

# SEEDS OF PEACE

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The Unity of Life  
underpins the diversity of all existence

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## Editorial Notes

The 2013 International Network of Engaged Buddhists Biennial Conference took place from 27 October to 4 November in Malaysia. The relevant theme 'Peace and Sustainability' was well received by INEB's partners and stimulated many useful discussions.

The conference started with **Interfaith Youth Camp for Social Justice, Peace and Sustainability**, where over 30 interfaith activists from 10 countries participated. For five days participants shared stories and experiences with friends. In addition, they carefully listened to Buddhists and Muslims from Burma (Myanmar?) and Indonesia about the complexity of Buddhist-Muslim religious conflict. To gain exposure to peace and sustainability in the local context activists visited Department of National Unity and Integration in Putrajaya and communities in Melaka.

**International Buddhist-Muslim Forum on Peace and Sustainability** was held on 1 November at Institut Kefahaman Islam. There, participants learned about issues affecting Buddhists and Muslims as well as ways to constructively overcome religious conflicts through peace building initiatives. After the forum, an international platform for Buddhist-Muslim Relations was set up to accommodate emerging various collaborations.

As always the conference brought *Kalayanamitras* together. We shared insights and supported each other's independent initiatives. Altogether over fifteen topics were discussed and various workshops took place. Through experience we know the outcomes from these workshops will be creatively transformed into working initiatives. If you have missed out the main panel discussion is available at <http://www.inebnetwork.org/clip-vdo-ineb-2013-conference>

INEB is committed to working on various projects including the young Bodhisattvas program, Interfaith Women Activist exchange and Buddhist perspective on Gender issue, Inter-religious Climate and Ecology Network (ICE Network) for climate change and environmental conservation, International Forum on Buddhist-Muslim Relations, Anti-Nuclear campaign, Right Livelihood Fund, Revival of Buddhism in India and Buddhist Sangha Exchange. INEB committee members will meet at the end of 2013 in Burma to explore the future potential for working with local partners.

We are proud to announce *Seeds of Peace* is reaching 30th anniversary. The magazine has always been vocal on issues around social justice, human rights and sustainable peace for humanity. We are looking forward to raising the standard of the publication further. Suggestions are welcome.

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### 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Sathirakoses

(Phya Anuman Rajadhon)

Phya Anuman Rajadhon Memorial Seminar  
13 December 2013, 08.30 a.m. – 16.00 p.m.  
Auditorium of the National Library, Ta Wasugee, Bangkok

*Organised by: Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation and The Fine Arts Department, Ministry of Culture*

### 9<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL TIPITAKA CHANTING CEREMONY

Honoring the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual International Tipitaka Chanting Ceremony Bodhgaya, India



Awakening the Sound of the Precious Dhamma under Sacred Bodhi Tree December 2<sup>nd</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> 2013

Bodhgaya, India  
2-12 December 2013

Ten Dharma talks every night under the Sacred Bodhi Tree from 3 December from 18.00 p.m.- 21.00 p.m

*Organized by: Light of Buddhadharma Foundation International*



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PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT TRAINING CENTRE

### Special Anniversary & Fair of PADETC 15 December 2013, At PADETC Office, Vientiane, Lao PDR.

2013 – is a year of deep memories and challenges for PADETC’s work on sustainable development and civil society promotion in Lao society.

2013 – is a year of celebration of Mr. Sombath Somphone’s philosophy on ‘Balanced development for a livable Lao society’

2013 - is a year of transforming youth to be agents for change sustainable growth with equity and justice.

To express our deep gratitude to all the people who helped us make all these valuable achievements over the years since PADETC’s establishment in 1996, PADETC’s staff, families, and beneficiaries have decided to come together and organize a ‘Special Anniversary and Fair of PADETC’ at our Head Office. Today we wish to celebrate PADETC’s achievements, thank our supporters, and also to remember our founder, Mr. Sombath Somphone.

#### Proposed event agenda

##### Morning session

08:30-12:00 Buddhist Ceremony - Prayers  
Welcome remarks by PADETC’s Director  
PADETC’s history and testimony

12:00-13:00 Solidarity lunch

##### Afternoon session

13:30-16:00 PADETC youth/staff activities



The 20th Annual SEM (Sem Pringpuangkaew) Public Lecture

### “The Dharma and Socially Engaged Buddhism” By Phakchok Rinpoche

**On the 17 April 2014, at Siam Society, Bangkok**

13.00 – 17.00 Public Talk and Discussion  
18.00 - 19.00 Puja for well being of Siam

For more information, please visit [www.semsikkha.org](http://www.semsikkha.org), [www.sem-edu.org](http://www.sem-edu.org), [www.inebnetwork.org](http://www.inebnetwork.org)

India :

# Buddhist temple to be adorned with 600lb of gold

The Telegraph, World News, Asia. 14 Nov 2013

Dean Nelson, New Delhi



*The Mahabodhi temple was built at Bodh Gaya in Bihar, India, where the Buddha found his Middle Way enlightenment under the Bodh Tree more than 2,500 years ago Photo: Alamy*

Aides to the Dalai Lama criticise the King of Thailand's gift of 600lbs of gold for the Mahabodhi temple where Buddha renounced attachment to material wealth

Buddhist scholars have criticised the King's decision to decorate the temple where Lord Buddha renounced attachment to material possessions and attained enlightenment with more than £8 million worth of gold.

The Mahabodhi temple was built at Bodhi Gaya in Bihar, India, where the Buddha found his Middle

Way enlightenment under the Bodh Tree more than 2,500 years ago.

Built in around 1,500 BCE, it is a sacred pilgrimage site for Buddhists from Sri Lanka to Japan and thousands of devotees visit every year, including regulars like the Dalai Lama.

A bomb attack on the temple complex in July by suspected Islamic militants damaged Mahabodhi and set back restoration on the UNESCO World Heritage Site building.

Mahabodhi officials on Thursday announced a

major boost to their works with the donation of 660 pounds of gold from the King of Thailand and others which will be used to create a new glittering inlaid temple dome.

"A 40-member team including experts and two dozen commandos from

and misguided.

Thubten Samdup, Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama for Northern Europe, said the leader of Tibetan Buddhism had dismissed the focus on religious rituals and places of prayer but stressed the importance of compassionate works instead. He had highlighted this when in 2012 he gave his £1.1 million Templeton prize money to charity, including £900,000 to Save the Children, he said.

He said "[for] those of us who are spiritual leaders, it's not enough to pray in our houses of prayer, we have to act, that's more important." He made very clear his feelings that we're too hung up on rituals and he does not see that as very important. It's very nice of the King of Thailand to give \$14 million in gold. But knowing what I know about him [the Dalai Lama], that's not important because it's not going to help anyone.

"A lot of people would like to see the whole temple covered in gold, but at the end of the day, seriously?"

Thubten Samphel, director of the Tibetan Policy Institute and author of the Dalai Lamas of Tibet, said the temple marked the spot where Buddha freed himself from emotions like anger and envy and attachment to material possessions.

"This goes to the heart of the matter. With this Thai donation of gold, there is a clear irony," he said.

Thailand have arrived at Bodhi Gaya with gold in 13 boxes," Arvind Kumar Singh, a temple management committee member told the news agency AFP.

More than 200 pounds of gold was given by the king and the remainder by other supporters of the temple, officials added.

Work is expected to be completed next month but the decision to commemorate the place where Lord Buddha found enlightenment with an ostentatious show of wealth was criticised by Buddhist scholars as "ironic"

Japan :

## Priests take up pen to stop suicides

The Japan Times, 21 Nov 2013

Takeshi Nishide

To help turn the tide against suicide, a volunteer group of Buddhist priests, both men and women, writes letters to distraught people to help keep them from taking their own lives.

People considering suicide “write to us because they want to live,” said Yusen Maeda, a 43-year-old priest of the Soto sect. “So we write back by hand, saying in our mind ‘We want you to live. Don’t worry by yourself.’”

The group was founded in 2007 and now receives an average of 60 letters per month from people in trouble.

The members of

the group discuss the problems described in the letters, but there is no manual to follow, said Kenichi Yoshida, 44, chief priest of a Jodo-sect temple in Hiratsuka, Kanagawa Prefecture. “We write on a case-by-case basis.”

Yoshida joined the group five years ago. “I first thought I couldn’t do this,” he recalled. “But when I read a letter for the first time, I was switched on. Suicide, which is a general social problem, became a problem of ‘you and me’ as far as I’m concerned.”

After university, Yoshida thought little of his future. Without a job, he mainly stayed home, or

occasionally went camping.

