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3 Editorial Note

4 Country Reports

4 Cambodia: The Sound of Silence / *Paul Millar*

7 India: 1,500 Dalits Embrace Buddhism for 'Equality':
Gujarat / *Sabrangindia*

9 India: Tibetan Spiritual Leader Dalai Lama Endorses
Global Climate Strike by Students / *Nina Alekseyeva*

10 Siam: Supreme Patriarch Greets Pope as 'Old Friend'

11 Siam: Temples No Longer Safe for Children
/ *Sanitsuda Ekachai*

12 Siam: BBC Names Dhammananda Bhikkhuni, Thailand's
First Female Monk, among 100 Influential Women of
2019 / *Craig Lewis*

14 INEB

14 The Opening Speech at the 2019 INEB Biennial
Conference / *Harsha Navaratne*

16 International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB)
19th Biennial Conference & Celebration of its 30th
Anniversary / *INEB Staff*

21 His Holiness, The Dalai Lama Meets with Engaged
Buddhists / *Dalailama.com*

23 Realizing the Truth at the Edge of Contradictions-
Keynote Presentation of Ouyporn Khuankaew

27 The Culture of Living and Dying INEB Conference
Workshop Summary / *Jonathan Watts*

28 Young Bodhisattva Program: for Spiritual Resurgence &
Social Transformation / *Doreen Wang*

30 Second High-Level Summit of Buddhist Muslim Leaders
/ *K V Soon*

32 2019 International Day of Peace Celebration & Religious
and Traditional Peacemakers Congregation in Bangladesh

34 SEM

34 Rekindling Regional Pride: The Dawei Art Space
/ *Ben Dunant*

37 Sulak Sivaraksa

37 Sulak Sivaraksa: Behind the audience with the King
/ *Hathairat Phaholtap*

41 Articles

41 Tera (Temple) Energy: Supporting Inner Ecology through
Outer Ecology / *Translated by Jonathan Watts*

43 The 'Me Too Movement' Within Buddhism and Global Buddhist Women's Solidarity for Gender Equality / *Bogyean Ok*

46 The History and Impact of Indian Buddhism on the Development of Buddhism in China: Relevance to the Contemporary Situation / *Mangesh Dahiwal*

49 Dear Sombath...from Shui Meng

51 Updates from 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*

53 Young Woman Farmer's Contribution to Sustainable Development in Vietnam / *Dang To Kien & Mai Thuy Huyen*

54 Letters

55 Book Reviews

55 Roar: Sulak Sivaraksa and the Path of Socially Engaged Buddhism / *Jane Haile*

56 An Academic Life: The Memoir of a Much-loved Student of Thailand / *Chris Baker*

56 Obituary

Editorial Note

Dear Friends of INEB,

We send our best wishes for a most auspicious 2020, in addition to celebrating Chinese New Year in February and Songkran in April!

This issue of *Seeds of Peace* highlights sessions from INEB's recent conference held in Deer Park, Bir, India, during October 2019. Among them are *The Culture of Living and Dying*, and the 'Me Too' Movement within Buddhism and global Buddhist women's solidarity for gender equality. One specific outcome was that the coalition for Gender Equality and Gender Justice emerged during discussions held during the conference.

This issue includes several articles on addressing gender justice and equality in Buddhist countries, especially in monasteries where young boys have been preyed upon by monks and abbots, in addition to the

ongoing inequality and challenges that Buddhist women continually encounter. Perhaps the gender scales are tipping more in favor of women as Dhammananda Bhikkhuni was named by the BBC as one the 100 most influential women of 2019.

Our friend Mangesh Dahiwal wrote an insightful article about the history and impact of Indian Buddhism on the development of Buddhism in China. The sad disappearance seven years ago December 2012, of our dear friend Sombath Somphone is poignantly shared by his wife Shui Meng. Other contributors tell about their (temple) energy that supports inner ecology through outer ecology, updates on various projects, in addition to a book review, letters and the obituary of Ram Das make interesting reading.

The year is beginning with many events scheduled below:

2020 INEB Event Calendar

● January

- 12 ● Opening ceremony of the School of English for Engaged Social Service (SENS), Wongsanit Ashram
- 24 ● Strategic meeting of the Eco Temple working group in BKK

● Feb

- 3 - 4 ● SEA AIR FoRB core group meeting, Bangkok
- 5 - 9 ● SEA AIR FoRB fellows workshop
- 8 ● SEM annual lecture at Thammasat University, Bangkok
- 20 - 22 ● 40th anniversary conference on Education For Right Livelihood to Inspire Change - Connecting Activism and Academia, Bangkok

● March

- Early March ● Launch the Asia Buddhist Network for Child Protection in Vietnam
- 28 ● Sulak Sivaraksa's birthday celebration in Bangkok

● April

- 1-5 ● Maitreya Culture study trip to Ningbo, China
- 29 - May 3 ● Gender Equality and Gender Justice workshop - Seoul, S Korea

● May

- 18 - 31 ● Young Bodhisattva Program, Taoyuan, Taiwan
- 24 - June 1 ● INEB study tour to Jungto Society in S Korea

Cambodia

The Sound of Silence

Paul Millar

12 February 2018

GLOBE - <https://southeastasiaglobe.com/>

“At first he was nice to me,” Samnang says, his eyes far away. “He made me feel important; made me feel special.”

Samnang, whose name has been changed to protect his identity, was barely 15 years old when he left home for Ratanak Mony Rong Ko pagoda in Kralanh district on the outskirts of Siem Reap town. Born into a poor family in a run-down village, and desperate for a way out, he asked his parents to send him to study with the local monks.

“My family had so many problems – they were fighting a lot,” he tells *Southeast Asia Globe*. “I wanted to be calmer. So they had to send me to live in a pagoda, where I could have free food and education with the monks.”

Bearing the shaved head and saffron robe of a novice, Samnang says he took to his studies of scripture and the ancient Buddhist language of Pali with

relish, rising every morning to sing the holy scriptures of his faith. Fifteen kilometres from the nearest village, Ratanak Mony Rong Ko was a small pagoda with just nine other boys studying alongside him under a handful of monks. Above these monks was 45-year-old Vong Chet, the abbot, or chief monk, of the pagoda. A man whose words carried great weight with the community, he soon began to take an interest in the pagoda’s newest arrival.

“A lot of the other monks didn’t like him,” Samnang says, staring at his fingers. “Back then, I didn’t know why.”

Over the course of the next year, Vong Chet repeatedly raped Samnang and the nine other novices living at the pagoda. The abbot would corner them in the stained toilets of the pagoda or lure them into his private quarters. For some of the boys, the abuse lasted years. Later, before the court, one

boy would describe how he had been raped on as many as 25 separate occasions. Each time, when it was over, the abbot would hand him a crumpled fistful of 10,000-riel notes, each one worth \$2.50. It was only when the last boy he attacked, new to the temple, told his parents what had happened that the police were called.

Now 18, Samnang works at a motorbike repair shop in Siem Reap town. Scrawny and sombre, his voice never rises above a murmur as he describes the betrayal he felt when he found out that every older monk at the pagoda had known about Vong Chet’s abuse of the boys in their care – and kept silent for more than two years. “They knew before everything happened,” he says. “No one dared to tell me. All the monks knew about what was going on, but no one told us kids. No one told us to be careful.”

There is little anger left in him now, he says. He sips his water and falls silent.

Leafing through a thick red ledger in his office in central Phnom Penh, Child Protection Unit (CPU) director of operations James McCabe sifts through the hundreds of cases of torture, rape and death that his team investigates every year. Bathed in the light of twin computer screens streaming

live reports of children beaten and brutalised across the nation, he passes over a photo of a drowned child, black and bloated, to stop at a double spread of gaunt young boys in saffron robes. Among them is Samnang. Although Vong Chet presided over the longest period of sustained sexual abuse that McCabe had uncovered in the nation’s pagodas, he tells *Southeast Asia Globe*, it was far from the first.

“It’s institutional abuse,” he says. “They’ve got access to children, without any real monitoring. We’ve [been involved in the arrest of] at least ten monks in the past three years for the abuse of boys. Quite often there were multiple victims – sometimes two, sometimes three, sometimes four. A majority of the time, it was only through the parents or a relative that the disclosure was made.”

Set up to work with local law enforcement to bring forensic specialists and investigators to work on cases where children are abused, raped, assaulted or killed, the CPU was active in securing Vong Chet’s arrest and 15-year imprisonment. Following reports that the abbot had previously served a series of short stints – no more than a year or two at a time – at a number of other pagodas across Siem Reap, Battam-



Cambodian Buddhist monks walk in line during a Buddhist ceremony in front of the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh

Photo: Tang Chhin Sothy/AFP

bang and Kampot provinces, a task force was sent to hunt out evidence of earlier victims. The communities remained silent.

“There was a follow-up in regards to the wats that he’d been at,” McCabe says, using another term for pagodas. “There were no disclosures – nothing that would allow us to further investigate. That’s not to suggest it didn’t happen, because leopards don’t change their spots. But there were no disclosures that would allow us to investigate.”

Adding that it would be almost unheard of for a man of Vong Chet’s age to suddenly begin to abuse boys, McCabe drew parallels with the unfolding crisis in the Catholic church, where paedophile priests were found to have been purposefully shifted between parishes to reduce the risk of a scandal – allowing them to continue preying on thousands of children

in sometimes decades-long campaigns of sexual abuse.

“It’s the same as in the Catholic church – they move around, and they don’t stop,” McCabe says. “Is it likely that [Vong Chet] had offended [previously]? More than likely... He had abused, what, ten, 11 boys at one wat? Who’s to say there weren’t five more at another? He had to start somewhere – he didn’t just start in Siem Reap, that’s quite obvious.”

Nor was he the only one. In 2014, a monk fled his pagoda in Kampong Cham province after being accused of raping 11 boys, all between the ages of 11 and 16. He was later caught by police and charged. Two years later, in Takeo province, another monk was arrested for the rape of a 13-year-old boy. McCabe told *Southeast Asia Globe* that, despite his initial arrest, the abuser was still listed as ‘at large.’ And just last year, two monks were arrested in

Siem Reap and Phnom Penh for separately abusing two boys in their care. They were both six years old.

Jarrett Davis, an independent social researcher whose work largely focuses on those vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse, said that institutions invested with unchallenged authority and power over children in their care often left those same children at risk.

“In some ways, institutions provide a cone of silence,” he says. “The big thing socially is the power, the authority, the purity that is ascribed to people – that they’re sort of untouchable. You grew up in a household where the way your parents talk about the monk, or the priest or the rabbi – they ascribe this position to them. And they become untouchable. And when you see this ugly underbelly, it must be your fault; it must be something you’ve done. Because clearly

it’s not their fault – they’re pure, they’re untouchable. So what have you done?”

With more than 95% of Cambodians identifying as Theravada Buddhist, the faith is an inescapable fact of life in the Kingdom. Functioning not just as places of worship but community centres, schools, event spaces, residential care and retirement homes, the local pagoda is the beating heart of traditional Cambodian society.

As living symbols of the sacred teachings of the Buddha, monks remain a source of much-needed education and guidance for their communities. More than this, they serve as an invaluable way – by means of offerings, alms and donations – of earning good karma to ensure success not just in this life, but the next.

Yaim Chamreun, executive director of First Step Cambodia, a local NGO offering counselling and

support to male victims of sex abuse in the Kingdom, says that he believes the high importance placed on pagodas in Cambodia had created a culture of gated self-preservation in the nation's largely autonomous Buddhist sanctuaries.

"Most people think that pagodas are very sacred places – a place where God is present," he says. "So, often, issues are not really being discussed or shared – it's all behind closed doors. And they always think about the reputation of the pagoda. So sometimes if the abuse takes place, they'll find ways to cover that up."

In cases such as Samnang's, where the perpetrator was none other than the chief abbot, it was this unassailable authority – and, it was rumoured, his past connection to the Khmer Rouge regime – that kept the other monks silent for fear of being cast out of the community they had lived in for most of their lives.

More often, though, the grim reality is that for many male victims of sexual abuse, their experience is simply overlooked or brushed aside. Davis says that Cambodia's strict gender roles, which dictate that men cannot be vulnerable to abuse and exploitation in the same way as women, seemed to be curiously reflected in

broader international efforts to fight child abuse – efforts that routinely ignore the full extent of the harm perpetrated to young boys.

"A big thing that we've been working on... is looking at gender and some of the assumptions that apply to genders. Oftentimes we assume that victims are girls and perpetrators are boys or men – and that, often, particularly within institutions, can make an issue invisible," he says. "[Cases are] less likely to be reported, [boys are] less likely to be seen as harmed in the case of sexual abuse, and law enforcement are often less likely to take it seriously."

It is this imbalance that led to the founding of First Step Cambodia more than seven years ago. Although the NGO has recently expanded its Siem Reap operations to care for female abuse victims as well, it remains committed to educating the community on the struggle of male victims of sex abuse.

"Many Cambodians find it very challenging to understand and to believe that a boy can be abused – including family members," he says. "People still laugh – even some people who call themselves social workers. [In Siem Reap], these monks were already affected by the abuse, but then the community started mocking them, making jokes – asking them

things like: 'Who was the first wife; who was the second wife?' and they were very ashamed. Their fear became greater, and they stopped going out to collect food. They were starving. When our staff met them, some of them hadn't had food for two days."

In Ponga Photra, First Step Cambodia's project manager in Siem Reap, says that the shame the boys felt after their abuse could have a devastating impact on their mental health.

"One of the hardest perceptions to overcome is that they failed to protect themselves – they're men, and men are supposed to be strong," he says. "And monks are forbidden from having sex. So they feel like they have lost their value – and it's very hard for them to recover from that."

Even for victims who recognise what they have been through as sexual abuse, fear of their family and community finding out what has been done to them leaves them reluctant to speak out about their attacker.

When the police came for his abuser, Samnang says, he was terrified.

"After the monk was arrested, I just left. I didn't want to stay," he says. "But I didn't want to leave either – I liked the pagoda a lot, and I still wanted to study there,

but I needed to get out."

It is this sense of shame, in part, that makes the full scale of institutional sexual abuse in pagodas so difficult to determine. Emphasising that reliable statistics on male victims of sexual abuse were incredibly difficult to come by, the World Health Organisation (WHO) cites studies suggesting that as many as one in ten men in developed countries reported a history of childhood sexual abuse. In some developing countries, that number rose as high as one in five.

The WHO also emphasises that the vast majority of experts believe that official statistics massively under-represent the number of male rape victims, suggesting that men are even less likely than women to report sexual abuse. A study conducted by World Vision Cambodia in 2005 found that almost one in five boys aged 12-15 stated they had been sexually abused after the age of nine. And a 2013 UNICEF survey into violence against children in Cambodia found that out of more than 2,000 respondents, more boys than girls reported being sexually abused. Of those who reported being sexually abused as children, about 6% claimed to have been assaulted in a pagoda – all of them girls. The survey did not reach out to chil-

dren actually living within pagodas, or specify the identity of the attackers.

McCabe says that trying to estimate the number of unreported male sex abuse victims remained a challenge.

"It would be hard to quantify what's actually occurring," he says. "And this is where the hierarchy of the Buddhist fraternity needs to have an office of integrity and child protection, to do inspections, to go out and visit – it's part of their responsibility of being a religious institution. They should know exactly who's in the wat."

Despite failing to respond to widespread calls for reform two years ago, the Buddhist religious community appears to be making grudging motions towards transparency. UNICEF Cambodia chief of communications Iman Morooka told *Southeast Asia Globe* that the government was taking steps to address community concerns about child sex abuse within Buddhist institutions – though they had yet to finalise a system for reporting cases of exploitation and assault.

"The Ministry of Cults and Religion, with support from UNICEF, is developing a Child Protection Pagoda programme with the aim of making pagodas a safer place for children, includ-

ing establishing reporting and referral mechanisms if children face abuse in those settings," she says. The ministry did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

In October last year, the ministry published a curriculum on the appropriate Buddhist response to violence against children as well as a picture book teaching young monks the importance of setting an example for the community. Both of these texts are now mandatory for Buddhist graduate school students.

In the picture book, Novice Sokha, a young monk escapes the chaos and violence of his family life to take refuge in the teachings of Chav Athika, an older monk who teaches him that a monk must above all things advocate for the rights of children. On the final page, an adult Sokha sits serenely on his throne, receiving the respect and adulation of his kneeling community.

It is an image that jars with the boy sitting before us. Far from his friends and family, Samnang's boyhood dream of entering into the community of monks died somewhere back in Kralanh. Despite this, he seems to have attained a level of hard-won serenity that makes him seem older than his 18 years.

"I used to be so angry," he says. "I don't feel angry towards those monks anymore."

For First Step's Photra, though, the actions of predators such as Vong Chet are harder to forgive. "They use their status as a tool for getting sex – they

say it is how you become a good monk," he says. "And if you don't understand sexual abuse, it works... I suspect it happens in many more pagodas."

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India

1,500 Dalits Embrace Buddhism for 'Equality': Gujarat

Sabrangindia

29 October 2019

In Dusehra around 500 Dalits from different parts of Gujarat had converted to Buddhism

It seems like the government's assurance to protect, preserve and restore the dignity of Dalits after the Una incident is still something the Dalit community sees as a lie.

After the Una incident when four Dalits were publicly flogged on the allegation of killing a cow, Gujarat has witnessed nearly a three-fold rise in the number of Dalit conversions to Buddhism.

In another mass conversion ceremony, around

1,500 Dalits from different parts of Gujarat resolved to follow the teachings of Buddhism at a function organized at the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Memorial in Shahibaug area of Ahmedabad on Sunday, October 27, The Indian Express reported.

In the function organized by the Gujarat chapter of Buddha's Light International Association (BLIA) and presided over by Hsin-Bau, the religious head of BLIA and Buddhist monk from Taiwan, many monks from India and abroad pledged to follow Buddhism after getting themselves

registered with the BLIA.

Speaking to the paper, Current President of the Gujarat Chapter of the BLIA said that there were many people among the 1,400-odd people who took the pledge to follow Buddhism for the first time.

Citing discrimination in Hinduism, Manjula Makwana who embraced Buddhism with her husband, spoke to the paper on the eve of the occasion and said, "Equality is the only reason for us to embrace Buddhism. As Hindus we did not find equality... We are witnessing lot of discrimination and atrocities against people of Scheduled Caste (Dalits). Surendranagar is notorious for it."

NisargParmar, an engineer, who pledged to follow the same path also converted with around 25 members from his extended family. He said, "We used to follow Hinduism. But we do not like the discrimination and caste hierarchy in it. Buddhism is preaching equality. So, today we have taken the pledge to follow Buddhism... I want India to be the best in the world. But I think one of the biggest hurdles in its progress is this caste system that discriminates people and treats them unequally."

This is not the first time that Hindu groups have chosen to convert to Bud-



Image: Outlook India

dhism. Recently, on Dussehra, around 500 Dalits from different parts of Gujarat embraced Buddhism at three separate functions in Ahmedabad city, Mehsana and Idar of Sabarkantha district.

