human rights organizations working in Laos. The local organizations are not authorized to deal with these issues, and big international organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have no access.”

Each new chapter contains a fresh outrage, including even the sprawling, traditional wooden home she, her husband and children had taken.

“On the morning of the fourth day, excavators were tearing off the wall and crushing the trees that we had not been able to move back. They also removed telephone lines and pipes, which made water gush from the trench. Our yard turned progressively into a swamp. Our neighbor, who lived at the corner of the street, had just started building an extra room at the back of his house. Now, his house was partially amputated. Within a few days, the neighborhood was totally transformed, as if a typhoon had come through.”

The pleasant, low-slung capital of Vientiane, she found, was suddenly in the middle of a significant transformation. “Construction sites pop up everywhere like mushrooms, and cranes suddenly appear out of nowhere. Corrugated sheet fences erected

in different parts in the city mark out the wide areas to be developed. Large banners covered with ideographs show the presence of the powerful Chinese brother in the Laotian capital.”

As Gindros travels to the farthest corners of the country, the story is the same, time after time. A new village chief calls a meeting. The district authorities have asked him to ensure peace and harmony in the village. “His mission is to make sure all villagers support the development projects in the area, because these projects are part of an ambitious plan aimed at developing the country – Laos can no longer remain backward, content with simple subsistence agriculture. Laos must progress and shift to market-oriented agriculture, because Laos must become part of the global market.

“The eyes of the village chief light up. His face shows the satisfaction of one who has carried out his duty.”

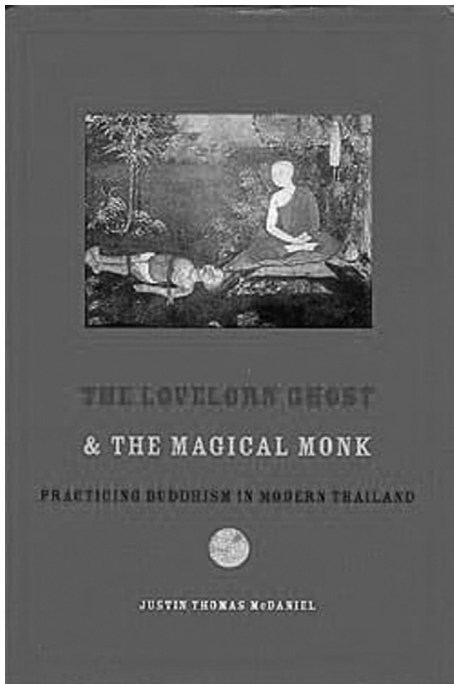
It is a sad commentary, of a country that is vanishing outside the sight of the world as the country’s leaders, in thrall to their neighbors the Chinese and Thais, destroy it in the name of progress. Somewhere along the line, they also physically destroyed Sombath, one of Southeast Asia’s most effective campaigners against what is happening.

When she remonstrates over the destruction of a village’s rice farms to plant rubber, “I will be accused of having gone too far, of having provoked a confrontation and having made the Deputy Minister lose face. It would certainly have been better had I shut up when the problem so close to my heart was simply being overlooked. It would have been better for my colleagues. Not for the farmers who are losing their land.”



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## The Lovelorn Ghost & The Magical Monk: Practicing Buddhism In Modern Thailand

by Justin Thomas McDaniel ,  
New York: Colombia University Press, 2014.

Review by Sulak Sivaraksa

This book illustrates the contemporary conditions and practice of Thai Buddhism through two 'popular' figures: the lovelorn ghost (Mae Nak) and the magical monk (Somdet Toh).

The author is an American and a former Catholic who had been ordained in the Dhammayuti sect in Siam. He is pretty well-versed in the Thai language, and therefore is a bit puffed-up like many *farang* academics. Nevertheless, this book contains a wealth of important information.

McDaniel begins his book with various stories attesting to Somdet Toh's supernatural power. He includes a long section on the monk's acclaimed Chinnabanchon prayer. The monk is also credited with the exorcism of the well-known female ghost, Mae Nak Phra Khanong. The Mae Nak

shrine now stands at Wat Mahabut, and McDaniel tells the reader about the offerings devotees make to the shrine and the related ceremonies held at the temple.

McDaniel juxtaposes monastic activities at Wat Mahabut with the superstition and black magic at the Mae Nak shrine. It seems that the temple's monks do give much thought on their compatibility. The author does not deem Buddhist commercialism a serious problem, and he only makes passing remarks on the Dhammakaya sect and the Santi Asoke sectarian movement.