At the urging of his grandfather, a school-teacher and priest, he then qualified to become a Buddhist priest. But his grandfather’s temple had too few financial supporters, so Yoshida began working at a funeral service company.

“I wanted to know about funeral services because I thought they were the same as the work of priests,” Yoshida said.

Over the next 10 years, he witnessed various kinds of responses to death. For example, a woman who had just lost her husband asked him, “Is my husband in heaven?”

Buddhist priests, who attend funeral services, often reject the word “heaven,” Yoshida said.

“It doesn’t matter,” he stressed, saying people who have lost their loved ones want priests to understand their sorrow.

“Our role is to side with their sentiment regarding life and death rather than having them comply with our teachings,” he said.

His experience at the funeral service company reinforced his decision to live as a priest.

Bereaved people show different reactions, according to Yoshida. For instance, the widow of a man who committed suicide might be blamed by his relatives for failing to recognize his pain, while

her children are concealing their sorrow out of concern for her.

Emotional support for people whose relatives have committed suicide is one of the core activities of the group.

The letters written by Yoshida contain “genuine and heartfelt messages” to people seeking advice, said Maeda, chief priest of the Soto-sect Shozan Temple in Minato Ward, Tokyo, who acts as secretariat for the group.

They are “warm letters and you should feel pleased if you receive them,” added Yukan Ogawa, 36, a priest of the Jodo sect.

While people who have lost their children often work hard to forget the grief, they can’t move on unless they have a place where they can unload, Yoshida said.

“They don’t have to understand Buddhist scriptures, when chanted, but sit relaxed and remember their lost children for an hour,” he said.

“We sit between Buddha and bereaved families to convey this thought to them.”

Suicide remains a serious national problem, though the annual number dropped below 30,000 in 2012 for the first time in 15 years. Since its foundation, the group of Buddhist priests have received more than 5,000 letters from people contemplating suicide.

## Suksit Siam



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

Malaysia :

# Doing our part for sustainability

The Star Online, 12 Nov 2013

Dr. Azizan Baharuddin

A FORUM on Peace and Sustain - ability – jointly organised by Ikim, the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) and the International Movement for A Just World (JUST) – was held on 1 Nov.

The major aim of the forum was to create greater understanding between the Muslim and Buddhist

communities which make up 42% and 40% of the Asean population respectively.

Contrary to the opinion of some, the forum did not aim to promote religious pluralism.

Rather, its focus was the importance of sustainability for peace, and what the role of religion is or can be in promoting or

ensuring sustainability.

The tenets of pluralism are that; (i) all religious traditions are the same as they all make reference to the ultimate reality or the transcendent; (ii) all religious traditions are the same as they all profess paths (albeit different from each other) to salvation; (iii) all religions have limited experience vis-à-vis truth and they can change or evolve in their understanding of the ultimate reality or the truth.

None of these tenets was part of the objectives of the forum.

“Sustainability” and its sister terminology “sustainable development” aim to ensure that the capacity of future generations to fulfil their needs are not

jeopardised as a result of the current generation’s efforts to fulfil their needs.

In the Islamic perspective, ensuring the survival of the future generations is in harmony with the tenets of the Maqasid Syariah (the objectives of the syariah or law of Islam), especially the principle of ensuring the safety and survival of lineage which is indirectly the future generation.

The three pillars of sustainable development are the ecological, socio-economic and the cultural (including religious values) dimensions.

The imperatives of sustainable development, as outlined in the Brundtland report to the United Nations Commission on Environment and Development (UNCED) back in 1987, are that the basic needs of all humans have to be met and poverty eliminated; and that there have to be limits placed on development in general because nature is finite.

Although the definition sounds optimistic, it is laced with challenges and contradictions.

Besides suggesting that we have a moral responsibility to consider the welfare of both the present and future inhabitants of the planet (and this is a religious imperative as explained earlier) wealthier, more technologically sophisticated societies would have to assist poorer



*Peace and religion: JUST president Dr Chandra Muzaffar (right) speaking to attendees as panellist (from second right) INEB and Clear View Project USA advisory committee Rev Alan Senauke, moderator Prof Dr Mohd Hazim Shah Abdul Murad, panellist INEB founder Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa and Dr Azizan take notes at the forum. — RAYMOND OOI / The Star*

Sri Lanka :

# Commonwealth puts on united front after summit rifts

The Star Online, 12 Nov 2013

Dr. Azizan Baharuddin

Colombo (AFP) - Commonwealth leaders agreed on Sunday about steps to tackle high debt and poverty as they staged a show of unity after a summit in Sri Lanka dominated by a bitter dispute over war crimes.

Following a three-day meeting in Colombo, Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse announced that a communique had been agreed by the Commonwealth's 53 member nations after a summit which he said had been characterised by "fruitful discussions".

But he was again forced on the defensive and warned his critics against pushing him "into a corner" by setting an ultimatum to address war crimes allegations by next March.

"I am happy with the outcome we have reached at this CHOGM," said Rajapakse, who has spent much of the summit having to fend off allegations that his government's troops killed as many as 40,000 civilians at the end of the country's 37-year conflict.

Outlining the agreements inked by Com-

monwealth leaders, he said there had been widespread agreement on a series of issues -- particularly on ensuring that economic growth does not come at the expense of equality.

"Achieving growth with equity and inclusive development must be one of Commonwealth's priorities," said the Sri Lankan president.

"Issues covered in the communique include development, political values, global threats, challenges and Commonwealth cooperation."

While only 27 heads of government attended this year's meeting, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak said the summit had helped strengthen the organisation of mainly English-speaking former British colonies.

"I sense there is a reaffirmation of the spirit and ideals of the Commonwealth ... the core values of the Commonwealth, namely democracy, the rule of law and human rights," Najib told reporters.

The Malaysian prime minister said there was a general recognition among leaders of "the fact

nations develop their capability to provide their basic needs by not exhausting the world's resources.

The latter is a moral imperative which draws heavily on a religious framework.

The welfare of present and future generations can only be achieved by balancing environmental and social justice.

To ensure ecological balance (Mizan al-biah) and social justice, there must be restraint against greed.

In the religious context, actual practice (instead of mere repetition of religious teachings/principles pertaining to it) of restraint and compassion is necessary.

This is what participants of the forum reminded themselves of.

As religious leaders it is their duty and role to urge their followers to live out the "ethical-moral" engine of sustainability.

To effect such a religious duty, they need to be assisted for example by knowledge, facts and information about ecological destruction which in itself is a *dhosa* (Sanskrit for destruction and injustice).

The Quran in fact refers to widespread destruction on land, sea and air through the hands of man.

A typical illustration of this today perhaps is the loss of biodiversity which is

one of the most critical issues of sustainability.

So fundamental is the function of biodiversity that to destroy it is to undermine life itself.

Destruction of biodiversity is also a major cause of poverty, another major challenge of sustainability.

To the religious, one might ask how has man been the vicegerent (Khalifatullah) of God on Earth thus far?

All these issues were debated at the forum which served to remind faith practitioners to focus on making religious and spiritual principles the bases for translating the ideals of sustainability and peace into reality.



that we are different but should not be divided”.

“There was a reaffirmation of the spirit and willingness of wanting to stay together as a unique collection of nations.”

Rights groups including Amnesty International urged leaders not to ease pressure on Colombo over an investigation after they leave the summit.

“Let me be very clear, if an investigation is not completed by March, then I will use our position on the UN Human Rights Council to work with the UN Human Rights Commission and call for a full, credible and independent international inquiry,” said

Cameron on Saturday.

But Rajapakse reiterated on Sunday that Sri Lanka would not bow to pressure and would complete its own inquiries in its own time.

“This is not something you can do overnight. You must also respect our own views without trying to push us into a corner, so please be fair,” he said.

“We have suffered for 30 years, that’s why they (the people of Sri Lanka) want a new life. That’s why people elected me.”

The largely pro-government press in Sri Lanka acknowledged that debate about Colombo’s

rights record soured the summit.

Ceylon Today said Cameron’s push for UN action had ensured “the festive mood at the Commonwealth parley turned sour”, bemoaning how “media obsession over the host country’s human rights record had overshadowed the official business”.

Mauritius had been due to host the next summit in 2015 but it withdrew in protest against Sri Lanka’s rights record.

Malta is now the hosts, the organisation’s top official Kamalesh Sharma announced.

In their communique, countries agreed to

push world bodies to adopt a Commonwealth report on new ways for small and vulnerable countries to access funds to fight climate change.

The report suggests small countries with high debt, including some in the Caribbean, use climate change funds that wealthier nations have already pledged to instead pay off national debt.

Smaller countries, in return, pledge to use their own funds to tackle rising sea levels and other climate concerns over a longer time frame.



*Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse (L) and Secretary General of the Commonwealth of Nations, Kamalesh Sharma (3L) chat at the final working session of the commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Colombo on November 17, 2013 (AFP Photo/Manjunath Kiran)*



*Prime Minister David Cameron gestures during a press conference held on the second day of the Commonwealth Heads Of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Colombo on November 16, 2013 (AFP Photo/Ishara S.kodikara)*

# A Reflection and Report on the recent INEB Conference in Kuala Lumpur (November 2013)

*Vidyananda, (K V Soon)*

## Mount Bodhi

This place did not formally exist before the recently concluded INEB conference in Kuala Lumpur. Mount Bodhi, is the name given by several Indian delegates who arrived early and stayed at the Bodhi Buddhist Society in Kuala Lumpur (BODHI). To get to BODHI, one had to alight from the train, and walked about 5-10 minutes. The real challenge was to walk up 5 flights of stairs with full luggage and all! It was so challenging, especially for our friends from India, that they decided to name this place Mount Bodhi.

A few days later at the conference the rest of the delegates got a sense of this challenge when everyone had to climb up the 5 flight of stairs to reach the conference hall!

If it was any consolation, many found the main hall on the first floor of Wisma Dhamma Chakra to be exclusive and cozy. In the following 4 days this hall would be the chosen venue among keynote speakers, forum panelists presentations, and breakout groups for deep discussions. Friendships were built and renewed.



*the beautiful and meaningful buddha image on “Mount” Bodhi against the backdrop the Kuala Lumpur nightlife*

## The Climb

I began this report with a reflection on climbing the stairs - with challenges and difficulties. This was the feeling and experience that I, together with our working committee members, supporters and friends went through to put this conference together.

The inter-faith theme with a Buddhist-Muslim focus I felt would be a challenge, but I did not realize that it would be this difficult. Working with the backdrop of an on-going conflict in the region and several incidents that happened in Malaysia, the conference seemed impossible.

We seemed to be hearing growing voices expressing radical ideas. The need to “defend” and “protect” religions and practices were common themes for battle calls. The increasing volume of these voices have raised the level of fear and distrust. The media were of little help, except to sensationalize or to biasly report these incidents. We have become an over-sensitive society, fearing that we might step on “sensitive” matters, the option is to reclude into the relative peace of temple grounds for a false sense of solace and security.

Many local Buddhist and religious organizations, preferred to not get involved and deemed the “socially engaged” approach to Buddhist practice of INEB as “political”, and an extremely sensitive topic for any religious organization. There are also those organizations that have taken an openly confrontational approach. Both ways in our opinion, were not good.

With this situation, we wondered if Malaysia was ready to host an INEB conference. Support for the conference was not strong. At one point, there were even suggestions to hold a smaller, scaled down event in Siam. Our friends, fellow organizers and committee members, would not allow it. We felt this was good enough reason to put effort in keeping the event in Kuala Lumpur. We continued to push ahead.

### Positive Voices and Lessons Learnt

The participation of Buddhist Maha Vihara (BVM) as a co-organizer and host of the conference signalled an important turning point for the conference. BMV, being one of the oldest Buddhist missionary organizations in Malaysia, their participation proved pivotal and we began to see more moderated voices surfacing - both within and outside the Buddhist community. We began to push for more support and reached out to as many people as much as possible. It was indeed heartening to know that there are people still deeply concerned about the interfaith situation in our country as well as in the region.

At this point too, we made a deliberate move to channel our message towards the civil society community. With Sis Vienna Looi

who has a strong network in that space, we began engaging spiritual-based organizations and personalities. Our encounter with groups such as Projek Dialog (Dialogue Project) and Sisters in Islam (SIS) and other progressive groups have brought about positive engagements.

The most significant collaboration, was with the Institute of Islamic Understanding, Malaysia (Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia,

IKIM). Working closely with our co-organizer, International Movement for a Just World (JUST), this collaboration with JUST and IKIM resulted in the one-day International Buddhist-Muslim Forum for Peace and Sustainability on November 1, 2013. We were impressed and inspired by the openness and sincerity of the management and members of IKIM that really gave Islam a very positive outlook.



*the beautiful and cozy hall on the first floor at the Buddhist Maha Vihara*



*Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa, Founder of INEB with Y.Bhg. Datuk Nik Mustapha bin Nik Hassan, Director General of IKIM*

On the Buddhist-Muslim Dialogue, there were many lessons learnt. One lesson learnt is to recognize the importance of individual voices of moderation, tolerance and inclusiveness and to support them. For the individuals are those who make up society and communities. It is so easy to generalize and compartmentalize people - without even knowing them. We must not judge, we need to let go our own prejudices, insecurities and fears. Once we learn to let go, we will realize the hindrance to effective dialogues are really ourselves.

The next or perhaps the more important lesson is that cultivation of a partnership takes time. Patience is an important aspect of relationship building. We must make sure that we allow time for partnerships to happen.

## Learning from Others

The collaboration with JUST and IKIM allowed us to learn from others. Participants of the conference also had the opportunity to engage in discussions when the Department of National Unity and Integration (Jabatan Peraduan Negara dan Integrasi Nasional, JPNIN), under the purview of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

YBhg DATO' AZMAN AMIN, BIN HASSAN, Director General of the Department spent time to share with us the detailed strategies to manage interfaith and inter-communal conflicts and relations. The strategies seems comprehensive and with details. They later graciously hosted us a wonderful lunch in Putrajaya. Overall it was a very good learning experience.

*YBhg DATO' AZMAN AMIN, BIN HASSAN, Director General of the Department of National Unity and Integration making his presentation*



*The Kampung Keling Mosque*



*Seak Kia Eenh Buddhist temple, Melaka*

## Historical Appreciation

What was helpful to appreciate different cultures was a historical perspective. Buddhism and Islam have very similar beginnings in our country - brought about by the traders and merchants to one of the earliest entrepôts in this region, Malacca. Participants of INEB visited some of the oldest, if not, the oldest, temples and mosques in Malaysia. We were very well received by the Mosque management who gave a detailed history of the Masjid Kampung Ulu (the oldest mosque in Malaysia) and Masjid Kampung Keling mosque. We also visited the Cheng Hoon Teng temple, the oldest Buddhist/Taoist temple in Malaysia.

We saw the very unique architecture of the mosques and temples, and the recognition of the influences each culture had on one another was important to note.

What was also interesting was that being traders and merchants, their objectives were very much a bounded by the fact that there was need for spiritual solace that would support them in their quest for business. Perhaps even enrich their lives in different ways, just as we are today searching for peace within a seemingly turmoil environment. Without interference of governments and powers that be, that was the place of religion, to offer peace in every aspect. Special recognition needs to be given to the our host in Malacca, the Seak Kia Eenh Buddhist temple, Melaka. Seak Kia Eenh (SKE) is just not any temple, it has a very rich history too. Almost 100 years old, SKE has been the most important teaching center in Malaysia. Many of the local Buddhist teachers hailed from this temple. We felt very connected to the friends and members there.



*Interfaith forum; panelists from different spiritual traditions express their ideas*



## Finding Common Ground, Shared Values

There are many initiatives among the different religions for dialogue. In the course of putting the conference together I was inspired by efforts of many people who tried very hard to share, learn and truly appreciate each other. Many of them included grassroots driven activities and efforts to find a common ground so that we can appreciate one another.

The approach we have adopted during the conference was to find common ground by identifying and addressing common issues. Common challenges are easier to identify and agree upon. We have broadly identified “peace” and “sustainability” as the potential common ground. Against a backdrop of conflicts in the region, we are all concerned if the conflict will end or spread to the wider region. We may all see it differently, or even approach it differently, but what is clear is that we all want to end the conflict.

Yet as we look around, many things concern us as much, if not more

Issues from education to environment, food to health, politics and governance. These concerns are not just for ourselves but towards our children as well. This is the reason why sustainability of a positive and wholesome way of live becomes a concern. Addressing these issues allows the opportunities to dig deep into our spiritual practice and to address them through our own sets of values. We need this, we need to find and appreciate each others values, so together we can resolve some of these social issues from the roots.

It was indeed heartening during the conference, Buddhists, Muslims and participants from other faiths came together to address issues of common concern. While views and approaches may differ, the end goal of social improvement for a better society is the same.

Over 5 days of the conference, including exposure trips to Malacca, a public dialog at IKIM and the conference at the BMV - much

discussed. We were presented with ideas, challenges and even practices that may run contrary to our own ‘standard belief’. We need to take these criticisms and feedbacks.

In the break-out sessions too, there were a lot of discussions. Some participants asked what concrete ideas and approaches we have gotten from the panelists and discussions.

