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The Way Forward
with Young Bodhisattvas

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and Research.

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Editorial Note

We are looking forward to seeing many of you at INEB's biennial conference, October 22 – 24, hosted by the Deer Park Institute in Bir, India. It is in this beautiful location in the foothills of the Himalayas we will renew our commitments to the work of engaged Buddhism. Please visit our website for more information, as well as read the article about the conference and poster on the back cover of this issue.

This issue has some inspiring and diverse articles beginning with an overview and analysis of the path and status of Theravada Buddhism in America by Derek Pyle. This 21st century perspective describes the history of Buddhism in America and its various influences and streams. The gesture of Myanmar Buddhists giving White Roses to Muslims during Ramadan provides a welcome and inspiring action led by Buddhist monk Bandatta Seidatta, also known as Asia Light Sayardaw, who created the White Rose Campaign as a way to rebuild social cohesion among Buddhists and Muslims in Myanmar.

Other inspiring articles share about how Buddhist women are influencing the feminist discourse in Thailand and Bhutan. Two separate articles share the story of Thai feminist Ouyporn Khuankaew, founder and lead trainer for the International Women's Partnership for Peace and Justice

(IWP), based in Chiang Dao, Thailand, and how Bhutanese nuns are being empowered through their new training center located on the outskirts of Thimphu. Some of Dr. Tashi Zangmo's personal story (Director of the Bhutan Nuns Foundation) is included in the article. Both women have overcome violence in some form – domestic violence and structural violence, which has been part of their journey to liberate and empower Buddhist women.

Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh, one of INEB's esteemed patrons and close friend, has been honored with a Global Peace Prize in the category of 'Outstanding Inner Peace.' We send him our best wishes. Nigel Crawhall wrote an illuminating article about the relationship between Buddhism, human nature and tropical rainforest conservation which provides insights for all of us. A project to light the Mahabodi temple in Bodhgaya, India, is underway from which all spiritual pilgrims will benefit.

Please read the reports about INEB's study tour to South Korea organized by the Jungto Society, the young Bodhisattva training in Taiwan, and the School for Wellbeing Studies and Research – CURLS summer school along with the Earth Trusteeship workshop. We are happy to announce that the Jungto Society will be hosting study tours on an annual basis, and Venerable Chao Hwei has agreed to host the young Bodhisattva training in Taiwan annually during the last 2 weeks of May each year. We greatly appreciate the valued ongoing support of Ven. Chao Hwei and Ven Pomnyum Sunim for making it possible to continue these vital INEB activities into the future.

We also welcome the team from the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, who are sharing the office space as they oversee the European Union funded project Southeast Asia Advancing Inter-Religious Dialogue and Freedom of Religion or Belief – SEA AIR FoRB. Please read their report on the status of the project. Another article provides news about the International Forum for Buddhist-Muslim Relations.

Peter Janssen's article gives a new perspective about how Ajarn Sulak, as a Buddhist activist, influenced the Thai king to drop 'lese-majeste' charges against him, followed by King Vajiralongkorn writing letters to the Supreme Court and Attorney General requesting that no further cases be accepted. However, the law has yet to be changed.

We also invite you to read the book reviews and obituaries of dear friends.

We send you our best wishes and look forward to seeing some of you at INEB's 2019 conference in Bir, India.



The International Network of Engaged Buddhists' Statement Regarding the Situation in Hong Kong 09 September 2019

As the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), we have members who represent a wide variety of peoples across Asia as well as in other parts of the world including the Americas, Europe, Oceania, and Africa. We also have members and close friends who are not Buddhist among other faith traditions and beliefs.

In regards to the extremely difficult situation in Hong Kong recently, we are deeply concerned for the immediate suffering of people who are facing violence on a daily basis. We are also deeply concerned about the structural and cultural roots of this suffering.

In this way, we would like to express our commitment to engaging in the situation in Hong Kong in a compassionate, holistic and thoroughly non-violent manner.

We will seek through our networks to end the violence on both sides of the conflict. As Buddhists, we find violence an unskillful way of dealing with conflict which also leads to intolerable levels of immediate suffering. We look forward to the Buddhist monasteries and groups in Hong Kong to

provide humanitarian assistance beyond political positions.

We also wish to seek to work on longer term solutions, which include:

- Appropriate economic development for Hong Kong that does not exacerbate class divisions
- Right governance in which local, regional, national, and international interests are harmonized to avoid the exploitation of others and ensure civil and human rights are honored as part of the system.
- Cultural and ideological inclusivity which forms the root of a non-violent society so that the long history of Hong Kong as a diverse and international city can continue to thrive.

We invite any partners who resonate with these goals to reach out to us so that we can continue to build bridges and human connection to resolve this crisis.

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What is American Theravada Buddhism in the 21st Century?

Derek Pyle

13 March 2019

See *Lion's Roar* for references - <https://www.lionsroar.com/theravada-buddhism-america/>

The oldest lineage of Buddhism Theravada, is known for sharing the earliest recorded teachings of the Buddha. Building on this ancient lineage, Theravada today is innovative and diverse. Derek Pyle reports on the tapestry of communities that make up American Theravada.

In the United States, there is a rich and varied range of Theravada teachers, practices, and communities. There are hundreds of Theravadin temples, monasteries, centers, and communities.

To better understand the landscape of American Buddhism, I interviewed more than two dozen senior Theravada teachers in the US. I wanted to draw a more comprehensive map of American Theravada, but I likely omit many important teachers and communities. I hope others will pick up where I leave off.

Theravada is considered an orthodox Buddhist tradition. It emphasizes adherence to the teachings of the Pali Canon — the earliest recorded teachings attributed to the Buddha — and its commentaries. Theravada is most common in Sri Lanka and mainland Southeast Asia.

In North America, Theravada is often seen as focusing on meditation. In truth, meditation is one aspect of the tradition, which also includes important components, such as:

- cultivating generosity alongside moral precepts and ethical training;
- understanding karma and its laws;
- study of the Pali Canon, its commentaries and sub-commentaries;
- a range of community services, including outreach and social welfare programs;
- support for immigrant



Two young boys receive temporary ordination — a common rite of passage in many Southeast Asian communities — at Wat Kity Vongsa Bopharam, in Leveret, MA, 2017. Photo provided by Sakal Kim.

and refugee communities; and much more.

To many traditional Theravadins, this larger framework is important. Bhikkhu Bodhi, a leading American Pali scholar and translator, is wary of practicing meditation “without sufficient appreciation of the context in which these techniques are set and [without] the principles and auxiliary practices that should accompany and support meditation practice.”

In America, “Theravada” is also often equated with Insight Meditation and the “vipassana movement.” This is, in part, a racially-informed oversimplification, as both of these communities are predominantly white. Media coverage of American Buddhism often marginalizes or outright ignores Asian-American Buddhists.

While practicing in alignment with the Buddha’s original teachings of liberation is a common goal in Theravada, between various teachers and practitioners there are nuanced and often heated debates about how this is best achieved. My intention was to survey this range without holding any single perspective as “authoritative.” To ensure the range of teachings were adequately represented, I relied on interviews and direct quotes whenever possible.

The Vipassana View

Vipassana, or Insight Meditation, is the meditative form most often associated with Theravada. It is also the inspiration behind many secular mindfulness teachings, such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction.

Vipassana is often thought of as a tightly-defined meditation technique. In truth, it is not a homogeneous teaching or technique but can refer to a wide array of practices, generally geared toward understanding the Buddha's teachings of the Four Noble Truths, the three marks of existence, dependent origination, and the eightfold path, with the goal of liberating the heart and mind. Some teachers emphasize particular systems or methods of practice, while others do not.

Three particularly popular vipassana lineages emerged in Burma during the 20th century. Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw and U S.N. Goenka are well-known in the United States for their systematic approaches to intensive meditation practice. The third teacher, the late Venerable Mogok Sayadaw, is hugely popular in Burma but his teachings are not as well-represented in the US.

The Satipatthana Sutta is held by many as the most comprehensive overview of traditional Theravadin meditation practices, yet these same practices are subject to an array of practical and technical interpretations. For instance, a well-known framework of Theravada meditation distinguishes between two basic types of

practice, insight meditation (vipassana) and calming or tranquility meditation (samatha). But in a more traditional and canonical understanding, vipassana is not a type of meditation at all. "Vipassana actually refers to the direct seeing of the real nature of phenomena," says Bhikkhu Bodhi, "thus what a person would practice are meditation techniques that lead to vipassana."

Mahasi Sayadaw's Revolution

Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw (1904-1982) was a great Burmese monk. At a time when most Burmese meditation techniques were taught to monastics only, Mahasi Sayadaw and his students also instructed thousands upon thousands of lay practitioners. Sharon Salzberg, a well-known convert Buddhist American lay teacher authorized to teach by Mahasi Sayadaw, explains, "The sociological implications of what Mahasi Sayadaw did were enormous — returning the possibility of liberation to lay people."

Many of Mahasi Sayadaw's senior monastics have taught in the United States, including the late Sayadaw U Pandita. Some of these monks immigrated to the United States, often overseeing multiple Burmese-American and multiethnic

communities. Mahasi Sayadaw's teachings have also become popular in some traditionally Mahayana communities; for instance one of the country's most senior monastics, Bhante Khippapanno — also known as Hòa thượng Kim Triệu — often teaches the Mahasi Method to his Vietnamese-American students.

Mahasi Sayadaw's method of teaching is known today as the "Mahasi Method." It includes mindfulness of breathing focused on the abdomen, mental noting, and a very slow style of walking meditation. This system is outlined most clearly by Mahasi Sayadaw in his book *The Progress of Insight*. Well-known within this system is Mahasi Sayadaw's formal map of awakening, which corresponds to commentarial Visuddhimagga explanations of the path.

Ashin Pyinnya Thiha teaches the Mahasi Method at the Mahasi Satipatthana Meditation Center in New Jersey. "I teach mindfulness meditation based on Mahasi Sayadaw's way according to the Mahasatipatthana Sutta," Bhante Pyinnya explains. "If the student follows the Mahasi Method or way of practicing," says Bhante Pyinnya, "[they] can get the progress of sixteen kinds of insight knowledge through the seven

stages of purification."

The center where Ashin Pyinnya Thiha teaches is a part of the America Burma Buddhist Association (ABBA), the U.S. affiliate of the Mahasi Meditation Center of Burma. Like most monastic traditions in the U.S. and Asia, the ABBA community is sustained through donations, while all ABBA activities including residencies and retreats are offered free of charge. This model of teaching is fundamental to the traditional Theravadin framework: the Dharma is considered priceless; therefore, there can be no cost associated with it. Thus monastics freely support the community in a variety of ways, including teaching. In turn, monastics are deeply dependent on the generosity of lay community support — Theravadin monastics cannot handle money, cook, or even store food.

In this way, monastics and lay practitioners alike cultivate the parami of dana, which is translated as generosity, giving, or charity. Dana is not simply a financial or economic practice, but rather a way of cultivating the heart, and cultivating communities, through an ethos of mutual interdependence and responsibility. While many American lay centers have modified this understanding of dana in a

variety of ways, there are a few notable exceptions including the communities maintained by Santikaro, Gil Fronsdal and Andrea Fella, and the centers in the tradition of U S.N. Goenka, all of which operate solely based on dana.

U S.N. Goenka, Global Teacher

U S.N. Goenka (1924-2013) and his teacher Sayagyi U Ba Khin (1899-1971) were Burmese laymen who emphasized ten-day intensive meditation courses (retreats), primarily for lay practitioners. There are numerous centers around the world offering courses in the tradition of U S.N. Goenka (respectfully known as Goenkaji) and Sayagyi U Ba Khin, including twelve centers in the States.

“Sayagyi U Ba Khin and Goenkaji wanted the Dhamma to reach as many people globally as possible... and Goenkaji prided himself on teaching exactly what his teacher taught,” says Barry Lapping, the head teacher at the Dhamma Dhara Vipassana Meditation Center in Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts.

“The teaching is presented via audio and video recordings of Goenkaji in order to maintain the consistency of the technique worldwide,” explains Lapping, while “the conducting

teachers run the course, give guidance to the students, meditate with the students and answer their questions.” While the centers do not track specific demographics of their students, “there are courses for different communities based on language, including Khmer, Burmese, Hindi, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Thai.”

In keeping with the traditional Theravadin emphasis on dana, all centers are supported solely by donations. “An important principle in this tradition is that no one should have to pay for the teaching, and no one should profit by it,” explains Lapping. Course teachers and volunteers do not receive any financial compensation; students understand that everything they receive is from those who previously sat courses and they, in turn, have the opportunity to donate so others can receive the same benefits in future retreats.

At the beginning of each course, students take the five moral precepts and then develop a base of concentration (samadhi) through anapanasati or mindfulness of breathing. On the fourth day, students begin vipassana practice. “They learn to move their attention systematically through the body,” says Lapping. Cultivating equanimity in response to all sensations is



U S.N. Goenka and his wife, Elaichi Devi Goenka, visiting Edmonton, Canada, on a North American tour in 2002. Photo provided by Barry Lapping.

key to the method.

While U S.N. Goenka was his best-known student, the late German-American Ruth Denison was also a disciple of Sayagyi U Ba Khin, although she eventually modified her teachings in ways that diverged from her teacher. Her women’s retreats were particularly popular among LGBTQ women. “She offered a gateway, an open door to the Dharma, to lesbians who might not otherwise have chosen to enter into Buddhist practice,” explains biographer Sandy Boucher. Boucher adds that Arinna Weisman, a student of Denison, was one of the first teachers to offer LGBTQ-specific retreats, co-taught by Eric Kolvig.

U S.N. Goenka was a major influence on many Insight Meditation Society teachers. “The Buddha did not teach Buddhism, he

taught a way of life,” Salzberg recalls U S.N. Goenka saying, a perspective which is now key for many in mainstream as well as secular Buddhism.

The Streams of IMS and Spirit Rock

In 1975, the founding of Insight Meditation Society in Barre Massachusetts, catalyzed an extraordinarily popular and influential current within mainstream American Buddhism. Joseph Goldstein, Jack Kornfield, Sharon Salzberg, and Jacqueline Mandell (née Schwartz), all of them Jewish converts to Buddhism, were the center’s founders and early core teachers. Today, IMS — along with the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, the Forest Refuge, and its de facto sister center Spirit Rock in California — serves as a hub for dozens of formally and informally



Jack Kornfield, Sharon Salzberg, Jacqueline Mandell, and Joseph Goldstein in 1977 or 1978 at Insight Meditation Society. From the personal collection of Jacqueline Mandell.



The current IMS teacher trainees and trainers. Sitting L-R: Dawn Scott, Shelly Graf, Roxanne Dault, Andrea Castillo, Devon Hase, Jeanne Corrigan, Rachel Lewis, Yong Oh, nakawe cuebas, Kamala Masters (faculty), Tara Mulay, and Jessica Morey. Standing L-R: Vance Pryor, Walt Opie, Neesha Patel, Devin Berry, Tuere Sala, Jozen Gibson, DaRa Williams (faculty), Matthew Hepburn, Rebecca Bradshaw (faculty), Joseph Goldstein (faculty), bruni dávila, and Nolitha Tsengiwe. Photo provided by IMS.

connected teachers, centers, and practitioners. Spirit Rock, in particular, has grown to become a major player in the Buddhist world in its own right since its founding in 1987. As Lion's Roar reported in a 25th-anniversary profile of Spirit Rock, the center was by that time serving 40,000 visitors a year.

Blending Theravada lineages is a hallmark of IMS and Spirit Rock. Important early teacher-lineages included Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw; Anagarika Munindra and Dipa Ma, students of Mahasi Sayadaw; Sayadaw U Pandita, a successor of Mahasi Sayadaw; Venerable Ajahn Chah; and U S.N. Goenka. "Munindra was extremely open-minded in his approach," says Goldstein. "I think that's where I derived that basic

framework of openness for my own practice and understanding."

For Salzberg, the master laywoman Dipa Ma was "hugely important... She was the person who told me to teach." A close student of U S.N. Goenka, Jacqueline Mandell was encouraged to teach in the States by Venerable Taungpulu Sayadaw and Dr. Rina Sircar. "Taungpulu Sayadaw taught by temperament," says Mandell. "He individualized the practices." The late Taungpulu Sayadaw and Dr. Sircar were also important teachers in Burmese-American communities. It was Sayadaw U Pandita who taught Sharon Salzberg the metta practices that would later become a fixture at IMS and Spirit Rock retreats.

Unlike Mahasi Sayadaw and U S.N. Goenka, Vener-

able Ajahn Chah did not offer students a systematized or standardized map of practice. In his book *Bringing Home the Dharma*, Jack Kornfield summarizes Ajahn Chah's teachings as "using every experience as your practice... opening up to each experience to see what is happening... learning to let go... [and recognizing] the one who knows how to rest in wisdom and equanimity."

Both centers maintain connections with monastic communities, and many IMS and Spirit Rock teachers also train in outside traditions, including Advaitin, Dzogchen, and Western

psychotherapy. In February 2019, IMS changed their mission statement to reflect that the center is aligning themselves with "Early Buddhism" rather than Theravada — a change that could herald Theravada reforms in the 21st century.

In recent years a handful of IMS and Spirit Rock teachers, organizing themselves under the auspices of the Wisdom Streams Foundation, have practiced and taught under Burmese monk Sayadaw U Tejaniya.

Moushumi Ghosh, Sayadaw U Tejaniya's English translator, explains one of Sayadaw's central teachings: "If you watch the breath —

or anything else you might be noticing — then you can also know that there is the mind that's watching the breath. And when you're watching the breath, you can also know everything attendant to the breath, like your feelings and your thoughts."

Expanding the Refuge

In 1983, Jacqueline Mandell formally left the Theravadin tradition. Prompted by the historical, as well as contemporary gender inequality in Theravada Buddhism, Mandell wrote about her decision in the first issue of *Inquiring Mind*.

"It needed to be said from a place of leadership," Mandell reflects now. "I realized I had an ability to say something and maybe it would make a difference."

Mandell's push toward equality heralded an important turning point in the development and expression of the Dharma at IMS and, later, Spirit Rock. To this day, both institutions strive to address inequality, diversity, and inclusion. The organizations are now focusing on addressing racism and increasing leadership opportunities for people of color and LGBTQIA people.

"Our lessons learned will increase the rapidity at which we can integrate and bring about transformation

in other areas," explains DaRa Williams, one of the African-American teachers at the helm of these initiatives.

Many white teachers at IMS and Spirit Rock, says Williams, are also working to understand how intersectionality informs their own life experiences. "It's been hugely rewarding, for me personally," says Joseph Goldstein, "and also for the institution, to see all the work being done — it's been tremendous."