Expression of Anger

P G Jyotikar, Chairman of the Buddhist Society of India and one of the first Dalits to convert to Buddhism said that the decision of Dalits all over Gujarat to convert to Buddhism, was an expression of anger to protest against the caste-based violence meted out to them.

Before the Una incident, Gujarat would witness 400-500 conversions every year, but the number has now risen to around 1,500-1,600.

Dalits, though being a part of Hinduism, were never allowed to enter

temples. The ruling BJP had come under severe criticism of opposition parties who claimed that this was the real 'Gujarat model' under which minority communities were persecuted and tortured.

Ramesh Sarvaiya, one of the men assaulted in the Una incident said that Hindu cow vigilantes addressed the Dalit community as Muslims. He added, "The kind of discrimination we faced by Hindus pains us and therefore we have decided to convert. Even the state government has discriminated against us by not fulfilling the promises made to us in the wake of the flogging incident." He said abandoning Hinduism may not change anything, "but we will no longer pray before the same gods whose followers thrash us and

treat us like animals."

Dalit thinker Chandra Bhan had said that these mass conversions would send a strong message to the government for not giving Dalits their deserved status in society. He said that there would be more such conversions if 'radicalised Hindus' continue to discriminate against Dalits.

"This is the beginning of a Quit Hinduism movement, and if upper caste Hindus continue to chase Dalits away, the count of Hindus would come down significantly," Badri Narayan, professor at JNU's School of Social Sciences, said all should take note of the mass conversion and try to take corrective measures.

Dalit youth, all over the country, especially in BJP ruled states, have been up in arms because of the

Country Reports

alarming rise in incidents of brutal oppression and murderous atrocities against Dalits by outfits owing allegiance to the RSS.

Cow-related violence has been on an upward trend since the Modi government came to power in 2014. Dalit groups are particularly vulnerable to such attacks, as they are particularly responsible for disposing cattle carcasses and skins.

In 2018, another Dalit man Mukesh Vaniya was killed in a cow-vigilante murder in Rajkot.

Dalits have been fighting for their rights from time immemorial. The sudden caste-supremacist shift in India, has put their lives and livelihoods at stake. These conversions come as a hard stance against the ruling party's dream of a 'Hindu Rashtra' as Dalits are now denouncing Hinduism.

Dalits, all over the country are today challenging this hierarchy of caste by converting from Hinduism. This is their act of rebellion in the name of liberation.

S

India

Tibetan Spiritual Leader Dalai Lama Endorses Global Climate Strike by Students

Nina Alekseyeva, *Sputnik News*
20 September 2019

New Delhi (Sputnik): Millions of young people and students took to the streets across cities seeking action against climate change ahead of the United Nations Summit in New York on "Climate Action for Peace".

The students have a supporter in the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual head. He said the "younger

generation should have serious concerns about the climate crisis and its effect on the environment", adding they are very realistic about their future and we should encourage them.

The protesters, who boycotted schools and colleges, demonstrated from India, the Pacific islands to Australia demanding their governments take urgent steps

to tackle the climate crisis awareness about the risks posed by climate change, to prevent a catastrophe for future generations.

The 16-year-old Swedish girl Greta Thunberg, who is spearheading the global campaign to create has gone viral worldwide.



Siam

The United Nations said global emissions are reaching record levels and show no sign of peaking. The last four years were the four hottest on record, and winter temperatures in the Arctic have risen by 3°C since 1990. Sea levels are rising, coral reefs are dying, and we are starting to see the life-threatening impact of climate change on health, through air pollution, heatwaves, and risks to food security.

The impacts of climate change are being felt everywhere and are having very real consequences on people's lives. Climate change is disrupting national economies, costing us dearly today and even more tomorrow. But there is a growing recognition that affordable, scalable solutions are available now that will enable us all to leapfrog to cleaner, more resilient economies.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres has called upon leaders to come up with "concrete, realistic plans to enhance their nationally determined contributions by 2020, in line with reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 45 percent over the next decade, and to net zero emissions by 2050."

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Supreme Patriarch Greets Pope as 'Old Friend'

The Nation Thailand
21 November 2019

Noting that Thailand and the Vatican have enjoyed a long and warm relationship, the Supreme Patriarch said he regarded this visit as welcoming an old friend rather than a new acquaintance.

The Supreme Patriarch reminded Pope Francis that the last papal visit to Thailand was made by John Paul II in 1984 – 35 years ago – specifically to thank the Thai people for accepting refugees from the Indochina conflicts in neighbouring Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos.



photo: *The Nation*

Pope Francis, head of the Roman Catholic Church, had his scheduled meeting with the Supreme Patriarch, head of the Buddhist faith in Thailand, on November 21.



photo: *The Nation*

The pope and Somdet Phra Ariyavongsagatanana IX met at Wat Ratchabophit Sathit Maha Simaram in Bangkok.

S

Temples No Longer Safe for Children

Sanitsuda Ekachai, *Bangkok Post*

30 October 2019

News about monks' sexual misconduct has become so frequent that it no longer shocks. But the latest scandal involving a rapist, paedophile monk makes my blood boil.

It involves an abbot in Kanchanaburi who detained a 13-year-old novice at his temple residence to sexually assault the boy at will, using power and threats on his life to silence him.

After five days of sexual slavery, the boy swallowed his fear and phoned his family, pleading with them to move him to other another temple. When pressed, the traumatised boy revealed the ordeal he had gone through. The crime became public when the novice's father pressed charges against the abbot, which was followed by an order from the Kanchanaburi cleric elders to defrock the paedophile monk.

A rapist, a paedophile, in the guise of a monk. This is not an isolated case. Type "monks rape novices" into a search engine and the ugly reality will hit you in the face. The system is sick.

Seriously sick. Yet the clergy keeps turning a blind eye to these heinous crimes which are happening right under their noses to protect their image.

In rural Thailand, being a novice is a ticket for poor boys to get a free education, shelter and financial support. Without proper oversight, sexual abuse is rife, both among the older and younger novices as well as between monks and novices.

Often, as recently happened in Kanchanaburi, the abbots themselves abuse their authority to sexually assault fearful boys with impunity, knowing their victims cannot fight back.

The novice in Kanchanaburi could escape because he has a family to ask for help. Most novices are not that fortunate. They are poor, their families live far away, and many are orphans, making them easy prey for sexual predators. Their plight is hidden in the temples' dark corners because they are powerless.

This hush-hush approach to the sexual abuse of novices sometimes fails

to keep a lid on the problem in the summer when mass ordinations of schoolboys into novices during the long break occurs.

After sexual assaults occur, furious parents call for the monk rapists to be arrested, defrocked and sent to jail. After the scandals make the news, cleric authorities give the same empty promises of better oversight.

According to the law, sex with minors under 15 regardless of consent is categorised as rape with a maximum jail term of 20 years and/or a maximum fine of 400,000 baht. The sentence can be increased by one-third if the rapist assaults a child under their supervision. They may also face a life sentence if the child is under 13.

Yet most paedophile monks escape the law because they are protected by a culture of fear, secrecy and impunity in temples.

Interestingly, the crimes are often revealed by the paedophile monks themselves when they post video clips of sexual acts or texts boasting about their sexual conquests on social media.

How many more paedophiles are still at large in the clergy is anyone's guess.

How many boys continue to suffer and how many become abusers themselves when they grow up, perpetuating the cycle of

sexual violence and trauma in temples? No one knows. And the clergy does not want to know either. Their mission is to protect the clergy's name, not to save the kids.

Despite the monks' frequent sexual scandals, the cleric authorities prefer to treat them as isolated crimes committed by a few rotten apples. They're not.

And despite the clergy's resources, they have made no attempts to look at the problem systematically. Don't waste your time looking for records or statistics of sexual abuse in the clergy. There are none because the clergy refuses to confront the problem.

A study in 2019 on monks' misconducts shed some light on the situation. According to a study by Phra Priyaphong Khunpanya on some 100 news items about rogue monks, one-third of them involved sexual misconduct. The majority of perpetrators are senior monks with high cleric education. Many are the abbots themselves.

To appease the angry public, the clergy has recently set up a new rule requiring preceptors to check the criminal records of people requesting ordination. Only those free of criminal records are allowed to enter the monkhood.

The aim is to fix the lax monk recruitment system.

The move, however, raises many questions.

For starters, those who have already served their sentences are now denied an opportunity to live a monastic life should they want to. Undeniably, the clergy's move reflects prejudice against former convicts and violates human rights.

Don't forget that many of them are mere scapegoats or the poor who could not afford legal help to fight for justice.

Had this rule been in force during Buddha's time, Angulimala, the ruthless murderer who killed 999 people before he was ordained by the Buddha, would not have had a chance to redeem himself and finally attain enlightenment.

The clergy should follow the Buddha's example by embracing compassion, not prejudice.

Also, the new rule only applies to new ordination requests when the clergy is already infested with corrupt, abusive and paedophile monks. How to weed them out?

The new ordination rules would be unnecessary were the clergy to strictly observe the Vinaya or cleric disciplines set by the Buddha.

Apart from being in the monkhood for more than 10 years, preceptors are required by the monastic

rules to train people they have ordained for at least five years, or until the trainees can fully abide by the monastic disciplines by themselves.

Nowadays, this training period is no longer observed. You can just go through the ordination ceremony and leave whenever you like.

However, the lax recruitment and training system are not the only culprits.

Under the Vinaya, the cleric structure should be egalitarian and the decision-making should be communal, open and participatory to prevent abuse of authority.

The clergy, however, has now become an autocracy with a feudal hierarchy that commands total submission from junior members. Any criticisms or calls for reform are not tolerated and those who dare to voice dissent are subject to punishment, even ostracism.

This closed system without transparency and accountability is a fertile breeding ground for corruption and abuse of power.

The temple's governing structure mimics this autocracy. Under Sangha law, abbots are empowered to rule their temples like feudal lords, owning all temple assets and enjoying absolute administrative powers, especially over temple donations.

This authoritarian system governed by fear ena-

bles abbots and their inner circles to accumulate wealth and sexually assault minors with impunity.

Any new rules that leave the abusive system intact cannot tackle financial and sexual abuse in the clergy. Opening up the system to usher in transparency and accountability can.

The monastic disciplines already provide a way out -- if the clergy chooses to follow them.

Under the Vinaya, dictatorship and feudalism have no place in monastic governance. The clergy needs to return to participatory decision-making and egalitarian monastic structure that allow internal monitoring as well as external oversight from lay communities.

The Vinaya also prohibits its monks from being involved in money matters. They are barred from seeking or receiving money. The violations will be forgiven only when they make confessions to their monastic community and give up what they have received.

Greed leads to other vices, including sexual abuse. The closed system governed by fear perpetuates the culture of impunity, allowing paedophiles to thrive.

Short of cleric reform to make monastic communities transparent with external oversight, paedophiles will continue to have a field day in temples that are no longer safe for our children.

S

Siam

BBC Names Dhammananda Bhikkhuni, Thailand's First Female Monk, among 100 Influential Women of 2019

Craig Lewis, *Buddhistdoor Global*

17 October 2019

The BBC has named Dhammananda Bhikkhuni, Thailand's first female monk, among its list of the world's 100 most inspiring and influential women of 2019, which draws on the achieve-

ments and accomplishments of influential and notable women from across the globe.

Thailand is a predominantly Buddhist country, with 94.5 per cent of the

Country Reports

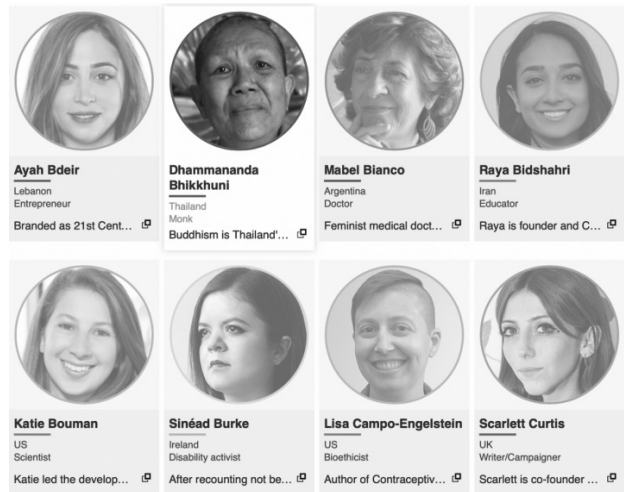


nation's population of 69 million people identifying as Buddhists, according to government data for 2015. The Southeast Asian kingdom has some 40,000 Buddhist temples and almost 300,000 monks. However, the country has never officially recognized the full monastic ordination of women, and bhikkhunis do not generally enjoy the same level of societal acceptance as their male counterparts. By comparison, the Mahayana Buddhist traditions widely practiced in East Asia have historically been much more accepting of female ordination.

Yet communities of ordained female renunciants do exist and are growing across Thailand, committed to overturning the institutionalized chauvinism that stands in the way of female monasticism. Now numbering around 270 nationwide, and supported by more progressively minded bhikkhus, they seek to re-establish the fourfold sangha as the optimal holistic and inclusive structure in which all segments of society can study and share the Dharma.*

Ven. Dhammananda ordained in Sri Lanka in 2003, becoming Thailand's first bhikkhuni in the face of considerable public opposition. Formerly known as Chatsumarn Kabilsingh, an author and professor of religious studies and philosophy at a prominent Thai university, and now the abbess of Songdhammakalyani Monastery, the country's first all-female Buddhist monastery, she states her case simply and with a gentle logic, noting that the Buddha himself founded the bhikkhuni order, which included his own adoptive mother.

"It's been 90 years and the social context has changed, but they still don't accept us," said Ven. Dhammananda. "It's a shame that women aren't allowed to make decisions for their



From bbc.co.uk

own lives. You have to rebel against injustice because this is not right." (Reuters)

The 100 women of note identified by the BBC were selected from a pool of candidates who made headlines or influenced important news reports over the past 12 months, or those with significant achievements or influence in their societies.

Other notable women on the list are: Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg; Purity Wako of Uganda, who is empowering Ugandan women and calling for all women to have legal rights in marriage; Parveena Ahanger, the "Iron lady of Kashmir," whose son disappeared in 1990, during an uprising against Indian rule, leading Parveena to set up the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP);

Dr. Alanoud Alsharekh, founding member of the Abolish 153 campaign, calling for Kuwait's "honor-killing" law to be scrapped and working to improve gender equality in the Middle East; Owl Fisher, aka Uglá Stefánía Kristjónudóttir Jónsdóttir, an Icelandic journalist, writer, and transgender campaigner; and forensic psychology professor Soo Jung Lee, who has worked on numerous high-profile murder cases in South Korea and has challenged the legal system to introduce an anti-stalking bill to protect vulnerable women.

**The fourfold sangha: bhikkhus (male monastics), bhikkhunis (female monastics), upasakas (male lay followers), and upasikas (female lay followers.)*

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The Opening Speech at the 2019 INEB Biennial Conference

Harsha Navaratne



First and foremost, let me welcome all of you on behalf of the INEB secretariat. We are blessed to have a wonderful partnership with Deer Park which has been and continues to be one of the key centers of our organization for many years.

In his absence, we express our sincere appreciation and share merits with Zhongsar Khyentse Rinponche for his constant support, advice and sponsorship towards of our conference and iNEB's ongoing activities. I also extend sincere thanks to brother Prashant Varma and his team for their great effort, commitment and generous hospitality. Thank you for hosting INEB's conference here in beautiful Deer Park!

Two years ago we last met in Taiwan, and went away with high hopes of our 10 year strategic plan "The Way Forward." Since then we have made steps toward and accomplished many positive interventions with our communities and in countries. We are a group which is amazingly diverse, yet brilliantly networked with harmony, brotherhood and sisterhood. Our doors are open to

everyone who believes in true human values while serving our society. Our organization truly engages outside of our faith traditions, and have a shared understanding as an INEB family.

In a time like this, when the world and societies are divided by differences in ethnicity, faith and many other issues, we are here as one family breaking barriers in order to bring all of us and others out of suffering - Dukka. Many of our teachers have told us that the Buddha's teaching is universal regardless of one's religion. It's purely a practice for the extinction of sufferings. That's why our work, practice and network as engaged Buddhist activists is so profound and transformational.

This year's conference theme was *The Culture of Awakening-Cultivating and Harvesting Wisdom*. The theme addresses the complexities and contradictions that modern societies are facing.

There are enough evidence and real-life situations to demonstrate that we are facing many conflicts and crisis in today's world. So there can't be any doubt that awakening and cultivating wisdom



may help attain universal peace and harmony, in addition to freedom and social progress which are upheld by human rights, dignity and democratic principles.

Buddha means the “one who knows” and the “one who is awakened.” Our teachers say when we are awake, when our eyes are open, we are practicing the real Buddhist path. In such a situation we move deeper into self-understanding and correct knowledge. This makes it possible for us to overcome suffering, come out of ignorance and have an abundance of happiness which in turn can be shared with our neighbors and society. So, it is within this conference setting we set our overall and long term goal to stimulate awakening to the profound and enduring teachings of the Buddha that can bring about personal and social transformations through reflection and social action.

Once again let me welcome all of you today, and encourage you to work as one family. This will help all of us to fully realize the potential of socially engaged Buddhism which enhances social justice,

cultural inclusivity and diversity, transformative learning and harmonizing ecology and the economy.

Let me conclude with a quote by Bikkhu Buddhadasa,

“Dhamma is acting as we should act in order to be fully human throughout all the stages of our life. Dhamma means to realize our fullest potential as individual human beings. What is most important is to realize that dhamma is not simply ‘knowing’ but also ‘acting’ in the truest sense of what it means to be a human. The correct action is acting for the sake of the action itself, is following dhamma, is acting for society - not acting for our self. To act with non - attached mind is dhamma or acting on behalf of society.”

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Harsha Navaratne is the chairperson of INEB's Executive Committee.

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Summary Report

International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) 19th Biennial Conference & Celebration of its 30th Anniversary

Deer Park Institute, Bir, India.

INEB Staff



In October 2019, INEB members and friends gathered in Himachal Pradesh, India, for the Biennial Conference under the theme of *A Culture of Awakening: Cultivating and Harvesting Freedom*. A couple of gatherings preceded the conference, one was held on October 21 of which a truly inspiring and blessed audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, one of INEB's original Patrons, at his temple in McLeod Ganj. During the audience, he drew on the tradition of Buddhist logic of his own Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism as founded in the classical Madhyamika tradition of Nalanda University to encourage us to practice the teachings of the Buddha and to cultivate wisdom and compassion. Using the rigorous and penetrating

logic of Madhyamika based on the insight of "voidness" (*sunyata*), he said that we can clarify and engage in modern systems of inquiry, such as western science and philosophy, as well as reform and deepen our traditional, ritualistic religion.