Our answer is that dialogue is a process and this process need not end after the conference. Let us all continue our personal engagement and strengthen our social engagement.

Do continue to stay in touch through our Facebook and google pages, search for the hashtag #INEB2013.

Deep appreciation to all who have in supported and made this conference a success.

*Sadhu Anumodana!  
Thank you!*

# All People Are Chosen, All Lands Are Holy

## Interfaith Dialog for Peace & Sustainability

*Hozan Alan Senauke*



The essence of my talk is a simple and challenging principle: All people are chosen; all lands are holy.

I was born into a secular Jewish family in the United States. My grandparents and great-grandparents fled religious repression and military conscription in eastern Europe one hundred years ago. In the course of five thousand years, going back to the earliest Hebrew scriptures, Jews embraced the myth of the chosen people. And the myth of the holy land, a story that continues to bring great suffering to peoples of the Middle East.

I have never accepted these myths. Visions of chosen people and holy lands seduce us. The obsessive nature of religious, ethnic, and national identity is not sustainable, nor

does it lead to peace.

At an early age I set aside my religion of birth and began a search for spiritual teachings that fit better with how I saw the world. By my college years, I had come to admire Buddhism. In simple terms the Buddha explained: “I teach about suffering and the end of suffering.” This teaching continues to inspire me.

Still, I carry two powerful models in mind. In Judaism, Christianity, and Islam we hear the voice of the prophets, preaching justice, righteousness in society, speaking truth to power. In Buddhism we admire the Bodhisattva, who selflessly places the wellbeing of others before him or herself. Two streams of faith from two sides of the world

— Jewish elders and Buddha ancestors — converge in my heart. They speak to each other and I try to listen.

When I consider that all lands are holy, two Zen Buddhist sayings come to mind. The first is: “There is no place in the world to spit.” Every place is precious to those who live there. Every place is the center of the world. So, of course, there is no room for actions that defile the land and poison the air and water. The path of peace is to take equal care of every place.

The second Zen saying I recall is this: “If you create an understanding of holiness, you will succumb to all errors.” Just as all lands are holy, we see that elevating one people splits the world in two. An exclusive holiness plants poisonous seeds of “us and them”— my people, my religion, my nation. War and hatred grow from such seeds. In the name of holiness, the soil of nations has absorbed the blood of crusaders, soldiers, defenders, martyrs, and countless innocent people.

From a Buddhist perspective our self-centered attachment to these views is the source of suffering. Self-centeredness causes us to live at the expense of others. From there grows a kind of cultural or national self-centeredness, with individual suffering manifesting as policies of religious and ethnic intolerance, generation after generation, forging chains of suffering out of fear and anger. We use violence to enforce this identity.



Verses 3-5 of the Dhammapada say:

*He insulted me, hit me, beat me, robbed me*

*— for those who brood on this, violence isn't stilled.*

*Violence is never stilled through violence, regardless.*

*Violence only ceases are stilled through love.*

*This is an unending truth.*

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Buddhism and Islam prevail in Southeast Asia, and over the last decade we have seen the rise of inter-communal tensions between Buddhists and Muslims in Thailand, Indonesia, the Maldives, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. The International Network of Engaged Buddhists' mission is to recognize our common humanity and common right to life. The United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights begins with recognition that *"...the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world..."*

The enlightened center of Buddhism, the peaceful heart of Islam, and the essence of all religious traditions, are often lost in a world that is governed by global politics and multinational corporations. Where religion, the state, and economics join forces, narrowness and prejudice arise. This unholy alliance is more about power than faith. In a religious state the religious community in power has the preponderance of authority, resources, and weapons. We begin with words, but peace and sustainability in Southeast Asia or anywhere depend on much more than words. We can talk about equality, generosity, and all kind of high-minded principles. But until we recognize that all people are chosen, that we are our brother's brother and

our sister's sister, nothing will really change.

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says:

*All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.*

Article 25 puts this in concrete terms:

*Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services..."*

Sustainability is a global issue. Southeast Asia suffers from overpopulation and global warming. Agricultural output is threatened and fresh water is at a premium as oceans rise and overrun low-lying coastal areas. The exponential rise of CO2 from factories, energy production, and fossil-fuel-powered vehicles has destabilized weather patterns; cyclones, hurricanes, tornados, and floods rake across our continents.

These man-made crises will not just go away. Nor will they be resolved by the actions or technology of any one nation. If all beings are chosen in the sense that our deepest nature is enlightened being, we are also chosen together to face all the self-created challenges and crises that beset us.

In one of his last books, Robert Aitken Roshi wrote a Zen fable with talking animals. The wise Owl and Brown Bear discuss the Buddha's Eightfold Path. Owl asks, "...where does Right Realization come in?"

*Brown Bear said, "Right Views! Right Views!"*

*Owl said, "What are Right Views?"*

*Brown Bear said, "We're in it together, and we don't have much time."*

*— from Zen Master Raven: Sayings and Doings of a Wise Bird*

We are all in this world together and we don't have much time. Even in the United States — a nation whose lands were stolen from indigenous people and whose wealth was built on the backs of slaves — there are many of us from all religious and political traditions who know that our privilege and empire are not sustainable.

We begin with words, but words are not enough. Buddhist and Muslims, living in the same cities, farming the same lands, fishing the same rivers and seas, must work hand in hand. As all people on this planet must.

If there are differences between us we must learn to respect and even treasure those differences, even when they seem to contradict our beliefs. We have to do this carefully and kindly. It will not be easy, but it is necessary if the world itself is to survive. Let us dedicate ourselves to this common purpose. Warm hand to warm hand.

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*This is a shortened version of a talk given on 1 November 2013 at the Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur, at the 2013 conference of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists.*



# Towards the Creation of a Fact-Finding Commission on Relations Between Buddhists and Muslims in Myanmar

*Joint Press Release*  
by

*International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB)*  
*International Movement for a Just World (JUST)*  
November 20, 2013

The International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) concluded its biennial conference on 4 November in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, our first such meeting in a Muslim-majority nation. The conference theme — Inter-Faith Dialogue for Peace and Sustainability — points to the interdependence of Buddhists and Muslims throughout Southeast Asia. A long history of harmonious relations across all nations in this region has been challenged in recent years by inter-religious conflicts rooted in a complexity of economic, political, social, and cultural tensions. INEB's mission is to respect the integrity of all religions and people, restoring harmony wherever possible.

A significant outcome of this unique gathering was the establishment of an international affirmation of the forum for Buddhist-Muslim relations, drawing from members of INEB and Malaysia-based International Movement for a Just World (JUST).

At the closing a special session brought together Buddhist monks, laypeople, Muslims, and concerned friends from inside and outside Myanmar to consider conflicts and violence that have taken place inside that country over the last two years. Participants in this session, including people of four religions and from interfaith partners inside Myanmar, called upon this interfaith forum to establish a fact-finding

commission to examine relations between Buddhists and Muslims in Myanmar.

Collaborating with local civil-society bodies inside Myanmar, this fact-finding commission has three objectives:

1. to bring forth the facts of Buddhist-Muslim conflict in Myanmar;
2. to ascertain the causes of this conflict;
3. to develop resources and proposals for the establishment of inter-religious peace and harmony in Myanmar.

Guided by these objectives, an open-minded interfaith group will research conditions inside Myanmar and offer advice and support for the restoration of inter-religious and inter-ethnic stability. Members of INEB see this work as the embodiment of our vision of peace and sustainability across the region and among all peoples.

# Interfaith Representatives at COP 19 call to fast for Climate Justice

*Warsaw, Poland, 15 November 2013*

We, as delegates and representatives of various faiths and faith based organisations, in solidarity with our brothers and sisters from the Philippines and all over in the world have decided to embark on a fasting chain, that will last until the end of COP 19

on 22 November.

Fasting unites us as a common practice in our different religious traditions. Although we may be relying on different spiritual backgrounds we can all join in the common experience of voluntary

fasting.

For us, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Jews, Hindus, indigenous spiritual traditions and other faith traditions, fasting has a strong spiritual meaning. First and foremost it allows us to meet our God. In the midst of



necessary technical and political discussions, we step back, pray and reflect. Through the concrete sensation of hunger we do not only declare ourselves in solidarity with people's sufferings but we are actually in solidarity with them.

As we engage in COP19, fasting reminds us to relate to the negotiations with our responsibility as a believer. We cannot live in isolation, but we must care for each other. As a principle of equity we fast and reduce because we can for others who cannot.

The fast marks our commitment to the principles of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change - inter-generational equity, the precautionary principle, common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. We fast now because we are able to. There are many who live in poverty and who are vulnerable who cannot have these choices. This is our message to the global leaders and COP19 - those who can reduce Greenhouse gas emissions must do so for the sake of the future generations and the vulnerability of the poor.