In recent years, the growing number of POC and LGBTQIA practice communities associated with IMS and Spirit Rock have attracted more and more young people to the practice. The Against the Stream (ATS) communities — often overseen by hip, tattooed and streetwise teachers — were also popular among younger practitioners until allegations of misconduct by founder Noah Levine surfaced in 2018 and the community disbanded. Some of the teachers from ATS have started a new socially-minded Buddhist group under the name "Meditation Coalition," which also promises to attract a younger demographic. All in all, there is an increasing focus on making teachings more accessible to young people.

Yet the cost of IMS and Spirit Rock retreats remain prohibitive for many, al-

though both centers offer some significant scholarships, and formerly incarcerated persons can sit IMS retreats at no cost.

The centers' underlying economic models are a modified form of the traditional Theravadin ethic — the retreat fees contribute to the centers' annual operating costs, while most teachers and some staff do not have fixed incomes but are dependent on additional donations (dana) offered by students and retreat attendees. Subsequent to the widespread influence of IMS and Spirit Rock, this model has been adopted by many of the country's lay residential and nonresidential centers.

Changing Landscapes in Asian-American Communities

Sri Lankan-American monk Venerable Bhante Seelawimala, of the American Buddhist Seminary, says he is concerned about decreased engagement in younger Asian-American Theravada Buddhists. The ABS website writes that many monastics "lack sufficient background in developing communication skills with these immigrant children who are growing up in America... mainly due to the language and cultural gaps between the monks and the younger generation."

Conversely, researcher Chenxing Han is studying the nuanced experiences of young Asian-American Buddhists. While not specifically focused on Theravadin communities, Han highlights how many Asian-American Buddhists do not fit into easy typologies of experience or cultural background. In her Buddhadharma article "We're Not Who You Think We Are," Han writes, "The young adult Asian Americans I spoke to are both evidence and upholders of American Buddhism's multivocality."

Many monastics who immigrate to the U.S. also hope to teach outside of their specific ethnic communities but are unable to do so, explains Ayya Tathaaloka, a white American bhikkhuni (a fully-ordained female monastic) who spent many years practicing in predominately Asian-American communities. "Especially amongst the younger monks, many of them come wishing to share the Buddha's teachings more broadly," says Tathaaloka, "but in so many places the connections are not in place."

Stalwarts of American Jhana

Jhana practice is an important set of traditional teachings not generally



Taungpulu Sayadaw and Jacqueline Mandell in the late 1970s. Photo from the personal collection of Jacqueline Mandell.



A procession at Wat Kiry Vongsa Bopharam, lead by (R-L) Vipassana master Bhikkhu Jotannano, Bhikkhu Dejapanno, and Bhikkhu Pamutto. Photo provided by Sakal Kim.

found in mainstream mindfulness communities. Jhanas can roughly be understood as very deep and particular types of samadhi, or concentration — though there are many nuances and important debates about the nature of that concentration. In the United States, only a handful of teachers specifically teach jhana practice.

Students sitting the annual IMS and Spirit Rock rains retreats, or practicing at the Forest Refuge, may receive jhana instructions from individual teachers. While these instructions vary based on the teacher's own training, Joseph Goldstein says, "a number of us learned a particular method from U Pandita Sayadaw, which we have also taught on an individual basis to many meditators [and fellow teachers] over the

years." In this method, metta practice is often used to develop jhana.

Burmese monastic Venerable Pa-Auk Sayadaw's teachings on jhana are largely systematized, corresponding to the classic treatise Visuddhimagga and sutta maps of practice. In the States, Pa-Auk Sayadaw has many Burmese-American as well as Malaysian-American students, says Tina Rasmussen, one of Pa-Auk Sayadaw's senior students. Pa-Auk Sayadaw has spent considerable amounts of time teaching in these communities and at the Forest Refuge in Barre, Massachusetts. "Sayadaw Pa-Auk's teacher told him that part of his dharma, his life's truth," says Rasmussen, "was to plant the seeds of the samatha practice in the West."

In years past, Tina Rasmussen and her husband

Stephen Snyder served as assistant teachers during some of Pa-Auk Sayadaw's residencies here, and they continue to teach independently in the States. Since the depth of absorption required by Pa-Auk Sayadaw is quite difficult for many, Rasmussen says, "Sayadaw and his students encouraged us to write Practicing the Jhanas to outline the method of first obtaining jhana."

Leigh Brasington was a student of the late Venerable Ayya Khema, a German-born pioneer of the modern Bhikkuni Sangha. "Anybody who studied with Ayya Khema was struck by her clarity," says Brasington. Ayya Khema learned jhana practices through the study of the Pali canon and commentaries and was later encouraged to teach jhana by the Sri Lankan monk Most

Venerable Matara Sri Nanarama Maha Thera.

While following a clear map of jhanic progression, also outlined in his book *Right Concentration*, Brasington allows students a range of methods for developing concentration. Likewise, when moving from jhana to insight practice, Brasington encourages students to use whichever insight method they prefer. "I figure it's not so important how you examine reality," he says, "but that you examine reality."

Venerable Bhante Henepola Gunaratana, founder and abbot of the Bhavana Society in West Virginia, also teaches jhana practices. Bhante G, as he is known, was born at a time when meditation practices were largely suppressed in Sri Lanka due to colonialism. Thus Venerable Gunaratana

learned meditation through experience, using his knowledge and understanding of the texts as a guide. Known also for his teachings on mindfulness and loving-kindness, his books *The Jhanas in Theravada Buddhist Meditation* and *Beyond Mindfulness in Plain English* outline his teachings on jhana.

Venerable Gunaratana also has longstanding ties with the Washington Buddhist Vihara, the country's oldest Theravada monastic community. While the organizations are not formally linked, the Washington Buddhist Vihara and the Bhavana Society form an important nexus of American Theravada. Venerable Gunaratana has also supported female monastic ordination in the US.

Bhante Vimalaramsi, a monastic who has reached many students via successful online outreach, also teaches jhana but as a kind of understanding rather than level of absorption.

Forest Monks of Thailand

Throughout the history of Theravada, there have been many monastics who wander the wilderness committed to solitary practice. Renowned master Venerable Ajahn Mun (1870–1949), a Theravada reformer, emphasized such a return to

the roots of Buddhism through asceticism, intensive meditation, and rigorous ethical conduct. He established the Thai Forest Tradition based on those principles. Venerable Ajahn Maha Boowa (1913–2011) and Venerable Ajahn Chah (1918–1992) were two of Ajahn Mun's best-known students.

In the US, many Thai Forest monastics are either white converts or Thai-American, but there is a wide range of community demographics. Wat San Fran serves a predominately Thai-American community and is particularly popular among millennials. On the other hand, Venerable Ajahn Maha Prasert's temple in Fremont, California has of the most diverse congregations in the country, with Thai-Americans comprising the minority-majority.

Even the name "Thai Forest" itself is something of an ethnic misnomer. "The northeast of Thailand, where Ajahn Chah, Ajahn Mun, and Ajahn Maha Boowa were from," says Ajahn Pasanno, "it's an area that speaks a Laotian dialect."

In the Thai Forest Tradition, there is less of a divide between insight and concentration practice. "Meditative concentration and wisdom may be likened to two wheels of a cart: only when both wheels work in

unison can the cart move forward," says Ajahn Dick Silaratano, a senior student of Ajahn Maha Boowa. Since various students have different capacities for absorption, Ajahn Dick says, "most of the Thai Forest masters refrain from speaking publicly about jhana, preferring to talk about samadhi in more general terms."

In general, Thai Forest monks have great respect for the natural world. The late Venerable Luang Por Thoon would instruct students, says his student Phra Anandapanyo, to correct wrong perception through observing the natural world. "In your daily life, in the forest, in the city, there's metaphor in the world," Phra Anandapanyo explains. "Use that to reflect and look into yourself, make a parallel, and see: okay, perhaps what you believe is wrong and you have to let go of it."

Abhayagiri monastery in Northern California has played an important role in connecting many lay practitioners to the deeper monastic roots of Theravada. Ajahn Chah was hugely popular amongst Thai and international students alike, and it was important to him that his "Western" students establish monasteries in their home countries, to maintain "the traditional [Buddhist] model, of how

monastic community and the lay community functions together, creating an integral part of a society or culture," says Ajahn Pasanno.

Many Thai Forest teachers encourage self-reliance and solitary practice, and they are less likely to instruct students through formalized systems of practice. "The person has to find the technique themselves," says Ajahn Vuttichai, also known as Phrawoody, a senior student of Venerable Ajahn Jamnian.

Thai Forest teachings often emphasize awareness and the knowing nature of mind. "It's the ground of one's practice, what one roots the practice in," says Ajahn Pasanno, "but it's also what takes one to a place of, say, liberating the heart." Ajahn Dick Silaratano, like many Thai Forest teachers, refers to this as "citta, or the mind's essential knowing nature."

Thai Forest teachings on awareness have drawn comparisons to the Dzogchen tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. In one method, systematized by the late Thai monk Luangpor Teean (1911–1988), the student first learns to cultivate awareness through a traditional rhythmic hand movement. Next, one "learns to 'see' thought, as opposed to just knowing that one is thinking," says lay teacher Mi-

chael Bresnan. “After one is able to see thought, then we can be aware of awareness itself.”

Along with the many American Thai Forest communities, Thai Forest teachings have also impacted many convert Buddhist teachers outside of the Thai Forest lineage. Santikaro, a white American lay teacher, says that his Thai Forest training was essential to his understanding of the path, but worries about cultural appropriation. He notes that convert Buddhists need to “pay respects to the history we’re drawing on, not just appropriate the bits we like and then pretend we’re more advanced than Asian-American Buddhists.”

In recent years, a Theravada reform movement with connections to the Thai Forest Tradition, called Buddhawajana, has gained momentum amongst Thai-Americans. Led by Ajahn Kukrit, a former student of Ajahn Chah, the movement is hugely popular in Thailand.

Outside of the forest tradition, a popular form of Thai meditation is called vijja dhammakaya. The term “dhammakaya” is often associated with Thailand’s largest temple, Wat Phra Dhammakaya, but numerous temples independently teach vijja dhammakaya as a meditation method. Wat

Phra Dhammakaya has dozens of branches around the world, including sixteen centers in the United States, which are attended primarily by Thai-Americans. But within Thailand, the Wat Phra Dhammakaya community faces widespread allegations of corruption, including a series of ongoing political and legal conflicts. The topic is too complex to explore in detail here, but such controversies highlight something too often neglected in the “mainstream” American image of Buddhism: the reality that sanghas — of all ethnicities, both here and abroad — must remain ever vigilant against corruption and abuses of power.

The Spread of Sri Lankan Mahamevnawa Monasteries

Mahamevnawa is a hugely popular meditation movement, originating in Sri Lanka at the turn of the 21st century. The tradition is striking particularly for its rapid growth — there are dozens of Mahamevnawa centers around the world including six in the United States, all of which emphasize orthodox yet accessible approaches to practice and textual study. The centers here mostly serve Sri Lankan-Americans, although Bhante Kachchana — a re-

siding monk at the Mahamevnawa branch monastery in California — explains that he is interested in teaching others as well. When teaching beginners, Bhante Kachchana emphasizes traditional loving-kindness and mindfulness of breathing practices. “There are many meditation methods,” he acknowledges, “but basically those are very important.”

It can be helpful to think about the world and its suffering before beginning loving-kindness practice, says Bhante Kachchana. “You can think about how people are living in this world, what are their problems,” he says. “There are thousands of millions of people in this world, and there is a lot of suffering.”

After one is comfortable practicing loving-kindness and breathing meditation, Bhante Kachchana recommends contemplating the nature of the sense bases and their objects. The students think “true nature of eye, true nature of form, true nature of ear, true nature of sounds,” and so forth, and then turns to contemplate the three marks of existence with reference to each sense base. “This eye is impermanent, not ‘I am,’ not mine, not myself. This ear is impermanent, not me, not ‘I am,’ not myself. Like that.”

Although these three practices may be particularly suitable for beginners, Bhante Kachchana emphasizes the helpfulness and importance of the full Sutta Pitaka for practice. “We have many Dhamma talks given by Supreme Buddha,” he says, “so we just follow those explanations.”

Revitalizing Cambodian-American Vipassana

Wat Kiryvongsa Bopharam in Leverett Massachusetts, is one of the only Cambodian-American temples that emphasizes meditation, and Cambodian-Americans travel from around the country to attend their annual summer retreat. I spoke to Venerable Dejapanno Phorn Pheap, the temple’s residing meditation teacher, through a translator, Sakal Kim. (Kim also assists with many of the temple’s Khmer-based media productions.)

Venerable Dejapanno was a student of the late master Venerable Keto Dhammo, who was responsible for revitalizing Vipassana Dhura throughout Cambodia until he was assassinated in 2003. Venerable Keto Dhammo had a systematized approach to teaching meditation, explains Venerable Dejapanno, which has three levels and takes twelve years to

complete. The first level takes three years. The second level requires four.

The student begins by studying the Vinaya and the Triple Gem, then trains in anapanasati. “The goal here is to focus on the mind,” says Venerable Dejananno, “make sure the mind is one.” After mastering anapanasati the student learns vipassana with the traditional forty Theravada meditation subjects. “Any one of these types of meditation you can learn to adapt or suit to your style,” says Venerable Dejananno.

The second level is jhana practice. “Once you’re good at it,” says Venerable Dejananno, “even people talking near you, they will not disturb you.” Venerable Dejananno was unable to train in the third level before leaving Cambodia, but which levels you master is not important, he says. “At the end, if you’re good at it, you will receive the same merit and reach the same goal.” Meditation brings peace, says Venerable Dejananno, and it applies to all people. “Once you get rid of desire there’s no more disputes, no war,” he says. “We can all live in peace and harmony.”

Bhikkhuni Robes, Flags of the Arhats

Bhikkhunis are fully-ordained Buddhist female

monastics. In Theravada, the lineage was only recently revived; Bhikkhuni ordinations were not available to women for most of the second millennium. In the States, the Bhikkhuni revival may represent the quintessential Buddhist community; it requires a strong mix of tradition and adaptation, with support coming from far-flung schools of Buddhism, lineages, and countries.

Ayya Tathaaloka has written about the history of American Bhikkhuni ordinations in “Honoring Those Worthy of Honor,” an article published by the Alliance for Bhikkhunis. Beginning in 1987, many of the early ordinations, she writes, were organized by the late Most Venerable Dr. Havanpola Ratanasara Maha Thero (1920-2000) with the assistance of Venerable Dr. Walpola Piyananda, both Sri Lankan-American monks.

The largest of these early ordinations took place at the Buddha’s Light International Foundation’s newly inaugurated Hsi Lai Temple in Southern California, and was coordinated on a truly international scale with a total of 200 bhikkhuni candidates, “includ[ing] twelve eight- and ten-precept nuns from various Theravada traditions,” writes Ayya Tathaaloka, “and eight get-

ulmas from Tibetan monastic traditions, with the remainder of the ordination candidates being from Korean, Vietnamese, Taiwanese, Chinese, Indonesian, and Thai Mahayana traditions.” After all of the bhikkhunis received Theravada monastic ordination, some also chose to undertake Bodhisattva precepts. Vajrayana monastics were also present, to supplement the training of the Tibetan traditions’ candidates.

In the Sangha, you have all the colors of the Buddha’s full radiance when you gather all of these diverse teachers, multifaceted teachings and manifold paramis back together again.

—Venerable Ratanasara

While bhikkhuni ordinations remain a point of contention in some monastic communities, these and subsequent ordinations are not the product of renegade monks and nuns. Venerable Ratanasara and the Buddha’s Light International Association were respectively, as Ayya Tathaaloka writes, “the leading Theravada Buddhist prelate in the Western Hemisphere and one of the strongest Buddhist organizations in the world.”

When I interviewed Ayya Tathaaloka, she spoke

of Venerable Ratanasara’s hopes for the Bhikkhuni Sangha, and his vision of Buddhist harmony. “It was one of the conditions for my ordination,” she explains. “He didn’t want to ordain anyone who was going to be strongly and divisively ethnosectarian, especially among Westerners.” He was inspired by the possibilities of a “family reunion” between Buddhist traditions in the United States.

“Venerable Ratanasara had this strong image of the Buddha’s time, with the colors of the Buddha’s radiance spreading through the Sangha into all these different countries, and each teacher sharing in their own unique ways aspects of the Buddha’s radiance, from their own awakening, based on their unique experiences, strengths, and paramis,” says Ayya Tathaaloka. Venerable Ratanasara articulated his vision: “In the Sangha, you have all the colors of the Buddha’s full radiance when you gather all of these diverse teachers, multifaceted teachings and manifold paramis back together again.”

This reunification of traditions typifies many bhikkhuni communities, so there is no simple way to summarize lineages or teaching styles. “People ask us: ‘what is your lineage; is it Thai? American? Sri Lan-



An ordination officiated by monks and nuns at Buddhī Vihara, a Sri Lankan temple in Santa Clara, California, in August 2017. Photo provided by Ayya Anandabodhi.

kan?” says Ayya Anandabodhi, a Welsh-born bhikkhuni who immigrated to the US. “But it’s much broader — it’s the Bhikkhuni lineage.” In Southern California there are many bhikkhus and bhikkhunis in the Vietnamese Du Tang Khai Si Mendicant Sangha, a fused Theravada-Mahayana tradition; Venerable Dr. Pannavati in North Carolina is a former Christian pastor and dual Theravada-Mahayana bhikkhuni who has received Zen transmission and Vajrayana empowerments; in Northern California, convert Buddhist bhikkhuni ordinations receive strong support from Sri Lankan-American as well as Thai- and Lao- bhikkhu communities. Monastic code, as found

in the traditional Vinaya Pitaka, is of central importance to all Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis. Yet numerous parts of the Bhikkhuni Vinaya text are unclear, and thus subject to varying interpretations. “There are so many outstanding questions in Vinaya I’d really like to have the time to research more fully,” says Ayya Tathaaloaka.

This research, and sharing its results, is the focus of the Bhikkhuni Vibhanga Project — a collaborative project overseen by a team of bhikkhunis, including Ayya Tathaaloaka, and supported by the Alliance for Bhikkhunis. One important research question, Ayya Tathaaloaka says, is around ordination for transgender and gender non-conforming persons. Ayya Tathaaloaka has begun examining this in Vinaya, she says, and feels “hopeful about the value of deeper study with regards to this and other questions.”