Another important event that took place before the conference was the 3rd international Eco-Temple Community Development gathering. The event began in New Delhi with a visit to the Aali farm and Edible Roots Foundations led by Kanchana Weerakoon from Sri Lanka. Some people from eco-temples in Japan, India, Myanmar, Thailand, Sri Lanka, the United States, and Hungary arrived at Deer Park two days earlier to share new work and ideas, such as the new, temple-based clean energy

company in Japan led by Rev. Ryogo Takemoto. The group met on the last day to plan a meeting and site visits in Myanmar during November 2020.

The conference officially began on the morning of October 22 at the Deer Park Institute, with an official inauguration by Harsha Navaratne, Chairman of INEB's Executive Committee. His key message was that we should awaken to knowing and then act with an unattached mind, in accordance with dharma teachings for the benefit of society.

The keynote speakers, Ven. Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo of the United Kingdom and Ven. Pomnyun Sunim of South Korea, addressed the gathering around this year's theme of a culture of awakening. Ven. Palmo encouraged us to practice being present and awake in the moment, and to take time to build ourselves through our practice so that we can give support to others. According to her, "mind practice" is the bedrock of the very logical and rational Buddha Dharma that can be used to "water" the positive human aspects of kindness and compassion, flowering in our society despite the numerous negative weeds of anger, greed, and ignorance that plague our world today. With constant and consistent practice of the mind, we can transform the wild monkey mind to an enlightened mind.

In order to address climate change and other global crises, Venerable Palmo called for urgent action from a space of genuine compassion, humility, and kindness. She also advised using awareness and skillful means to harness the two faces of compassion: as Avalokiteshvara in her sweet and nurturing manifestation and as Mahakala in her fierce and confrontational manifestation.

Venerable went on to say that aside from physical pollution, we are dealing with an even greater amount of mental pollution, such as anger, paranoia, greed, jealousy, competition, fear, and violence, which is fed by sources of media and entertainment. She advised that we must learn how to use this garbage of ultimate ignorance as compost to grow the Bodhi tree within each of us. She also

urged us to reach out to youth, because they have new ideas and are our future. She encouraged inculcating right values in children and teaching how to cultivate a good heart and build bright, inquiring minds. Venerable also said that we could show that greater amounts of compassion rather than material desire is what is actually good for them as well as society.

Ven. Pomnyun Sunim spoke about how our suffering often comes from our ignorant and afflictive actions. He spoke about how we believe our sensual perceptions to be the only reality, when, in reality, they are not. This error in perception then gives rise to negative emotions like fear and anger. What we need to do, he heeded, is to correct this error in our perception, so that we can deal with the negative emotions that arise in ourselves before they become afflictive actions and speech leading to greater suffering.

Venerable also called on us as Buddhists to seek out and eliminate the root causes of suffering, like the lion that attacks the human that pokes a stick at it rather than the dog that attacks the stick only. He encouraged us to see life as it is and be self-reliant, while also knowing and seeing our interdependence with others. He then recommended that once we learn to free ourselves from suffering, we should help others experience this by sharing the Buddha Dharma. He warned against influencing others from a space of anger and, instead, come from a space of compassion. Also, we should focus on the other person wants/needs, not what "I" can or want to give. Venerable stated that by nature, all human beings are ignorant and that only with Buddhist practice can people evolve. However, he also cautioned against accepting anything, even the teachings, without one's own investigation.

After a morning of deep listening, the afternoon sessions of Day 1 featured 4 parallel workshops on realizing a culture of awakening through various areas of engagement:

1) *The Culture of Living and Dying* - Jonathan Watts moderator, featured Ven. Ani Pema who focused on preparing the mind for death, Ven. Phra Woot Tongmun on end-of-life and bereavement care in Thailand, and Rev. Ryogo Takemoto on suicide prevention in Japan. Clearly, Buddhists are becoming more involved in the culture of living and dying as noted in Thailand where new activities are being initiated by Thai monks working in hospitals, with persons who are dying, as well as their families and caregivers. Also, there is a movement in Japan, that Jondo-Shin with Pure Land described that is working with people who are suffering from psychological problems.

2) *The Culture of Peace and Justice* - Gauthama Prabhu moderator, featured panellists who using diverse approaches to pursue peace and justice included:

- Ven. Galkande Dhammananda of the Walpola Rahula Institute in Sri Lanka where meditation as a means of loving kindness is practiced, in addition to conducting dialogue at the grassroots level.
- Hosne Ara Begum of the Thengamara Mohila Sabuj Sangha (TMSS) in Bangladesh is involved in addressing social inequalities, environment issues and interfaith dialogue.
- Rev. Hidehito Okochi of JNEB talked about his involvement with anti-nuclear groups and the opposition they are facing.
- Milind Wani of the Kalpavriksha Environment Action Group in India discussed different aspects of social justice that are both restorative and redistributive in nature.

3) *The Culture of Sustainable Well-Being* - Naveen Vasudevan moderator, featured Neil Amas of the Panyaden School in Thailand, Tashi Ron

Coleman from Nova Scotia, Canada, Jeongyeun Choi of the Jungto Society in South Korea, and Dixie Belcher of Turning the Tides in south India. Generally, the panellists explored how capitalism has caused a lack of well-being at many levels which has to be rectified across the spectrum of humanity.

4) *Me Too: Movement Solidarity Against Sexual Violation within Buddhism* - Ven. Tsunma Tenzin Dasei moderator, featured Bogyean Ok of the Institute for Religion and Gender Research in South Korea, Nang Loung Hom of the Walpola Rahula Institute, and Divya Ethiraj of the Nagaloka Center in Nagpur, India. The panellists highlighted how power dynamics prevent people from speaking their truth, effectively making them invisible. Dr. Oak noted that the 'me too' movement has led to a lot of action. The panellists expressed that together a gender alliance could be formed holding us responsible for ethical behavior. The session concluded by agreeing that the world at large needs better examples of bodhicitta, pure ethics, good-hearted altruism. Brief summaries of each workshop were given the following morning.

The day culminated with a fantastic musical dialogue between Buddhism and the poetic tradition of Kabir by musicians Shabnam Virmani and Swagath Sivakumar.

October 23 - Day 2 opened with a keynote speech by Ouyporn Khuankaew, a long time INEB friend and founder of the International Women's Partnership for Peace and Justice based in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Her keynote presentation entitled *Realizing the Truth at the Edge of Contradictions*, specifically addressed gender-based violence within society and in Buddhism. She used an interactive role play among members of the audience to

demonstrate how people, particularly women, experience inequality through various forms of gender-based violence. This powerful and insightful activity she led emphasized the patriarchal power embedded in societal systems and how patriarchal structures feed inequality, abuse and oppression and imbed violence into social structures (structural violence).

Each role-play participant spoke in the voice of a social structure that encourages patriarchy, inequality and discrimination of women at all levels including the local community, family, police and legal systems, health systems, economic systems, media, culture and religion. She urged us to seriously examine and address this “social dukkha” to truly work toward the liberation of all.

Ouyporn shared a chart of comprehensive social engagement for Buddhists. In her work, she often encounters NGO/development workers who suffer from burnout. She says social activism cannot be run from a space of anger, and needs to have a spiritual component.

Prior to working with INEB in the mid-1990s, she could not connect the traditional teachings of her Thai Buddhist heritage (which often supported patriarchy) with her feminist activities. Although, feminism provided clarity of analysis, it lacked compassion.

However, with the help of various INEB kalyanamitra, she learned how the Four Noble Truths create a comprehensive system for engagement with patriarchy and violence towards women. Throughout the years she has taken these initial lessons and developed her own new and powerful insights, such as adapting Thich Nhat Hanh’s five mindfulness trainings into six ways to engage in social work and social justice based on the capacity of each person as: advocate, organizer, healer, educator, reformer, or “warrior.”

The morning plenary continued with a panel moderated by Aspi Mistry with invited speakers Milind Wani of Kalpavriksha, Mangesh

Dahiwale of the Manuski Institute in India, Venerable Tsunma Tenzin Dase, and Tin Ma MaThet of Sayarma Foundation in Myanmar. The panel addressed issues of ecological peril, gender and sexuality, discrimination and divisiveness (including Islamophobia), and Buddhist ethics.

Tin Ma Ma Thet’s story about her upbringing as a child of mixed race facing discrimination in Myanmar school systems was especially moving. This led her to create the Sayarma Foundation, which provides training to school teachers using Buddhist principles. She spoke about how our identities have the potential to unite or divide us, and that learning the Buddhist principle of dependent origination helped her understand the oneness of all beings and allowed her to cultivate compassion toward the people who had hurt her.

Milind spoke about the need to hold perspectives on structural and systematic levels so that we can see all societal divisions and issues as part of a greater whole. He invoked Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche in calling us to prepare ourselves for the war against ecological collapse and to deliver solutions quickly with optimism in the heart and pessimism in the mind.

Mangesh called upon us to create a true socio-economic democracy and to let go of hero worship. Rather, we should promote respect and reverence amongst ourselves. Only in this way can social democracy bring about personal growth.

Ven. Tsunma Tenzin Danzel encouraged us to practice and teach critical and analytical meditations for the equanimity of self and others. She observed that our current problems often stem from not listening actively or sometimes talking too much, engaging too quickly, and looking for answers in the wrong places.

Aspi remarked that in the face of global crises such as climate change, our failure or success matters only if we don’t achieve success at the cost of others’ failure. He urged us to consider how we fail and the question of how being critical is important.

In the afternoon, a spontaneous session broke out of Chinese tea ceremony led by Dr. Hsiang Chou Yo from Taiwan combined with the previous night's Kabul singers Shabnam Virmani and Swagath Sivakumar. Sharing Buddhist poetry and songs with Dharma teaching, a large group had a joyous afternoon drinking tea in front of the main hall of the Deer Park Buddha Hall.

On the morning of October 24, the process work took place with all conference participants. This activity is what distinguishes the INEB network and helps its members plan for the next steps in their home countries based on the conference theme. Kishore Thukral helped facilitate participants as they broke into small groups to discuss what they learned and what they will take back to their home countries. The outcomes from the small group discussions were expressed with the entire group.

Following the summary of the process work, comments were made by Ajarn Sulak, Divya Ethiraj on the Wisdom of Elders and the Promise of Youth. Indian Buddhist youth closed the session with chanting.

Prashant Varma, the Director of Deer Park, delivered a thank you message from Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche, Deer Park's founder, who was unable to attend.

A joint meeting of INEB's Advisory and Executive committees followed on October 25. INEB is now entering Year 3 of its new 10 year strategic roadmap called the Way Forward in which four key areas of engagement are: Transformative Learning, Social Justice, Cultural Inclusivity & Diversity, and Ecology & Economy. A brief summary of what was discussed at the meeting follows.

- The first area of Transformative Learning is thriving through the many and various educational workshops led by INEB members both locally and internationally. Currently, programs offered through the INEB Institute are the School of English for Engaged Social Service (SENS) with its annual three month

intensive program, as well as the Awakening Leadership Training (ALT).

- An international network for Buddhist chaplaincy training has begun which will better empower monastics to support those living with mental illness and other forms of suffering.
- INEB has a long history of individual programs for social justice and cultural diversity. INEB is helping to coordinate the groundwork for Buddhist-Muslim dialogue with the members of the International Forum on Buddhist-Muslim Relations formed in 2013.
- INEB is also been involved in some pilot programs for empowering bhikkhunis and lay Buddhist women, especially the new orders in Theravada countries. It is hoped that this conference with its sessions on We Too and violence towards women will broaden INEB's engagement in this area.
- The Interfaith Climate and Ecology Network (ICE) based in Seoul and the Eco-Temple Community Development Project are ongoing initiatives to confront the climate crisis through offering sustainable environmentally friendly and ecologically appropriate alternatives. The Eco-Temple project also has offered a number of new economic models and social enterprises designed to develop a new economics that sustains rather than destroys the environment. This area of social enterprise is expanding its engagement for INEB members.

In conclusion, we look forward to carrying this vast net of activities into 2020 and further developing our connections at the next INEB Executive and Advisory Board Meeting in Kyoto, Japan in October 2020.

His Holiness, The Dalai Lama Meets with Engaged Buddhists

Dalailama.com , 21 October 2019



His Holiness the Dalai Lama speaking to members of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists at his residence in Dharamsala, HP, India on October 21, 2019.

Photo by Tenzin Choejor

Thekchen Chöling, Dharamsala, India - Members of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists led by Thai activist Sulak Sivaraksa met His Holiness the Dalai Lama this morning. They included 35 from Thailand, 41 from India, 37 from Burma, as well as people from the USA, Japan, South Korea, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Taiwan Hong Kong, Switzerland, Hungary and Sweden.

“As human beings, we all want to live a happy life,” His Holiness told them, “but we are regularly faced with problems of our own making. Many such problems arise because we persist in viewing others in terms of ‘us’ and ‘them’. In addition to this, these days, we also see conflict taking place in the name of religion. There are differences between our religious traditions

and even within them—for example the Pali tradition included 18 schools of thought, while within the Sanskrit tradition there were four. Different points of view appeal to people of different dispositions, but what is most important to remember is that all religious traditions stress the importance of cultivating loving-kindness.”

“As you know, the Buddha encouraged his followers to question even what he had told them. Nalanda masters like Nagarjuna, Chandrakirit and Buddhapalita examined his teachings in this light, classifying them into those that were definitive and those requiring interpretation.”

“Our collection of scriptures includes 108 volumes of words spoken by the Buddha and 225

The question and answer session with His Holiness on October 21, 2019. Photo by Tenzin Choejor

His Holiness addressing the audience at his residence in Dharamsala on October 21, 2019. Photo by Tenzin Choejor



volumes of explanatory treatises by subsequent Buddhist masters. We have reassessed the content of these books in terms of science, philosophy and religion. I believe this scientific and philosophical material can be considered in an objective, intellectual way. Consequently, we have compiled books dealing with science and philosophy as recorded in Buddhist literature that have been published in Tibetan and are being translated into English, Chinese, Russian, Mongolian and so forth.”

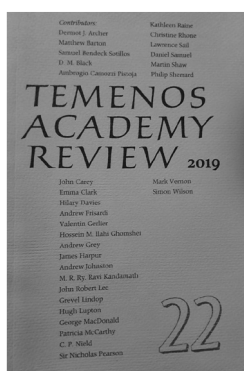
His Holiness emphasised the need for study. He acknowledged that the Pali tradition conveys the Buddha’s fundamental teachings, particularly the

Vinaya tradition. He recalled visiting Thailand many years ago and being deeply impressed by the Thai monks’ strict way of life. He also reported a conversation he had had at a meeting of the World Parliament of Religions in Melbourne, Australia, with two Burmese monks, who were surprised when he referred to the Vinaya as something they both—Tibetans and Burmese—had in common.

His Holiness alluded to his being committed to reminding people of the oneness of humanity and the importance of nurturing human values, and his encouragement of inter-religious harmony. He mentioned that as a Tibetan he is committed to preserving Tibetan language and culture and speaking up for the protection of Tibet’s natural environment. Finally, he described his commitment to reviving appreciation of ancient Indian knowledge of the workings of the mind and emotions in India.

Answering questions from the audience, His Holiness suggested that a tendency for young people today to become depressed and despondent has its roots in the current education system. Modern education, he observed, with little regard for how to tackle disturbing emotions and how to foster positive attitudes, gives insufficient attention to methods for achieving peace of mind. He encouraged his listeners to think about how to change this.

Recommended Reading



Temenos Academy Review

General editor: John Carey

Poetry editor: James Harpur

Reviews editor: Valentin Gerlier

Realizing the Truth at the Edge of Contradictions

Keynote Address by Ouyporn Khuankaew
Deer Park Institute, Bir, India
23 October 2019



Ouyporn Khuankaew (with microphone) and role play participants from the audience.

Ouyporn Khuankaew, leading Thai Buddhist feminist activist and co-founder of the International Women's Partnership for Peace and Justice based in Chiang Mai, Thailand, gave a compelling and engaging presentation about some of the misconceptions in Buddhism which have perpetuated misinformation, injustice, inequality and violence against women. She shared some of her remarkable journey which continues today.

Ouyporn has been actively addressing social issues and injustices much of her life which eventually brought her to a stage of burnout. She recognized that her anger was part of her activism and returned to her home in northern Thailand where she co-founded a center where women could pursue their aspirations for peace and justice. The words of Ajarn Sulak resonated

when he said that Buddhism teaches us how to understand suffering and how to confront it.

Ouyporn shared that she grew up in a Thai home in which her father was violent, yet a 'good' Buddhist at the temple. With this lived experience came the realization that Buddhism was for men. At the same time, while feminism provided clarity of analysis, it lacked compassion. This brought her to use the 4 Noble Truths as a framework for analysis and taking actions.

She spoke about the multiple forms of domestic violence – physical and emotional. They are expressed in many ways including forced sex, having affairs, drinking as emotional abuse, controlling or limiting access to finances, restricted movement, job

and money, physical abuse in the form of beating, and psychological abuse in the form of demeaning women.

Ouyporn believes that these forms of domestic violence are experienced by so many women in the world, none of which is not caused by the women's personal behavior or previous life karma. Often when these women seek counseling from Buddhist monks and nuns who have no knowledge about domestic violence and its root causes, their advice often tells the women to leave or stay in the abusive relationship with patience and kindness. The monks never tell the women that her husband is breaking the precept and that he is the one who should seek get advice from them.

Ouyporn used the 4 Noble Truths to help participants see the root causes of this problem and the ways to end it. Ouyporn asked some people from the audience to help demonstrate how Buddhism can confront structural violence through a role play exercise.

Two Thai women sat in the center of the stage represented the women living in abusive relationships. She explained that domestic violence created so many forms of suffering for women: mentally, emotionally, physically, spiritually and socially (being judged and blamed and shamed). This is the First Noble Truth, which is related to the suffering that women living in an abusive relationship experience on a daily basis.

Then the Second Noble Truth is asking questions about the root causes of violence. This is how we address the root causes of the women's suffering, so that we do not see this problem as a personal issue of the woman, nor is it a problem just between the woman and her abusive partner.

More questions followed to ask how each social institute or system in the society help support and maintain domestic violence. What does the family as an institution say? What is the message that contributes to the women's continual suffering? These were the responses:

- *Family messages* - A woman needs to be a good wife. Don't leave your husband. You have children, think of them. The husband is the leader, the head of the family.
- *The community*, local leaders and friends – He knows that the neighbors will not intervene, or do anything. It's a family matter, maybe something is wrong with her, the wife.
- *Law enforcement/police* - We see cases like this many times. We have more important things to do. The most important thing is that the law supports keeping the family together.
- *Health care system* - We only care for injuries and diseases. She is ok.
- *Culture and tradition* – Steeped in patriarchy support the man saying that, I am a man, I earn the money that supports the family. I am the head of the family so I have the right to beat my children and beat my wife.
- *Economic system* - We don't hire pregnant women, or women with small children. They don't increase our profits and their productivity is low.
- *Media* - We produce soap operas that generate money. Domestic violence is normal. We need drama to keep our ratings high.
- *Religion* – Expressed through the words of monks chanting say that, this is God given you should not divorce him or it is your karma from a previous life that you were born a woman. Just donate more money to the temple so that your bad karma will be reduced.