McDaniel talked to a lot of people when writing this book. He did not interview me though. However, he made some incorrect claims about me based on a misreading or misinterpretation of one of my English texts. He

referred to some of my Thai books, but did not pay any attention to my important English books such as *The Wisdom of Sustainability: Buddhist Economics for the 21st Century*. If he had spoken to me, he would know that I always wear a Somdet Toh amulet around my neck whenever I travel internationally. Also, before I wash my face every morning, I would recite the Chinnabanchon prayer to cast a spell on the water. How then could the author claim that I don't believe in the magical and the mystical? I treat the magical as means to the attainment of certain ends (in this case, skill or proficiency [*kossalla*]). I don't blindly believe in it. For example, people who want to calm their nerves or have confidence may take a vow to some deity. For me, I take refuge in the Buddha, the



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Dhamma, and the Sangha. For me, I follow the Four Noble Truths as the way leading to the cessation of suffering. And, well, I recite the Chinnabanchon prayer every morning.

Since the author is knowledgeable but too cocksure, it is natural that he would make a series of mistakes—some glaring ones. Let me point out a number of them. McDaniel mistook Phya Anuman to be a prince. He also thought that Prince Damrong is the grandson of King Mongkut. There are also problems with the author's transliteration of Thai words and names into Roman script words. ผ้ายันต์ (talismans cloth) became 'Phra yan' not 'pa-yan'; รุ่น (series or model) became 'rung' not 'roon'; Somdet Phra Sangharaja Pae [His Holiness

the Supreme Patriarch Pae] is simply called Somdet Phra Pae; Chao Khun Aranyik became Arannin; and so on.

I don't want to continue nit-picking on his errors. Rather I want to applaud the author's great effort to make the reader understand the state of Buddhism in contemporary Thai society. However, he should have been more critical of Buddhist commercialism. He also fails to notice the danger posed by the new religion of capitalism and consumerism that is dominating many Thai Buddhists.

What about the construction of a giant Ganesh statue at a Buddhist temple, now a leading tourist spot? Will it have any repercussion on Thai Buddhism? Or is it not dangerous that some

Thai monks want Buddhists to worship Chuchok instead of Prince Vessantara?

Naturally, Buddhism is also constituted by superficialities. They become a problem when Buddhists forget the real substance of the religion. These superficialities would then turn into a malignant tumor that endangers the life of the religion.

The author claims to be a Buddhist. But it seems that he does not really care about the conditions of Buddhism in contemporary Thai society. It seems that he just wanted to amass information to write and sell a book for his own sake. Perhaps, I am being overly critical of him.

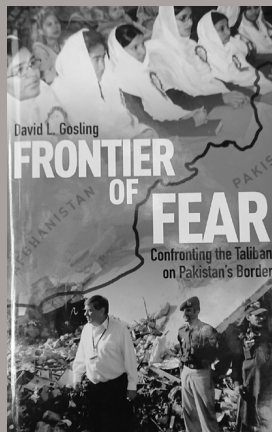
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### Recommended Reading



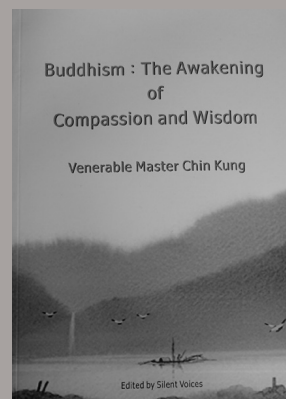
On the Path

Author: Thanissaro Bhikku  
For Free Distribution



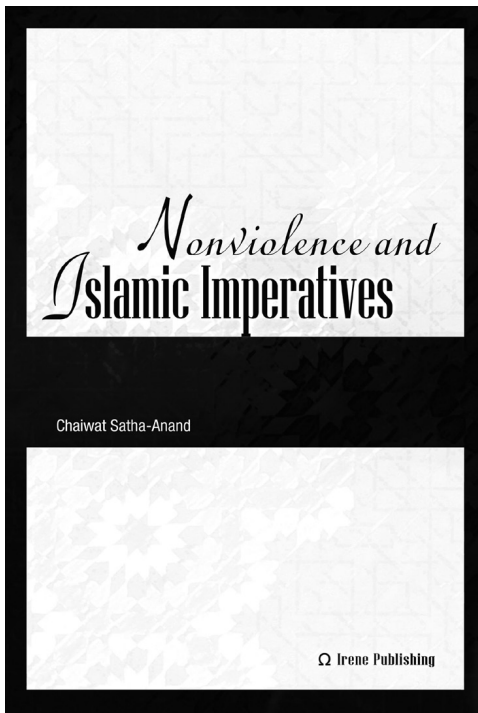
Frontier of Fear

Author: David L. Gosling  
Publisher: The Radcliffe Press



Buddhism : The Awakening of  
Compassion and Wisdom

Author: Venerable. Master Chin Kung  
For Free Distribution



# Nonviolence and Islamic Imperatives

Chaiwat Satha-Anand,  
Sparsnas, Sweden, 2017, pp.178.