In recent years “Western” lay practitioners, especially lay women, have played a large role in supporting the Bhikkhuni Sangha. One vehicle for such support is the Alliance for Bhikkhunis, a nonprofit founded by Susan Pembroke to honor her teacher, the late Venerable Ayya Khema. “To see a nun wearing the robe, a female renunciant with an aspiration to awaken,” says

Ayya Anandabodhi, “this wakes something up in the hearts of women, like I could do this too.”

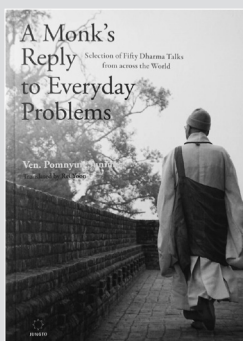
American Theravada in the 21st Century

The seeds of American Buddhism are sown, but if the teachings are to flourish here, we must not forget the Dharma’s deep and varied roots.

In Theravada Buddhism, it is essential to understand the interdependence of lay practitioners and the monastic Sangha — and the ways in which both groups support and illuminate the path to awakening. This interplay is something often missed in “convert” Buddhist communities.

When it comes to reconciling Asian and non-Asian communities, or otherwise creating more inclusive dharma centers, convert Buddhists, in particular, should remain cautious about forms of bridging that replicate hegemonic assimilation or colonialism. If “mainstream” Buddhist consciousness is to expand its recognition of Theravada teachings and traditions, this will require building many bridges, and each community will have its own path to navigate. May the Devas guide and protect us.

Recommended Reading



A Monk's Reply to Everyday Problems

Editor: Seung Suk, Simone Halley, and Jungto Volunteers
Publisher: Jungto Publishing

In Myanmar, Buddhists Offer White Roses to Muslims During Ramadan

Thant Sin

Global Voices, 29 May 2019

On 16 May 2019, a group of Buddhists in Myanmar's former capital, Yangon, launched a 'White Rose' campaign which offers roses to Muslims who are fasting during Ramadan. The campaign was organized to show solidarity with Muslims after Buddhist mobs gathered around a number of temporary Muslim prayer houses and demanded that prayer services be suspended.

On the evenings of 14 and 15 May, mobs of more than 100 Buddhist extremists attempted to prevent Muslim prayers, demanding that three prayer houses set up for Ramadan observance in the South Dagon area of Yangon be closed down.

In response, Buddhist monk Bandatta Seidatta, more famously known as Asia Light Sayardaw, created the White Rose campaign. Bandatta Seidatta visited the South Dagon Muslim community on the evening of 16 May to offer

them white roses as a way of providing encouragement and support. The campaign has been joined by interfaith activists, and in just one week, it has spread to other cities across Myanmar, including Mandalay, Sagaing, and Mawlamyine — even reaching Myanmar communities in Malaysia. The campaign continues to urge citizens in Myanmar to offer a white rose to their friends regardless of ethnicity or religion.

The campaign also urged Internet users to share posts on social media of people offering white roses to Muslims using the hashtag #WhiteRose4Peace.

"White rose for peace movement is the movement of the citizens of Myanmar who love peace and value equality and social harmony, by resisting those who intentionally spread hatred and provoke ethnic and religious instability in Myanmar right now."

Meanwhile, some netizens responded to the har-

assment of Muslims by group and its leader changing their profile pictures with this frame endorsed by the Yangon Youth Network:

"There is no place for religious extremists in our country."

Myanmar has a predominantly Buddhist population. Current Buddhist extremist movements in Myanmar were started by a radical group called MaBaTha in 2014. Although MaBaTha was declared unlawful by state bodies, the 969 movement initiated by the

group and its leader Wirathu has inspired widespread discriminatory extremist movements and pervasive online hate-speech against Muslim minorities in the country. Since 2012, Myanmar has experienced several instances of religious conflicts across the country, including the large scale communal violence between Rohingya Muslims and Rakhine Buddhists.

To rebuild social cohesion among Buddhists and Muslims in Myanmar, civil

Photo from White Rose Campaign Facebook Page.
Used with permission.



White Rose Campaign in Yangon. May 27, 2019.
From White Rose Campaign Facebook Page. Used with Permission.

society leader Thet Swe Win believes that government leaders must step up to speak about social harmony. He said during a recent interview by Irrawaddy News Agency that:

“I attach greater importance to the moral leadership of political leaders. [...] Frankly speaking, our leaders fail to provide moral leadership. Millions of Rohingya fled and many people died. [...] They should at least acknowledge on humanitarian grounds that they had been living in the country, and are now in trouble after they left the

country. Muslims have suffered, and Arakanese people are suffering now, and so are Kachin and Shan people. Only when a leader defines the norms and values of [a] society will people be able to follow. [...] One day when we have leaders who dare to say the country has no place for people with such amoral attitudes, and define clear moral standards for the society, then, hopefully there will be some changes to our society.”

S

Ten Years of Empowering Female Monastics: Bhutan Nuns Foundation Extends Reach with New Training Center

Craig Lewis

Buddhistdoor Global, 14 June 2019

The Bhutan Nuns Foundation (BNF), a non-profit organization under the patronage of Her Majesty the Queen Mother Ashi Tshering Yangdoen Wangchuck, is working diligently to educate and empower female monastics in the Himalayan

kingdom of Bhutan. It has made great strides, since being founded in 2009, to improve living conditions for Bhutanese girls and women in nunneries, and to enhance access to basic and higher education for Buddhist nuns.



The Bhutan Nuns Foundation (BNF) operates under the patronage of Her Majesty the Queen Mother Ashi Tshering Yangdon Wangchuck. Image courtesy of the BNF

The BNF has chalked up an impressive list of achievements in its 10-year history, not least of which is the long-awaited BNF Training & Resource Centre (TRC) on the outskirts of Bhutan's capital Thimphu. Although the project is highly dependent on external funding, remarkable progress has already been made in constructing the necessary infrastructure and drawing up detailed plans for training programs and initiatives.

“The Training & Resource Center is envisioned as a vibrant, dynamic institution that will focus on enabling nuns, women, and girls—primarily those at the grassroots level—to become skilled and empowered, promoting the well-being of themselves and others,” explained BNF Executive Director Dr. Tashi Zangmo.

Once fully operational, the BNF's training center

will provide a broad curriculum, teaching life skills and social engagement for female monastics and lay women following the spiritual path. Courses will include counseling training, hospice and basic health-care, palliative care, leadership and management, and teaching methodology for Buddhist nuns who will then go on to teach. In addition, the center will provide meditation retreats for lay women conducted by resident nuns, Nungey instruction (a fasting practice widely practiced in Bhutan as a means of physical and spiritual purification), as well as classes in qi gong, tai chi, and yoga to help the nuns stay physical healthy.

“We have three of our nuns already residing at the Training & Resource Center, and since March they have been running a learning program for the children of the laborers who are engaged in completing the



Dr. Tashi Zangmo with nuns and children at the BNF Training & Resource Centre. Image courtesy of the BNF



The BNF Training & Resource Center in Thimphu. Image courtesy of the BNF

center's infrastructure," Dr. Zangmo observed. "We are running a basic Montessori-style study course for the kids, blended with Buddhist values and practices, such as saying simple prayers while eating and drinking, helping them understand the importance of not taking anything for granted, and so on."

"We plan to run the learning program until the construction project is completed—but who knows where it will lead? We might even be able to continue after the center is complete if everything goes well!"

Most Bhutanese—about 75 per cent of a population of some 735,000 people—are Buddhists. And

while the nation's holistic approach to economic management and social development, under the now-famous banner of "Gross National Happiness," has resulted in a healthy level of growth and low inflation over the last 20 years, life in Bhutan is not without very real challenges, even for those who find their calling in the Dharma. Female lay practitioners in particular face major obstacles in accessing opportunities for spiritual and practical education. A decade ago, the BNF observed that many rural nunneries offered poor living conditions and lacked conducive learning environments—a situation that has since improved

substantially.

Headquartered in Thimphu, the Bhutan Nuns Foundation has taken up the challenge of advocating for Buddhist nuns by providing qualified teachers, training courses, workshops, and conferences. Their efforts also include improving their physical infrastructure—especially for those who lack proper living quarters, classrooms, and bathrooms without running water. Working with about 28 Buddhist nunneries across the country, the BNF educates and trains nuns to become community leaders and teachers, ensuring that each nunnery maintains adequate, healthy living conditions, and providing a practical, hands-on education for the female monastic population.

The foundation aims to enable female monastics to create self-sufficient mo-

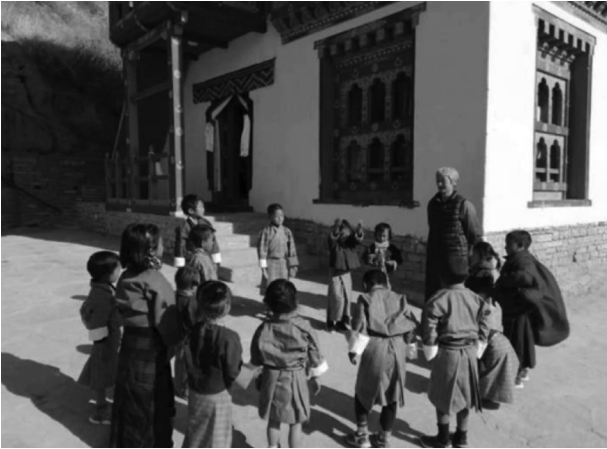
nastic communities that not only provide a healthy environment for Buddhist study, but also enables them actively engage with and contribute to lay society, and play a role in preserving the kingdom's unique Buddhist and cultural heritage:

- Providing quality education to Buddhist nuns to become effective community teachers, health workers, and counselors.

- Training nuns, and women and girls in grassroots communities, to have at least one employable skill for the economic sustainability of themselves and nunneries or families.

- Strengthening the capacity of nuns and women—particularly the heads of nunneries and grassroots women's groups—in leadership and management.

Dr. Zangmo herself was born and raised in one of the kingdom's most re-



Study time for children at the Training & Resource Center. Image courtesy of the BNF

mote rural areas. Due to her determination and passion for education, she was able to pursue higher education in India and the US, eventually graduating with a PhD from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

“The number of nuns at the training center will increase, of course. We plan to have a maximum of 27 nuns residing there in the future, who will be trained as trainers so that they can train other nuns in the country,” Dr. Tashi noted. “We have been organizing Dharma talks by a few qualified nuns in Bhutan since June 2014, and we are going to organize Dharma talks by nuns soon at the TRC, as well as short reading retreats and sharing among women—both lay Buddhists and nuns.”

“To honor Her Majesty the Queen Mother’s 60th birthday on 21 June, we

plan to mark the inaugural Bhutan Nuns Foundation Day, which we will observe with a prayer ceremony by 21 nuns and a Dharma talk by one of the senior nuns in Bhutan at the TRC’s temple.”

Some of the training courses already delivered to nunneries throughout the country over the 10 years of the BNF include child protection and child rights; menstrual hygiene and reproductive health; life skills education; disaster management and preparedness; nutrition, physical health and sports; non-formal education; teaching methodology; and providing English language teachers to at least 11 nunneries. These and other training courses have been designed and implemented in collaboration with UNICEF, UNFPA, SNV (Netherlands Development Organization), Bhutan’s Ministry of Health,

Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Works and Human Settlement, the National Commission for Women and Children, and the Central Monastic Body of Bhutan.

“Another project that we have started at the training center recently is Reiki healing sessions, provided three days each week by Ani Rinzin Lhamo, one of our nuns who is a doctor of indigenous medicine,” added Dr. Zangmo.

“Although I’m overjoyed and surprised by the progress we’ve already made at the training center, there are still a few more structures to finish, including the conference hall, administration block, and renovation and expansion of the ancient temple building that stands on the site. We hope to complete everything by 2021,” said Dr. Zangmo. “We’re looking for technical support to train and run the programs as we go along—either individual supporters or institutions interested in partnering with the BNF.”

Sandwiched between political and economic heavy-hitters China and India on the edge of the mighty Himalayan mountain range, the tiny Buddhist Kingdom of Bhutan is perhaps best known for prioritizing “Gross National Happiness” over the short-

sighted acquisitiveness of economic growth, and for its sustainable approach to environmental stewardship. The kingdom is also unique in being the world’s only remaining Vajrayana Buddhism nation. The spiritual tradition is embedded in the very consciousness and culture of this remote land, where it has flourished with an unbroken history that dates back to its introduction from Tibet in the eighth century by the Indian Buddhist master Padmasambhava, also known as Guru Rinpoche.

About 75 per cent of Bhutan’s population identify as Buddhists, according to data for 2010 from the Washington, DC-based Pew Research Center, with Hinduism accounting for the majority of the remainder. Most of Bhutan’s Buddhists follow either the Drukpa Kagyu or the Nyingma school of Vajrayana Buddhism.

S

Thich Nhat Hanh Honored with Global Peace Prize

Justin Whitaker

Buddhistdoor Global, 25 June 2019

Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh, who has returned to his home monastery in Vietnam after decades spent teaching abroad, has been awarded one of this year's Luxembourg Peace Prizes. The awards were announced on 21 June in Luxembourg by the Schengen Peace Foundation, an organization founded in 2005 with the aims of promoting peace, tolerance, and understanding around the world through multicultural discussions, publications, online platforms, and educational programs.

In their profile for Thich Nhat Hanh, known affectionately to his followers as "Thay" (teacher), the award committee writes: "Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh is a global spiritual leader, poet, and peace activist revered throughout the world for his powerful teachings and bestselling writings on mindfulness and peace. His key teaching is that, through mindfulness, we can learn to live happily in the present moment—the only way to truly

develop peace, both in oneself and in the world." (Luxembourg Peace Prize)

Thay was given the award for "Outstanding Inner Peace," a category of the annual awards aimed at people or institutions that promote health for body and mind. The different categories of the Luxembourg Peace Prize aim to draw greater attention to the goals of the World Peace Forum, which offers an online forum and annual events aimed at facilitating leaders in peacebuilding around the globe. The 12 different categories awarded each year are: peace education, peace activist, peace organization, public peace efforts, peace support, peace technology, youth peaceworker, peace process, peace journalism, environmental peace, art for peace, and inner peace.

Thich Nhat Hanh, who is 93 years old, was unable to attend the award ceremony in person, but two monks from his order attended to receive the prize on his behalf.



Thich Nhat Hanh with Buddhist monastics at Tu Hieu Pagoda in Hue, central Vietnam, February 2019. Photo by Vo Thanh. From vnexpress.net

Thay is known around the world for his efforts to find peace in the midst of the war in Vietnam in the 1960s. His activism then led to a friendship with Martin Luther King, Jr., who nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967. At the time, King told the prize committee: "I do not personally know of anyone more worthy of the Nobel Peace Prize than this gentle Buddhist monk from Vietnam." (Plum Village)

Since then, Thich Nhat Hanh has toured the world as a Zen Buddhist teacher, and a prolific author, poet, and peace activist. His teaching has consistently drawn from the Buddhist concepts of mindfulness and interconnectedness. He founded the Order of Interbeing in Saigon in 1966 and the Unified Buddhist Church in 1969. In 1982, he went on to establish the Plum Village Buddhist Center in France with his

colleague Sister Chan Khong.

Thay was able to return to Vietnam for the first time in 2005 and again in 2007 and 2008. In 2014, Thay suffered a stroke and was hospitalized in France for many months before being transferred to the US for specialist treatment. In 2016, still in recovery, he moved to Plum Village in Thailand. He has been back in Vietnam since 26 October last year, having declared his intention to remain there for the remainder of his life.

He has stated: "I promise myself that I will enjoy every minute of the day that is given me to live. It is thanks to the practice of mindful walking and mindful breathing that I can enjoy deeply every moment of my daily life." (*Anger: Wisdom for Cooling the Flames*, Riverhead Books 2002)



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Bangkok Communities: New Spirit - The Human Touch

MAXIRAP100, 30 Jul 2019



BKK OX spoke to Kittikhun Bhukhongkha (Big), who is one member of three, who make up the organization, New Spirit. Three people, one powerful vision – a Thailand which is human again. They are re-training Thai society, and its teach-

ers, through public forums and workshops, how to connect with their inner human.

New Spirit are swimming against the strong current of society, much like the fish in their logo. They are swimming back to the roots of humanity, human connection and face-to-face communication. They are swimming back to the old spirit, which was buried under concrete blocks.

New Spirit is a small, closely knit group of three people from the Suan Nguen Mee Ma Social Enterprise, a bookshop and green café located near Wat Rajabopit in the old town area of Bangkok. The team of three are: Woranut Churuangsuk (Mi) Nongluk Sukjaicharoenkij (Kyo) and Kittikhun Bhukhongkha (Big).

"We are not only selling books, we also sell the new paradigm of a meaningful life." Khun "Big" – Member of New Spirit.

The technological age has created a mass of individuals who engage in less human dialogue than ever before. If people can't engage in dialogue and share their thoughts, feelings and fears, where does it all go? Often it stays locked up inside our bodies and creates chaos. New Spirit is fighting to bring back the old human spirit to our "modern" world.

"New spirit is the old spirit that we forgot. The spirit of community and people around the campfire sharing stories. We used to have such a warm neighbourhood, but now where is that? There are a lot of fences being built, solid, concrete walls separate us. We are trying to bring back human contact." Khun "Big" – Member of New Spirit.

New Spirit are one part of a growing movement here in Thailand – for a better world. They challenge the conventional path, and have been presenting an alternative way of life here for the last five years. Their bold stance is to incorporate 'humanity' in every aspect of life. These times are critical and intervention is needed, young people are taking their own lives in shocking numbers.

How does New Spirit work in practice? They host public forums, where people can share, listen and re-





connect with themselves and others. They translate and publish international books, carefully selected and aimed at bringing new ideas to Thai society. They co-run a series of 4-5 day workshops which provide a welcoming space for leading educators to retreat and rediscover themselves. These lecturers reclaim their feelings, their love for what they do, love for their students and consequently their passion for teaching.

This workshop is called: “Courage to Teach,” inspired by the Parker J. Palmer book. Mr Nuttarote Wangwinyoo, founder of Kwan Pan Din Training Institution, recommended this book to be published by New Spirit. The book was translated, published and then launched as a cooperative workshop. In doing so, New Spirit and Kwan Pan Din launched a rebellion against the Thai education system, presenting Palmer’s

humanist ideas that “when the person at the front of the classroom changes, the entire classroom will change also.”

After five years of relentless effort by New Spirit, positive changes have started to manifest in “mainstream” education. A growing number of universities are incorporating humanist ideas into their curriculum design and teaching. The highest profile change to curriculum was the Communication and Leadership course, introduced to the faculty of engineering, Kasetsart University. In this course, students of Engineering got the opportunity to connect with each other, as humans, as well as study together.