More than ever, it is time for us to all work together to be good stewards of the creation.

That is why we are fasting in solidarity with the poor and vulnerable

who are disproportionately affected by extreme weather events; we are praying and fasting for the victims and survivors of typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, as well as other people affected by extreme weather events all around the world, which are increasing in frequency and intensity due to climate change. We are fasting, praying and meditating for a tangible and ambitious outcome to the climate change negotiations. We are calling for urgent action to bring sanity and ethics in the international climate negotiations.

Together, we call to the members of delegations and organisations at the 19th UN Conference on Climate Change (COP19) and people of faith around the world to join us in fasting for one day.

We encourage all people of faith to contribute to this journey of public awareness and action for global climate justice. We need you to engage with your congregation and national leaders to inspire a commitment to change our current model to one that is sustainable and just. We invite those who are capable to fast for a meaningful outcome here in Warsaw as we head to COP20 in Lima, Peru in 2014 and the urgent cut off date for a binding emissions agreement for all countries at COP21 in Paris, France.

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*This initiative is supported by the following organisations and faith communities who are present at COP19*

- *The Lutheran World Federation (LWF)*
- *Act Alliance*
- *The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society Kenya Youth Climate network*
- *Southern African Faith Communities Environment Institute (SAFCEI)*
- *We have Faith - Act now for Climate Justice Campaign*
- *The Orthodox Church*
- *International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB)*
- *Interreligious Climate and Environment Network (ICE)*
- *National Islamic Council of Norway*
- *Brahma Kumaris- World Spiritual University*
- *Church of Norway - Council on Ecumenical and International Relations*
- *Christian Council of Tanzania*



# The Thailand-Myanmar (Burma) Civil Society Exposure Trip for Princeton University Undergraduates

*Matthew C. Weiner  
Erin L. Hasinoff*

In August 2013 Princeton's Office of Religious Life sponsored a three-week exposure trip to Thailand and Myanmar (Burma) for undergraduates, which had as its focus the activities of organizations and youth activists who are strengthening religious diversity and civil society in South and Southeast Asia<sup>1</sup>. This trip was planned to include the first American exposure trip for undergraduates to Myanmar, and from the outset, the idea was to learn from an organization that had a long record supporting projects in the country and training a vast regional network of activists.

## Bangkok, Thailand

The program had two parts. First, in Bangkok, nine students, as participant observers, joined a two-week civic engagement training that included nineteen youth-activist leaders from Laos, Myanmar, India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Ladakh, and Thailand. The idea of joining the training was proposed to the organizers, the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB). The program was understood as an exposure trip, which would provide students with an opportunity to participate in, and watch, how civil society is understood and shaped in Southeast Asia. For the program designers, as scholars who are both serious about ethnography and critical theory, and also sympathetic toward attempts to foster civil society through models of interfaith

organizing, the program was a chance for them to work on and think about these issues with their Thai and Myanmar colleagues and the participants.

INEB built the program, the Young Bodhisattva Leadership Training (YBLT), out of various workshops and models it has developed over the last ten years. The training, today, serves their young leadership constituency, but similar programs were created for ethnic minority groups in Burma. INEB's sister organization, the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM), developed the program's curriculum and contributed resource personnel and facilitators. SEM was established in 1995, and developed a grassroots leadership program in partnership with and for Myanmar activists who were then restricted in their abilities to organize, advocate for, and explore the relationship between their religious identities, their communities, and civil society. Trainings include topics such as deep ecology, leadership skills, and meditation for social action. SEM as a civil society organization, self-consciously trains civic leaders to foster the kind of public space they seek: one that emphasizes diverse spiritual practice, is integrated with civic action, and is concerned with grassroots led sustainability. Initially, its partners were Kachin and Karen Christians, but later Burmese and Shan Buddhists, Muslims, and Hindus joined trainings. These trainings have continued for nearly twenty years, and there are over five hundred alumni in Myanmar. SEM has expanded its reach in South and Southeast Asia,

training and acting as a resource for Thai, Sri Lankan, Lao, Cambodian, and Vietnamese activists as well.

The 2013 August training began with four days of trust-building exercises, followed by overviews of Buddhist moral teachings, and Thailand's democracy movement, in its secular and engaged-Buddhist forms. Thai, Burmese, and New Zealand engaged-Buddhist activists who had been trained in Quaker models of non-violent resistance and participatory education facilitated the workshops. The program continued with sessions and group activities on mindfulness practice, deep ecology, and Buddhist economics. In addition to site visits to a Buddhist nunnery (Wat Songdhammakalayani) and an intentional community (Pathom Asoke), there were workshops on governance and feminist approaches to engaged Buddhism.

Princeton students joined this particular training as participant observers: that is, they participated in all of the program's activities and they reflected on how and what they and other members of the group were learning. The program was conceived for the South and Southeast Asian youth activists, and was not altered for the inclusion of Princeton students. The idea was that, while the training was not built for the non-Buddhist American participants, they would develop listening skills, an understanding of and a compassion for the politics of civil society, and a new network of peers. Even though the two groups differed greatly, they bonded during

<sup>1</sup>The Office of Religious Life (ORL) at Princeton understands religious life to include civic life, and that moral development for students includes participating in, and reflecting upon, civic life as it is infused with religious diversity. Trainings for students emphasize their learning about how others understand the value of partnerships across religious difference.

the program. The students had the opportunity to learn from the program itself, the ideas and history behind it, and importantly, about how the program was shaping their fellow participants.

College students are familiar with participating in academic and campus life activities created for them. But, through this SEM/INEB training, they learned the value of participating in activities clearly not designed for them. Here, their responsibility became more complex: to learn alongside others, and reflect and ask questions of the group: what are other people learning from this kind of training for their work? What are the organizers' ideas behind such trainings? They also asked themselves questions: what does my response to the program, in comparison to other participants, tell me about myself, my religious identity, and my cultural context? How does this training relate to what I am learning in the classroom? And, what does such reflection teach me about civil society in places like Kuala Lumpur or Ladakh, where my fellow participants are from?

When students spent days on trust-building exercises, they built trust with their new friends and they learned about each other. The Burmese and Lao participants reminded them that they rarely have the opportunity to openly have confidence in an acquaintance, to talk about building trust, and to reflect on its value. Until this past January, in Myanmar, a public gathering of more than five people was illegal, and many of the participants themselves had been under surveillance. The opportunity to tell one's life story and to describe one's struggle for democracy is new to many of them. In this way, the Princeton students could learn about trust building and the value of such exercises for Southeast Asian activ-

ists.

When students learned about deep ecology, they explored both its ideology and methods as well as what it means for Buddhist activists. Outspokenness about environmental degradation in the face of new development is recent for most Burmese, and the facilitator, Ko Maung Day, who is Burmese himself, had only recently been trained to lead these sessions. Working on this kind of topic would have been branded political and prohibited in Myanmar just prior to recent democratic reforms. Participants therefore learned many things during this session, about sustainability of course, but above all how civil society in Myanmar is strengthening, through the key role of youth leaders.

Participants were tasked to design a Buddhist model of government and argue for it in relationship to other forms of government, which left some of the Princeton students unsatisfied. Yet, they had the opportunity to see how activists apply political theory in an attempt to articulate indigenous responses for social change in unstable political settings—a context quite different from their classroom experience. How do activists teach about and use political theory in practice? And how do we, as participant observers from the academy, learn from and contribute to such an exercise?

Pracha Hutuanuwatr, a founder and long-time director of SEM and Ashram Wongsanit, where the group was hosted, explained that he designed this particular workshop to give young Southeast Asian leaders an opportunity to think about larger political ideas, critique them, and develop their own ideas in the public sphere through their personal experiences. The exercise, then, was meant to contribute to a budding de-

mocracy in Myanmar, and knowing this added tremendously to what the American group learned.

## Yangon, Myanmar

The second part of the program took place in Yangon, where students met religiously and ethnically diverse SEM alumni who are now engaged in a range of aspects, and levels, of their emerging public sphere. Students, in this way, deepened their understanding of the training they had just completed by seeing their fellow senior alumni in contextualized action. They also learned about the shifting and tenuous parameters of civil society during this time of democratic transition.