Ouyporn asked the two women to focus on their feelings and to describe them in words.

Sad. Unfair. Upset. Angry and No way out of this problem. These were some of the words they spoke.

Ouyporn validated their words by saying, "You look upset." She was sharing their feelings of injustice and inequality. She went on to emphasis that

this was not personal, rather it is a structural issue. She predicts that while some of us would say to be patient, or get divorced, no, the structure is the cause. In fact, the root cause of domestic violence is imbedded in all these institutions mentioned – law enforcement, health care, religion, economics, culture and traditions, media and community.

We are using the Second Noble Truth to look at the root causes of domestic violence. The nature of suffering expressed through violence includes abuse and shame. Let's look at what these institutions say to the husband and men.

- *Family* – Husband's masculinity and entitlement as family leader dare validated. Continues to beat wife. Knows her family will not do anything to him.
- *Law enforcement* - No one questions me so I can do anything. I told you not to go to the police, because if you do you are in worse trouble.
- *Health care system* – Often I (husband speaking) will accompany her to the hospital to make sure that she doesn't leak any information about our situation to anyone.
- *Culture and tradition* – I have the right to beat my children and my wife. I can do anything.
- *Economic system* – I (the husband) won't send money to my wife if she leaves. I can easily find work, can work at night because it is easy, and I can be promoted.
- *Religion* – I am a good Buddhist. Sometimes I feel that drinking is bad. Then I am ordained for 15 days, all is forgiven and everyone gives me respect.
- *Media* – I watch soap operas and really enjoy them. It's (seeing violence on the screen) is normal. Those soap operas never say anything bad about me.

Ouyporn went on to say that these are all gender issues, not women's issues, which arose from the male's privileged system of patriarchy and hierarchy. What we need to be talking about is how and why the



entire system gives males privilege. They have a prevailing sense of entitlement in which they are given space, freedom, can do and buy anything, even an island. What are we going to do about it?

She asked the audience who are some of the are the other people or groups that experience this inequality and injustice from the same social systems? The answers were: children and young people, people with disabilities, Buddhist nuns, gays, lesbians and transgender people, as well as people who are considered to be lower class, ethnic minorities and more.

These are manifestations of structural greed, anger, delusion and hatred. They stem from the ignorance that is embed in our societal structures.

So, we need to build a society where no one is treated unequally, and our differences are respected. Ouyporn calls this nirvana. The 3rd Noble Truth is nirvana. Nirvana means the society that provides safety and equality for all.

The 4 Noble Truths are very practical and logical. When Ouyporn works with doctors and nurses they respond by saying, "Oh, is this the 4th Noble Truth?" The four Noble truth is very logical and practical. It offers us an analysis that will lead us to acquire the wisdom we need in order to understand and respond to the social suffering. Ouyporn went on to say that if she had learned this from a young age then she would not have suffered so much in her adult life.

So now we apply the 4 noble truths.

- 1st Noble Truth – The truth is that the wife/woman is suffering, she feels injustice, inequality, sadness, upset, anger, and shame.
- 2nd Noble Truth – The cause of the suffering is the Male Privilege System as institutionalized through patriarchy and hierarchical social systems. (And instead of gender abuse, it could be any form of oppression, like racism, class oppression, homophobia, transphobia, caste systems, oppression against children and young persons, etc.)
- 3rd Noble truth – Anyone can see that it's the structure that creates and/or supports the abuse and suffering. This insight can help us break these systems and create a Nirvana society. A society or a community that offers safety, respect and equality for everyone.
- 4th Noble truth – By using the Eightfold Noble Path, people can logically overcome suffering/abuse through Right Understanding, wise thinking, wise Speech, wise Action, wise Livelihood, wise Effort, wise Mindfulness and wise Concentration.

The first major wake up call for me was when Ajarn Sulak said, "Buddhism is about confronting suffering. Because we all have that inner wisdom." Tibetan Buddhism teaches that we are all born with wisdom and compassion, which is why I became a Buddhist.

The second wake-up call was from Venerable Dhammananda Bhikkhuni when she said, "Women can become enlightened."

The reality is that in Thailand women have experienced so much oppression from the patriarchal Buddhist monks and institutions to the point, that Ouyporn says, what we have learned and internalized since a very young age is not the Buddha's teachings, but patriarchal teachings. For examples, Thai women are not allowed to sit near a monk. This is because we were told that women will corrupt them, contaminate them, and cause them to disrobe. This makes women

believe that they very dangerous and sexually seductive. These teachings are wrong and so outdated.

We, Buddhist women, are surrounded by many examples of male dominance and inequality. In 1995, Ouyporn met 400 Buddhist nuns in Ladakh who were all crying about their conditions. Some had been raped by their abbot or by their meditation master. This kind of Buddhism is the true cause of suffering. Ouyporn could relate to these experiences through the words her mother when her father beat the children and her mother. When Ouyporn asked her mother why they were being beaten, her answer was because of our past karma. This is because mother never learned the four noble truth,

When her mother hid the rice, we asked, "Why are we so poor?," to which she replied, "It is our previous life karma." Another example is about Ouyporn's sister who practices Buddhism seriously because the monks have said that in the next life you (as a woman) will be born as a man. Again, this false thinking is based on previous life karma.

People from the Shan ethnic group in Myanmar believe that in the previous life then did something to the Burmese. This is the reason the Burmese military oppresses them.

Clearly, Buddhism is in crisis. What are we going to do about it?

We can all begin by studying how to use the Four Noble Truth. Their wisdom is not based on blind faith, not just believing what the monks or other Buddhist teachers say which blames your human existence on your previous life karma or that it is your personal fault. Fortunately, their collective wisdom can help us to understand social suffering and guide us about how to end it.

The Culture of Living and Dying

INEB Conference Workshop Summary

22 October 2019

Jonathan Watts

A workshop on *The Culture of Living and Dying* was held on October 22, 2019, during the first day of INEB's biennial conference which was attended by 50+ participants from a wide variety of countries. The goal of the workshop was to introduce, as well as deepen the participants' awareness and understanding of the general conference to important concepts and skills for engaged Buddhists in the work addressing suffering connected to:

- 1) depression & suicide
- 2) end-of-life-care, and
- 3) grieving & bereavement care, and training

Buddhist chaplains how to engage in these issues.

After an introduction by MC Jonathan Watts about the growing work within INEB on these issues, three members of the ordained Sangha from the three major traditions led us through their separate sessions.

Pra Woot Tongmun and focused on End-of-Life Care and Bereavement Care in Thailand, especially by Buddhist monks. Inspired by the work of INEB AC member Pra Paisan Visalo, who started end-of-life care workshops for those caring for dying family members over a decade ago. There are also new initiatives such as the Kilanadhama group of monks that supports dying patients in hospitals, and also the care of medical professionals who also experience suffering in this difficult work environment.

The Bhavana Forum also has a four part training program for monks to develop their skills in this work. The participants found it especially moving to see photos of these monks in training, sharing both emotional and physical intimacy in joy and sorrow as they worked together to learn.

Rev. Ryogo Takemoto led the session on suicide prevention activities of Buddhist priests in

Japan. Rev. Takemoto spoke mostly about his own work to build SOTTO, the Kyoto Self-Death and Suicide Counseling Center in Kyoto where he has been training priests of the Jodo Shin Pure Land denomination for some 9 years. He also belongs to a broader network of Buddhist priests who hold large annual funeral rituals for the bereaved of the suicidal, as well as group counseling for them.

As Rev. Takemoto belongs to a unique Japanese Pure Land school that emphasizes chanting Amitabha Buddha's name over meditation. The participants were intrigued to learn his methods for developing intimacy with the suffering of others and a warm heart in supporting them—as Amitabha Buddha would.

The final session was led by Ani Pema, a Tibetan nun from Australia on the theme *Begin with the End in Mind*, which was an experiential session in which participants reflected on their own impermanence and death. In this workshop, they were asked to imagine three situations:

- 1) being given a diagnosis that death is immanent
- 2) being on our death bed
- 3) at the time of our funeral

Participants were asked to reflect deeply on each one of these situations and examine how they would like their beliefs, values and relationships to be central under such conditions. In turn, they were asked to then consider how they might choose to realign their life direction at this point in their lives order to have no regrets at the culmination of this fragile existence.

This session was an ideal way to conclude the afternoon session after seeing the work of others in this field by bringing the lessons home to our own experience.



Young Bodhisattva Program: For Spiritual Resurgence & Social Transformation

18 May - 31 May 2020

Buddhist Hongshi College, Taoyuan, Taiwan

Doreen Wang

The Crises Facing Our World

A common phenomenon that can be observed in the countries where members of International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) bodhisattvas been operating, especially in South and Southeast Asia, is that the people have not yet achieved enduring peace and social justice. Every country continues to be influenced by capitalism and authoritarianism from the colonial era until the recent era of globalization. The common experience shared by the Third World countries is dominated by the business corporate sector and non-democratic or pseudo-democratic governments. These two sectors' powerful influence adversely impacts everyone.

We have become increasingly aware that the predominant threat to the planet is the ecological price of human consumption and lifestyle. Some values such as simplicity, sufficiency and sharing within the community have gone by the wayside or minimized as they are fueled by a capitalistic ideology that relies on mass production to maximize profit.

This change increased greed-based values such as selfishness, competition, oppression, and exploitation among humans and against nature. These conditions make achieving real peace in any context difficult. Instead, structural violence and injustice have created conditions of poverty, ecological crisis, hunger, human rights violations, discrimination and conflicts at many levels.

When material development becomes both the overarching personal and national goal, it overshadows values such as compassion, simplicity, forming relationships, sharing, and forgiveness. The degradation

of the human spirit is, in fact, due to many factors. Firstly, it becomes more difficult for people resist the temptations of indulgence, wealth and fame that the modern world presents to them. In addition, people become victims—forced to struggle and survive in violent, corrupted and unjust social structures. We can see those forces also eroding many societies' traditions.

The future of humankind relies on its young generation. However, growing up in divided societies makes it very difficult for them to realize their potential and positively contribute to society. Young people's vitality is expended because of the impact of structural violence, namely—poverty, ill health and many other social and economic inequities in education, housing, employment, and so forth. These conditions create disparities and instability, particularly in communities where development is imbalanced.

What Can Buddhist Thinkers and Social Activists Do?

Some Buddhist thinkers and social activists have proposed alternative views and practices to create societies based on compassion and non-violence, which are key Buddhist values. These are intended to address and transform the negative outcomes brought about by the development route that Third World countries have taken.

What the Buddha set forth more than 2,500 years ago was a means of discovering truth/dharma. These truths, passed down to us through the ages, transcend time and remain relevant today.



2019 Young Bodhisattva participants

In modern times, the Buddhas' teachings are being applied across Asia—via many means—to achieve social justice and equity. The Dhammic socialism by Bhikkhu Buddhadasa, Meritism (as opposed to capitalism) by the Asoke Network, Ajaan Sulak Sivaraksa's teachings on critical thinking, and discourses on Gross National Happiness are just a few examples.

Other experiments include the Samdrup Jonghkar Initiative (inspired by Buddhist teachers such as Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche). Buddhist models of leadership and governance have been seen in the model of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Samdhong Rinpoche, as well as peace and ecological actions by many Buddhist movements of the Karmapa and Thich Nhat Hanh. There are quite strong and substantial movements of socially engaged Buddhism becoming internationally renowned, beyond Asia.

The importance of youth in these movements is vital in the pursuit of genuine peace and social justice continues. As youth (Buddhist and others) realize their human potential to contribute to deep and lasting social change, the timeless teachings of the Buddha can serve as road maps for a harmonious world.

The International Young Bodhisattva Program

The International Young Bodhisattva Program (18-31 May 2020), established by INEB in conjunction with Buddhist Hongshi College, aims to develop young people's confidence, capacity, and commitment for social and spiritual transformation. It is an exposure program for youth to learn about social engagement—centered on values of lovingkindness and compassion—in Asia, particularly in the context of Taiwan.

Who Would Benefit From This Program?

Everyone can benefit! Whether you were born in a Buddhist family, came to Buddhism on your own, or do not identify as a Buddhist at all, this program is designed to strengthen your understanding of the roots of "dukkha" or "suffering" in our modern societies, as well as potential ways to address them.

Applicants should:

- Possess strong English language capacity
- Be 18-40 years of age
- Demonstrate interest in Buddhism, spirituality, personal & societal transformation, social engagement & change

What Will You Learn from Taiwan & this Program?

The content is based on a three-mode learning process involving intellectual, spiritual and physical practice. Sessions will include panels, discussions, community building activities, meditation practice, as well site visits to understand opportunities and challenges for social engagement in Taiwan, and the role played by Buddhists and other activists.

Participants will learn from teachings of the Buddha Dharma's Four Noble Truths to develop an analysis of societal structures and institutional sources of power and use various tools to critically examine and investigate conditions in their lives and communities. Participants will also build connections and a network of

kalyanamitta that is comprised of other youth and elders, teachers, resource people, from across Asia and other parts of the world.

Participants will also visit some civil society organizations, government agencies, and Buddhist institutions in Taiwan. These exposures will give the participants examples of pioneering work on the environment, gender and sexuality, democracy and free speech, and chaplaincy and palliative care on the island.

Finally, participants will be asked to conduct mapping exercises on social engagement in their countries and create action plans to consider what contributions they can bring home and how they can foster future leadership in their communities.

Tentative Content

- What is Engaged Buddhism
- Buddhist Health & Exercise
- Site Visit on Civil Society & Government Action (e.g., LGBTQ rights & environmental issues)

- Analysis of “Social Dukkha” and Power & Structural Inequality
- Meditation & Nature Retreat
- Suicide Prevention: Role of Buddhists in Taiwan & Japan
- End of Life Care: Role of Buddhists in Taiwan & Japan
- The Opportunities and Risks of Media & Big Data
- Site Visit to Tzu Chi: Buddhist Role in Healthcare & Waste Management

Timeline:

- 31 January 2020: Application deadline
- 20 February: Selected Participants are Notified
- 20 Feb-15 March: Applicants purchase air tickets and apply for visas
- 18 May: Program Begins
- 31 May: Program Ends

For more information, please visit:

<http://inebnetwork.org/engagements/young-bodhisattva>

More questions? Email us!

conference@inebnetwork.org

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International Forum on Buddhist - Muslim Relations

Second High-Level Summit of Buddhist Muslim Leaders

KV Soon

The International Forum on Buddhist-Muslim Relations – BMF, convened the second High-Level Summit of Buddhist and Muslim Leaders during November 21 – 22, 2019. Over 20 Buddhist and Muslim leaders from across South and Southeast Asia attended the summit in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh, to discuss current needs and efforts across the region to overcome violence extremism

that impede progressing toward just and inclusive societies. The meeting reaffirmed the leaders' commitment to the principles contained in the 2015 Yogyakarta Statement of Shared Values and Commitments between Muslims and Buddhists to overcome extremism and advance societal peace with justice.

Religious leaders, including women and

youth leaders, play an important role in shaping societies and values across Asia. This includes dedicated work that increases understanding among their communities, and breaks down stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination and hatred.

This High-Level meeting, hosted by Religions for Peace Bangladesh, continued to develop inter- and intra-faith relations between Buddhist and Muslim actors by identifying challenges related to Buddhist-Muslim relations and ways of further strengthening this work. The participants identified shared core values and primary narratives of Buddhism and Islam relating to respect for human dignity, non-discrimination, peaceful coexistence, and shared well-being. This was further strengthened by designing specific actions to change the situation.

Highlighted discussions during the meeting related to challenges faced by minority religious groups and the impact of regional conflicts such as the Rohingya refugee situation. Participants noted the role of the minorities, lack of adequate knowledge of religion and the difficulties faced by the host communities as some related challenges. Religious leaders can be well-equipped and in a position to address drivers of human rights abuses and marginalization of minority communities.

The participants concluded that the values embedded in the Yogyakarta Statement must be applied by religious actors to promote mutual understanding and tolerance amongst Buddhist and Muslim communities. As a key outcome, a task force to advance one of the seven shared values embodied in the Yogyakarta Statement on “Living in Harmony with the Environment” was formed, with a focus on Bangladesh. This effectively puts forward a thematic approach for future activities of the BFM.

About the BMF & The Yogyakarta Statement:

The Yogyakarta Statement was developed in 2015 by Buddhist and Muslim leaders representing

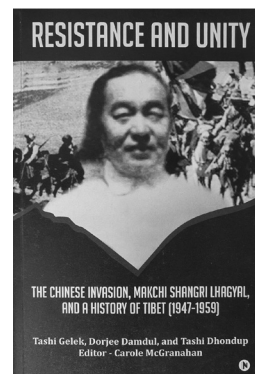
15 countries. The Statement reaffirms shared fundamental values between the two religions and emphasizes that both traditions, “respect the sacredness of life and inherent dignity of human existence, which is the foundation of all human rights without any distinction as to race, color, language or religion.”

The first high-level summit was held in March 2015 in Indonesia and sponsored by the BMF. Currently the BMF Core Group members include Religions for Peace (RfP), International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), International Movement for a Just World (JUST), Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah (PM) and The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers.

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K V Soon (Vidyananda) is a BMF core group member and a member of the INEB Executive Committee.

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Recommended Reading



Resistance and Unity

Editor: Carole McGranahan

Publisher: Notion Press

2019 International Day of Peace Celebration & Religious and Traditional Peacemakers Congregation in Bangladesh

On the eve of the International Day of Peace Celebration, the religious and traditional peacemakers organized a two day peace program on Sep 20- 21 with a festive mood in Chittagong, Bangladesh. Humanitarian Buddhist organization Atish Dipankar Society (ADS) hosted the National Buddhist Peace Dialogue on September 20 at the Madarsha Buddhist Temple premises. Buddhist leaders and peace actors participated in the peace dialogue and shared their peace initiatives, promises in peacemaking following the Lord Buddha's noble teachings on universal loving-kindness and unbounded compassion for the benefits of all living beings without any distinction. The participants were inspired to share their local strategies with Somboon Chungprampree (Moo), INEB Executive Secretary.

On 21 September during the International Day of Peace, Atisha Dipankar Peace Trust Bangladesh in cooperation with the Interfaith Peacemaker Team (IPT) and ADS organized a Religious and Traditional Peacemakers congregation and multi-faith dialogue on National Peace and Harmony with the theme Efforts for Sustaining Peace and Peacebuilding-context in Bangladesh & South Asia at the Hotel Shaikat in Chittagong City.

In the morning session, Vice Chanellor of the Premier University, Prof. Dr. Anupam Sen highlighted the importance of peace in society and emphasized building a culture of peace. He added that Bangladesh and South Asian countries people are peace loving, yet poverty, lack of proper education and unemployment are causing unrest



and also increasing religious extremism and social intolerance. He suggested building a peaceful society where all religious and traditional peacemakers would be involved in sustainable peace building processes.