“Some students told us they have never shared their life with their friends, they have never got close enough to truly know their friends. So they have class mates, but they still feel lonely inside.”

“After the Leadership and Communication workshop at Kasetsart, they felt connected, like they had a second family. Someone to talk to when they fall down. The students became a community. In a society which likes to compartmentalize us into individual units, we need this human connection.” Khun “Big” – Member of New Spirit.

“Changed people change people.” How did this revolutionary change in curriculum happen? A lecturer from Kasetsart University, who attended the “Courage to Teach” workshop, organized in-house training for her fellow lecturers. The workshop inspired educators to reconsider the conventional method of teaching. In the new age, “teaching as preaching” will soon be irrelevant as knowledge is available at the fingertips. The human aspect in teaching has never been so vital.

New Spirit receives funding from the government through money which comes from alcohol and cigarette tax. The money is used to run events, aimed at re-connecting people to their inner selves. This idea was met with suspicion when they started, but is now growing in numbers and influence all around the country. The human rebellion has begun. Education is now the talk of the town, but it took some time for the message to spread that something wasn’t right.

“At first, even though we are a Buddhist country, when we said the word “spirit,” people were not very comfortable. People are not comfortable talking about their inner landscape. They thought: Are you some kind of cult or new religion? Are you smoking a lot of weed? Now, people are getting more used to the word “spirit” in our public forums. People talk a lot more about the es-

Country Reports

sence of life.” Khun “Big” – Member of New Spirit.

Creating dialogue is fundamental to the strength of any movement. New Spirit, through their public forums, are able to generate dialogue, introduce new ideas and concepts, new paradigms of life, to groups of people across Thailand. The discussion snowballs as the message is spread around the country.

Courage to Teach, New Spirit’s powerful intervention into Thailand’s authoritarian education system, has literally impacted hundreds of thousands of lives and continues to do so today, as more institutions climb on board.

“When a teacher comes to our workshop, we follow up with the teachers, we interview the students. In one year a teacher has, in most cases, several hundred students, and 30 teachers come to our work-shops each time, which means at least 10,000 students are being directly impacted by a single workshop.” Khun “Big” – Member of New Spirit.

New Spirit are not exclusively targeting educators, their funding is equally being spent on staging public events, such as the upcoming “Secret Garden” workshop, and “Places of the Soul,” a forum, based on a book by Christopher Day, which talks about how the

architecture and environmental design of a place, can change how we feel.

Each event staged by New Spirit promotes inner exploration, sharing, and deep listening. This is something which is rarely promoted in society, yet affects everything we do. The well-being and happiness of the nation has played second fiddle as industrialization, modernization, numbers and statistics took over. Yet as individuals, our thoughts and feelings inside become our actions outside. Why are we surprised when we see depressed young people taking their own lives? Now the dialogue is changing, and the human movement

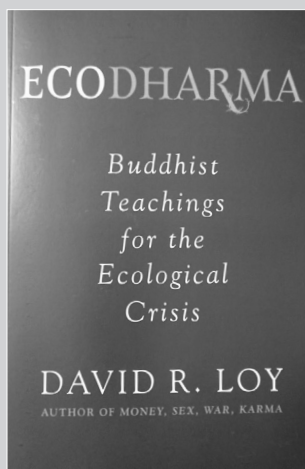
is gaining momentum around Thailand.

“There are many people in society who know the alternative way of life is possible, but they don’t know if it’s right or wrong, or if it’s just their imagination. When they come to our workshops, they gain confidence when they meet other people who think the same. There is an alternative way, which is outside the current of modern society.”

“Life is not one single route, or one running track. When rebels come together that is powerful enough to make a change.” Khun “Big” – Member of New Spirit.

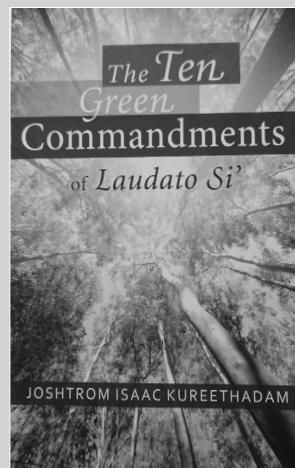


Recommended Reading



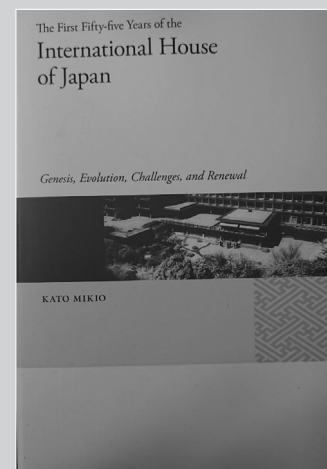
Eco Dharma: Buddhist Teachings for the Ecological Crisis

Author: David R. Loy
Publisher: Wisdom Publications



The Ten Green Commandments of Laudato Si

Author: Jostrom Isaac Kureethadam
Publisher: Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota



The First Fifty-Five Years of the International House of Japan

Author: Katō, Mikio
Publisher: Tokyo, Japan : I-House Press,



Culture of Awakening *Cultivating and Harvesting Wisdom*

The 19th Biennial INEB Conference and
Celebrating 30th Anniversary of INEB

Deer Park Institute, Bir, India

22 – 24 October 2019



Overview of INEB's 2019 Conference

This year's INEB conference theme is ***The Culture of Awakening – Cultivating and Harvesting Wisdom.*** The theme addresses the complexities and contradictions modern societies are facing. More to the point, whether the universal values of peace, freedom and social progress are being upheld through human rights, dignity and democratic principles. Do these universal values conflict with, or complement Buddhist teachings and practice?

Every two years INEB convenes an international gathering of *kalyanamitra* or spiritual

friends. During these gatherings, which are known as INEB Conferences, opportunities are provided to openly discuss and plan ways of addressing current social issues. Each conference location is rotated among its members. In this way the host organization provides an opportunity to increase understanding of its country context and challenges unique to it home community. The 2019 Conference is being jointly organised by INEB, Siddhartha's Intent Society and the Deer Park Institute.

Conference Goal and Objectives

The overall and long-term goal of the conference is to stimulate awakening to the profound and enduring teachings of the Buddha that can bring about personal and social transformation through reflection and social action. The specific conference objectives are to:

- Reconnect to the rich Buddhist and spiritual heritage, its arts, customs, social institutions and achievements as a means of confronting contemporary forms of greed, anger, and delusion, such as consumerism, targeted acts of violence, and over immersion in social media.
- Realize the benefits of awakening through transforming the contradictions perpetuated through globalization, structural violence, cultural intolerance and so forth. The new realization can happen through social action in areas of environmental resilience, peaceful coexistence for pluralistic societies, gender equality, youth empowerment, and sustainable growth.
- Celebrate INEB's 30th Anniversary and expand the spirit of kalyanamitra among the INEB members and beyond.

The conference theme of "Culture of Awakening" seeks to further develop INEB's 10 Year Strategic Roadmap launched in 2017 to expand its outreach to emerging like-minded social movements. This will help INEB more fully realize the potential of Socially Engaged Buddhism to engender social justice, cultural inclusivity and diversity, transformative learning, and the harmonization of ecology and economy.

Conference Venue -

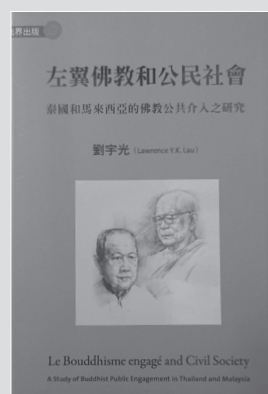
Deer Park Institute, Bir, India

Deer Park Institute is a project under Siddhartha's Intent Society, a registered educational society, that was formed in March 2006 by Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche. Deer Park is a centre for the study and practice of classical Buddhist and Indian wisdom traditions, infused with both spirit of the ancient Nalanda and the freshness of contemporary expression. It is a place which nurtures a spirit of non-sectarianism in Buddhist and other philosophical traditions; and which also builds deep relationships with the local Indian and Tibetan communities through understanding the problems faced by them and bringing positive changes.

Please visit the following websites for more information about the 2019 INEB Conference:

**INEB - inebnetwork.org
Deer Park - deerpark.in/**

Recommended Reading



Le Bouddhisme Engagé et Civil Society

Author: Lawrence Y.K. Lau

Publisher: Law Publishing House Ltd.

Jungto Society Organizes Korean Study Tour for the International Network of Engaged Buddhists

Craig Lewis

Buddhistdoor Global, June 06, 2019

The South Korea-based Jungto Society, a humanitarian organization founded by the Seon (Zen) master and social activist Venerable Pomnyun Sunim, organized a nine-day intensive study trip for members of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB). Ven. Pomnyun Sunim has served as a special advisor to INEB for several years.

The study tour was aimed at providing an opportunity for monastic and lay Buddhists to meet, present and exchange ideas for expressing and practicing engaged Buddhism in today's increasingly polarized world. The itinerary included visits to retreat centers, group presentations, discussions, and Dharma talks given by Ven. Pomnyun Sunim.

The event program, which ran from 27 May to 4 June, included educational seminars on the various humanitarian, social, and environmental organizations and projects founded by Ven. Pomnyun Sunim. These projects included Join Together Society for helping people in need; the Peace Foundation for resolving conflicts within the nation and around the Korean Peninsula; EcoBuddha for addressing environmental issues; Good Friends, which works toward reunifying North and South Korea; and Jungto Dharma Centers and Jungto Retreat Center, which offer settings for individuals to study and practice mind cultivation for inner peace.

In June each year, the Thailand-headquartered International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) forms a group of delegates and guests who travel to

South Korea, where they are hosted by hardworking Jungto Society volunteers. The objective was to learn from the activities of Ven. Pomnyun Sunim and Jungto Society members on applying the Dharma in the context of modern society by studying the ways in which Korean monastics and Jungto Society members practice the Dharma and conduct social engagement. This also offers an opportunity for monastic and lay Buddhist visitors to discuss and exchange ideas for applying the Dharma in their respective societies.

This year 20 guests attended the study trip from as far away as Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Myanmar, Taiwan, Thailand, and Sri Lanka. The Jungto Society team was especially pleased to welcome INEB founder Sulak Sivaraksa as a special guest among the visiting delegates.

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."

Each day of the study trip began with an early morning chanting ceremony, followed by a period of

Members of the INEB Delegation's Study Trip. Image courtesy of Jungto Society



Ven. Pomnyun Sunim, right, welcomes INEB founder Dr. Sulak Sivaraksa. Image courtesy of Jungto Society



Q&A session about Jungto Society at the Jungto temple in Chungju City. Image courtesy of Jungto Society



Namgyel Lhamo, a nun from Bhutan, during a group discussion. Image courtesy of Jungto Society

contemplative walking, before breakfasting with a traditional formal vegetarian temple meal known as *balwoogongyang*. Unique to Korean Buddhist temples, it is typically served on ceremonial occasions and during intensive retreats, and is regarded as a type of meditation practice.

“When my mind and heart are clean, that is the place of Jungto—the Pure Land; the ideal land of Buddhists,” Ven. Pomnyun Sunim explained to the participants. “We named this organization Jungto Society to mean let’s make Jungto ourselves, not over there but here. Not in the future but in the present. It means let us make the world in which we live the world of the Buddha—not by wishing to be born in a new world when we die; not by wishing for a future Jungto. We wish that we keep and practice the Dharma not

only in our minds, but also to create justice in the world.

“The *Avatamsaka Sutra* says, ‘To a bodhisattva, Jungto is not the perfect world that is already made, but the world a bodhisattva makes in moving toward the perfect world . . .’ We walk toward the perfect world (the Buddha’s world) step by step. As individuals, we are not yet fully mature, but we proceed forward to the perfect world step by step. For practitioners, the present is Jungto where we do this work to make the Buddha’s world.”

Among the highlights of the week’s itinerary was a field trip to Bongam-sa, one of the nine founding temples of Korean Seon Buddhism, located in a remote valley deep inside the mountains of central Korea and with a history dating to the ninth century. Designated

Breakfasting with a traditional formal vegetarian temple meal known as balwoogongyang. Image courtesy of Jungto Society



Ven. Pomnyun Sunim gives a Dharma talk. Image courtesy of Jungto Society



INEB founder Dr. Sulak Sivaraksa. Image courtesy of Jungto Society



Bongam-sa, renowned for the disciplined meditation practice of the resident monks, is only open to the public for one day each year on the Buddha's birthday. Image courtesy of Jungto Society

by the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism as a special meditation retreat center and renowned for the highly disciplined meditation practice of the resident monks, Bongam-sa is only open to the public for one day each year on the Buddha's birthday.

The party of delegates also visited Bulguk-sa, a major temple of the Jogye Order, built in 528 in the Silla period (57 BCE–935 CE), during the reign of King Beopheung (r. 514–540). It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, as well as Unmun-sa, a sixth century temple in North Gyeongsang Province of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, and the largest nunnery and training center for female monastics in South Korea. It has produced more than 1,250 bhikshunis and presently accommodates some 270 student nuns.

Jungto Society is a volunteer-run humanitarian organization and community that aspires to embody the Buddhist teachings through social engagement

and by promoting a simpler lifestyle less centered on consumption than mainstream society. Jungto Society seeks to address the problems and crises of modern society, such as greed, poverty, conflict, and environmental degradation, by applying a Buddhist world view of the interconnectedness of all things and the principal that everyone can find happiness through Buddhist practice and active participation in social movements. Jungto Society has numerous regional chapters across South Korea, as well as more than 20 overseas chapters, including 12 in the United States, each offering gatherings for Buddhist ceremonies, Dharma talks, and other Dharma-based programs.

International Young Bodhisattva Training

for Spiritual Resurgence and
Social Transformation

Ven. Pema (Karen Schaefer)
April 30 - May 12, 2019. Taiwan

Twenty seven (27) students, including monks and nuns from 10 countries who joined this International Young Bodhisattva Training (IYBT) course were welcomed by hosts Somboon Chungprampree, INEB's executive secretary and Venerable Chao Hwei Bhikshuni from Hongshi Buddhist College (HBC) and a patron of INEB. Somboon said that graduates from previous courses were very active in Indonesia, India and Myanmar. The facilitators volunteering on this course were themselves alumni.

Ven. Chao Hwei shared how we can all practice the way of Bodhisattva in daily life. She went on to discuss her work advocating for same-sex marriage, in addition to other sangha and activist communities addressing issues such as anti-legalisation of Gambling, Animal and Environmental Protection. (The same sex marriage bill passed parliament a few days after this course ended.)

The students separated into their country groups to reflect on and discuss the core issues in their countries, and to brainstorm what kind of social action Buddhist organisations could effectively offer.

Ouyporn Khuankaew, the International Women's Partnership, Chiang Mai, Thailand, led the group through a series of relevant topics and activities. Her three day "Workshop on Socially Engaged Buddhism" went into practical experiential examination of issues and skills using Buddhist

Social Analysis, Power Analysis, Deep Listening, Compassionate Communication, Gender Inequality and Social Injustice. She skilfully facilitated exercises that helped students experience directly issues of power, and marginalisation due to social inequity—encouraging them to take up action in areas of Social Development, Social Service and Social Change.

Urging them to find their own way to take up social action, Ouyporn defined six different roles people could adopt to make society better:

1. *Warrior*: challenge system; non-violent direct action.
2. *Reformer*: join government committee; change laws.
3. *Educator*: raise consciousness amongst marginalised people,
4. *Healer*: provide counselling; conflict resolution; use non-violent communication (NVC). Help people who suffer from injustice.
5. *Organiser*: build relationships, connect people, now this is happening more on-line.
6. *Campaigner*: advocate for them; tell the public about injustice; use the media; technology.

Ven. Bhikshuni Shing Kuang, Hong-Shih Buddhist College, spoke on "Meditation on Mindfulness, Buddhism and Health" by saying that it is possible for activists to become so engaged in

Bodhisattva work that they lose their health. She addressed important health issues and assisted them with sitting posture, and valuable instructions and exercises to support their meditation practice.

Dr. Hsiang-Chou Yo, Executive Committee of World Fellowship of Buddhists and INEB's Advisory Committee, spoke on "Taiwan's History of Engaged Buddhism" and traced the lineage through Master Tai Jiau, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa and Master Yin Shun (mentor of Master Cheng Yen Bhikshuni), the founder of Tzu Chi. He also discussed the influence of Dr. Ambedkar in India and Buddhadasa Bhikkhu from Thailand. He also introduced the four main Dharma Institutions in Taiwan and their founders.

A panel of three activists working on issues of LGBT Rights, animal protection, human rights and environmental protection discussed their areas of activist work and the challenges they faced. They also responded to questions on how they managed to avoid burnout in their work.

The group visited Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts (DDILA) where speakers shared their areas of activist work. Bobo Lwin of Kalyana Mitta Foundation in Myanmar and Jonathan Watts from Japan Network of Engaged Buddhists and member of INEB's Executive Committee, presented their work in areas of social justice, climate change, environmental protection, Buddhist chaplaincy and eco temples.

Ven Huimin Bhikshu, President of DDILA, welcomed the students and discussed the work of Buddhist chaplaincy and hospice care in Taiwan. He explained that the Buddhist teachings given in context of chaplaincy and end-of-life care and training are as much for the caregiver as the patient to develop the caregiver as a listener and compassionate supporter.

He also discussed how Master Shen Yen had developed a natural burial system of putting ashes

into the ground of the Memorial Garden, thus bypassing extravagant funerals. The group later visited the Memorial Garden to see where many peoples' ashes had been returned to the earth through the natural cycle of life.

On Thursday May 9th, the group visited Tzu Chi Foundation where they witnessed some initiatives by the followers of Ven. Cheng Yen. First was the Recycling Center. Tzu Chi Environmental Protection Mission operates in 98 countries, with thousands of volunteers trained to assist the recycling mission. One extremely valuable technology they have developed recycles PET plastic bottles into blankets and clothing to be distributed in their disaster relief projects.

Tzu Chi is also very active in disaster relief work around the world through their Environmental Humanist Protection. Visiting the Tzu Chi Taipei Hospital, the cardiologist welcoming the group explained, "We can make the world a better place. Spreading love around the world; compassion in action. Wherever there are people in need, Tzu Chi volunteers will be there to help." Their workers brought aid to 90 countries in 2016. Relief is given with no consideration of race, religion or nationality. Doctors and medical workers visit disaster sites entirely at their own expense.