Following government reforms, in 2013 SEM's network in Myanmar re-configured itself as an independent organization, Gaia Sustainable Management Institute (GSMI). GSMI is religiously and ethnically diverse, and its partner organizations work on a wide array of issues to promote meaningful democratic reform: and rebuilding in ceasefire areas, repatriation, poverty alleviation, funeral charity, and conflict resolution among others. Until very recently, most of its work was clandestine. GSMI understands itself as a non-hierarchical system of actors seeking to nurture their country's civil society through its network's programs and trainings. It sees itself as a model in its response to the changing political, economic, and development landscape. Though GSMI does not emphasize religious pluralism, or see its trainings as fitting into an engaged Buddhist model (many of the leaders are Christian), through its work, it implicitly developed a strategy of interfaith practice. Unlike the Thai program, GSMI organized the exposure trip for Princeton students to showcase the broad scope of its activities and of its alumni.



The week-long program began with small groups of students touring parts of Yangon with young leaders and activists on public transportation, foot, and trishaw. In each case the leaders had the opportunity to show them the locations and the projects they are active in: an impassioned storytelling collective, a traditional music school, and a Muslim-Buddhist peace-building group. The program continued each day with GSMI alumni offering overviews about their work in diverse fields. These lectures often turned into long interchanges with the students, who learned about how such projects develop in the emerging public sphere, how the faith background of individual leaders motivates and influences their work, and how they learnt from SEM's engaged-Buddhist trainings.

The students' recent training in Thailand shaped and contextualized their time in Myanmar. While students visited several sites each day, as they would on any exposure trip, they did so through meeting fellow alumni. Instead of being passive listeners, they were now fellow junior partners in a shared vision of work. The framework also quite naturally created the opportunity for comparative analysis of GSMI and its partners' activities, as well as more familiar, intimate, and sustained conversations—something so critical for meaningful exchange. Students had the opportunity to hear the life stories of how each activist came to do their current work and reflect on their personal perspective of the stake of civil society in Myanmar.

These encounters, and those in Thailand as well, often triggered students to think about career development within the larger context of personal and community experience, spiritual development, and above all,

vocation. Though informal, it was an opportunity for high achieving students to think about their futures, and what constitutes success, outside of campus and academic life.

## Overarching Goals and Outcomes

Beyond learning about contextualized, comparable, and interconnected religiously plural grassroots civil societies, the program had two other overarching goals.

First, the program was mutually educational. While SEM and INEB are expert at training local activists, what would a group of American students learn from their program? How would two groups of young people interact with each other? SEM/INEB chose participants based on the investment of leadership potential, and those sympathetic to its model. It is not easy to find young spiritually-inclined like-minded civic leaders in South and Southeast Asia who are interested in grassroots development and willing to devote and risk their lives for such work. The make-up of the Princeton delegation was an experiment, and the selection process was quite different. The Office of Religious Life sought both students who would be sympathetic to the program, and also those who might view politics and theology differently: politically and economically conservative Orthodox Jewish, evangelical Christian, observant Muslim, and secular students. In the spirit of healthy civil society, the intention was to ensure that a diverse Princeton community would participate in the training, be challenged by it, and add alternative perspectives.

In the case of the GSMI exposure trip, this was the first group of foreign students that the organization had hosted. Such opportunities are very new to Myanmar. In this

way, the partnership created the opportunity for a network of local activists to explain their work in a way that would be educational for an audience interested in civil society, and likewise to learn, in the process, how to answer public questions—something that they are now learning to do.

Second, the program was also designed for Princeton students to build relationships with fellow youth, which would foster civil society networks. It exposed the students to individuals and activist communities in Thailand and Myanmar, and likewise those communities to Princeton students. The students have remained connected to those they met: several attended the 2013 INEB Buddhist-Muslim conference in Malaysia, others volunteered to edit grants for their fellow alumni, and members of Princeton's student government initiated a partnership with a student government in Myanmar.

In these ways, the program diverged from classic exposure trips, which tend to offer students an overview of organizations working on development or civil society issues. The Princeton-INEB trip, instead, acted as a mechanism for discussion about and participation with individuals who are actively building a robust and open society.

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*Matthew C. Weiner, Associate Dean in the Office of Religious Life, Princeton University; Somboon Chungprempree, Executive Secretary and Patcharee Chonmanat, Youth Coordinator of INEB; and Thet Nai and Ohnmar Shwe of GSMI developed and implemented the project. Erin L. Hasinoff, Research Associate in the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History, New York, conceived of and participated in the project. Alison Boden, Dean of the Office of Religious Life, and Matthew Weiner led the trip.*

# Our lessons learned from Jungto Society, South Korea

*Ven. Sayadej Ekaggacitto*



Visiting Korea was always my dream and now it has come true after working as volunteer for Buddhism for Development Project (BDP) in Laos. BDP has a connection with International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), Somboon Chungprampree (Executive Secretary) who invited us to conduct a study tour in Korea, to learn from Venerable Pomnyun Sunim, the founder, and guiding Zen master of Jungto Society. Five monks from Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Sri Lanka and Laos were invited to join the study tour including Somboon Chungprampree and Andrew, an American living and practicing Zen Buddhism with Venerable Pomnyun Sunim who was conducting a documentary on Jungto Society.

We monks from Laos and Cambodia arrived Korea at the same time in early morning of 29th of June. There Mina, Choi, and Mr. Lee were waiting for us at the airport. Mina is from France. She took her vow for a hundred days to practice and work for Jungto society after following Venerable Pomnyun Sunim's Dhamma talks through YouTube. After five hundred videos she was somehow awakened and decided to help.

Surprisingly, Mina knew

about us as she had found our data through the Internet. After having a big breakfast at the airport, Mr. Lee and Mina guided us to Jungto Society while Choi was waiting for the remaining monks to arrive. At the Jungto Society, Venerable Yu Su Sunim, who is one of Venerable Pomnyun Sunim's students, Somboon and Andrew were already there, waiting to warmly welcome us.

We stayed at the small Dhamma hall with well-equipped facilities and also had lunch in this room. In the afternoon, we listened to the program's orientation and proceeded to the Peace Foundation where we met the Venerable Pomnyun Sunim. There, we had a very friendly discussion as he introduced us to the activities of the Peace Foundation and some other social welfare that he has been involved with and supported. We exchanged the experience and knowledge with him and asked about the practice of Zen Buddhism.

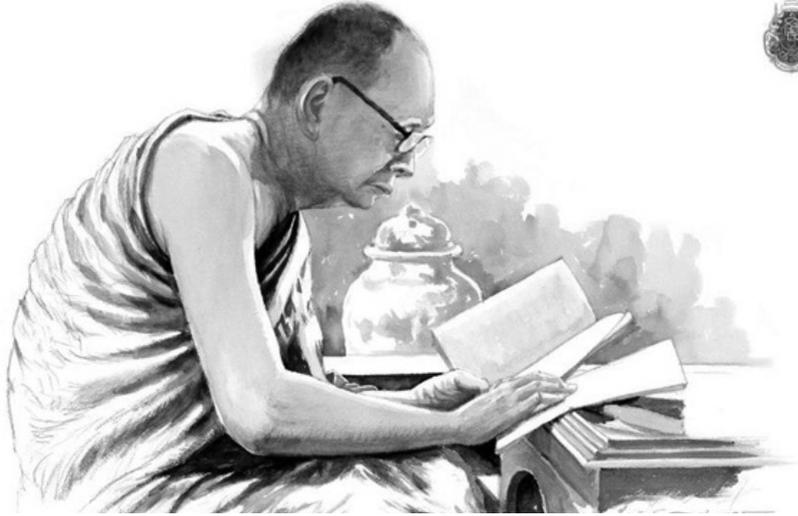
After discussing with Venerable Pomnyun Sunim, we proceeded to the Peace Foundation to learn about the process of producing Dhamma books and videos by volunteers who have taken vows to work for him or Buddhism from a mini-

num of hundred days to a maximum of ten thousand days without wages. Most of them have faith and confidence in Buddhism because they have listened to his Dhamma before. In the evening, we learned how to use the bowl and the Barugongyang at the Dhamma hall for the next day breakfast.

In the morning of 30 June we followed Venerable Pomnyun Sunim to Jogye-sa temple, where he gave a Dhamma lecture to a lot of people. At the same time, we also met with other Buddhist groups to discuss and exchange knowledge and had lunch with them. After that we went into the Dhamma hall to see big Buddha images.

In the evening, we followed Venerable Pomnyun Sunim to another public Dhamma lecture in Kwangmyang city. There we experienced a new style of Dhamma talk, which provided questions and answers. We were impressed by the way Venerable Pomnyun Sunim interacted with people. It was entertaining because they were enjoying the talk so much. He was really graceful and full of compassion. He was smiling even though he was asked difficult questions. In the end everyone understood and accepted his answer.