The first dialogue panel discussed *Peacebuilding through Promoting Interfaith Co-operation: From Dialogue to Action*. The speakers noted how essential the work for peace, peacebuilding, communal harmony, enhancing interfaith leaders connectivity through advancing dialogue, dialogue for building fellowship, harmony among different religious and faith groups is in Bangladesh as a densely populated country. They also emphasized respecting the principles of Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) and 'Do No Harm' in the name of religion or faith.

Second session focused on *Building Universal Responsibility & Ending Religious Motivated Violent Extremism*. The speakers urged the religious and traditional peace actors to take personal responsibility for the consequences of their behaviors, decisions and actions for the future of the planet. They also suggested becoming actively involved through collaborative engagement to find sustainable positive solutions to challenges the global community is facing. The speakers discussed

the causes in the rise of terrorism, intolerance and extremism in Bangladesh and South Asia. The causes included social injustice, ideological contradiction, religious views, ill-motivated and bad political interference. Additionally, sometimes government policies and outside interference in all South Asian countries have been primary factors responsible for the rise of extremism in the region. So, a comprehensive approach is needed to deal with issues of terrorism, violence, intolerance and extremism at the state, society and regional levels in order to eradicate them from our lives.

After lunch break, the dialogue the *Youth & Women Empowerment: For Contributing an Inclusive and Peaceful Society* was discussed. The speakers mentioned that total world's population is about 7.8 billion, among them 30% are youth, of which approximately 50 million youth are in Bangladesh who are born after independence. These numbers reflect the necessity of ensuring empowering youth and women through meaningful participation, equal partnership, decision-making and societal well-being. The speakers indicated that the youth are the catalyst for peace, security and humanitarian action. Their voices and dedication should promote a peaceful, safer, just and sustainable world. Also, women are generally deprived of their basic rights and face discrimination in many aspects of their daily life. So, the speakers emphasized promoting an inclusive and peaceful society that specifically addresses youth and women in ways that support facing challenges of the 21st century.

The last dialogue session discussed *Climate Justice, Environmental Ethics & Human Values*. It was also mentioned that the theme of the Peace Day is Climate Action for Peace. This draws attention to the importance of combating climate change as a way to protect and promote peace throughout the world.

The speakers argued that peace can only be achieved if concrete action is taken to combat climate change. They demanded that all governments should prioritize reaching carbon neutrality by

2050; tax pollution; stop subsidizing fossil fuels; stop building new coal plants by 2020; focus on green economy, not a grey economy and pursuing global efforts to limit temperature rises to 1.5C degrees. Their demands also included making significant contributions to climate policy and action, advocating for sustainable agriculture, producing and consuming for one's personal life, community and country; and to raise ethical and moral arguments for climate justice.

Finally, there was an exclusive Peace Talk and Atisha Changemaker Award presentation ceremony chaired by Dr. Dibakar Barua, co-chair, Atisha Dipankar Peace Trust Bangladesh. The honorable mayor of Chittagong City Cooperation Alhaz A J M Nasir Uddin was present, in addition to Prof. Dr. Bikiran Prasad Barua, Prof. Dr. Pravat Chandra Barua, Somboon Chungprampree (Moo), Prof. Dr. Monzurol Kibria, Prof. Dr. Ujjal Kumar Dev, councillor Tareq Soliman Salim, councillor Hassan Murad Biplob, Santoshita Chakma Bakul were presented as guests of honor. The city mayor thanked everyone for arranging the Peace Day programs and greeted all peace activists to work for sustainable peace, religious harmony, overcoming extremism and collective efforts for fellowship, amity among people to people connection in the region and the world.

Later the mayor presented the Atisha Changemaker Award to the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), Thailand, "For Incomparable Role of Promoting Global Peace, Peacebuilding and Services to the World Humanity." INEB Executive Secretary Mr. Somboon Chungprampree (Moo) received the award on behalf of the organization. Awards were also given to Professor Dr. Md Monzorul Kibria, Mr. Swapan Barua Chowdhury and Prof. Dr. Ujjal Kumar Dev individually 'For Significant Role of Promoting Peaceful Society and Services to the Humanity.'

Rekindling Regional Pride: The Dawei Art Space

Words & Photos *BEN DUNANT* | *FRONTIER*



A new art gallery in the Tanintharyi capital of Dawei aims to showcase the natural beauty and cultural heritage of a region on the brink of large-scale development.

“DAWEI is not like the rest of Myanmar. We have our own language, our own culture and literature. Our way of thinking is different,” explained Ma Mya Ei Thwe, a volunteer at the Dawei Art Space in the Tanintharyi Region capital.

Given Myanmar’s diversity, such statements are regularly heard in other parts of the country. However, because Tanintharyi is a nominally Bamar-majority administrative region, as opposed to an ethnic nationality state, its cultural distinctiveness is often overlooked.

Mya Ei Thwe, who is known to friends as Nge Nge, said locals were also prone to devalue their heritage in the desire for modernity and economic development. In an isolated region where many households are only kept afloat by remittances from relatives working in exploitative conditions in Thailand, there is straightforward desire for a better life.

Mya Ei Thwe said a better life needn’t come at the expense of identity. She believes that the gallery and the art it displays, with its focus on local subjects, could play a role in rekindling pride in the region’s natural and cultural inheritance.

“People want to copy more developed countries, but we’ll lose our culture and our values that way,” she said. “Through art, we can recall our childhood memories and our happiness.”

When the gallery opened in June, Dawei was being pummelled by monsoon rains that hit this lush coastal corner of southeastern Myanmar with particular ferocity. Close to the municipal market and just a couple of minutes’ walk from Strand Road along the river, the Dawei Art Space is one of the few contemporary cultural offerings in a small, low-rise city characterised by peeling colonial villas and family-run businesses.

Frontier visited the gallery in mid-October, when the rain clouds had given way to fierce sunshine, and found a thick-walled, two-storey building resembling a godown, or warehouse. Its cheerful yellow façade, with three large doorways opening onto a covered stretch of pavement, invited anyone to walk in from the street.

Inside, the gallery’s dark wooden floor, recessed windows and white walls created a cool, quiet mood, undisturbed by the whirring of a ceiling fan and the pattering of scooters from the street outside. It was the perfect atmosphere for looking at art and considering Dawei’s heritage, and discussing both subjects with Mya Ei Thwe.

As Mya Ei Thwe told it, the building has a largely commercial history that reflects the changes



The Dawei SEZ site, by Thai artist Prasart Nirandornprasert.

in trade and consumer habits in the small city. It had served a dealer in Capstan cigarettes, a British brand popular in the early 20th century but rarely sold today, as well as a trader in areca nut, which grows in dense palm groves across the region. It had later been a video hall where pirated Myanmar and Hollywood films were shown, and for a brief time a motorcycle showroom. But with holes in the roof to fix and a rotting floor that needed replacing, it had not been well maintained.

She said that the gallery runs on contributions from local organisations and individuals, including artists who previously had to submit their work to cafés, restaurants and hotels if they wanted the public to see or buy them. Renting out the space for workshops and small conferences, and the sale of handmade products from local enterprises, also helps them to meet the K600,000-a-month rent.

Besides exhibitions, talks, film screenings and traditional music nights (recently, a Tavoyan mandolin concert) that are organised directly by the gallery, the space also provides a free venue for discussions by students from high schools in the city, along with other groups in the community who cannot afford to pay, Mya Ei Thwe said.

The exhibition showing at the gallery when Frontier visited was devoted to depictions of the

region's coastline and the communities whose lives depend on the sea. "Sea Lovers" runs to the end of November and features paintings by the Dawei-based artists Karaweik, Hla Shwe, Saw Eh, Soe Naing and Aung Kyaw Myo. Little red circular stickers, denoting a sale, were affixed to the frames of a few of the works.

Mya Ei Thwe said the idea for the exhibition came from the artists themselves. "They wanted to rent a space to put on an art show during the Thadingyut festival [in mid October] but didn't have the budget for it, so they approached us, and we were so happy to host them here," she said.

The exhibition took up the front room of the gallery, while a rear room bore a rotating display of paintings by artists who were based in, or had visited, Dawei. One canvas, by Thai painter Prasart Nirandornprasert, depicted the site of the Dawei Special Economic Zone, 30 kilometres northwest from the town.

An angry red sky loomed over an otherwise bucolic scene, the sun's rays jabbing violently downwards onto green-and-yellow fields populated by water buffalo. A milestone loomed in the foreground, showing 0 kilometres – the starting point of a planned highway that, like the mega-project it was intended to serve, has gone nowhere for years.

This acrylic work jarred with the other paintings on display, which showed a region of undisturbed rural livelihoods and the largely unblemished beauty of its beaches, mountains and forests. Prasart's unsettling panorama seemed to portend an apocalyptic transformation of the coastal area of 20,000 hectares that was earmarked for what would be one of the largest industrial zones in the world.

Though construction of the SEZ has been stalled since 2013, and residents in villages slated for demolition have even built new houses, work on the

130km road that would connect it with the Thai border at Htee Khee is expected to begin soon with Thai government financing. A deep-sea port will follow. Though many remain sceptical about the prospects of the accompanying SEZ, the spectre of big development still lingers over this stretch of picturesque coastline.

"We are rich in natural assets, but many people aren't conscious of this," Mya Ei Thwe said. "Through art, we can show our resources and regenerate feelings of pride."

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The 26th Sem Pringpuangkeo Public Lecture

Saturday, 8 February 2020, 1:00 – 6:00 pm

Faculty of Liberal Arts - Room LA107,

Thammasat University (Tha Phra Chan Campus), Bangkok

DHAMMA RAINBOW Gender Justice: An Inevitable Issue in Contemporary Buddhist Ethics

Programme Schedule

13.00-13.30	Registration
14.00-14.10	Welcome remarks - Mr. Surasee Kosolnawin, President, Sathirakoses-Nagapradeepa Foundation
14.10-14.20	Opening remarks - Mr. Chutchawal Pringpuangkeo, Director, SEM Pringpuangkeo Foundation
14.20-14.30	Thai flute music - Norapattara Phabanjongjit
14.30-15.30	Documentary film Tripitaka 2 - Buddhism for Equality
15.40-16.40	Public Lecture "DHAMMA RAINBOW - Gender Justice: An Inevitable Issue in Contemporary Buddhist Ethics, Ven.Chao Hwei Shi, Dean, Department of Religious Studies, Hsuan Chuang University, Taiwan
16.40-17.40	Panel Discussion Panelists include: Ven. Chai Woradhammo , Thai Buddhist monk & LGBT activist Ouyporn Khuankaew , International Women's Partnership for Peace and Justice Asso. Prof. Dr. Chalidaporn Songsamphan , Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University Tanwarin Sukkhapisit , Thai filmmaker and member of Parliament Moderator - Anchaleeporn Kusum , journalist
17.40-17.55	Q&A and exchanges of ideas
17.55-18.00	Closing remarks - Sulak Sivaraksa

With translation into Chinese and Thai

● For the full programme, visit <http://www.semsikkha.org> and www.snf.or.th

● For more details, contact Ms. Poolchawee at 0 2344 7385, 08 9499 0490

Sulak Sivaraksa: Behind the Audience with the King

Interview by **Hathairat Phaholtap**,

October 16, 2019

From *The Isaan Record*:

<https://isaanrecord.com/2019/11/16/interview-sulak-sivaraksa/>



Sulak Sivaraksa at the Wild Dog Bookshop in Khon Kaen.

At 86 years of age, Sulak Sivaraksa—better known as S. Sivaraksa—is a senior academic who has been popularly dubbed the “Siamese Intellectual,” and he is no stranger to the courtroom. Throughout his career he has been compelled to answer court summonses more often than he cares to remember. In no less than six of these court cases he was answering to the charge of *lèse-majesté*, or royal defamation.

His most recent court case was in 2014, when he was accused of defaming King Naresuan during a debate at an academic seminar titled “The history of expunging and contriving.” In 2018, the case was withdrawn by military prosecutors.

The Isaan Record’s editor Hathairat Phaholtap sat down with S. Sivarak to talk about this case, and his views concerning the monarchy, and the question of ethnicity in the Northeast.

The Isaan Record (IR): You’ve been charged with *lèse-majesté* many times over. Why do you still continue to speak out about Article 112 [of the Thai criminal code] and the monarchy?

Sulak Sivaraksa: The last time I was accused of insulting the monarchy, if the military court had gone ahead with that case, I would probably have been facing quite a bit of jail time.

IR: After petitioning the King and receiving a royal pardon from him, you gave interviews to the press saying that the King is compassionate. How is he compassionate?

Sulak: I told His Majesty that I was being unfairly targeted, that the charge of *lèse-majesté* was just a pretext for silencing me, and he believed me. He instructed the royal secretariat to have the court case dropped immediately. His Majesty is very decisive. If he is going to do something, he doesn’t wait around to do it. I am very grateful indeed.

IR: It’s been said that you’ve had numerous audiences with the King. Can you tell us how you’ve advised His Majesty?

Sulak: That’s not true; people really do talk too much sometimes. I’ve had the one audience with His Majesty and that’s it. He was simply interested to hear the views of an old man like me. He asked me what I thought about various things, and I replied to the best of my old brain’s ability. I spoke to the King in frank and earnest terms, that much he could tell. There really was nothing more to it than that.

IR: In your view, how is King Rama X?

Sulak: He is a very capable man. People often think that he wouldn't be up to things like reading, when he is extremely well read. He knows about people like Netiwit [Netiwit Chotiphatphaisal, a student activist at Chulalongkorn University]. He knows about the book that Netiwit translated into Thai [*Letters to my Grandchildren* by Tony Benn]—things the vast majority of Thai people aren't aware of. It took me by surprise, too.

IR: You say that he is a very capable and insightful person. What are his views on democracy?

Sulak: He is very interested in the topic of democracy, that much I'm sure. But as to exactly what his views are on the subject of democracy are, I am not sure at all.

IR: Do you view Article 112, as it is currently being used, as a political tool or as a means of protecting the monarchy?

Sulak: Oh, it's definitely not a means of protecting the monarchy! It is well and truly a political tool. The previous king stated under no uncertain terms that anyone who abuses Article 112 is, in effect, harming the King. And by doing that, they would be directly contributing to the decline of the monarchy. He was very clear about that.

Every administration likes to blow a lot of hot air about being loyal to the king, but they never really follow the King's real intent for the law. There was only one politician who did, and that was "Seh Nan" [Maj. Gen Sanan Kachornprasart] when he was the Minister of Interior. During his tenure he forbade the police from initiating any 112 cases. I have to give him credit for that. But he's dead and long gone now. Hardly anyone remembers him anymore.

IR: How will this law be used from this point onwards? You've said many times in the past that it needs to be overhauled. How should it be changed?

Sulak: I said that in parliament. I said that, "If you MPs had any sense, if you don't have the courage to get rid of this law, you should at least think about amending it." For example, they could have gotten rid of the minimum sentence of three years since that would allow the courts to suspend sentences. Another thing is to remove the obligation for the police to accept any accusation of *lèse-majesté*—however spurious—as *prima facie*. That's just ridiculous, that they can't refuse to arrest someone

accused of *lèse-majesté*, even when they don't see any reason to.

There ought to be a legal commission to decide first on whether there is really any grounds for prosecution under Article 112. This commission could be drawn from the judiciary, or from the Bureau of the Royal Household, too, for that matter. The point is that there really ought to be some serious deliberation on whether to go ahead and prosecute someone for the crime of insulting the monarchy.

But it isn't because this law, as it is, is extremely useful for the people in power. It has no use whatsoever for those without power. You have to understand that most people don't have any power, they have no real recourse. The law should be protecting these people, not the people who already have all the power.

IR: Do you think the monarchy should remain a fixture in Thai politics and society?

Sulak: That's actually one of the questions His Majesty posed during my audience with him. I said to him, that for the monarchy to endure, it must make itself useful to the people. If the monarchy is wholly self-serving, well then its days are surely numbered [Sulak shakes his head]. The monarchy must introduce some transparency into its workings if it wants to remain. It must be open to criticism. That's what I said to him, but I don't know whether he believes I'm right or not.

IR: At the moment there's a buzz online about young people not wanting to stand up for the King in cinemas. What are your views on this?

Sulak: Standing up for the royal anthem in cinemas and theaters, that's a custom that we borrowed from western nations when they still did it. In the UK, they've stopped doing that long ago! They know that if people want to do these symbolic displays they will, but if they're not into it then they won't. There's no real point to it.

Let me tell you something. During the reign of Rama XII [King Prajadhipok, r. 1925–1935], there was an incident where police arrested an elderly lady who didn't stand up for the royal anthem at a theater. Marshal Paribatra Sukhumbandhu [Prince of Nakhon Sawan] who was also Minister of Interior at the time, was absolutely furious. He said, "How is an old lady supposed to know anything about these western displays of

respect?” and he had her released immediately.

The [royal] anthem is just a symbol. It's designed to honor the monarchy and make it look great. When the people are satisfied, that is a good time to put the anthem on. But when people are dissatisfied, forcing the anthem on them is a mistake—whether it's a song or whatever. If people are unhappy about these displays, then they have to stop. There is absolutely no good to be gained from forcing the issue.

IR: But some people still do stand up for the royal anthem—there seems to be a pretty even split. What is the way forward?

Sulak: Just leave them be! The people who don't agree with you, that's who you have to get to come around. The people who already agree with you, they're already on your side.

It's very simple. When Tsarist Russia fell, Rama VI asked his son Prince Chakrabongse—who was studying in Russia and living as a member of the Tsar's royal household—why the monarchy ended there. Prince Chakrabongse's reply was that though the Tsar was personally a very nice man, he refused to listen to the progressive voices, he refused to hear anyone who disagreed with him. He only listened to the people who agreed with him. Even the young Prince Chakrabongse could see that.

The lesson is very clear. Prince Chakrabongse told the king that the monarchy must pay heed to what its detractors have to say, and have a dialogue with them, and respect their differences of opinion. In the UK, the monarchy has survived because of this. There are critics of the monarchy left, right, and center there, but the monarchy still remains because they allow their detractors to vent. Better to allow them to say whatever they want to say, rather than have them conspire to overthrow the monarchy in secret.

IR: What is the political significance of the monarchy?

Sulak: The monarchy has been with Thailand for around 700, 800 years now. It's generally better to keep and improve what you already have than to destroy and start again. It's easy to chop down a tree, but if the tree gives shade then it's surely better to keep it than to chop it down.

Sure, the tree could have parasites living off of it.

It might have creatures living in it that can make you wish the tree wasn't there. You have to remove them, not the tree. The monarchy is the same. You have the extreme right-wingers, the people who are just hanging onto the coattails of the monarchy for their own ends, you have to get them out of the tree. A transparent monarchy that can be critically examined can last forever. It's better to keep a tree than to chop it down.

IR: The government of General Prayut Chan-ocha, which started off as a military dictatorship, has manipulated things and got themselves into parliament. What kind of hopes do you have for this government?

Sulak: Mr. Prayut... I've known dictatorships since the government of Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram, Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat, and later General Suchinda Kraprayoon. Those people ordered my arrest, and I ran away from them. But they all had smarts. They were capable men. But Mr. Prayut, he doesn't know a damned thing about anything. He's just winging it from day to day. How did we allow this kind of person to be prime minister?