Their overall mission is to inspire innate selfless love in people through four specific mission areas of Charity, Medicine, Education and Culture. There are 10 million Tzu Chi volunteers around the world, with 5 million in Taiwan alone.

Next stop was the Buddhist Education Foundation. The organisation was started in 1982 with the intention to encourage young people to do dharma work, and to make Buddhist teachings more accessible. The main mission is to spread Buddhism incorporating all traditions through publishing Buddhist texts in 33 different languages, and conducting Buddhist education courses free

of charge.

Early in the morning of 11 May, the students went to a beautiful mountain monastery, Xiang-Kuang Mountain Temple, one of 7 branch temples of Luminary International Buddhist Institute which has a total of 160 nuns. They were greeted by Ven Bhikshuni Zinai, who spoke to the group on their work of Holistic Education and Monastic Training. “We plant gardens, study, counsel lay people, share dharma with people and also confront social challenges. We investigate what is the right way to bring Dhamma into action.” We also learn the attitude of a compassionate Bodhisattva and provide Buddhist Education.

Back at Hongshi College, Mr. KV Soon (Vidyananda) spoke to the group on the topic of “Technology, Media and Engaged Buddhism.” He advised about how to look at technology and media, understand how technology effects people’s behavior, and how to use social media to influence them.

Dhammachari Lokamitra from Nagaloka Institute, and INEB advisory committee member, spoke on the work of “Dr. Ambedkar, Buddhism and Social Justice.” Lokamitra has spent most of his adult life working in India to support the Dalit Buddhist community in their struggle against Hindu caste prejudice and social injustice inspired by the life and work of the great Dalit leader, India’s first Justice Minister Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar.

On Saturday 11 May, HBC celebrated the Traditional Chinese Buddha Jayanthi Ceremony with a large gathering including IYBT students, students of the college and many nuns. Ven Chao Hwei gave an inspiring talk about the life and teachings of Buddha. People came forward to bathe the Buddha in a traditional ceremony followed by a lavish banquet.

After having visited the many inspiring social action projects undertaken by the engaged

Buddhist organisations in Taiwan, the students returned filled with inspiration and learning. Then they prepared to address the issues in their own countries. The social action projects that they want to pursue included:

Social Welfare:

• India

- Create development centre in a Nagpur India school; build community.
- Address drug and alcohol addiction in Ladakh community.

• Myanmar

- Address Christian/Buddhist hostility.
- Educate, organise workshops on recon-ciliation, peace building, social cohesion.

• Sri Lanka

- Work towards sustainable peace.

• Taiwan

- Form a small charity foundation to support Nagaloka in India.
- Help teenagers find direction.

• Thailand

- Eco temple.
- Suicide prevention for young people.

Working for Structural Change:

- Initiate an awareness campaign in social media on animal protection and help poor children.
- Conduct more training to increase gender discrimination for women.

- Social enterprise to raise money for activists.

• Cambodia

- Conflict resolution Non-Violent Communication.

• India

- INEB trainer for Train the Trainer to Ladakh nunnery.
- Conduct a workshop to make posters for Nagaloka and for social media.

- **Indonesia** – Conduct inter-religious seminar by



end of year.

- **Myanmar** - Raise awareness of farmers rights.
- **Nepal** - Find groups with similar interests to support an organization set up by a Nepali monk.
- **Singapore** - Look for organisation to work on the issue of oppressed domestic workers.
- **South Korea** - Get youth involved in congress; invite Ouyporn.
- **Taiwan** - Promote centre with a visible front shop. to display things about compassion in life.
- **Thailand** - Palliative care, rights of patients for end of life choices.

On the last evening, the group joined in an extraordinary ceremony attended by nearly 40,000 people held by Tzu Chi at the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial in central Taipei. The ceremony honouring the Buddha Jayanthi was meticulously arranged and conducted with dignity and reverence. Persons attending the auspicious event included Taiwan's

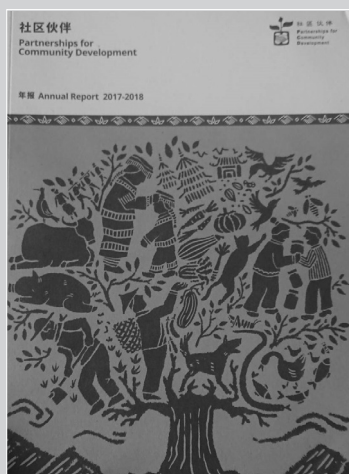
President Ma Ying-jeou, foreign diplomats, senior monks and nuns and people from all walks of life.

The students of the IYBT expressed their tremendous gratitude to the nuns and kind supporters of HBC for their generous support. With heartfelt thanks they expressed, "Even if we are not perfect, we can still help to make the world a better place." They chose to sing a song for the nuns and supporters which was a very moving expression of gratitude and aspiration for the conclusion of this Young Bodhisattva Training:

*Heal the World — make it a better place...
for you and for me...and the entire human race...
There are people dying, but if you care enough
for the living you make a better place
for you and for me.*

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Recommended Reading

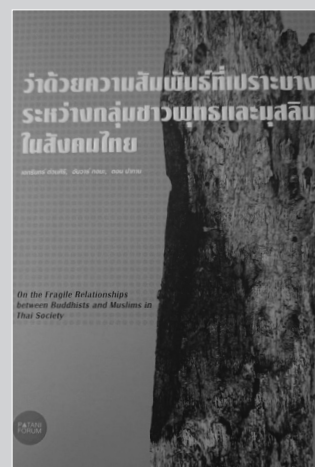


Partnerships for Community Development
Annual Report 2017-2018



Understanding Anti-Islam Sentiment
in Thailand

Author: Ekkarin Tuansiri, Don Pathan,
Anwar Koma
Publisher: Patani Forum



On the Fragile Relationships between
Buddhists and Muslims in Thai Society

Author: Ekkarin Tuansiri, Don Pathan,
Anwar Koma
Publisher: Patani Forum

CURLS 2019: the Rise of Earth Trusteeship

CURLS 2019 marked the 10th anniversary of the School for Wellbeing Studies and Research. At this occasion the Chulalongkorn University Right Livelihood Summerschool (CURLS) concluded with a two day forum *Nature Rights, Global Citizenship and Reclaiming “the Commons”: the Rise of Earth Trusteeship*.



With such an engaged and passionate group of young people, we know for certain that the future of the world is in good hands.

The School for Wellbeing was founded in 2009 as a follow-up to the 3rd International Conference on Gross National Happiness held in Thailand two years earlier. The founding partners were the Faculty of Political Science of Chulalongkorn University (CU), the Centre for Bhutan & GNH Studies (CBS), based in Thimphu, Bhutan and the Sathirakoses Nagapradipa Foundation.

CURLS is a program bringing students together from all over the world to learn about sustainability, organic agriculture, and right living. The Summer School balances the traditional

academic learning of speakers and text with alternative forms of learning through art and theater. The movement, art, and theater components culminated in an artistic exhibition and a 45-minute performance during the Earth Trusteeship Forum at Chulalongkorn University. While learning activities varied, the theme of the School focused on Earth Trusteeship and innovative ways to reimagine ‘the Commons.’

Over the course of the program, CURLS was divided into four modules illustrating the various stages of the learning journey.



Module I: Academia – Civil Society Dialogue

The first module focused on the major academic themes of the Summer School and on bringing the students closer together. Participants were introduced to the ideas behind Earth Trusteeship and Right Livelihood activism. One notable activity for the participants was a panel exploring the effects of neoliberalism by a diverse group of thinkers and activists. During another activity they learned about the origins of the Right Livelihood Award Foundation and about the achievements of some of the laureates.

In addition to the academic work, participants learned more about each other through movement exercises and theater workshops. The CURLS methodology of teaching through art was introduced, and participants began learning how to embrace certain emotions and present that feeling in front of the group. The goal of the first module was to share the basic themes of the Summer School and to facilitate an environment where students learned more about one another and bonded through the experience.

Module II: Creative Retreat

The next stage of the programme was a short stay at the Wongsanit Ashram, which is a haven for social activists to rejuvenate in a space blending society and nature. Activities in this module included role playing various global identities, trust walks around the community, and a seminar on the use of film and media in effective storytelling. Participants were encouraged to act in front of an audience, and the group continued growing closer through the various movement activities.

Module III: Participatory Action Research

From there, the Summer School traveled north to visit the Maetha Community located a few hours outside of Chiang Mai. Participants were welcomed by the community in homestays, and various speakers shared the people's story. Summer School students learned about the community through interactive learning in a research philosophy known as Participatory Action Research, or PAR. This method of research included the chance to interview members of the community about their life practices and see first-hand their customs and way of life. The interviews were conducted in various groups focusing on different parts of the community including their ecological practices, their economy, their history, and their cultural worldview.

At the end of the stay, participants created presentations on what they learned. The presentations used artistic means of representing data and brought the ideas alive through performances.

After leaving Maetha, the participants spent a few days with the Klong Yong community learning about their story. This module focused on exploring a community that transitioned into a more organically oriented approach. One community leader shared how they transitioned to planting

organic rice and how beneficial that shift has been for their social and material well-being. After learning about Klong Yong from various members of the community, participants visited an organic rice paddy to help in the field. Each student helped plant at least three rows of rice. The Klong Yong module concluded with students' first rehearsals for the performance sharing what they learned.

Module IV: Public Lecture, Earth Trusteeship Forum, and Presentations

The culminating stage in the journey was at the Right Livelihood Public Lecture and the Earth Trusteeship forum at Chulalongkorn University. Summer School participants were joined by activists and thinkers from all over the world to discuss the major issues facing our time. The forum had been opened by Prof. Suthipand Chirathivat, Chula Global Network, Dutch Ambassador Kees Rade, as well as by 11-years old Thai activist Lilly.

Keynote Speaker and 2004 Right Livelihood Laureate Raul Montenegro spoke about some of the challenges facing humanity caused by destructive consumption patterns.

Later, Laureate Anwar Fazal shared the global "projects of hope" that strive for a better future, and laureate Sulak Sivarksa concluded the forum by sharing the need to engage in activism with both the head and the heart. Anwar Fazal had presented the views of Mahatma Gandhi on Trusteeship in a pre-forum seminar organized by the CU Indian Studies Center.

While the Right Livelihood laureates were major components of the conference, speakers from all over the world enriched the dialogue through their expertise and authority. There were discussions about the Sustainable Development Goals, nonviolent activism, and paradigm shifts in response to the challenges of climate change. Speakers

included Dasho Karma Ura, CBS, Bhutan, co-founder of the School for Wellbeing; Prof. Klaus Bosselmann, Auckland University, New Zealand; Neshan Gunsekera, Sri Lanka, World Future Council; Alide Roerink, the Netherlands, Earth Charter International; Justice Suntariya Muanpawong, Thailand, Supreme Court; Katherine Marshall, USA, the Network of Religious and Traditional Peacemakers; Harsa Navaratne, Sri Lanka, INEB and Alissa Wahid, Indonesia, young Gusdurians.

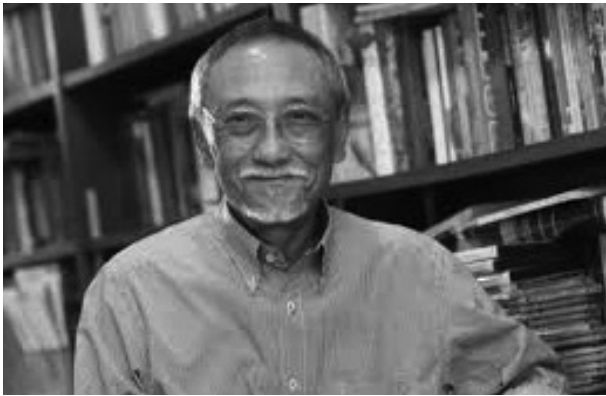
Music included performances by students of Panyotai Waldorf School and Tammai Ensemble conducted by Anant Narkkong.

For the Summer School students, the forum provided an opportunity to learn more from the various speakers and to engage in inter-generational discussions with older participants. Summer School students shared what they learned through an exhibition located in the lobby and a 45-minute performance. The exhibition was composed of pieces of art the students made throughout their experience at the summer school. It included portraits of the participants, detailed drawings of the Maetha community, and pictures from various parts of the journey.

The presentation focused on acting out some of the stories heard and in presenting a vision of Earth Trusteeship. Throughout each stage of the learning journey, students benefited innumera- bly from the people along the way who took the time and energy to share their worldviews.



The Meaning of Kraisak Choonhavan



It is difficult to find a Thai word that defines Kraisak Choonhavan. If we turn to English, the best word is probably “unique.” Or to borrow a Latin phrase, he is *sui generis*, which means “in a class by itself.” He is unlike others but not in an otherworldly or superhuman sense. Kraisak is still “all too human.” He is still “humane,” even though he was born into a powerful political and military family that was pretty much anti-democratic. His grandfather was at the forefront of the reactionary forces that obstructed Thai democracy after WWII.

As prime minister, his father was also quite devious. In any case, Kraisak would not be offended by my criticisms. As he often says, “Ajarn Sulak has criticized not only my father but also my grandfather. But he is telling the truth.” How many of us can openly accept criticisms of our ancestors like him? Certainly not the offspring of Luang Wichitwathakan! They would get terribly upset and angry when someone criticized their father. In fact, Luang Wichit was probably worse than Kraisak’s father and grandfather. But this is not the place to delve into this matter.

Kraisak and I are from two different generations. I was born slightly after the 1932 Revolution, while he was born in 1947—the year that the Revolution was destroyed. He grew up among the powers-that-be in a family of politicians and military figures. It wasn’t spontaneous, but I grew up trying to resist or break free from the powers-that-be. However, Kraisak questioned rather than justified his family’s massive power and wealth. He also openly admitted that he has benefited a lot from them.

Kraisak grew up in South America. He was aware of the anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian, and anti-imperialist struggles in the region. He understood well the perils posed by the American empire, and it didn’t diminish when he went to study in the US. Except for a tiny number of progressives who were studying in the US during the Vietnam War, most Thai graduates from American universities are uncritical of US foreign relations.

Subsequently, Kraisak went to study in France and England. He met many intellectuals and further exposed himself to progressive thought in both countries. At the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London, Kraisak studied with many progressive teachers. One of them was even murdered by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.

I was fortunate to know many of Kraisak’s SOAS professors. When I was in exile because of the October ’76 mayhem, I met Kraisak in London. During this time, he went back home several times. He liked to joke that it would take quite a while before someone like me would be allowed back into the kingdom. I could sense his sincerity and

friendship at the time.

Kraisak is a true intellectual. This label has also been pinned on me. The main difference is that I've never been a state official. Kraisak had been an MP. He even rose to become deputy leader of the Democrat Party. Later, he was senator and advisor to the governor of Bangkok. He has performed many official duties. Since he has a personal interest in the arts, Kraisak played a leading role in the construction of the Bangkok Art and Culture Center. Without his support, a shopping mall would have been constructed instead.

Kraisak had to juggle between his opposing identities as intellectual and state official. It's never easy for a real intellectual to work for and among the powers-that-be. At some point the working relations had to stop. For instance, he told me that when he was advisor to Governor of Bangkok Bhichit Rattakul, he saw many capable and hardworking officials. He was even full of praises for the governor. At the same time, he revealed to me the endemic corruption behind the scenes.

It has to be said that the Choonhavan family is very wealthy as well as corrupt. But Kraisak has never condoned corruption. He also has an eye for picking the right man for the right job at the right time. An exemplary case is the selection of a group of advisors to the Chatichai government. This group was comprised of six people: Pansak Vinyaratn, Sukhumbhand Paribatra, Narongchai Akrasanee, Chuanchai Achanand, Borwornsak Uwanoo, and Surakiart Sathirathai. Kraisak then acted as researcher for this group.

In 1988, these six individuals were the best and brightest in their respective fields. Whether or not any of them was morally upright is entirely another matter. And it seemed that they had interfered with the working of numerous ministries and departments, much to the consternation of the responsible state officials and bureaucrats. However,

this group along with the Chatichai government was disbanded following the military coup led by Sunthorn Kongsompong and Suchinda Kraprayoon.

Sadly, Pansak who once praised Chatichai as the best boss ever, went on to serve Thaksin Shinawatra without any sense of shame.

As mentioned above, Kraisak is an intellectual who is close to the powers-that-be. In the world of the powers-that-be ordinary people are invisible and voiceless. The powers-that-be, don't even have to try to understand ordinary people. Kraisak is a clear exception. He understood Charoen Wat-aksorn, who was murdered by the land-owning elites. He understood Wanida Tantiwitthayapitak, who worked for the Assembly of the Poor. He is on good terms with Bamrung Kayotha. And so on. Moreover, he has condemned Thai state violence against Haji Sulong and the Muslim communities in the southern provinces of the country. A slight criticism is that he doesn't appear to acknowledge that the name "Thailand" is more chauvinistic than "Siam." If only there are more people like Kraisak among the ruling class!

Unfortunately, Kraisak has yet to make any concrete proposal for meaningful democracy in the country (as Pridi had initiated and as destroyed by Kraisak's grandfather). In addition, although he is concerned about the plight of the farmers, he does not have any good plan to help them (unlike M.C. Sitthiporn Kridakara).

Admittedly, I'm too negative. Maybe, it's because I expect too much from him. After all, Kraisak has to confront numerous family problems—from his father, mother, wives (I don't even remember how many he has had), etc. He's also not in the best of health. On the whole, I sincerely respect him as someone who belongs and does not belong to the ruling class, as someone who is *sui generis*.



How an Activist Buddhist Convinced Thai King Law on Insulting Monarchy Was Being Abused

Peter Janssen



Sulak Sivaraksa is a respected Thai social activist. He talks about how a chance meeting with new King Vajiralongkorn resulted in an end to new lèse-majesté cases in Thailand.

Photo: Mikel Flamm

Sulak Sivaraksa, proponent of engaged Buddhism, talks about how an audience with King Maha Vajiralongkorn led to a halt in new lèse-majesté cases in Thailand. Lèse-majesté, or insulting the monarchy, is punishable by three to 15 years in prison in Thailand.

Sporting a panama hat, his signature collarless shirt and sarong-like longyi, Sulak Sivaraksa addressed an auditorium at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University this month on the disappearance of fellow activist Sombath Somphone. The Laotian citizen went missing at a police

checkpoint in Vientiane in 2012.

"Sombath is a good friend of mine," says Sulak, who at the age of 86 remains Thailand's best-known political gadfly. His long career as a social critic and activist has driven him into exile twice and seen him embroiled in numerous court cases.

Sulak has been campaigning for Laos' communist government to release Sombath, 67, since his mysterious disappearance. Before he vanished, Sombath was the country's foremost promoter of community development initiatives, launching numerous grass-roots projects in

education, micro-enterprise and eco-friendly farming.