Review by Ramu Maniannan

Chaiwat Satha-Anand's book on *Nonviolence and Islamic Imperatives* is a proverbial narrative of life and journey of an engaged scholar with an unyielding commitment towards the vision and practice of nonviolence. Chaiwat is one of the most distinguished Asian scholars and peace researchers of our times. This book itself is a revelation of the dilemmas, challenges, hopes, dreams and above all, a deeply embedded belief in nonviolence, as the author takes us through a period of thirty years confronting the violent realities with humane understanding, remarkable integrity and exceptional commitment towards nonviolence. This is what distinguishes Chaiwat from several thousands of academic peace researchers and ad-

vocates of nonviolence in this world. He possesses universal mind with a deep spirit of Islam and its noble teachings. In knowing, reading, and understanding Chaiwat, I have always believed that nonviolence is his faith, and Islam is his spirit of life with a message that there are nonviolent alternatives based on Islamic traditions and authentic sources that would be conducive to confronting injustice in the world without resorting to violence. This is the message of this book too.

Gandhi observed that "the means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree; and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and tree". This inviolable relationship is understood and advocated by

many, including the growing academic tribe of scholars with belief in nonviolence as strategy, and others who define nonviolence as power. The organic roots of inviolable connection are best revealed in the spiritual and religious traditions of the world. This mind is therefore universal. Chaiwat, who locates his journey of life in reflection of the spirit of Islam, combined with an unwavering commitment towards nonviolence, articulates this organic and inviolable connection between the means and end. There is indeed more than academic ground for Muslims to explore nonviolent alternatives based on Islamic traditions and genuine sources as the narratives reveal in this book. Chaiwat writes that ' for a Muslim, choosing nonviolent

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action over the use of violence not only means choosing a more effective weapon, but one that is in line with reality of a human life considered sacred by the faith’.

This book classified into seven chapters is a nonviolent path of life in quest for peace and justice in this world. This book retraces three decades of searches, dialogues and engagements with global imprint. Though each chapter written separately over a period of three decades, yet form an inclusive part of the global trajectory of time and consciousness. Chaiwat in observing that “this book is about a child like Aylan Kurdi and millions of other people like him. It is about finding nonviolent alternatives based on Islamic imperatives, to conduct politics nonviolently so that their lives would not be senselessly lost to violence, directly and indirectly”, raises a conscious question of the global responsibility for people in the world practising and observing all the faiths, beliefs and religions in this world. Peace, justice, and the pursuit of nonviolence as a means and the inviolable connection between the means and the end are universal. In dialogue with the author of the book that speaks to readers, I want to place my observations on record to say, “Chaiwat, you have profoundly, with your deep sense of humanity, responded, with your unmistakable

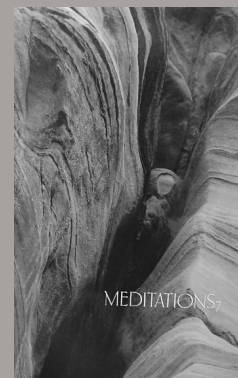
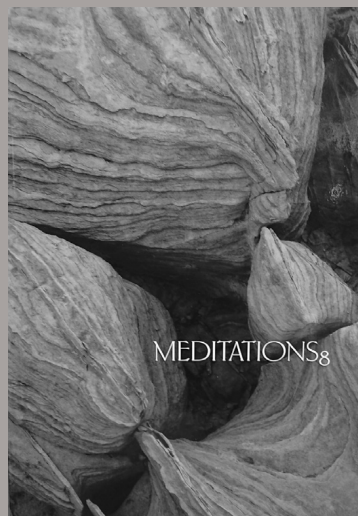
humility and respect towards your great teacher and mentor – Glenn D. Paige, to his question, ‘as a nonviolent Muslim, what would you do to deal with the prevalence of violent actions among Muslims in the world?’. Your response evolving from the decades of committed engagement and persistent scholarship in identifying, recognizing and advocating nonviolent alternatives is a meaningful message to the Muslims, and in fact, to other people practising different faiths and beliefs in the

world today to explore nonviolent alternatives based on their own authentic sources and traditions”. I would like to acknowledge the role and contribution of Jorgen Johansen and Majken Jul Sorensen in publishing this book through IRENE. As the old Indian saying goes, that it takes a village to bring up a child, and this applies to ideas and truths to spread in the world.

S

Ramu Manivannan, Professor & Chair-Department of Politics & Public Administration, University of Madras, Chennai, India. He is a founder of the Buddha Smiles – Garden of Peace Schools in Tamil Nadu, India, and currently engaged in spreading the idea of peoples’ university in tribute to simple truths of living and dying as wisdom of life.

### Recommended Readings



Meditations 7  
Meditations 8

Author: Thanissaro Bhikku  
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The International Network of Engaged Buddhists  
**The 18th INEB Biennial Conference 2017 in Taiwan**

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國際入世佛教協會第十八屆雙年會 2017於台灣