But there are still some promising signs. There are some new parties in parliament now, a lot of people who are progressive in outlook. I think that these people will band together to stick it to Prayut. They'll use rationality as their main weapon because that's something that Prayut just doesn't get.

He even decided to either leave out or forget certain parts of the oath when being sworn into office. This is very dangerous, because the oath is sacred, yet he doesn't seem to give a damn. How do you deal with someone like this? The MPs have to get together and push, or kick him out, through whatever legal means they have before them.

IR: You've experienced dictatorships since 1937. Throughout your time, which dictatorship was the scariest?

Sulak: Sarit Thanarat. He was a genuine dictator who was truly fearsome because he was able to successfully co-opt the power of both the monarchy and religion for his own ends. Sarit was the most dangerous one of them all. Your publication is based in Khon Kaen. There are still photos of Sarit Thanarat on display around Khon Kaen. That means the people of Khon Kaen have yet to become aware of this.

You shouldn't forget that there used to be statues of Monsieur Pavie [Auguste Jean-Marie Pavie, first French vice-consul in Luang Prabang] standing in Laos, both in Luang Prabang and Vientiane. Pavie once said that it was because of him that Laos was able to escape the clutches of Siam. When Laos finally achieved its own independence and became a communist country, the statues of Pavie were thrown into the Mekong river. That shows that the Laotians are more aware than the Thai when it comes to these things.

I believe when Thai people finally wake up, they'll be throwing the statues of Sarit Thanarat into the Mekong river too, just as the Laotians have done.

IR: You've said that you're beginning to see some hope in the younger generation in parliament. Can you see hope for democracy after the most recent election? Do you think the people have democratically awake?

Sulak: Yes, I believe that some kind of awakening is afoot, whereas the government is rudderless. The more dictatorial the government is, the more the people will awaken. I think it really is worthy of praise, the way that young Thai people are more wise to what's going on than a lot of people from my own generation.

My hope is that Thailand is going to make it because of the new generation. In Khon Kaen you have people like Pai Dao Din, and in Bangkok there are people like Netiwit. Things are getting interesting.

IR: Many people in Isaan feel like their electoral choices have been ignored over and over again. Do you expect this pattern to continue in the future?

Sulak: It's not always easy to make changes. Power, and access to power, is bought and sold all the time. You have to be patient.

People these days have probably never heard of Prince Sithiporn Kridakara [1883-1971]. He dedicated his life to fighting for the farmers. During the first election that we had after the dictatorship in 1969, Prince Sithiporn formed a party and he came and asked me to help him find some candidates. He said he just needed one or two good people in parliament to be a voice for the struggling farmers.

Well, he did get one of his candidates into parliament. But that rascal only went and sold himself to the highest bidder. He never said a word about farmers in

all his time in parliament. Prince Sithiporn was heartbroken. I tried to console him, I told him to keep his chin up and just accept the fact that people can be bought, and to keep on fighting. That was a real shame. Prince Sithiporn died soon after that, and was forgotten.

Thinking of him, I recall him saying that the future of Thailand lies with the farmers, who are equal in dignity to any government official or middle-class urbanite. He said that when the farming backbone of this country gets a real say in how the country is run, that's when Thailand will have a future that is worth looking forward to. Right now, the farmers are still being woefully exploited, to say nothing of the manual laborers.

IR: You often talk about Thainess, you like to wear Thai-style outfits; sometimes you even go around in a ratpataen [traditional Thai loose-fitting knickers]. What is your definition of what it means to be Thai?

Sulak: To be Thai, for me... let's put it this way. Every nation has a right to express itself through its own language and culture. We shouldn't look down on other cultures. But what I do look down on is people trying to force [cultural expression] on others. Take the phrae trousers that I'm wearing, for example. During the time of Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram, people would get arrested for wearing these trousers. The police said it was indecent, and that to be presentable in public you had to wear western-style slacks. That's why I make a point of not wearing western-style clothing.

IR: What do you think "being Isaan" should mean?

Sulak: Being Isaan, you have to be proud of your Lao cultural heritage. These days you're calling yourselves "Isaan" [a Sanskrit-derived word for the northeasterly direction] people. Is there any country or culture that takes its name from a compass direction relative to another place? So you're Lao. What's wrong with that? You should be proud of the fact that you're Lao. Whether you're Lao from this side of the [Mekong] river or that side of the river, you're still culturally and linguistically Lao. The only thing that keeps trying to drive a wedge between the Lao-speaking peoples is politics.

Tera (Temple) Energy: Supporting Inner Ecology through Outer Ecology

*Translated and edited by Jonathan S. Watts from articles in the **Mainichi Newspaper***

*October 25, 2018 and the **Bukkyo Times**, May 16, 2019*

Since its establishment in 2015, the INEB Eco-Temple Community Development Project is continuing to attract new members and create new linkages for sharing knowledge on developing comprehensive eco-temple activities appropriate to each region and local ecosystem.

As a partner of another INEB sub network on Buddhist chaplaincy and psycho-spiritual care, our newest eco-Temple member, Rev. Ryogo Takemoto, is creating a new kind of interconnection between inner and outer ecology through his newest project Tera (Temple) Energy. Rev. Takemoto is the 41 year-old abbot of Saisho-ji, a Jodo Shin Hongan-ji Pure Land denomination temple located in Katsuragi City in Nara Prefecture, Japan. In June 2018, he along with a group of Jodo Shin priests established a new company called Tera Energy (tera=Buddhist temple) based in Kyoto City.

The roots of this project, however, go back to 2010, when with another group of Jodo Shin priests he established Sotto—the Kyoto Suicide and Self-Death Counseling Center as a non-profit organization to contribute to the work being done various Buddhist priests in Japan on suicide prevention and mental health care.

For the next 9 years, he put forth his best efforts into the work of counseling the depressed and also training other priests to support such persons. However, there were many instances in which he felt he could not continue with it, especially because of the strains of funding a non-profit that relied on grants and subsidies. This pushed him to conceive of a new system of support, which became the genesis of Tera Energy, whose motto is, “With a rich mind/heart, we can move towards a secure future”.

Rev. Takemoto notes that, “The fundamental cause of suicide is isolation. If we can create temples that

build community around a group of supporters, then we can definitely help in resolving the social isolation problem in Japan. Through Tera Energy, we would like to support temples and communities that have communal property to support society.”

With the wider circulation of electricity sales in Japan that until recently have been monopolized in every region by large utility companies, smaller retailers can provide freedom of choice as they gain certification for their new businesses. Since 2000, there has been a progressive shift in the energy market away from large-scale customers to individual households emerging in April 2016. Instead of Japan using nuclear power as a basis for generating electricity, Rev. Takemoto says Tera Energy would like to help realize the goal of more than 70% renewable energy (feed-in-tariff supply included) for the total electricity supply of Japan. The electricity Tera Energy procures will be mostly from renewable energy companies, such as Miyama Power HD, a company in Miyama City, Fukuoka Prefecture that supports community energy development. The Climate Network (Kiko-Nettowaku), a non-profit, will also provide support. They also have the aim in the medium-term to develop small-scale hydroelectric power in the wider Sanin region of prefectures along the Japan Sea Coast, such as Shimane, Tottori, and Hyogo.

For the time being, Tera Energy is targeting temples and their members in the Shikoku and Chugoku regions of central Japan with the aim of selling energy



Rev. Ryogo Takemoto, abbot of Saisho-ji, a Jodo Shin Hongan-ji Pure Land denomination monastery & CEO of Tera Energy.

nationwide by 2020. By June of 2019, they began supplying electricity to 30 temples and their parishioners of 2 sub-sects of the Rinzai Zen denomination and of the Jodo Shin Hongan-ji denomination in both Hiroshima and East Hiroshima cities through 11 main temple suppliers.

By November of 2018, Tera Energy had raised 16,420,000 yen (\$150,000) in capital to begin the work, and at present have 6 officers, of which 4 are Buddhist priests, and one staff. In June 2019, they will added two more staff through public canvassing. They are forecasting becoming profitable quickly through expanding nationwide by the year 2020. Their original expectations for this year was to have revenue of 1.7 billion yen (\$15.6 million). However, they will not able to meet this target, and Rev. Takemoto says, "There are some aspects we are looking at that might still be insufficient," such as lowering expenses through transferring office work, like customer management, within the company and also moving offices around.

The revised goal for contracts in 2019 is 300 temples with 1,200 attached family households for a revenue of 420 million yen (\$3.87 million). They claim that the break-even point for profitability is 200 temples and their affiliated households. Usage charges will reflect

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TERA Energy

the market price that changes according to time of day. As usage is divided into a fixed payment, there are no hidden or additional costs to pay.

Besides trying to offer clean energy as part of the larger environmental movement, the distinctive part of their system is the returning of 2.5% of the electrical charge to the temple provider, which they call "asset relief," a name change from the original "temple support cost." Those temples with normal contracts, which are basically the home temple of the consumers, will be the first to receive such returns. These temples will need to then show their plan of using these returns during the period of the contract. Rev. Takemoto says, "Rather than speaking of returning charges to the temple, it's more of a mechanism or system of donating to a business run by the temple. We could consider such a business as a social (welfare) activity, like building a cafeteria for local children or developing a plan for community restoration for the future."

By developing such an understanding in the community, lay followers may join in through creating such business proposals and acting as support staff. In the specific case that a supplier is not linked to a temple, Rev. Takemoto can choose to initially offer the returns to support a group that is working on environmental issues or his own Sotto Kyoto Self-Death and Suicide Counseling Center. In this way, he vows to make electricity a lamp for relief and security in Japanese society.

The 'Me Too Movement' Within Buddhism and Global Buddhist Women's Solidarity for Gender Equality

Bogyean Ok

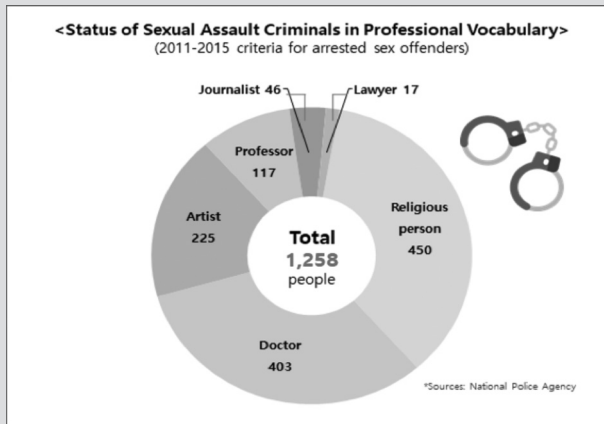
*Director, Institute for Religion and Gender/ Co Representative,
in The Solidarity for Gender Equality in Buddhism*

On October 20, 2019, I attended the 19th International Network for Engaged Buddhists (INEB) conference in India. Established in 1989, INEB holds an annual conference for Buddhists around the world who pursue peace, nonviolence, justice and human rights. This year's theme was "Culture of Awakening -Cultivation and Harvesting Wisdom." In Dharamsala, India, more than 160 people from 18 countries gathered together for the conference and also- met with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, revered as the incarnation of the Compassionate Avalokiteshvara. He generously welcomed us, stressing the "Oneness" of all mankind, saying that despite differing religious and political perspectives, every human being has the right to be happy.

I was given an opportunity to not only attend this conference, but also to give a presentation. While honored, I was mindful as to how to best tackle some real issues which have recently taken place in Korea that have had a major impact on the general population but also on the Buddhist community. The topic in particular was regarding the "Me too Movement" in Korea, where among many things that came to light, a Bhikku leader who sexually harassed a female employee a few years ago. In an effort to show support for the survivors, three women's organizations, including my institute, pursued justice for the women and the Bhikku was jailed. As a result, 15 Buddhist organizations formed a "The Solidarity of Gender equality in Buddhism" consortium which remains active.

As I experience the importance of solidarity and support for gender equality within Buddhism, I proposed to INEB my topic addressing the Me Too movement in Korea. Even as I made the decision to address this issue, as time went by I grew more concerned. This is in part because in many Southeast Asian Buddhist countries, the restoration of the Bhikkuni order is becoming the most important gender issue within Buddhism since the Bhikkuni order disappeared a long time ago, and because the rules of the monks are very strict, it was inconvenient to mention sex crimes. I could not help but wonder if the subject would be of interest to the participants.

In the afternoon there were four discussion groups related to peace and social justice. The title of our session was "Me Too Movement' Solidarity for



Gender Equality within Buddhism” and was moderated by a U. S. born Bhikkuni and three panelists which included an Indian and Sri Lankan women activist and myself. I presented my topic to about 30 people, including the Bhikkus, Bhikkunis, trainees, laywomen and laymen.

One of the panelists from Sri Lanka shared the story of a recent visit to a hospital where she saw a 7 year old child Bhikku who had been severely injured and hospitalized after being repeatedly raped by an adult Bhikku. We were all heartbroken to hear the story. Then the Indian panelist who said she came from a low caste background said that though she tried being part of Muslim and Christian communities, due to serious gender discrimination, she left those faiths and converted to Buddhism. However, she became disenchanted with Buddhism because of similar gender discrimination issues.

For my presentation, I began by citing the argument of Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa, INEB's founder to overcome gender discrimination within Buddhism, that Buddhists should “be an ally, network, organize, and, above all, practice the dhamma.” And, while there is no sexism anywhere else in Buddha's teaching, I explained how serious the deep-rooted patriarchy and misogyny in the Buddhism is. Presenting data showing that female believers in religion suffer from the “three bridles” of male-dominated patriarchal systems in families, churches and society, the data showed that of all

professional job holders (including lawyers and doctors), religious persons topped the list within sex offenders over the past five years in Korea.

While there are many reasons as to why women in Buddhist communities affected by sex crimes have difficulty speaking out, being ignored, criticized and threatened by others in the community are part of the problem. Furthermore, the temples force silence with authority or conceal cases, and refuse to intervene, saying it is a societal and not a religious issue. Even though crimes were exposed, many times they were dismissed as a minor clerical error or insignificant matters. These silent cartels have continued allowing sex crimes, which is a matter of human rights and a matter of teaching, not just a women nor society at large issue. Therefore, it is my opinion that female practitioners should be allowed to break their forced silence, and INEB needs to make efforts to support all Buddhist survivors of sex crimes in each country, to allow for unity and practicing Buddhism without fear of sexual assault.

After the presentation, the reaction was overwhelmingly supportive. One woman said in a trembling voice, “I feel reluctant to go to a temple, because a Bhikku sexually harassed me when I was young.” Then a layman said, “I didn't know that the sexual assault problem in temples were so serious. I had no idea women were suffering so much. Men should also be educated,” receiving applause from women in attendance. A Bhikku protested, however, complaining “Even though we work hard outside, sweating, Bhikkunis have easy work in the kitchen. So, sometimes we envy Bhikkunis. And Bhikkunis don't like to take center stage because they don't like to teach or be in front of others.” He claimed that “This is by no means sexism.”

Then a Japanese monk said, “We too have a serious sexual harassment problem in the temple. This seems to be as much affected by the male-dominated Confucian culture in Japanese temples



Korea Buddhists Supporting the Me Too Movement

as it is in Korea.” A Theravada Buddhist Bhikku said, “We haven’t heard about what sexual violence is and what to do with laywomen. Laywomen do not say things that criticize or reject us. We have to learn because we don’t know very well.” Mae-Chees from Thailand (they are called “Mae-Chee” instead of “Bhikkuni” because Thailand has no Bhikkuni order) were listening quietly.

After the end of the presentation and panel debate, another Theravada Buddhist Bhikku said very seriously, “I’m very surprised by this talk today and learned something I hadn’t known. For Buddhists who truly follow Buddha’s teachings, it is unthinkable to do sex crimes. I realize that there is much we don’t know about this, and it is my hope that your efforts will get rid of sexual assault within Buddhism.”

Through this discussion, we came to the conclusion that solidarity activities for gender equality are very important and should be carried out consistently and systematically, and also urgently. These activities also can take place in all Buddhist countries at the same time, such as gender equality education for Bhikkus and education for preventing sexual violence for laywomen. As a start, we created a chat room to exchange mutual opinions, promising to take a step forward for organized activities for gender equality at INEB.

Each participant wrote and shared their opinions and ideas regarding how to affect change

going forward. Many of their ideas shared a similar vein of thought.

“Not only laywomen but also laymen in the temple also become victims of sex crimes.”

“The solution to this problem should include the strengthening of the legal system and educating for human rights and preventing sex crimes.”

“The problem of gender equality is due to a lack of knowledge. In a male-dominated society, men have a sense of superiority and do not know what gender equality is. Therefore, we should open up more and discuss this issue.”

“We need seminars and workshops on the issue of gender.”

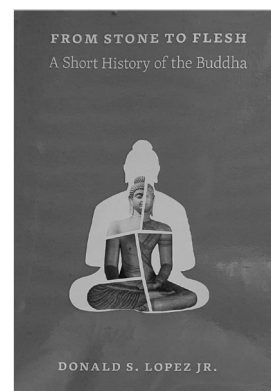
“We need to be merciful.”

“We provide medical assistance to surviving sex offenders.”

We could agree on the necessity for solidarity and also confirmed the possibility of a gender-partnership with Bhikkus and laypeople. The time we shared together will be a precious first step for Buddhists to unite, network, organize and practice in order to create a gender-equal culture.



Recommended Reading



From Stone to Flesh: A Short History of the Buddha
A series edited by Donald S. Lopez Jr.

Translated: Earl Hartman

The History and Impact of Indian Buddhists on the Development of Buddhism in China: Relevance to the Contemporary Situation

Mangesh Dahiwale

Framework to Study Buddhist Conquest of China

According to Hu Shih, India colonised China through Buddhism. He termed this process of cultural borrowing as the Indianisation of China through Buddhism. Remarking that unlike material borrowing, cultural borrowing has many stages and phases, he outlined various stages of development of Buddhism in China. He compared this with Christianisation of Europe and described as Indianisation of China. The impact of Buddhism on China is summarised in the Chinese proverb: Every home Amitabha; every home Avalokiteshvara. In 1930, there were 500,000 Buddhist monks and 100,000 Buddhist temples.

According to him, the cultural borrowing took place in four stages:

1. Mass borrowing (blind translation and acceptance of everything coming from India)
2. Resistance and persecution (violent attack on Buddhism by Chinese kings and intellectuals)
3. Domestication (for example, Avalokitesvara converted into Kuan Yin)
4. Appropriation (The rise of Chinese Zen)

Hu Shih concluded that Buddhism was all the time undergoing internal evolution and transformation under the influence of the Chinese environment and tradition.

Influence of Indian Buddhist Teachers on China

The influence of Nagarjuna, Kumarjiva, and teachers like Kashyap Matanga is still found in Chinese

Buddhism. Kumarjiva, in particular, translated the Buddhist texts in a way that was easy for the Chinese to relate with in their own language. The name Kashyap Matang indicates one of the castes among the Dalits.