“He served his people wonderfully, training young people to be useful to Laos, and the government responded to his good work by kidnapping him,” Sulak says. Vientiane has repeatedly denied knowledge of Sombath’s whereabouts.

For Sombath, like many social activists in Southeast Asia, Sulak was a mentor.

“Sulak was a very important influence in Sombath’s life, especially his work on engaged Buddhism and how to use engaged Buddhism to pursue what is right, what is just for disenfranchised groups,” says Ng Shui Meng, Sombath’s Singaporean wife, referring to the application of Buddhist precepts to social and political injustices.

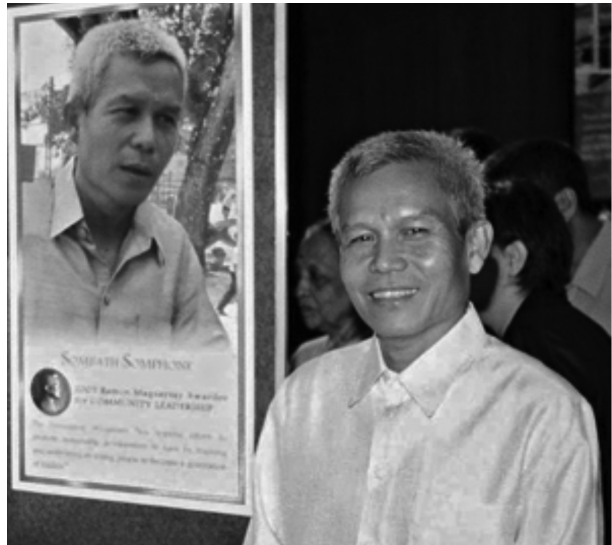
Sulak, best known abroad for his trials and tribulations with Thailand’s onerous *lèse-majesté* law – under which insulting leading members of the royal family can lead to imprisonment for up to 15 years – is first and foremost a proponent of engaged Buddhism.

Sulak was a founding father of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), established in 1989, with patrons including The Dalai Lama, Vietnamese activist monk Thich Nhat Hanh and Cambodian monk Maha Ghosananda.

Sticking to a Buddhist foundation for his intellectual and activist work in Thailand, a predominantly Buddhist country, has arguably helped keep Sulak out of prison.

Loyalty Demands Dissent, Sulak’s autobiography, was published in 1998, soon after he was acquitted of a *lèse-majesté* charge brought against him in 1991 that forced him into self-exile (1992-1995).

This year, two English-language biographies have been published on Sulak: *ROAR, Sulak and the Path of Socially Engaged Buddhism* by Matteo Pistono, and *Hidden Away in the Fold of Time: The Unwritten Dimension of Sulak Sivaraksa* by Pracha



Laotian citizen Sombath Somphone went missing at a police checkpoint in Vientiane in 2012. Photo: AFP

Hutanuwat. “I am getting famous in my old age,” he jokes.

Sulak – who, like many Bangkok-born Thais, is of Chinese descent – stands out for his outspokenness and fearless criticism of authorities, whether they be in the military, monarchy or the Sangha, the Buddhist monastic order.

“He’s a provocateur, and I think this is a very important role to play in a society that has people who want to discipline it all the time top-down,” says Chris Baker, a Bangkok-based historian who, with his Thai wife, Pasuk Phongpaichit, has written a number of books on Thai history and literature.

● ●
For me, human beings must have the right to speak their minds. Without the right to speak your mind, you are not a human being.
● ●

Sulak Sivaraksa



Sulak with Ng Shui Meng, the wife of Sombath Somphone, who was kidnapped in 2012 in Laos. Photo: Mikel Flamm

Sulak's long career as a social critic and activist has driven him into exile twice.

"It is important to have people who have the guts to challenge that [authoritarianism] but also, somehow, have the ability to survive, which to me is attributable to the sheer strength of his character."

Sulak was born into a middle-class, Sino-Thai family in 1933. His father was an accountant at the British American Tobacco company.

"My character started with my own father," he says. "He encouraged me to be myself."

The second-most influential force in his early years was Buddhist monk Bhaddramuni of the royal Thongnoppakhun temple, where Sulak became a novice monk during the second world war.

"He introduced me to Buddhism and Siamese culture. Without him, I'd be like any other Thai, influenced by mainstream education, fashion and Americanisation," Sulak writes of his mentor in *ROAR*.

Sulak entered Bangkok's Assumption College, a training ground for the business community, before going abroad to study at the University of Wales, in the United Kingdom. He spent eight years in the country, occasionally working for the *BBC* and eventually becoming a

barrister in 1961.

Back in Thailand, in 1963, he became founding editor of the *Social Science Review*, the kingdom's first "intellectual journal." It launched his career as a social critic, activist and mentor for student activists whose opposition to military rule would eventually explode in the mass demonstration of October 14, 1973. That resulted in the expulsion of dictator Thanom Kittikachorn at the order of King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

Though the late king was praised for his role in defusing the 1973 uprising, he was criticised for allowing Thanom to return to Bangkok three years later and seemingly condoning the subsequent bloody crackdown on student activists at Thammasat University by right-wing thugs backed by the police and army on October 6, 1976.

"This became the turning point for me with the king," Sulak writes in *ROAR*.

Sulak was in the UK during the bloodshed, and decided to stay abroad for a year after his bookshop and publishing house in Bangkok were ransacked.

Thereafter he faced several charges of lèse-majesté, for comments he made in public about

Bhumibol and the institution of monarchy. He was acquitted on all charges.

The latest charge was brought in 2017 for a comment Sulak made at a seminar about the accuracy of Thai historical accounts of 16th-century King Naresuan, who legend has it defeated the Burmese king in a duel on elephant back.

While Sulak's struggle to amend the onerous *lèse-majesté* law made little progress under the rule of Bhumibol, who had publicly objected to the law's excessive application, there has been more progress under King Maha Vajiralongkorn, Bhumibol's son, who ascended the throne in 2016.

Sulak was granted a rare audience with Vajiralongkorn in December 2017, after the two met informally at an honorary degree granting ceremony at Thammasat University. During a photo shoot following the ceremony, Vajiralongkorn and Sulak swapped pleasantries.

He said, "You have many good ideas. Why don't you come and advise me?" I thought he was joking, but on December 3, 8pm, the telephone rang. The royal secretary asked me if I was free on December 5 at 8pm, Sulak says.

His audience with the king lasted 90 minutes. Vajiralongkorn asked Sulak's opinion on three issues: the *lèse-majesté* law; the future role of the monarchy in Thailand, and; whether democracy was suitable for the kingdom.

On *lèse-majesté*, or Article 112 in the Thai Penal Code, Sulak said the law was often abused by people in power and ended up tarnishing the monarchy more than protecting it.

Shortly after their meeting, the most recent *lèse-majesté* charge against Sulak was dropped. Later, Vajiralongkorn wrote letters to the Supreme Court and Attorney General requesting that no further cases be accepted.

"There has not been a new case of *lèse-majesté* since October 2017," says historian David

Streckfuss. "What the new king has done, effectively, is removed the much abused tool that the military and Bangkok elite have used against their critics."

The law has yet to be amended, however.

"The point is that the government should do something legally," Sulak says. It is up to Thai legislators to amend the law, or replace it with a less onerous one that would protect the monarchy against libel.

Whether the newly elected government will have the courage to do so remains to be seen.

In Thailand, few people have shown the same courage as Sulak, Streckfuss says.

"Sulak as a social critic, a political critic, has almost stood alone," Streckfuss says. "He's become, in some way, untouchable. He's so well connected to the rest of the world that to take him on legally always becomes an international incident."

Looking back on his unique career, Sulak takes a more Buddhist view of his achievements.

"My achievement is I have *kalyana-mitta* (spiritual friends) – good friends who tell me what I don't want to hear, and I have friends all over the world," he says.

Being open to criticism, Sulak's lifelong message to authorities is that they should be mindful of the opinions of others.

"For me, human beings must have the right to speak their minds. Without the right to speak your mind, you are not a human being," he says.



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This article appeared in the *South China Morning Post* print edition as: The voice of treason - <https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/article/3022373/how-activist-buddhist-convinced-thai-king-law-insulting-monarchy-was>

Buddhism, Human Nature and Tropical Rainforest Conservation

Nigel Crawhall

ICE / INEB Voluntary Advisor on the Environment

As with the other global religions, Buddhism is challenged by the ever-deepening crisis of biodiversity loss, accelerating climate instability and global warming. Within the panoply of human-initiated harmful practices impacting on our planet and sustainability, the deforestation of tropical rainforests, the great green lungs of our planet, is a source of grave concern where we need inspired leadership and effective action.

It is important to say at the outset, that though this article is a contribution to the global reflections on the absolute urgency of conserving and regenerating tropical rainforest coverage and the ecosystems functions associated with them, this is one part of a vast puzzle, including all ecosystems, all regions, and each place where human relationships with nature and other species have shifted from sustainable custodianship to degradation and the risk of collapse.¹ Whether it is an urban wetland, a desert oasis and subterranean aquifer, a coastal reef ecosystem or temperate grasslands, they all matter, and they are all part of the web of life and the web of our karma.

As we approach the end of the ten years of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, including Aichi Biodiversity Targets set out by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the challenge for us all is to determine how we

balance developmental aspirations and economic trends with the conservation of the natural resources that sustain life on our planet.

Religious leaders have an important role in such a conversation and mobilizing effective actions and accountability. Religious leaders are there to help communities sustain themselves and reduce their suffering. Religious leaders know that people suffer from greed and self-interest, and if they are not restrained, that such an approach to life leads to greater suffering of the individual and the collective. Moreover, religious leaders have the tools and authority to bring people together to contemplate the common good, to modify our actions based on ethics, altruism, duty and common sense. Ultimately religious leaders are here to help people find meaning in life, which includes finding value in restraint, generosity towards the most vulnerable and living mindfully. The biodiversity crisis is of our making, it

¹ There are various online materials about the state of nature. Two worth referencing are the IPBES Summaries for Policy Makers: <https://www.ipbes.net/now-available-summaries-policy-makers-four-regional-assessment-reports-thematic-assessment-report> and the Global Diversity Outlook series: <https://www.cbd.int/gbo/>

is also an opportunity for our awakening.

INEB has been engaged in the global dialogue of the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (IRI), supported by the government of Norway, world religious leaders and indigenous peoples' organisations. Difficult conversations about competing values, colonial heritage and the relationship of mainstream religions and indigenous peoples take place in these forums, with the ultimate goal of forging new alliances to protect the global rainforests.²

Forests have played a role in Buddhist life and practices over millennia. Queen Māyā of Sakya gave birth to Prince Siddhatta Gotama, the Buddha, under a sal tree³ (*shorea robusta*) in a garden in Lumbini, Nepal. The Buddha spent extended time in forests around South Asia. He was enlightened under a sacred fig tree (*ficus religiosa*) and passed away and ascended by his *parinibbana* in the Sala Grove which was rich with sal trees in the vicinity of Kusinara (now Kushinigar, India). Theravada Buddhists emphasise that prior to the *parinibbana* of the Buddha, there were a series of important tales foreshadowing the coming of the Buddha and the turning of the wheel of dhamma. If we look at Buddhist literature, we note that four Buddhas were enlightened under the naga tree (*mesua ferrea*). The Koṇḍañña Buddha was enlightened under a Salakalyani tree (*oroxylum indicum*). And there are other examples. For Buddhists, Hindus, Jains and traditional Asian animists, trees and groves have always been part of scriptures, practices and religious heritage.

The South-East Asia region has experienced serious deforestation with various drivers, though

mostly due to land use conversion. Thailand, for example, lost 14.5% of its forest cover between 1990 and 2005⁴. Initially having a forest cover of about 61% in 1945, there is approximately 28% cover now. The rate of deforestation is slowing but it continues to move towards a negative scenario. Forest issues became so much of a public concern that monks, from the 1990s onwards, became active in raising public awareness about forest conservation. The most visible manifestation of an ecological *dhamma* was the practice of ordaining trees in Thailand. To this day, Thai people will not cut forests near the forest monasteries. GoogleEarth can show clearly in Isaan forests, how the monasteries are nodes of the conservation of natural primary forest. Indeed, under the monastic rules, monks themselves are prohibited from cutting living plants and villagers respect that forests are a place of monastic refuge and they do not disturb this living network.

Through the work of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) and the Inter-religious Climate and Ecology Network (ICE) in Asia, and a range of Buddhist ecological initiatives around the planet, the environment is becoming a mainstream issue within Buddhism. At the same time, owing to Buddhist practice being quite often localized and community-based, it is not always easy to move from the local experience to engaging at higher levels of policy and decision-making. In Sri Lanka, Buddhist leaders have engaged directly with the Parliament and the Presidency to develop a new national vision of sustainability. The question is now whether Buddhist authorities can be effective change agents to turn around the trend of deforestation and other environmental threats.

² See <https://www.interfaithrainforest.org/>

³ Some sources say it was an ashoka tree (*saraca asoca*).

⁴ See <https://rainforests.mongabay.com/deforestation/archive/Thailand.htm> (accessed 17/03/2019)

Asian economies continue to grow faster than their Western counterparts and forest is being converted to palm oil, monoculture-based industrial agriculture and other drivers of deforestation. Religious leaders are holders of ethical values and social influence, while the problems are often defined as economic.

The late judge Sri Christopher Weeramantry outlined in his book, *Tread Lightly on the Earth* (2009), that all major religions include ecological principles, legal norms and moral advice on natural resource use and conservation. Some of this is specific to certain species, often it deals with principles, with moral and legal norms about farming or ecosystems. Weeramantry developed an argument that 'natural law' originally included concepts of sustainable use and effective intergenerational conservation. He suggests that 'nature' was removed from 'natural law' during the period of colonization wherein we moved away from the rights and duties of the users of nature to the alienation of such rights and the shift of authority to remote entities and decision-makers. For Buddhists and others, religious and non-religious, the Weeramantry legacy is a worthy topic of debate, as it aligns issues of justice, equity, custodianship and the use of both the law and moral norms to achieve sustainability.

Following a meeting with Judge Christopher Weeramantry, who was a devout Christian, in the sidelines of the INEB Biennial Conference in Sri Lanka, January 2016, the School for Wellbeing, South-East Asia campus of the Right Livelihood College, has taken up shaping a process of dialogue on what is now known as Earth Trusteeship.⁵ The process follows this quote from *Tread Lightly on the Earth*: "concepts such as ownership are often taught

and conceived in Western jurisprudence as being of absolutist nature, which is the very antithesis of the Buddhist approach to these concepts. Their stress on rights overshadows the accompanying concept of duties, and the latter is what Buddhist teaching tends to emphasize. This elevated concept of duties lies at the heart of the notion of trusteeship."

To mobilise any faith-based constituency requires some initial effort to understand the theological and moral underpinning, the relevance of the issue, and then the pathways to transformation. We have noted above that forests and trees feature prominently in Buddhist texts and iconography. The question to elaborate is in which way are Buddhists responsible and duty-bound to act in this context. Theologically, Buddhism has an interesting foundation of both being simultaneously anthropocentric and also placing humans within a bigger system, where we are not the drivers, but we are actors and influence makers, perhaps uniquely amongst all species of sentient beings. Indeed, moral law, as expressed in the law of karma, is specific only to human beings. We of all creatures have both higher intellectual and moral capacity, and this places a burden on us to act wisely, under guidance to purify the mind and cease to harm others.

Engaging in the conservation of tropical forests and defending the rights of the indigenous and local protectors of the forests revolves around our ability to understand the unwholesome drivers of our current behaviour and the systematic unwholesomeness of our economic system. Then transforming this according to ethical principles that are generous, wise and reduce global and specific suffering is possible.

At the time of the Buddha, Siddharta Gotama, was exposed to a range of ethical and moral

⁵ See <https://www.earthtrusteeship.world/> and <https://wellbeingsummer.com/>

norms, including by Jains who venerate life, and yogic traditions that emphasise our relationship with the different elements that make up life and the planet. The Buddha placed humans in a unique position of hierarchy over other sentient beings, his moral teachings, the *Dhamma*, focused on our relationship with other humans. This was a substantial break from the dominant religious trends at the time where the focus was on venerating and understanding the pantheon of Gods, observing rituals and reinforcing a system of caste segregation. At the same time, the Buddha's teachings were anchored in a principle that materialism would not bring one happiness, and in fact, that attachment to material objects was part of the characteristics of human suffering.

Of our great pitfalls, the Buddha identified three fundamental unwholesome roots (*akusala-mūla*), known in Mahayana Buddhism as the three poisons. These are *lōbha* (greed), *dōsa* (hatred) and *mōha* (delusion). In Buddhist teachings, we understand that if we are driven by *tanha* (craving), allowing ourselves to be pulled in different directions by our desire for things, status, power, a burning need for consumption, this will provoke other negative conduct, including ill-will towards others, taking what is not ours, lying and generally acting without moral compunction as the end somehow justifies the means. Indeed, as the basis of certain actions is unwholesome in itself, this is the path of negative karma and it results in greater suffering, including for she or he who initiated with unwholesome intent. The result of negative karmic action is *vipaka*, greater suffering.

The three unwholesome roots at first appear to be driven by this craving, but when we look deeper, we see that they are due to *avijja* (ignorance) and delusion (*mōha*). Buddhism may appear to take a dim view of innate human ethical capacity. Our point of departure is that most humans wallow and

struggle daily in such ignorance and delusion, and this causes us to do all sorts of things which are harmful to ourselves and to others. For those who work in environmental conservation, it is easy to recognize this selfish tendency, failure to care about anyone else or future generations, and to be driven by types of greed that are all-consuming.

Buddhism is at the same time a doctrine of liberation, so it offers us some solutions, some practical measures by which we can see the consequences of our actions, master our own desires and nasty habits, and develop a more sustainable, generous and more mindful approach to living. Rather than just saying that this is a moral aim, Buddhism teaches in a practical way that purifying the mind and acting for the greater good by reducing harm and suffering is what gives us a sense of peace and satisfaction in life.

To understand the drivers of rainforest loss, we need to face both the ugly side of extreme human greed and the associated willingness to engage in any kind of violent and illegal conduct to get what one wants at whatever expense to others. Then there is a whole gradient of unwholesome behaviours, including people accepting bribes, those who turn a blind eye to illegal conduct, failing to ensure law enforcement, civil servants fearing retribution if they are caught out as whistle blowers, and political leaders not adhering to the code of ethics of their political posts. Though we can at first concentrate just on the issue of logging and illegal logging, it is not surprising in a moral analysis that deforestation is also linked to human rights violations, human trafficking, fraud and a myriad of other crimes. Where there is an unwholesome root, there will be unwholesome results.