## Venerating the Supreme Patriarch on the Occasion of His 100th Birthday



**T**he present Supreme Patriarch (Charoen Suvaddhana) has been an embodiment of self-renunciation. He is highly learned in the Scriptures and has beautifully cultivated the task of meditation practice. This is a rare combination to be found in a single monk. He is also well-informed of worldly issues, past and contemporary. Although simple and humble, his brilliance has always shined through.

The Supreme Patriarch has strictly observed the Four Noble Sentiments. His compassion is particularly boundless. Monks of the forest order greatly benefited from his administration of the Sangha. Town monks received his moral support irrespective of their denominations and sects. He could clearly perceive the excellence of Venerable Payutto and praised it accordingly. His veneration of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu is also a good reflection of his own brilliance.

Although appearing to be soft and compromising, he possesses great inner strength. He has rarely exercised his authority directly, but when he did he always relied on guidance from the Dhamma. His handling of the Santi Asoke and Dhammakaya sects is a case in point. On the latter, he clearly stated in written form that the leader of Dhammakaya sect

was a fake monk, and hence underserving of respect. In fact, this fake monk was almost legally prosecuted but was saved in the last minute by the intervention of some corrupt politicians. The other members of the Mahathera Council were indifferent to matters of legitimacy and therefore did not press the case further. The worsening of the Supreme Patriarch's health in recent years meant that he could no longer carry out his official duties. However, this may be seen as a blessing in disguise as he no longer has to be associated with the corrupt Sangha.

He has warmly welcomed the ordination of foreign monks in the kingdom, allowing them to be monks in any denomination or sect of their choice. He has also played a leading role in spreading the Dhamma internationally, especially in Indonesia and Nepal. He recognized monks from the Mahayana and Vajrayana Schools as his equals, and deemed His Holiness the Dalai Lama as a kalyanamitta.

Shortly after the military junta in Burma cracked down on Buddhist monks nationwide, it invited him to Burma to receive the award of the highest ecclesiastical title. But he politely turned down the offer. This decision affirmed that he could distinguish between right and wrong and stood with the former.

# New Paradigms for Future Societies

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**M**aha Ghosananda (1929-2007) a Cambodian Peacemaker, was considered as the ‘Cambodian Gandhi’ as well as a Niwano Peace Laureate in 1998. *‘Step by Step’*, his only book is a well-known guide for Buddhist practitioners. The chapter entitled “The Present Is Mother of the Future” reminds us that if we want to talk about future, we also need to take care of the present. A new paradigm for the future, must also focus on the present and how we can change our societies to be more peaceful, just and harmonious with nature.

Bhikkhu Buddhadasa (1906-1993) perhaps the most well known Siamese Buddhist monk declared that to follow the teaching of the Buddha, which means to become awake, one must practice how to transform greed into generosity, hatred into loving-kindness and delusion into wisdom or real understanding—one should learn to be less selfish and care more for other sentient beings. He argued that the essence of other religions is similar in encouraging followers to work for personal liberation as well as for social justice and environmental balance.

One should not regard our friends’ religions as inferior to ours. Each religion is unique. If we understand to translate worldly language into spiritual language, we would respect all the scriptures whether the Bible or the Koran; as they are there to guide us to be better human beings and serve others more than ourselves.

Those of different religions should work together, also with nonbelievers, for the betterment of humankind.

I do not know whether the messages of these renounced Buddhist scholars belong to New Paradigms for Future Societies or not but they do have relevance in this consumerist society.

When the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) first started more than 20 years ago, it provided a space for kalyanamitras to share experiences and support each other with independent initiatives. Bhikkhu Buddhadasa and Maha Ghosananda kindly became the patrons of INEB until both of them has passed away.

In recent years, we have been developing more collaborative programs that bring together INEB members around issues of common concern. So much has happened since we last gathered in Bodhgaya, India in 2011 around the theme “The Future of Buddhism: From Personal Awakening to Global Transformation.” Progress has been made on nearly all of the initiatives we discussed in Bodhgaya. The Young Bodhisattva program for youth leaders has continued to expand, and develop, and in January 2013, INEB convened an Inter-faith meeting of Asian women leaders.

In September 2012, INEB organized a highly successful Interfaith dialog on religion and climate change. More than 150 people representing Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, Islamic, Baha’i, and animist faith traditions gathered together at the Islander Center

in Sri Lanka. An outcome of this event was the formation of the Inter-religious Climate and Ecology (ICE) Network. The INEB Secretariat is playing a key role in coordination and follow-up, and has also been representing an engaged Buddhist perspective at international programs on climate advocacy and environmental conservation.

The 2012 INEB Advisory and Executive Committees meeting was hosted by the Japanese Network of Engaged Buddhists. During the excellent study tours and side programs, INEB members heard first-hand accounts of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, and many of us were able to travel to the affected areas. This experience made it clear that nuclear power is not a viable solution to the climate crisis, and INEB issued a statement supporting the anti-nuclear campaign.

Another new development was the emergence of Buddhist-Muslim violence as an international news story, particularly in countries like Burma and Sri Lanka. INEB has worked with other international groups like International Movement for a Just World (JUST), to hold a series of discussions on how to address the roots of these violent conflicts. This resulted in the theme for this year's INEB conference in Malaysia: "Inter-Faith Dialog for Peace and Sustainability" and the special "International Buddhism-Muslim Forum on Peace and Sustainability."

In terms of education, we founded Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) in 1995, to play the role as a capacity building organisation, working with transformative educational approaches that integrate inner growth as a foundation for social change and wellbeing.

In Siam, SEM provides capacity building on topics that encourage life skills integrated with developing the heart. They have been offering trainings to the general public, as well as working with NGOs, businesses and government institutions to improve working structures and relationships, in order for people to develop happiness in the workplace, and create balance in their lives.

SEM also has outreach programmes in neighboring Laos and Burma, implementing broader and longer-term projects which focus on

empowering civil society groups to participate in transforming their own lives so that they are able to define their own needs, and work together to meet them. These projects are helping to build resilience among diverse communities in the face of increasing pressures from economic globalisation and consumerism.

In 1997 we organized the Alternatives to Consumerism international gathering in Buddha's Park near Bangkok. Groups and individual pioneers from all over the world, but especially from Asia, joined and exchanged experiences and vision on alternative development in various areas: education, agriculture, human rights and governance, art and religion. Although we made a very critical analysis of how the corporate world lures people into the illusions of a consumerist culture, at that time alternative business approaches did not have a strong profile. So, a group of responsible business people came together and founded, in association with similar networks emerging elsewhere in the world, the Social Venture Network (SVN). SVN in Siam is a very active and influential business network until today and even co-organized in the past international gatherings in Thailand, Singapore, Japan and Vietnam.

One group of pioneers in this SVN movement wanted to shape more concretely an alternative approach to business and started what later was called a 'social enterprise'. It was given the name of the land of my ancestors where they started. Suan Nguen Mee Ma social enterprise became an 'against the stream' publishing house and started the Green Market Network, bringing small-scale organic family farmers and mindful consumers together. The Green Market Network was inspired by the Teikei movement in Japan which evolved in 1965 as a reaction of housewives to the Minamata disaster. Food Security which includes Food Safety, became an issue and is a growing challenge.

We do not see the challenges around food security separate from other issues. In our understanding food security is part of 'Human Security' which can only be effectively addressed in its full complexity with a genuine holistic approach.

Therefore, when Bhutan articulated its ideas

on Gross National Happiness by means of the first international conference on Gross National Happiness held in Thimphu, February 2004, we actively joined the “GNH Movement” and the search for a new development paradigm. In 2007 the Suan Nguen Mee Ma social enterprise, in partnership with many others, organized the 3rd international conference on GNH in Nongkhai and Bangkok. The conference drew participation of more than 900 people from all over the world, including a promising group of young people. After some initial follow-up activities we decided to consolidate this work in a permanent but small-scale organization: the School for Wellbeing Studies and Research. The three founding partners of the School for Wellbeing are: Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok; the Centre for Bhutan Studies based in Thimphu; and the Sathirakoses Nagapradipa Foundation, a Siamese umbrella for independent civil society initiatives which I founded in 1968. Apart from research on “the well-being society” and organizing public debate on happiness, the ‘limits to growth’ and sustainable development – with experts including Nobel laureate Joseph E. Stiglitz, Vandana Shiva, Helena Norberg-Hodge, Matthieu Ricard, David Loy and Arthur Zajonc – the School for Wellbeing, inspired by Vandana Shiva, started, the Towards Organic Asia programme, together with partners in the Mekong region. Its major achievement is the start of a Young Organic Farmers’ (YOF) network.

In July 2014 the first Chulalongkorn University Right Livelihood Summer School will be organized in association with the Right Livelihood College in Penang and the School for Wellbeing, who will join forces to create a platform where activists and academics can meet. Right Livelihood Award recipients from all over the world, who have been recognized for their outstanding pioneering activism, will be resource persons in this annual Summer School in Bangkok and Ashram Wongsanit.