Bodhidharma played an important role in establishing Dhyana Buddhism and also Shaolin temples. While the influence of these masters continues in China, India also benefited from the visits of Chinese Bhikkhus like Faxian, Xuanzang and Itsing. If they had not left the travelogues behind, the history of Buddhism in India would have been lost to the forces of time. This bilateral interaction between Buddhists from India and China paved a way for the contemporary understanding of Buddhism in India and Chinese world.

Buddhism in Modern China

In the nineteenth century, the Buddhists in China responded with a new vigour and Buddhism was alive in the republic era, Maoist era, and is still alive in present day China.

In the nineteenth and twentieth century, the Buddhists in China responded to the changing political situation with innovative ideas like lay Buddhist organisations in Shanghai during the republic era, publishing magazines exclusively devoted to Buddhism, and engaging in dialogues with science and Marxism. The notable figures of period were remarkable individuals who defended Buddhism, including Master Taixu and Master Tanxu.

Buddhism in Modern India

Buddhism was reviving in the nineteenth century but in an altogether different context than Buddhism in modern China. Archaeological history of Buddhism was being exhumed and social and political activists from non-Brahman backgrounds found in Buddhism a religion for the new India. The remarkable individuals were Iyothee Thass, Periyar, Phule, and Babasaheb Ambedkar. Buddhism in India became an alternative to the caste system when Babasaheb Ambedkar embraced Buddhism in 1956.

However, the interaction between Buddhists in China and India was not there, except individuals interacting with individuals. For example, Anand Kaushalyayan visited China in 1956.

Xuanzang: The Unifying Figure

The life and mission of Xuanzang is uniting not only the Buddhists from China, Taiwan, Japan, and India, but he is seen as a model of Chinese spirit in contemporary Chinese society. He not only transmitted Buddhism from Nalanda University to China, but also acted as a Chinese Ambassador to India exposing Indians to Chinese thinking.

The Fifth Stage of Buddhist Interaction Between China and India

Buddhism has become a part of global diplomacy as a soft power. The communities in South East Asia and the Far East are influenced by Buddhism. There is a huge concentration of the Chinese diaspora in the South East Asia and now increasingly in the west.

China started with World Buddhist Forum, and in response to that India began with the Global Buddhist convention that culminated into forming the International Buddhist Council (IBC). This stage is political and diplomatically motivated as Buddhism is being used as a soft power where nation states like Nepal and Sri Lanka are involved in this great game over Buddhism.

However, the great masters like Taixu, Babasaheb Ambedkar, Tanxu, and Master Nan have shown the path to the future interaction between

Buddhists in India and China. The broader framework can be sketched from the study of history and extended into future.

Relevance of Buddhism

Buddhism is relevant to the modern world to solve the “problems” facing humanity today. These problems can be understood and then addressed using a Buddhist framework. Discrimination exists in India as do condition of exploitation/suffering in many other places around the world. The great masters saw in Buddhism a quest for pure land on the earth. They came to make Buddhism humanistic and this-worldly as opposed to “spiritual” and other-worldly.

The masters from the modern times understood the importance of Buddhist dialogues with science, democracy, and Marxism. The Buddhists in China would have agreed with Babasaheb Ambedkar’s paper on “Buddha and Marx” and believed in the efficacy of methods of the Buddha for enduring change in the world.

The masters from both China and India emphasized “Buddhist Internationalism” for fighting the local and regional problems. They advocated Global Buddhist Missions for a better world.

There is a need for Buddhists from Chinese speaking world and India to work together as the Buddhists for transforming the societies.

Perhaps, this is the time to borrow from “Chinese Buddhism” for the Indian Buddhists. The Indian Buddhists can borrow the rich experience of Chinese Buddhists. They can learn how to organise and response even in the grave situations that Chinese Buddhists faced.

Reverse Transmission of Buddhism from China to India

The Chinese speaking world has kept the back up of Buddha’s teaching, Indian Buddhists should start accessing that. The Chinese speaking Buddhists are relatively much richer than Indian Buddhists, they can help to set up Buddhist institutions in India.

The reviving Buddhism in India offers an opportunity for the Chinese Buddhists to pay back their debts to their ancient teachers as India is now young nation where youth from Buddhist communities are more inclined to learn and understand Buddhism.

Perhaps, it is not possible politically and diplomatically to go back to the slogan “Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai” which was converted into a joke “Hindi-Chini Bye-Bye” during the war between Indian and China. The Buddhists from both the sides can not only chant this slogan, but make it a reality: Hindi-Chini Bauddha Bhai Bhai (The Chinese and Indian Buddhists are brothers and sisters!!).

Revolutionary Convergence of Buddhist Thoughts of Babasahab Ambedkar from India and Bhikkhu Tai Xu from China: Common Ground for Buddhist Friendship

Both Babasaheb Ambedkar and Tai Xu were born in the years 1891 and 1890 respectively, and faced the same challenges of bringing transformation in their respective countries. Both were widely read and actively engaged in the societies responding to the problems. They were involved in a renaissance that can be qualified as Buddhist renaissance. While Babasaheb Ambedkar was engaged with society, politics, and the economic development of India, Bhante Tai Xu was devoted to bringing Buddhism into dialogue with social movements, science, Marxism, and other religions. Now that Buddhism is reviving in both India and China, their life, thoughts, and legacies are a guide to present generations.

Their common faith in Buddhasasana becomes evident in their cherished hope. This faith in Buddhism as the savior of humanity in the common ground between these great Buddhist leaders in India and China.

Bhante Tai Xu remarked that, “My long cherished hope that the world would be saved through Buddhism.”

Babasaheb Ambedkar similarly remarked, “It is only Buddhism which can emancipate the

world.”

New Buddhism of Tai Xu Bhante and Babasaheb Ambedkar is not new as opposed to old. Bhante Tai Xu wrote in Sound of Sea that new is in a sense of the true, original essence of Mahayana Buddhism; Babasaheb Ambedkar, he reclaimed and recovered the basic and foundational teachings of the Buddha from his study of Pali texts.

There are many similarities between the understanding of Bhante Tai Xu and Babasaheb Ambedkar. Both of them:

- Understood that there is a conflict and strife in the world and Buddhism should respond to that.
- Found Buddhism compatible to science.
- Agreed with the Marx’s vision ending exploitation in the world, but found Buddha’s methods effective for bringing non-violent revolution.
- Recommended following strategies to make Buddhism effective in the modern times:
 1. Reorganising the Sangha and lay people
 2. Compassionate social action
 3. Modern education
 4. Comparative study of religions
- Agreed on a Global Buddhist Mission

The World Fellowship of Buddhists was established by G. P. Malalasekhera from Sri Lanka, who said he was inspired by the vision of Bhante Tai Xu. Babasaheb Ambedkar participated in the WFB conferences and was honored as an esteemed Buddhist leader.

Unfortunately, Babasaheb and Bhante did not meet, but there is a strong possibility of Babasaheb Ambedkar knew of Bhante Tai Xu as former’s disciple Fa Fan was one of the forces behind WFB and a friend of G.P. Malalasekhera.

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Mangesh Dahiwalé is a member of the INEB Executive Committee and is with the Jambudvīpa Trust, India.

Dear Sombath...from Shui Meng

From Sombath.org -

<https://www.sombath.org/en/2019/12/dear-sombath-from-shui-meng-18/>

My dearest Sombath

Today is 15 December 2019. It's already 7 years today that you were so ruthlessly taken away from me, your family, and friends. Who could have imaged that 7 years have gone by and there is still a wall of silence surrounding what happened to you. However, with each passing day, the silence from those who took you speaks louder than words, and shows clearly their guilt and lack of ability to admit the truth of the injustice done to you.

Nevertheless, my dearest Sombath, the passing of time does not mean that you are forgotten. In the days leading up to your 7th anniversary, I have received so many messages from friends, colleagues, and even people who have never met you, to express their solidarity, love and blessing for you, wishing you strength, good health and your safe return to us. To mark your 7th anniversary, we held a prayer and blessing ceremony for you at Wat Na Khoun Noi Forest temple – the temple that you have had such a long and close affiliation with, and have helped initiate the Buddhist Development Program to train monks, nuns and novices to use the Buddhist teachings as the basis for development of the self, and their families and communities.

My dearest Sombath, today's prayer and blessing ceremony was so beautiful. It was led by all the monks and novices of the temple and attended by many friends, colleagues, members of the diplomatic community, and also young people.

The prayer and blessing ceremony was simple, but everyone felt the positive energy that emanates from the beautiful environment of the forest temple, and the strong spiritual presence of nature and the universe. We know you are here with us and you clearly know that you are loved and blessed and always remembered wherever you are.

My dearest Sombath, this morning before going to the temple, I got this message from one of our dearest friends, David and Lois from Minneapolis. Lois dedicated this poem to you and I a few years back. On this special day, she sends me this poem again to remind me that as long as we share the same air space, we are united in spirit, despite the physical separation.

I find such comfort reading this poem that I want to share this poem with you and to say to you that time and distance can never separate the love we hold and share with each other.

Alone with You

Are we not sheltered by this one vast tent of
night sky
There the sparkling stars!
There the watchful moon, just rising
Do you see them?
You in your somewhere place
Tell me
Do you not breathe the air I breathe
Laden with fragrant jasmine flower
Listless and still as is this night
Are we not held in its warm embrace
Surely our hearts beat as one in this moment
Soothed by the faintest whisper of young
bamboo
Unlikely keeper of our one remaining hope
That we too shall bend and not break
Where are you if not with me here
In this place of shimmering solitude
Tell me

Do you hear the rising choir of croaking
frogs in paddy fields?
There! The gecko calls its mate
And what of the pungent scent of moist
earth
We have to but breathe to partake of its
promise
And now
And now, my dear
Receive the gentle kiss
Of rain
So my precious love, know that you are
never far from me and from all who love you and
continue to think of you every day.
Come home soon my love.

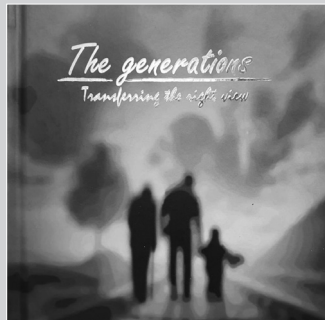
Shui Meng

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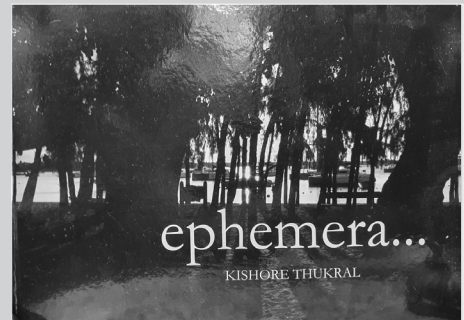
Recommended Reading



Factors for Awakening
Development
Ten Dhamma Talks by
Thanissaro Bhikkhu



The Generations:
transferring the right view
Author: Kishore Thukral
Publisher: Mosaic Books



Ephemera...
Author: Kishore Thukral
Publisher: Mosaic Books

The Network for
Religious and
Traditional
Peacemakers



Updates from 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

Pope Meets with Religious Actors to Advance Interreligious Dialogue

Bangkok - His Holiness Pope Francis met with religious and faith based actors from South and Southeast Asia to draw attention to the important role religious and traditional actors play in conflict mediation and broader peacebuilding efforts. The Pope's meeting entitled, "Building Bridges for Peace and Understanding," was held in conjunction with the Peacebuilders Conference on Faith, Development and Peace, hosted by the Rotary Peace Center and Chulalongkorn University in collaboration with the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers. During his visit to the University, the Pope met with multi-religious and faith based actors to discuss their experience, research and efforts in advancing faith peacebuilding at the grassroots, national and regional level. Staff from the Rotary Peace Center and the Network drafting a letter highlighting the important role religious leaders play in upholding human rights in their communities and confronting the challenging issues that Pope Francis highlighted in his 2015 Encyclical.

His Holiness inspired many people, in particular the Interfaith Fellows of the SEA-AIR Project (Southeast Asia: Advancing Inter-Religious

Dialogue and Freedom of Religion or Belief) consisting of local change makers to challenge discrimination and oppression linked to religious beliefs in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand and broader Southeast and South Asia. Fellows from Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka were able to attend the conference.

The draft letter was presented to conference participants for the input prior to sharing with the Vatican. Following the interfaith meeting, the Embassy of Finland hosted a media engagement event in which conference participants presented on the key themes from the conference and the Pope's interfaith meeting.

For over 100 years, Chulalongkorn University has produced valuable research and academic work recognized by the public and private sectors. It has been rated the number one University in Thailand for seven consecutive years.

The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers builds bridges between grassroots peacemakers and global players in order to strengthen the work done for sustainable peace. The Network strengthens peace making through collaboratively supporting the positive role of religious and traditional actors in peace and peacebuilding processes.

Network Hosts Diplomatic Briefing at Finnish Embassy in Thailand

Members of the Network Secretariat recently held a diplomatic briefing at the Finnish Embassy in Bangkok to discuss the work of the Network and its members and supporters in Thailand. The participants of the meeting included embassies and delegations from: Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Australian, European Union, Austria, Belgium, France, New Zealand, Switzerland and the United Nations.

The discussion focused on current dynamics and ongoing initiatives to advance interfaith peacebuilding throughout South and Southeast Asia. The Network presented on its work with women of faith and the related exchange between Southern Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia, the Peacebuilders Conference on Faith, Development, and Peace, and the European-Union funded project *Southeast Asia: Advancing Interreligious Dialogue and Freedom of Religion or Belief*.

The Peacebuilders Conference was hosted by the Rotary Peace Center at Chulalongkorn University, and organized in collaboration with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA) and the Network. The diplomatic briefing was the first of

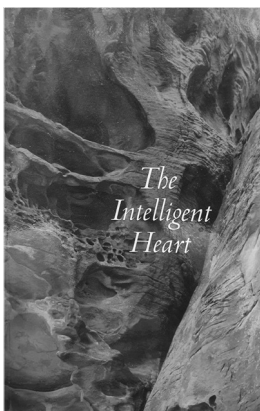
a series of planned follow-up activities to the conference, including future diplomatic briefings and disseminating a letter highlighting the conference's key messages to local and international media outlets. Representatives from all conference organizers presented at the briefing.

SEA-AIR Project Selects 15 Grant Recipients

SEA-AIR consortium project staff convened a Selection Committee in December to select 15 of Interfaith Fellows for small grant support. The Interfaith Fellowship Program, as part of the EU-funded SEA-AIR project, aims to build the capacity and skills of local changemakers, and empower and support them to advance interfaith dialogue and peace, challenge discrimination and oppression of minorities in their own communities and contexts, and contribute to social cohesion and FoRB in sensitive and constructive ways. As part of these aims, the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers will provide technical and financial support to 15 initiatives during phase 2 of the Interfaith Fellowship Program.

The 15 selected Fellows displayed advanced capacities to form collaborations and design human rights and conflict sensitivity focused innovative actions with demonstrable impact. The objective of this grant support is to promote inter- and intra-faith and pro-FoRB initiatives with real local ownership, promote cooperation among Fellows working in the same region/country, and increase contextually aware actions as part of the overall project. Fellows will receive grant funds in January 2020 and begin implementing their proposed activities in their home communities shortly thereafter.

Recommended Reading



The Intelligent Heart

Author: Ahra Ajaan Suwat Suvaco
Translated: Thanissara Bhikkhu

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Philip Gassert, Project Manager, The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers.

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Young Woman Farmer's Contribution to Sustainable Development in Vietnam

Dang To Kien & Mai Thuy Huyen



Mai Thuy Huyen, a lovely young farmer.

Huyen mulching her fruit trees using all available organic materials.

This little article is about a tiny amazing female, who lives in a remote local community named the Cao Quang commune of Quang Binh province. The central region of Vietnam, especially the two provinces Quang Tri and Quang Binh, are the two areas most affected by the US-War in Vietnam. Since that time the bombs and toxic residues of Agent Orange continue affecting the lives of many people.

Ms. Mai Thuy Huyen is a dedicated young female farmer, with long term interests in biology studies and is passionate about gardening following her own ways, her own heart. Despite many refusals and unsupportive statements from families and colleagues, she has since built her garden all by hand since around July 2018. Few days ago, I had a chance to visit Huyen's garden and absolutely felt the warmth and the love she has for it. It is amazing to see how Huyen has taken great care of every single fruit tree, which can be seen by how she mulches each one. Given the limited resources she has, Huyen has utilized and optimized the all available plant residues to mulch the soil and care for the fruit trees.

The local chickens are all free-range, fed with all home grown food. Huyen allows them to run free playing in the sand and rocks, searching for more food around the garden.

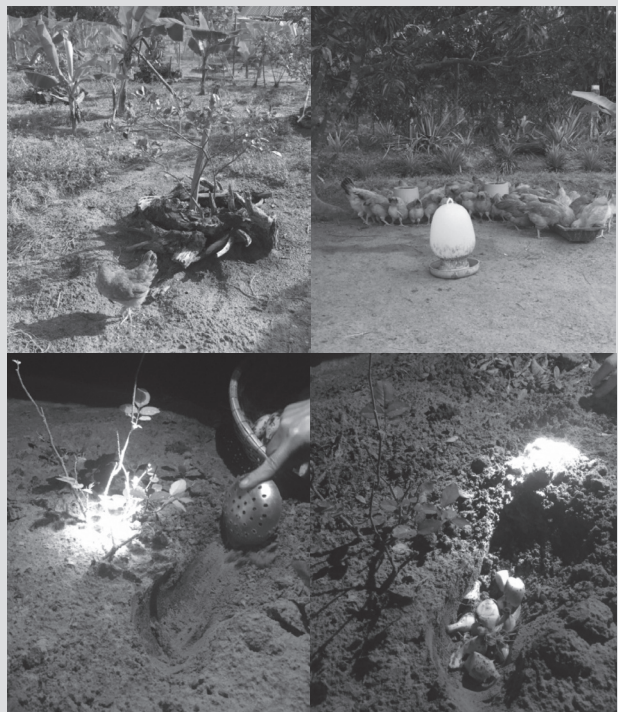
When evening time comes, Huyen found herself occupied with those little roses that were asking for food and to not be eaten by insects. Instead of buying external inputs, Huyen utilizes the banana fruits from the garden.

Together we enjoyed digging holes, cleared all the insects (caught them all by hands), and cut the banana fruits into pieces, and then re-filled the holes with them; expecting they will feed the rose plants soon.

I thought about the feeling the warmth and care Ms. Mai Thuy Huyen has for her plants, her animals and the roses. Huyen is a peace maker and she exercises her peace and calmness through gardening and interacting with living things around her life. I warmly hope this little story brings you more love and peace and motivation to create your own peace niche. Wishing you all good health and peace.

Dang To Kien is a member of INEB's Executive Committee, and is with the Community Entrepreneur Development Institute (CENDI)/HEPA Eco-farming School, Vietnam.

Huyen's chicken are healthy and run free.



Together Huyen and I fed the rose plants one evening.