There is another moral universe of people who legitimately believe it is acceptable to clear cut tropical rainforest to create new livelihoods, to promote large scale ranching, biofuels or mono-

crop agriculture. In their universe, they are not only doing nothing wrong, they are providing food or energy and providing jobs. How could that be bad? They believe their intentions are right, though science tells us that the consequences of such actions place the entire planet at risks, and particularly put indigenous peoples at risk.

In all of these scenarios, we are faced with the moral and physical consequences of ignorance as the foundation of decision-making, and where ignorance has been dispelled, we are dealing with systemic inequitable distribution of power and decision-making that endangers both local biodiversity and the people and other species which rely on its sustainability.

Nobel Prize winner in Economics, Elinor Ostrom, spent a lifetime studying complex systems and decision-making. The latter part of her work was dedicated to decision-making about natural resources, part of what is a subset of complex decision making related to 'common pool resources.' Ostrom provided substantial evidence that humans are capable of generating governance systems, with their own monitoring, rules and sanctions to protect common pool resources over many generations, despite changing conditions and contexts. She did not start with any premise that we are ethically evolved beings, but rather than self-interest and restricted resources when combined can manifest into a social, economic and ecological system which sustains itself.

Elinor and Vincent Ostrom explored how altruism is enacted through social entrepreneurs. They identified priests as having played an important role in helping communities return to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Whoever returned first

would take on the biggest risks and costs. If you waited, someone else would do the heavy lifting. The Ostroms saw social entrepreneurs, including the clergy, as capable of creating 'shared communities of understanding'; they can get people over the hump of self-interest to create a willingness to share burdens and do things for the common good (Tarko, 2017: 160).

Ostrom's work has many components, but the substance is that common pool resources (resources on which more than one person relies) are most likely to be conserved by those who live with them and rely on them. Where that combination of intimate knowledge and personal interest is alienated from caring for the resource and the decision-making power over the resource is shifted to some more remote location (in this case one can imagine a remote government or a remote timber company or both), it is likely that there will be a rapid degradation of the resource, sometimes with catastrophic consequences.

The Ostrom models and observations, which include a role for religious and community leaders as change agents, provide us with a way out of ignorance and into a more informed conversation and reconfiguration of authority that can allow checks and balances to regain vitality and help stabilize life on our planet.

The Ostrom thesis lead us in certain policy directions that arise from this understanding that it is mostly local efforts that sustain forests and where people live in a dynamic equilibrium with biodiversity and ecosystems. This is a similar viewpoint of indigenous cosmovisions and is often heard at local levels.⁶ These approaches advise us to ensure rights-based approaches and the active

⁶ See also Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines for the Sustainable use of Biodiversity: <https://www.cbd.int/sustainable/addis.shtml>

leadership and decision-making role of local custodians, including indigenous peoples and their historic mandate to protect the forest. Buddhism and Ostromian economics tell us not to be naïve about human ethics and self-interest. We require a policy process that will deliver the results of stopping deforestation, restoring wild pollinators, protecting and regenerating soil, and transforming our economic practices such that we are carbon neutral and working intentionally to regenerate biodiversity and reduce inequalities and vulnerabilities. This is not just about the percentage of national forest cover; it is a transformation of our relationships and how we take care of the Earth.

Part of the Buddhist tradition is introspection, understanding lessons which we need to learn and the behaviour that holds us back from such transformation and ultimate liberation. Buddhism speaks of ‘*ehipassiko*’ – come and see for yourself, investigate things. The other term is *dhammavicaya*, an investigation or discrimination of *dhammas*. The Dhammapada and the Tripitaka are full of references to abandoning urban lifestyles and comforts and heading into the forest and wilderness to simply be present, to understand the world and ourselves better. Nature in Buddhism is seen as both a teacher and a school; it is a place of practice and of learning. The invitation to Buddhists regarding the global crises of biodiversity, ecosystems and the climate is that we should come and see, examine, explore, analyse, understand and act mindfully to reduce the suffering.

At a recent international workshop on wild pollinator conservation in northern Thailand,⁷ an ethnic Karen farmer, Nivet Siri, whose community

has carefully conserved the forest and increased wild pollinator populations explained his motivation and approach through an interpreter: I do this because it is the right way of living, a right livelihood (personal communication, 2019). He brought together his indigenous worldview and the Buddhist doctrine of – *samma ajivo* – right livelihood.

We all need to live the right way and in this way we are happier, the forest is happier and the world will breathe more easily. This requires our attention, our intention, and the engagement of different actors, including religious leaders, to achieve sustainability for the benefit of all.



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⁷ See the full report online: Swedbio (2019) Dialogue across Indigenous, local and scientific knowledge systems reflecting on the IPBES Assessment on Pollinators, Pollination and Food Production: Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai, Thailand.

The Network for
Religious and
Traditional
Peacemakers



Advancing Inter-Religious Dialogue Project (SEA-AIR) Initiates Research and Fellowship Activities To Enhance Freedom of Religion or Belief - FoRB in South and Southeast Asia

Philip Gassert

The summer of 2019 saw the first major activities for The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers (The Network) European Union-funded consortium project “Southeast Asia - Advancing Inter-Religious Dialogue and Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) (SEA-AIR).” The activities contributed to the project’s overall objective of creating a conducive environment for protecting FoRB and peaceful co-existence of communities with different religious affiliations throughout Southeast Asia.

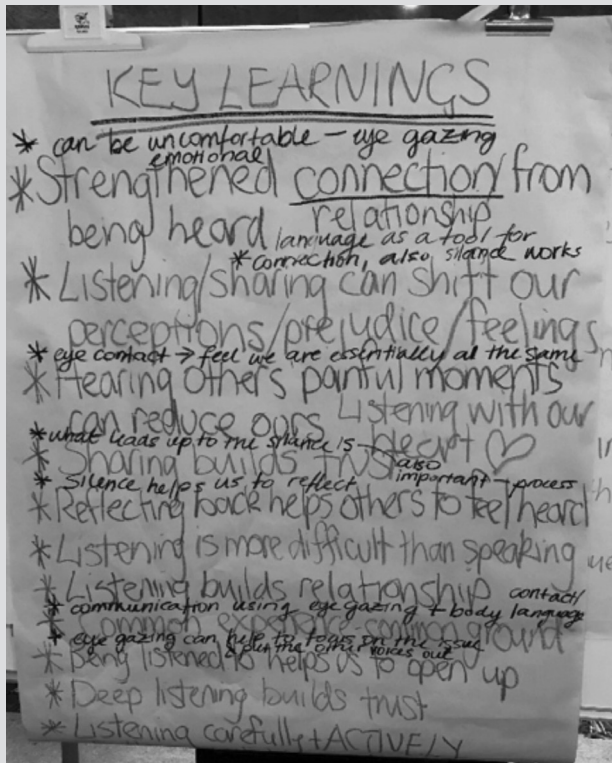
In July, The Network conducted an Expert Seminar, which included 23 participants from four South and Southeast Asian countries representing areas of expertise related to FoRB such as gender, Islamophobia, hate speech, and international human rights law. World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) produced a summary brief on FoRB in South and Southeast Asia, as well as five country-specific FoRB briefs to lay the foundation for the topics discussed at the seminar. Participants paid particular attention in country to regional analysis to topics such as majority-minority relations, spreading of hate speech, religious nationalism and the role of women, and their link to FoRB. The objectives and methodology were a part of a larger aim to make positive contributions to achieving Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 16.

“Religion’s for Peace (RFP) and its local affiliate Institute of Human Rights and Peace (IHRP) Studies at Mahidol University were the lead organizations for this activity. RfP/IHRP drafted the seminar agenda and concept note, with input from all

other consortium members: WFDD, Finn Church Aid (FCA), Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation (SNF)/ International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) and Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW).”

The Expert Seminar served primarily as a platform for researchers, human rights activists and peace practitioners who currently work to promote and protect FoRB in South and Southeast Asia to exchange and share their experience and research. The main objectives of the seminar were:

- 1) to draw on cutting edge global research and methods about FoRB and social cohesion and its applicability to the Southeast and South Asian regions, as well as expertise and knowledge;
- 2) to explore recommendations and advice for stakeholders, which will help the development of in-depth resources, such as policy papers, and inform the project and overall methods for implementing FoRB and social cohesion activities, as well as future research initiatives for all participants;



Key Learnings

3) to identify research gaps for current knowledge and suggest priority research areas for the future.

In July, the Network kicked off the Interfaith Fellowship Program by selecting 60 grassroots change makers from 10 countries: Nepal, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. From August 5th to the 9th; and 10th to the 14th, Network staff conducted the Interfaith Fellowship Workshops with cohorts of 30 and 25 Fellows respectively at Wongsanit Ashram outside Bangkok. Arrangements are underway to remotely train the five Fellows who were unable to attend due to visa application delays or health concerns.

Fellows took part in trainings and activities focused on FoRB and religion's role in conflict, mediation, communication, peer learning, deep listening, inter- and intrafaith dialogue, analysis, and process design. They shared their personal and professional experiences working in inter/intrafaith harmony and FoRB activism. Within each cohort, in



Fellows from Bangladesh

groups of 4 to 8, Fellows analysed specific case studies to identify challenges to FoRB and the issues and actors involved, and design activities in response to advance FoRB and social cohesion. Case study presentations included the following: attacks on Hindu families in Bangladesh by Muslims due to hate speech online; challenges to FoRB and violence against Muslim communities since 2014 in Sri Lanka; the Easter Sunday attack in Sri Lanka; conflict in Nagaland, India; women's rights, FoRB and conflict resulting from a Christian woman asking for water from a Muslim woman in Pakistan; and the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar.

Throughout the workshops, Network staff gathered further information on Fellows' areas of expertise, interests and goals for the Fellowship program to begin a process of identifying areas of collaboration between Fellows. They will also be assigned in groups to Mentors from the Network who will provide recommendations on ways to expand their work and networks throughout the Fellowship program. The Network will conduct follow-up Fellowship Workshops in early 2020 as part of the 18-month Fellowship Program.

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Philip Gassert - Project Manager for The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers based in Bangkok.

Toward a Thai Feminist Movement: Ouyporn Khuankaew

Caitlin Dwyer

Buddhistdoor Global, 12 June 2019

“We badly need feminist Buddhist scholars and meditation teachers who empower women and many marginalized people,” says Ouyporn Khuankaew.

As the founder and lead trainer for the International Women’s Partnership for Peace and Justice (IWP), based in Chiang Dao, Thailand, Ouyporn has thought a lot about feminism and its relationship to Buddhism and Thai culture. As a domestic violence survivor herself, she focuses her teaching on trauma, gender, and sexuality, topics that are often taboo in Thai society. Formerly a director of Women and Gender programs for the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, Khuankaew now leads anti-oppression workshops and retreats for activists suffering from burnout. For her, the work of transforming Thai society and empowering women means braiding spiritual practice with activist work.

Buddhistdoor Global: How do you see feminism in relationship to Buddhism, especially in Thailand?

Ouyporn Khuankaew: Feminist views and practices are most needed in transforming Thai Buddhism because, as a result of male domination in Thai Theravada Buddhism, the Buddha’s teachings have been altered or replaced by the teachings of patriarchy.



From womenforpeaceandjustice.org

When I first conducted a workshop with the Buddhist women from this region many years ago, what we found was that most teachings we have socialized from the Buddhist monks were anti-women. For example, we have all learned that, as women, we cannot gain enlightenment. Thus, patriarchal Buddhist institutions and teachings have become one of the main root causes of oppression, particularly against women, transgendered people, the disabled, and other marginalized groups. We badly need feminist Buddhist scholars and meditation teachers who empower women and marginalized people.



Ouyporn Khuankaew.
From womenforpeaceandjustice.org

BDG: Violence is the background for a lot of the people who you might work with, whether domestic violence survivors or refugees. What is important to know about working with trauma survivors?

OK: Trauma knowledge is most lacking in our society. I did not have this awareness until I started doing healing for myself and my mother many years ago. When I began to teach trauma healing to Thai nurses and psychologists seven years ago, I realized that they had learned very little about trauma and the trauma knowledge they had learned was mainly of the trauma caused by natural disasters or accidents. So when trauma is caused by sexual violence and other forms of oppression, such as women living with HIV, transgendered people, or those suffering from domestic abuse, the health officers had no knowledge or skills to support these patients.

In addition, since most hospitals are led by male doctors who never learn about this kind of trauma, they either are against or are not supportive of feminist counseling knowledge for nurses and psychologists. The emphasis is to give these patients pills. Our organization, IWP, is the only one in Thailand that has been giving seven-day mindfulness-based feminist counseling for survivors of gender-based and other forms of oppression.

BDG: You wrote in a paper that sometimes people simply only need a witness to their own existence.” Can you explain this a bit more?

OK: Deep listening is an amazing practice to offer to people who have experienced violence of any form. There are many social stigmas and labels placed on women, children, transgendered people, and people living with HIV who have experienced domestic or sexual abuse. Often these groups of trauma survivors are told that it is their fault (or karma from their previous), so guilt, shame, suppression, and isolation make their suffering worse. When they have a chance to tell their truth with a witness that is present and compassionate, they are breaking their silence, which is the beginning of healing.

BDG: Tell me a little bit about founding IWP—how did the organization come about, and how did you get started?

OK: I left the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) in 1998 but continued to do grassroots work with women in Asia. Working with INEB and living at the Wongsanit Ashram [a Buddhist activist community in central Thailand] for six months made me realize that I needed spiritual practice to deal with my anger and burnout from activism.

I also realized that it was impossible for me to work or live in a male-dominated organization/community. It also made me see that an organization can influence change only if it embodies power-sharing, spirituality, and a recognition that all forms of oppression are intersectional.

In those days I had not heard of any Thai feminist organizations that included spirituality in their work and practice. So I came home and in 2001 I met Ginger Norwood, who seeks similar values and vision, and we founded IWP in 2002. For the first two years we mainly served different ethnic women from

Burma, because of their severe suffering at that time. We later expanded to cover women from India (including Tibetan women in exile), Sri Lanka, Cambodia, and Thailand.

For the first two years before building our own center, we rented a retreat center from Catholic nuns in the mountains of Chiang Mai. After the Catholic nuns found out that we worked with undocumented women from Burma we were told that we could no longer use their space, so we began training in a small house inside my family compound. Then a year later, one of my sisters donated land nearby so we could build a kitchen and simple accommodation.

BDG: IWP focuses on deconstructing structural oppression. What are some of the ways in which working on social issues out in the world intersects with cultivating peace in oneself?

OK: As peace activists, we cannot work for peace with anger, fear, and hopelessness within ourselves. Well-being, self-care, and self-love bring me joy, inner peace, hope, and happiness daily. This, I think, is the core of sustainability for activists and activism and is a foundation for transforming difficulties in work and in personal life and especially our own ego.

BDG: Some of your work focuses on sexuality and gender, especially within the LGBTQ communities. Why is embracing sexuality an important thing for the women you serve? Do you find that there is support within the Thai community and the Buddhist community for this kind of work?

OK: When we look at sexuality, we look at heteronormative sexism that oppresses heterosexual women and LGBT people, although in different ways and levels. I think heterosexism helps particularly heterosexual women activists see patriarchal systems as bigger, that it not only affects them. This helps with

building allies among women's and LGBTQ groups. I used to work with women living with HIV and heterosexuality is the main cause for women to have HIV. Gender culture does not allow Thai women (or those of many other nationalities) to learn about safe sex, nor does it give them the power to say no to unsafe sex. Meanwhile, it promotes men having sex with anyone freely but without responsibility.

I have been working with the community of female monks that is led by Ven. Dhammananda [Thailand's first fully ordained Buddhist nun], who shares common values with IWP. In November this year, IWP will begin teaching a five-day Buddhist feminist anti-oppression workshop for Thai Buddhist female monks, white robed nuns [celibate renunciants known in Thai as *maechi*], and lay women. I hope this project will help us create and expand Buddhist allies for social justice in Thailand.

BDG: What are your hopes for the next generation of Thai women?

OK: I see that some young Thai women who are exposed to the progressive Western feminist movement on LGBT and women's issues are being active. But this is a very small group of young middle-class women, mostly based in Bangkok. I have to admit that I don't have much hope in general as long as the curriculum in high schools and universities does not integrate gender and feminism. The feminist groups in Thailand including IWP—which are very small in number—do not work enough at organizing grassroots women. In comparison to the feminist movement in Myanmar, we have much still to learn. We do not have a feminist movement in Thailand; we only have feminist groups, whereas in Myanmar there has been a strong feminist movement.

The 100th Birth Anniversary of Margaret Smith Ungphakorn

Kasidit Ananthanathorn

Margaret Smith Ungphakorn was born in England on 18 November 1919. Her father was a religious teacher of a Christian denomination that upheld modest living. He was a conservative and a nationalist who had volunteered for World War I. Her mother was an anti-war pacifist who became a Quaker near the end of her life.



Margaret grew up in London near the Thames River. When she was young the gardens and fields in the area were her playground. She had come to know a variety of flowers, and this made her love Nature. She was enrolled in St. Paul's School, which had a number of feminist teachers at the time. The school was a formative influence on her.

Margaret was courageous and steadfast in her principles. Two examples will suffice. One, she opposed World War Two and thus refused to serve the British state in the war. Instead, she chose to do social work. Margaret was an anti-war activist all her life. In 2003—at the age of 84—she joined the mass protests against the Iraq war.

Two, she had the courage to fall in love with a foreign student named Puey Ungphakorn. They both met at the University of London, and got married in 1946. Subsequently, Margaret moved to live in Thailand, a place that she had barely heard of. She gradually learned Thai and came to read and speak the language competently.

Margaret was a social democrat. When she was a student, she was influenced by a friend who had connections with Labour Party MPs. However, Margaret refused to be a Labour Party member at first. Although not a Marxist, she felt that the party was insufficiently radical. It was only later in life that she became a party member in order to protest

against Thatcher and the Tories. However, she liked to say that Tony Blair destroyed Labour.

She hated neoliberal possessiveness and competitiveness. She opposed the privatization of state enterprises and often sneered at men in suits who took control of the state to serve greed.

Margaret loved Thailand where she had lived for many years. She hated the authoritarian soldiers who liked to intervene in Thai politics. She hated the corruption in the kingdom, and the fact that underlings had to prostrate before the rich and powerful.