Religions for Peace

Office of the Secretary General

Dear Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa,

It is our great honor and pleasure to welcome you as Honorary President of *Religions for Peace*.

You have been nominated and elected as Honorary President of *Religions for Peace* by 700 voting delegates, representing the world's major religious traditions, affiliated national and regional interreligious councils, women of faith and interfaith youth networks from across 125 countries at the *Religions for Peace* 10th World Assembly in Lindau, Germany on 20-23 August 2019.

It is our commitment as your International Secretariat to work closely with you to advance our shared goals, and to feature and highlight the work in your organization that simultaneously advances the mission of *Religions for Peace*. Your news, articles and interviews will be disseminated across our global network and among key international partners.

Please also know that, during the transitional period in which Prof. Azza Karam, Secretary General-Elect's legal processes with the United States government authorities are finalized, the World Council has appointed Rev. Kyoichi Sugino as Acting Secretary General. Rev. Sugino will be working closely with the Secretary General-Elect in this transition.

As *Religions for Peace* celebrates the 50th anniversary of its founding in 2020, we look forward to further strengthening our organizational capacity and deepening the impact of our shared mission and action under your leadership, guidance and support.

With esteem for you and your High Office, we remain

Sincerely yours,



Rev. Kyoichi Sugino
Acting Secretary General



Prof. Azza Karam
Secretary General-Elect

Dear Sulak,

You are right: "a long time..." That was the reason that two days ago, I had a sudden look in your internet-page as to see what you are doing! Anyhow, it seems to me that you are travelling no more as frequently as in earlier times.

Same with me. Last week I had a dentist-date in Basel. I went, because I had to go, but without any interest in additional events. Still, I like to read the local and national newspapers, in addition to searching in the Internet, mainly in following-up the warming-up climate-debate and new developments in astro- and bioscience.

Besides, I am collecting material for writing a manuscript, following up my last book on the self-optimizing humankind in the age of Anthropocene (December 2017). The book to come, will be even more critical on Christian worldview and world-interpretation than the previous one. But I am not sure whether or not I'm able to carry out!

Are you still engaged in writing too? Are you still doing publishing work? I am still using your "Calendar 2560!

Inge is fine! She is still busy with the gardening. During the week to come she will be twice in Basel. Two ladies, members of a monthly-literature-reading circle, passed away and she will attend the funeral-service. This also drastically reminds us that we are getting old! How is your family?

Let's keep in touch. I deeply believe that we are close together in spirit and in great hope for a harmonious humanity to come.

Greetings, including from Inge,
Wolfgang Schmidt



Geneva, 27 November 2019

Dear Mr. Somboon Chungpramree,

On behalf of Arigatou International, please receive a heartfelt message of gratitude for your co-sponsorship the Launch of Faith and Children's Rights – a Multi-Religious Study on the Contributions of Religious Communities to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, that was launched on 19 November.

This study creates a unique and compelling opportunity to put faith into action and promote interfaith

collaboration to revitalize the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, inspiring positive change for children, everywhere and at all times.

We look forward to the continuous support of INEB to deepen our efforts to promote and protect children's rights and end violence against children in all settings.

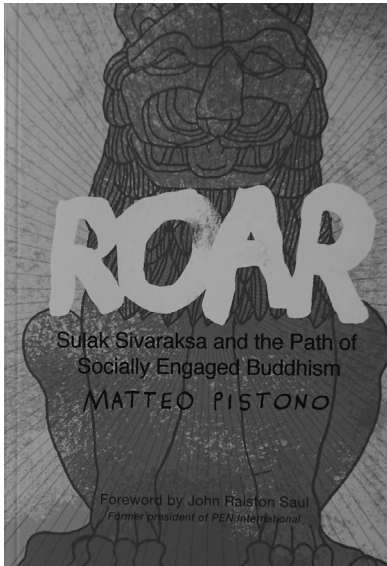
We thank you again for your support,

Respectfully,



Maria Lucia Uribe Torres

Director Arigatou International Geneva



“even readers already somewhat familiar with Sulak’s extraordinary life will find many things here to engage and surprise.”

The title of this book—explained in Chapter Eight—refers to two important scriptures in the Pali canon where the Buddha likens himself to a lion and equates his teaching to a lion’s roar. The Buddha also urged his disciples to go forth boldly and “roar their lion’s roar” for the benefit of all beings, and “Sulak’s voice of dissent and criticism, and his cries for social change have been a strong response to the Buddha’s call to action.”

This biography of Sulak Sivaraksa will be most accessible to readers who already have some knowledge of Thailand’s history and culture and preferably also of Sulak and his varied milieu, though it will be even more enriching for readers who have yet to penetrate beyond the country’s highly successful commercial image. Indeed the commercialization of his country that he referred to by its historical name, Siam, was one of the many

Roar: Sulak Sivaraksa and the Path of Socially Engaged Buddhism

by Matteo Pistono

North Atlantic Books (March 5, 2019)

Reviewed by Jane Haile

things Sivaraksa crusaded against in his development of “socially engaged Buddhism.”

Matteo Pistono, who has written extensively about Tibetan Buddhism (Mahayana as distinct from Theravada, the Buddhism of Thailand), captures the complex and often seemingly contradictory evolution of Sulak’s thinking and actions; a monarchist who openly criticized the Thai King Phumipol and had to flee twice into exile to avoid the consequences of his crimes of lèse-majesté; a devout Buddhist who criticized the institutionalization and bureaucratization as he saw it of the Thai Sangha (Buddhist Monastic Order); and a critic of Thai and other elites, who was not above a bit of elitism himself.

Throughout the book we are reminded of his attachment to a good red wine. One former prime minister who both supported and criticized Sulak summed up his situation as follows: “His heart is royalist, his head is slightly socialist.”

Whilst Pistono profoundly acknowledges Sulak’s contribution to “socially engaged Buddhism” through his actions, writing, and founding of organizations and networks this is not a hagiography by any means and shows with warts

and all how almost all of Sulak’s colleagues, family, friends, and disciples have at some time broken with him, only sometimes to return.

Some of the most vivid images of his complex values and presentation of self come from his early years in England where his applications to Oxford and Cambridge failed, in large part because of his poor English language skills. This was a bitter blow that took him to the University of Wales in Cardiff, though he continued fully to embrace the manners of an English country gentleman down to the cane and the cap.

After studying law in London and working for the BBC he returned to Thailand in 1962 and began to inveigh against the military regime that had repressed all intellectual freedoms, American culture well installed in Thailand to combat communism in Southeast Asia, and the dominance of capitalism and commercial thinking.

It was during this early period that Sulak founded his first publication the Social Science Review on the model of the *UK Encounter* and the *Atlantic Monthly* in the States. His editorship of the review made him a dominant progressive intellectual force partially

credited for the eventual overthrow of the military regime in 1973.

As part of his engagement with reforming Thai society and values Sulak continued to travel widely and to explore other religious beliefs, notably that of the Quakers in the US, and the Buddhisms of Tibet (Mahayana) and Vietnam (Vajrayana), through his relations with the Dalai Lama, and Thich Nhat Hahn respectively, in order to develop a more resilient and socially relevant Buddhist practice for Thailand and elsewhere.

Despite his progressive thinking Sulak has often been accused of chauvinism toward women, and

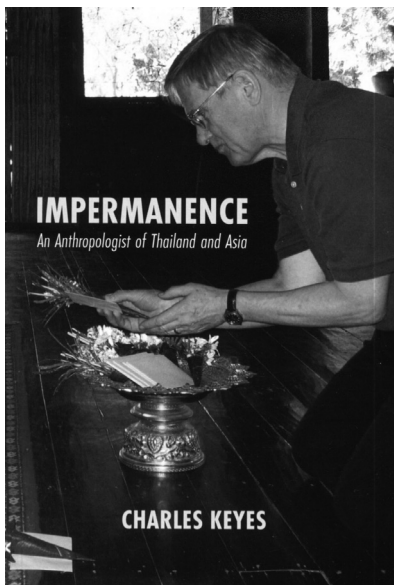
Pintero considers that while Sulak has always promoted gender equality he has not always demonstrated it. Sulak is deeply grateful for the support of Nilchawee his wife of many years, whom he considered “very contented and kind . . . not overambitious,” and though not following his radical way of thinking, always happy to support him, his workload, his disciples and his exiles. Nilchawee herself is fond of saying, “There has never been a microphone that Sulak didn’t want to make love to,” so is clearly her own woman.

Born on March 27, 1933, Sulak is still “roaring.” And even readers already somewhat familiar with

Sulak’s extraordinary life will find many things here to engage and surprise.

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Jane Haile is currently an Independent consultant on women’s empowerment and gender equality. Her vast global human rights experience includes a variety of assignments working for the United Nations and the European Union. She is a Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Society, London, U.K., and her writing has been published by several academic presses.

S



Charles “Biff” Keyes is exceptional. Among the foreign researchers who first came to study Thailand over half-a-century ago, few are now regularly read and cited today. Their works have aged. Academic fashions have changed. Their names have slowly faded. But anyone wanting to understand Thailand’s Northeast today will still read *Isan: Regionalism*

An Academic Life: The Memoir of a Much-loved Student of Thailand

Chris Baker, Bangkok Post, 16 August 2019.

Impermanence: An Anthropologist Of Thailand And Asia

By Charles Keyes, Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books 2018

In Northeastern Thailand, first published in 1967 as a modest “data paper.” This can partly be attributed to Keyes’ staying power. He continued to teach, write and regularly visit Thailand until a handful of years ago. But it’s also due to the book’s quality, Biff’s engaging personality, and his major role in the development of the study of

Southeast Asia.

He was born in Nebraska, son of an animal-feed salesman turned turkey farmer, and grew up in deepest middle America in a devout Presbyterian family. He coursed through school and into the University of Nebraska dreaming of becoming a physicist. His journey from this background to his Asian

career seems accidental. Discovering that he had more interest in people than things, he switched to anthropology. He decided to pursue graduate studies at Cornell University, just when it was becoming a centre for the study of Southeast Asia. He chose to focus on Thailand, and started learning Thai without having visited the country, probably under the influence of Lauriston Sharp. His journey in 1962 to Bangkok and on to his study village in remote Maha Sarakham, accompanied by his new wife and assistant, Jane, took him away from middle America to a very different world.

Keyes tells us that he kept a journal, and this clearly enables him to give a detailed account of his life and career with names named, dates specified, and events described. In the village, he struggled with the language, culture and environment, but gives a very warm picture of the villages adjusting to having these strangers in their midst, and to themselves becoming the subjects of academic study.

Anthropology, with its ambition to know humankind better, was very much the star social science of the second half of the 20th century. Many researchers chose to study peoples in remote islands and hills simply because they were most different from the modern, the present-day. Keyes joined a newer trend to focus on peoples being swept into modernity. His thesis described the semi-subsistent lifestyle and distinctive beliefs of the Maha Sarakham village, and then placed these in the context of history and politics: a peasant economy being

dragged into capitalism; a village enclosed by a nation; and ethnic Lao forced to negotiate with the culture of a Thai nation-state. His resurveys of the village and updates of the story in recent years show that the material base has changed completely, but the politics have extraordinary continuities.

Keyes developed a second research site among the Karen near the Thai-Myanmar border, where the themes were much the same. He settled at the University of Washington in Seattle for the length of his career. He discovered that his strengths were teaching graduates and writing fieldwork-based articles. He penned over a hundred articles, and guided 56 students to a doctoral degree. He also wrote two widely used introductory texts for the study of Thailand and the region, and edited several academic collections. He was gradually drawn into the administration and networking that underpin teaching and research, and became a leading figure in the development of South-east Asian studies in the US. He began an association with Chiang Mai University and is proud to have been accepted as *ajarn* rather than *farang*. As the Cold War wound down in the 1980s, he became involved in building academic links with Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar.

He used his growing status as an academic entrepreneur to draw Americans into studying Southeast Asia but, even more, to bring Asians to study in the US and return home to build the academic capability in the region. His corpus of graduate students includes 10 Thais, six Vietnamese, two Japanese, a Hong

Kong Chinese, two Filipino-Americans and an Afghani. He clearly sees this as his most important legacy.

Keyes includes pen portraits of the studies and careers of most of these students, and also of many of his American colleagues and acquaintances around the region. He seems to have led by example rather than diktat. He helped his students to secure funding and claw their way through the administration, but left them free to choose their own research topics and to pursue their own ideas. Still, many of their works recapitulate Keyes' own interests in modernity, culture, religion and being peripheral. There is no Keyesian school of anthropology. The only social-science theorist he mentions is Max Weber (twice). The post-modern, post-everything eruption that rocked social science in his mid-career does not rate a single mention.

Academic memoirs are a scarce genre. Biff Keyes states at the outset that "I have written this primarily for my family," but his family is much larger than this suggests, including large numbers of fictive kin including *luk-sit* (child-learners, the Thai term for a student) as well as brother and sister colleagues.

The author's journey from middle America to Southeast Asia, from turkey-farm to campus, from Presbyterianism to Buddhism, is a microcosm of the development of knowledge, and especially social science, over the last near-century. In this book, Biff has archived himself as part of this global process.



Ram Dass, Beloved Spiritual Teacher, Has Died

The American spiritual leader, yogi, counterculture icon, and *Be Here Now* author has died. He was 88.

By Joan Duncan Oliver, December 22, 2019

*Condensed from full obituary taken from Tricycle-
<https://tricycle.org/trikedaily/ram-dass-dies/>*



If there is an enduring figure emblematic of the consciousness revolution of the 1960s and 70s, it is arguably the Harvard professor and LSD researcher-turned-spiritual leader born Richard Alpert but known the world over as Ram Dass. With Timothy Leary, his colleague in the Harvard psychology department, he forever changed a generation of Americans through his explorations with psilocybin, LSD-75, and other psychedelics before reinventing himself as a spiritual teacher and humanitarian—a *bhakt* yogi with love as his path. When Ram Dass died on Sunday evening, one of the most beloved voices of the counterculture fell silent. He was 88 years old.

It was Leary who famously exhorted American youth to “Turn on, tune in, drop out,” but it was Alpert who became a model of awakening that wasn’t dependent on drugs. . . . But in 1967, Alpert, still searching, left for India. There he found his guru, the Hindu *sadhu* Neem Karoli Baba, known as Maharaj-ji, characteristically

wrapped in a blanket and seated on a wooden tucket, a low Indian bed. Curious to see how a spiritual adept would react to LSD, Alpert gave Maharaj-ji a whopping dose. It had zero effect on the holy man. Over the next few years until Maharaj-ji’s death in 1973, Alpert—by then renamed Ram Dass, or Servant of God, by Maharaj-ji—periodically returned to be with his guru. Resettling in America in 1974, he started a new life based on a different kind of turn-on—meditation—and his own synthesis of Buddhist, Hindu, Advaita, and Sufi teachings, and later, Jewish mysticism.

Much of the compassionate service for which Ram Dass became known was in collaboration with others. He launched the Hanuman Foundation to further practical application of the principles and teachings of Neem Karoli Baba—work that continues today through Ram Dass’s Love Serve Remember Foundation. Through Hanuman he also set up the Prison Ashram Project, offering counseling and spiritual practice to the incarcerated, many of whom had contacted Ram Dass after reading *Be Here Now*.

Inspired by the humane approach to death and dying he had seen in India, Ram Dass was instrumental in co-creating the Living-Dying Project to support caregivers, healthcare professionals, and individuals dealing with terminal illness, and in establishing a hospice and training center in Santa Fe, New Mexico. In 1979, with epidemiologist and Hanuman board member Larry Brilliant and others, Ram Dass founded the Seva Foundation, which works to combat blindness in the Himalayas and provides healthcare there and in other underserved areas of Asia and the Americas. He also helped set up the Social Venture Network to explore ways to bring spiritual awareness to business and served on the board of Creating Our Future, an organization for teens who wanted to lead more spiritual lives. On Maui, where he has lived since 2004, Ram Dass co-founded Doorway Into Light, which helps people prepare for dying. “Sitting by the bed of the dying is *sadhana* [spiritual practice],” he said. For his unwavering commitment to helping others,

Ram Dass has been called “a model of selfless service.”

Long an outspoken advocate and support for the sick and dying, shortly before his stroke, Ram Dass told an audience: “Something has happened to me as a result of my meanderings through consciousness over the past 30 years that has changed my attitude towards death. A lot of the fear that denial of death generated has gone from me. Death does not have to be treated as an enemy for you to delight in life. Keeping death in your consciousness as one of the greatest mysteries and as the moment of incredible transformation imbues this moment with added richness and energy that otherwise is used up in denial.”

After the stroke, those observations seemed hopelessly naive, he said. The stroke had given him a far deeper understanding of what the suffering of aging, infirmity, and dying really means. Characteristically, he viewed it in spiritual terms: “I don’t wish you the stroke, but I wish you the grace from the stroke,” he said in *Ram Dass, Going Home*, a 2017 documentary by Derek Peck.

“The stroke pushed me inside even more. That’s so wonderful.”

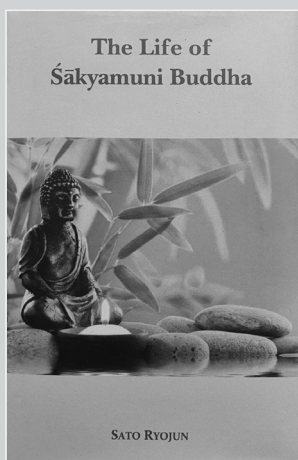
It also meant that the man who had spent much of his life helping others had to let others help him. Noting that before the stroke, he had co-authored a book about service called *How Can I Help?*, “after the stroke I would have titled it *How Can You Help Me?*” he said. “In this culture dependency is a no-no. The stroke showed me dependency, and I have people who are dependable.”

Unsinkable, Ram Dass survived great challenges to remain one of the most colorful and memorable spiritual leaders of his age. When he finally surrendered to death, it was with what filmmaker Mickey Lemle, in his 2001 documentary about RD, called “fierce grace.”

Joan Duncan Oliver is a *Tricycle* contributing editor. The author of five books, she edited *Commit to Sit*, an anthology of articles from *Tricycle*.

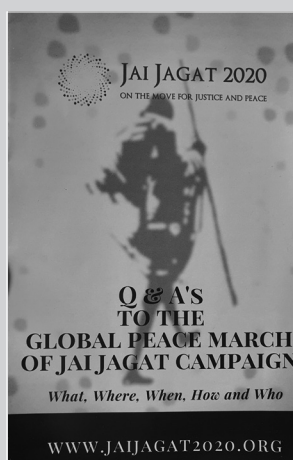
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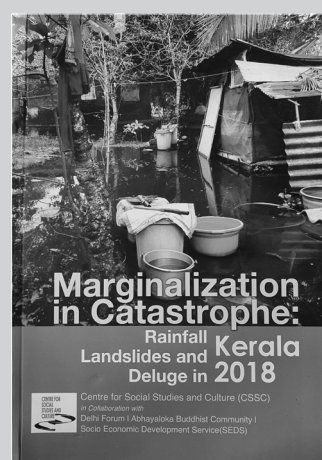
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