She was an atheist and hated all forms of superstition. Once, she wanted to topple the spirit house at her Soi Ari house. However, she gave full liberty to her three sons—Jon, Mitree, and Ji—to decide for themselves what to believe in.

She was an avid reader, especially of history and social issues books. And she loved to listen to Beethoven.

In “Looking Backward, Seeing Forward” (published in 1976), Puey has this to say about his wife:

Having a wife means taking a risk. A foreign wife entails a bigger risk. Married life is already never easy. However, when husband and wife are from different cultures and use different languages, it gets even more complicated. They have to rely on loving, being good to, and caring for one another. They have to be careful not to turn cultural differences into a problem in married life. All these things matter along with fidelity, frugality, and the valuing of collective achievement. As a result, it can be said that my family has a modicum of happiness.

A loving family is beneficial to the children because it makes them face fewer problems in life even though many people see them as “half-breeds.” Our three sons don’t have drinking

problems. All of them have already completed their studies in England. Nor are they drugs and sex addicts. They are not attracted to thing that ruin their lives. They believe in non-violence and have no desire to harm others. They uphold honesty and cherish rights, liberty, and democracy. They find working for the public good admirable. These qualities can be witnessed in their education, habits, and behavior. By and large, they got these traits from their mother. My wife was willing to sacrifice a lot to raise the children. With a degree in sociology she could have done otherwise. She cooked by herself. She washed all the clothes herself. She did all the house chores herself. Sometimes she even helped the children to prepare for their education abroad. When the children were grown-up, she became a social worker both in Thailand and England.

Puey translated two of his wife’s works into Thai. They are “Social Work in England” [karn songkroh prachachon nai prathet ungkrit] and “Medical Social Work” [karn songkroh tee gieow gub garn pat]. They are included as appendices to his book *Citizens’ Problems* [punha pollamuang], published by Thammasat University in 2016.

Puey is well-known. UNESCO even named him as one of the world’s outstanding personalities on the occasion of his birth centenary in 2016. Margaret was virtually unknown until her death on 27 March 2012.

To conclude, Aran Tummo, Puey’s disciple and later colleague, put it well thus: “I think that if Ajarn [Puey] married someone else, not this English woman, he wouldn’t have been as good a person as he is today.”

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Translated from the Thai by S.J.

*Special thanks to Ji Ungphakorn for relevant information.



Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne
Founder – President
Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement

5th April 2019

To Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa c/o INEB Secretariat, Bangkok

My dear Ajahn Sulak,

Your old Kalyanamitra, Ari, who continues to have the same respect, love and admiration for you is writing to you after reading *ROAR*.

First let me wish you perfect health, both physical and spiritual to continue your mission your way now under more favorable conditions. After decades of struggle and suffering I am sure now you are in a position to compassionately advise the authorities to bring change. Please convey my love and regards to your loving wife daughters and colleagues.

Through a friend I was able to get a copy of *ROAR*. It took me several days to read it as the only eye with which I can see is also very weak. However, I just completed reading it and thought I should write to you a few lines.

Matteo Pistono deserves appreciation from all of us who believe in Truth, Nonviolence and Justice for writing this book which will inspire many others world- wide who are looking for inner personal transformation along with structural change in political and economic fields to build a new society. The way he had looked at all forms of Buddhism prevailing today is very educative. I learnt a lot from the book. Thank you, dear Sulak. Now you are no longer young. But You have to live long and guide all.

Respected SULAK SIVARAKSA Ji and SOMBOON (Moo),

The JaiJagat 2020 campaign, a long march for 'Justice & Peace' from Delhi to Geneva is already attracting the minds of many people not only in India but also in many other countries. During the last one week alone many friends working for ideas like Global governance, world without war, friends of the earth and world peace march have shown interest in JaiJagat2020 campaign and have shown interest to join hands with this large global action.

Many of those who are deeply concerned about increasing level of conflict, violence, and war are also joining the JaiJagat2020 campaign as they identify huge potential within the campaign to promote the concept of nonviolence and peace in the world. As you know our country is celebrating 2019 -2020 as 150 years of Mahatma Gandhi. We feel that this is also an opportunity to link Mahatma Gandhi ideas "to care for the last person in the society" to the United Nation's goal that "no one left behind".

We sure you will be happy to know that the very concept of Jai Jagat (सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः) is appreciated and accepted globally. Many parallel Jai Jagat yatra from other parts of the world will also culminate in Geneva for a week by the end of September 2020.

Our struggles and sufferings were no less. We had to apply our own "upayas" and survive for the last 61 years – Sarvodaya Shramadana. I was still a school boy when I started this dual revolution. In all 74 years of my life I have spent for this. The present times are the worst. Cruel capitalistic forces with their corrupt political allies have taken control over everything. The loba, dosa and moha that took hold of some of my old colleagues have pushed them to that camp to suppress the awakening process we initiated in over 15,000 villages. I am sad and forgive them for their betrayal. However with 16 National Level incorporated independent bodies and 15,000 village level societies we are going ahead with several thousand fulltime workers and volunteers. Under the name 'Deshodaya' - National Awakening we started an alternative political wing 9 years ago. It is doing very well. I will send you a booklet about this.

After 60 years I stepped down from all Sarvodaya responsibilities. I spend most my time for my spiritual development while I am available for any advice to the second and third generation leaders.

Except the house two of us live in, we have no land or any other properties or shares in companies. Our second son is giving a living allowance. So Sulak I don't have the trouble of writing a last will. I am sure both of us may be two of the happiest people on this planet. We have only to let go our past memories and empty our minds. Ven Pandit Gnanasiha told me as he breathed his last laying his head on my hands "Please stop thinking. It is the cause of all suffering."

My kalyanamitta, May you be very healthy and Joyful.

Sincerely Yours,

A.T.Ariyaratne

Please remember we have only one planet, this is our duty to protect this planet and hand it over to the next generation. We probably have only one life the challenge in front of us is how do we use our life in a way that we are able to create permanent peace and harmony in the world.

With thanks and regards

Rajagopal P.V.

(Founder - Ekta Parishad)

Ramesh Sharma

(National Convenor - Ekta Parishad)

Dear Sulak, was a remarkable
I just wanted to time together. Your
write and share knowledge, wisdom
my deep appreciation was inspirational.
for your contribution Thank you
to the forest
university. It Amher

Judith Collignon

7 February 1943 – 4 July 2019



Judith Collignon passed away on 4 July at 10:30 in Bangkok, Thailand, with her husband Stefan, her two children, Menuka and Joa, his wife Delphine and many friends at her side.

Judith was born on 7 February 1943, but moved to France to marry her first husband Yvan Scetbon in the 1960s. She was married to Stefan Collignon for 38 years. Born into a Jewish family, she

found deep meaning in the Buddha's teachings, and also felt a spiritual relationship with Jesus.

Judith worked as a psychotherapist in Paris and in London when Stefan worked at the London School of Economics. She was an exceptional therapist, teacher and friend because of her courage to face life experiences fully, to always speak up regardless of the consequences. She had a surprising vitality and her curiosity of life was all embracing. There was never a dull moment with Judith and she had a very rare capacity to turn a very difficult personal moment into a deep journey of transformation.

Judith was a mediator, yogi, lover of travel, of beauty and much more. She was very generous with the love she showed to those she cared for. We have lost an exceptional friend, teacher, mother and wife. All of the above made Judith a particularly talented therapist, versed in many techniques, always open to new ideas and teachings. This is a sad day for the therapeutic Anglophone community and for those of us that loved her dearly.

Sogyal Rinpoche

1947 – 28 August 2019

Craig Lewis



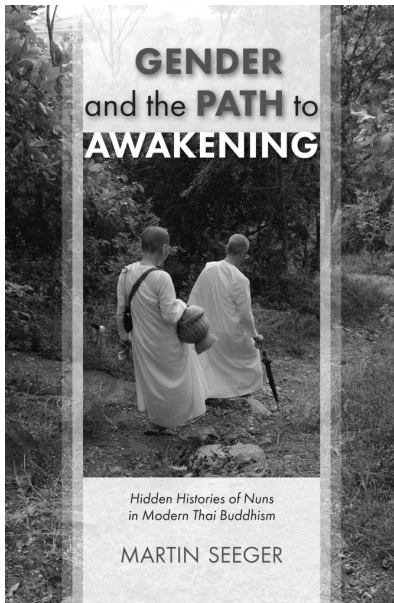
Sogyal Rinpoche, the founder and former spiritual head of Rigpa, an international Buddhist community and network of Dharma centers, passed away on Wednesday in Thailand, where he had been receiving treatment for colon cancer. He was 72 years old.

Sogyal Rinpoche's health reportedly deteriorated rapidly on Wednesday after he suffered a pulmonary embolism and he died at around 1pm local time in the capital Bangkok.

Although his passing was sudden, it was very peaceful and serene, and Sogyal Rinpoche was surrounded by close and loving students, according to a post on Sogyal Rinpoche's official Facebook page, which added that several lamas were providing guidance, including Sakya Gongma Trichen Rinpoche.

At the time of publication, plans were underway by close associates of Sogyal Rinpoche in Thailand and Sri Lanka to organize Theravada chanting ceremonies later on Wednesday. A ceremony will be held in Wat Thong Noppakhun, a Buddhist temple on the Thonburi bank of the Chao Phraya River, in Bangkok.

The full article is found at Buddhist Door - <https://www.buddhistdoor.net/news/former-rigpa-head-sogyal-rinpoche-passes-away-in-thailand>



Gender and the Path to Awakening: Hidden Histories of Nuns in Modern Thai Buddhism

Martin Seeger (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2018)

Sulak Sivaraksa

Among Western scholars of Thai Buddhism and culture, Martin Seeger is a rare case. Most of them are often arrogant—overconfident in their knowledge and understanding. As a result, they tend to make silly and unnecessary mistakes. A case in point is Justin McDaniel's *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk: Practicing Buddhism in Modern Thailand*. (Please see my review of this book in *Seeds of Peace*, Vol. 34, No. 1, Jan.-Apr. 2018.) On the contrary, Seeger is humble. He has learned a lot from P.A. Payutto and Thai kalyanamitta like Naris Charaschanyawong. The latter is an avid reader and collector of rare books on Buddhism. Also, he is truly knowledgeable on Buddhism.

Seeger's book is therefore free from unnecessary errors. More importantly, he is interested in gender and Buddhism, a topic that

is understudied. His interview a long time ago with P.A. Payutto on the bhikkhuni is worth rereading.

Gender and the Path to Awakening is an impressive and rich work. An eye-opener, it centers on the lives of six female practitioners: 1) Khunying Damrongthammasan (Yai Wisetsiri); 2) Mae Boonruean Tongbuntoem; 3) Mae Chi Kaew Sianglam; 4) Mae Chi Nari Karun; 5) Mae Chi Phimpha Wongsu-udom; and 6) Mae Chi Soda Sosut.

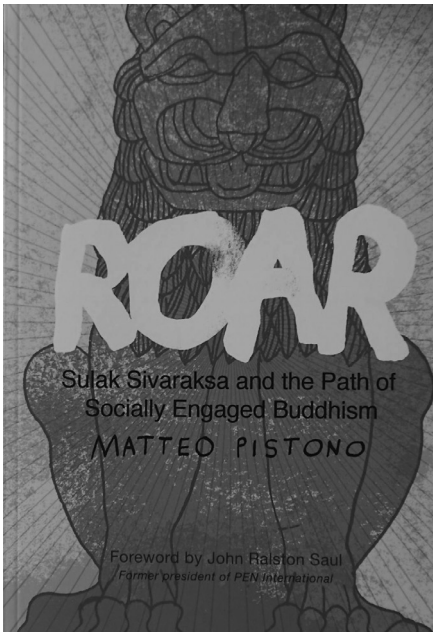
Before providing individual portraits of these six practitioners, Seeger gives a good overview of “the female in Thai Buddhism.” Then he discusses “female sainthood” in contemporary Thai Buddhism after giving the reader the biographies and hagiographies of these six women.

I strongly encourage anyone who is interested in how women have influenced the development of

Thai Buddhism to read this book. It is unfortunate that Seeger did not include any bhikkhuni, especially Bhikkhuni Woramai Kabilasingh, whose life is truly admirable.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu avoided the controversy surrounding the revival of bhikkhuni ordination in Siam by calling the ordained ladies *Dhammamata*. Khun Runjuan Indrakamhaeng carried on this legacy, and her life is also very interesting.

I was on good terms with Mae Chi Ging, who played a crucial role in the construction of Wat Pa-Wiwak in Chonburi province. Hopefully, someone will write about her. It will be an important piece. Over three decades ago, I wrote about one of her disciples, Pa [Auntie] Plaek in one of my books, *Lorg Krab Sangkhom Pueau Kru* [Unveiling Society for Teacher] (1985).



Portrait of a “Collaborative Hero” Review of *Roar: Sulak Sivaraksa and the Path of Socially Engaged Buddhism*

by Matteo Pistono
North Atlantic Books (March 5, 2019)

Jonathan S. Watts

The newly published biography of Thai social activist and Buddhist internationalist Sulak Sivaraksa, *Roar: Sulak Sivaraksa and the Path of Socially Engaged Buddhism*, by well regarded author Matteo Pistono is not only a refreshing portrayal of a “great man,” but also an important contribution to the contemporary history of Thailand and the region in general.

For those not familiar with Sivaraksa, born in 1933, he began as a Thai intellectual and political and cultural “royalist” while spending 8 years studying in the U.K. and working for BBC radio. His return to Thailand in the early 1960s, however, marked significant shifts in his stance towards Thai society and culture as it entered a dark period of acting as a client state to the United States’ war in Indochina

while under a harsh military dictatorship that manipulated the images of the Thai royal family and Thai culture to foment an ethnic nationalism common to the region.

In the face of this, Sivaraksa became one of Thailand’s most important voices of dissent, first creating cultural and literary activities to give voice to dissenting opinions and then later in the 1970s developing some of Thailand first grassroots NGOs working in alternative economic and social development. As Sivaraksa’s work grew in the 1980s and 90s, he was forced into exile numerous times for his stances on the Thai military and Thai royal family, yet used these periods to develop his international relationships to eventually co-found in 1989 the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB)—

now the most dynamic of a host of new, international Buddhist organizations for its work on a wide variety of social issues.

Pistono’s talented weaving of Sivaraksa’s story into the turbulent history of the region in the post-colonial era makes this volume an important read for historians as well as social reformers and scholars of religion and socio-logy.

The other important contribution of this volume is the honesty of the portrayal of Sivaraksa, a complex man whose incredible charisma is also matched by a quick temper and an existential loneliness amidst his international network of friends and colleagues. Sivaraksa, himself, is to be commended for allowing Pistono to spend three years entering into his inner circle and gaining a full view of his life,

Book Reviews

work, and relationships. So many of the past century's great social activists (Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr, Thich Nhat Hanh) have been portrayed as infallible saints, while their shadow material (something which every human has) is swept away, keeping the general public from a richer understanding of the incredible struggles and challenges of devoting oneself to society and one's fellow human beings. The other problem with the focus on "great men in the flow of great history" is the creation of the hero narrative as the essential means to

social change.

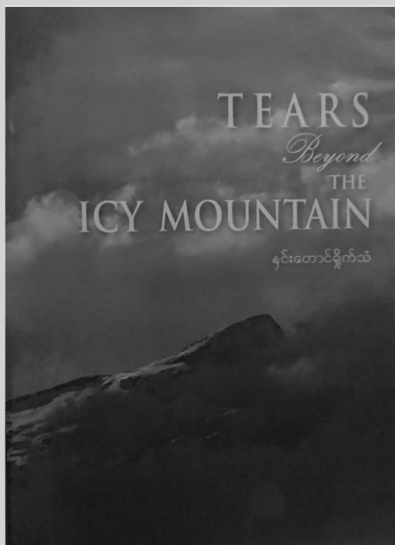
In our present era that is literally screaming out for inclusivity and collective social change, the "great man/hero" model of social change is not only outdated, but counterproductive as nations continually fall prey to virulent populism and the next great national savior. Sivaraksa's story, as both a Thai aristocrat whose leadership style is often less than democratic and a person who has inspired and linked together at least four generations of social activists committed to non-violent change, is a testa-

ment to his importance as a bridge between eras, from the great heroes of the 20th century to the potentiality of collective global transformation that this century offers.

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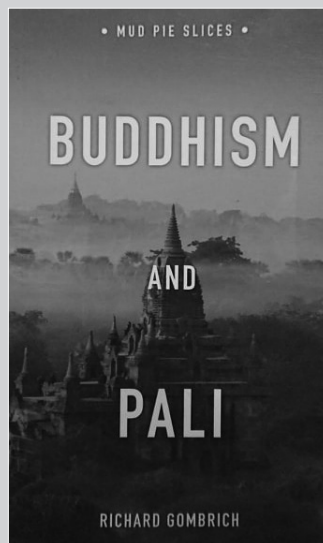
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Jonathan S. Watts is a research fellow at the International Buddhist Exchange Center in Yokohama, working on suicide prevention, Buddhist chaplaincy, and sustainable energy issues. He is also an Executive Board Member of INEB, in which he has served for 30 years.

Recommended Reading



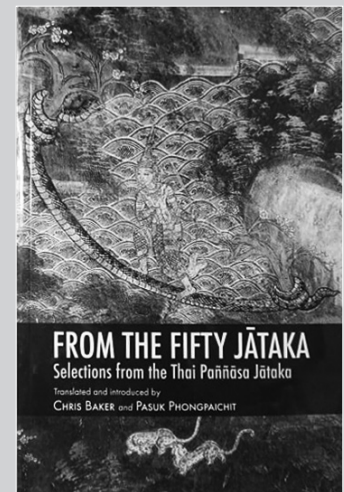
Tears Beyond The Icy Mountain

DVD by: Promotion of Indigenous and Nature Together



Buddhism and Pali

Author: Richard Gombrich
Publisher: Mud Pie Slices



From The Fifty Jātaka: Selection from the Thai Pannasa Jataka

Translated and introduced by: Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit
Publisher: Silkworm Books

2019 INEB Biennial Conference

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*Cultivating and
Harvesting Wisdom*

Deer Park Institute
Bir, India

22-24 October 2019

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The conference goal is to stimulate awakening to the Buddha's profound and enduring teachings that can bring about personal and social transformation through reflection and social action.

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- 21 October, Morning: Pre-Conference Day in Dharamsala, India "The Culture of Awakening Day with the Tibetan Community in Dharamsala"
- 22-24 October, Main Conference, Morning Symposiums on *The Culture of Awakening* Afternoon Sessions on INEB Themes and Projects
- 25 October, INEB joint Advisory Committee & Executive Committee Meeting