Our work is based on the inter-connections between small-scale initiatives. Fortunately a person like Jakob von Uexkull, the founder of the Right Livelihood Foundation, made the step towards tackling challenges at a worldwide level in order to give local and small-scale initiatives a global voice.

He started the World Future Council, an international forum made up of 50 eminent personalities from around the world. Together they form a pressure group for the rights of future generations.

The World Future Council brings the interests of future generations to the center of policy making. The Council addresses challenges to our common future and provides decision-makers with effective policy solutions. In-depth research underpins advocacy work for international agreements, regional policy frameworks and national lawmaking and thus produces practical and tangible results.

Recently the long awaited report from the UN Secretary-General on how the UN should consider the needs of future generations has been released, with the assistance of the World Future Council. The title is ‘Intergenerational Solidarity and the Needs of Future Generations’. The report strongly recommends what the World Future Council has been advocating: to establish a dedicated representative, a High Commissioner for Future Generations.

Any clashes from different perspectives and paradigms should be taken seriously and people should face one another as friends—not enemies; and try to listen to each other. A dialogue could take place, if one would not only lend our ears to others but also open our eyes and our hearts to learn from others respectfully and humbly. One should also teach oneself that those who tell us what we normally do not expect to hear are our good friends. If what he or she said is nonsensical, he or she should be forgiven. If however, what was said could be a good criticism on our wrong belief or bad conduct, we should feel grateful and learn to develop critical self-awareness for our own spiritual growth.

That would be guarantee towards more sustainable, harmonious and just Future Societies !!!

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*Presented at the symposium commemorative to the 30th anniversary of Niwano Peace Prize, Tokyo, Japan, 24th October 2013*

## An Elder Who Is Not Cunning



On March 5, 1976, a number of Puey Ungphakorn's friends and students, especially from Thammasat University, organized an academic conference, which was entitled "The Thai Future," to celebrate his 60th birthday. (Puey was born on 9 March 1916.) His Royal Highness Prince Wan Waithayakon served as the chair of the conference. Also the book series "Rak Muang Thai" (Love the Thai Country) was published to celebrate this event. This was perhaps the first concrete activity held in Thai society to honor Puey.

For this very special occasion the Komol Keemthong Foundation (KKF) also published the Thai edition of Thich Nhat Hanh's *The Miracle of Being Awake*. Puey had been the vice-president of the Foundation since 1973. Later in life, Puey would resign from all the positions he held in various organizations except at KKF. He served as KKF's vice-president till the end of his life.

The period between October 1973 and October 1976 was a time of political turmoil in Thai society. Thai society descended into rage and violence. Rumors were widespread, and they were used to slander if not dehumanize the opponents of the powers that be. Puey was one of the very first targets. However, he confronted these violent forces in good Buddhist manner, steadfastly upholding "santi pracha dhamma."

After October 1976 Puey fled to exile in England. His reputation was greatly tarnished. His physical and mental health deteriorated. Yet, he continued to serve his compatriots tirelessly. He wrote articles, gave talks, and

found financial support for the victims of the political turmoil.

I was also forced into exile after October 1976. I participated in several of the above mentioned activities with Puey. However, I was able to return home before he could. Once home I had to answer numerous queries on Puey. In a newspaper interview I said that Puey was "An Elder Who Is Not Cunning," and it eventually became the title of the interview piece. Nevertheless, I felt that the interview did not fully capture what I had said. Therefore, I wrote a book on Puey, which was published on 9 March 1979. It became an instant best-seller, and has since been republished several times.

Puey's reputation gradually recovered over the years, but his health never improved. Inner strength enabled him to visit his motherland. His first visit home since the exile was on 1 April 1987. He departed the kingdom on 25 April. He would return to his homeland again in 1993, 1995 and 1997.

Puey passed away in London on July 28, 1999, at the age of 83. The cause of his death was aortic aneurysm. His family and relatives held a small funeral service on 6 August. His eldest son, Jon Ungphakorn, called me to inform about his passing and to consult on the process of bringing the ashes home. He also asked me to be responsible for the publication of Puey's funeral book. It was published by the Komol Keemthong Foundation and released on 16 August 1999—the very day his ashes came home. Puey's ashes urn is now kept near the ones of his mother and maternal grandmother at Wat Pathum Kongka.

Puey's friends and students, especially from

Thammasat University, mustered the donations to renovate an old building at Wat Pathum Kongka and renamed it the “Puey Forum.” It was officially opened on 28 June 2001. It has become a place for meeting and discussion among and between lay people and monks.

On a personal note, I was deeply moved by Puey’s. “The Quality of Life of a South-East Asian: A Chronicle of Hope from Womb to Tomb,” especially the idea that

“ When I die, if happen to have some money left, I would wish the Government to take some of it, leaving an adequate amount for my widow. With this money the Government should make it possible for others to enjoy life too.”

I have put this idea into practice by establishing “Suan Ngern Mee Ma” (Garden of Fruition), which was opened on 19 August 1999. It was built on a plot of land belonging to my mother. I’ve dedicated it to the service of the common good. The “Santi Pracha Dhamma Library” is also located at Suan Ngern Mee Ma. Many books from the alternative streams are available for any lover of wisdom to read and borrow.

Lastly, many individuals, organizations, institutions, have reached a consensus that in the following three years as we are approaching Puey’s 100th birthday, a preparatory committee for the celebration of his centenary would be created. It will organize a series of events and activities and will reach out to involve all sectors of society whenever possible. These events and activities will be extensive, educational, and holistic. They will be held at landmark sites throughout the country. An important objective is to reanimate public interest in Puey’s political thought encapsulated in the concept of “Santi Pracha Dhamma.”

## 2014 Calendar

### *Twelve Influential Siamese Figures*



*The Santi Pracha Dhamma* Calendar in honor of Dr. Puey Ungphakorn (1917-2017) is US\$5, excluding postal. The calendar can be ordered at [spd@semsikkha.org](mailto:spd@semsikkha.org)

# The Uniqueness of Prince Naris

(28 April 1863-10 March 1947)

An appreciation on the occasion of his 150th birthday



*Sarn Somdej (Royal Epistles)*

*Notes on Knowledge*

## I

About 45 years ago, Professor Herbert Phillips of University of California, Berkeley came to do research work in this country and published his finding in an article entitled “The Culture of Siamese Intellectuals.” He maintained that there were ten leading intellectuals in Siam at that time, and I was the last in the list of these illustrious names. He depicted me as someone dissatisfied with the current ruling elites who were corrupt and incompetent, without moral courage or any sense of excellence. He concluded that in my view Siam should look back to the past, should at least attempt to understand the life and work of Prince Damrong and Prince Naris as exemplars to be emulated for the prosperity of the kingdom. At that time I did not have much time for democracy, and I disliked Pridi Banomyong and the People’s Party, which ended the absolute monarchy in 1932.

In fact in 1962-3, the Thai Government proposed the names of both princes to UNESCO who agreed that they should be recognized internationally as worthy

personalities on their centenaries: Prince Damrong in 1962 and Prince Naris in 1963. The Thai Government also organized big celebrations on both occasions. I myself contributed modestly by translating Prince Damrong’s book *Monuments of the Buddha in Siam* which was published by the Siam Society in 1962. The next year I produced in Thai five volumes entitled *Notes on Knowledge* which collected the correspondence between Prince Naris and Phya Anuman Rajadhon. The book has been reprinted three times since, and I maintain that anyone who has not read this book cannot claim to understand Siamese culture.

Prince Dhani, who was then Honorary President of the Siam Society, presided over the 1962 and 1963 celebrations. His Highness very kindly wrote the Foreword to my translation of *Monuments of the Buddha in Siam*. He told me that Prince Damrong had adopted him as a son, and he admired his adoptive father greatly. Yet he said he admired Prince Naris even more.

At that time, Princess Chongchit Thanom Diskul, Prince Damrong’s eldest daughter was so gracious as to invite me to lunch with her almost every Sunday. She loved and respected as well as admired her father

tremendously, yet always with a critical eye. In other words, she was unlike her younger and more famous sister, Princess Poon Pismai Diskul, to whom the elder sister remarked sarcastically that Poon worshipped Father as if he was a cult leader, because Princess Poon did not see anyone better than Prince Damrong. In her opinion, Damrong was beyond reproach. Princess Chongchit said, “Of course, we admire our father and others also admire their fathers. We should not tell people that our father is better than theirs. In fact, in some instances Uncle Naris was even better than my father, especially in perseverance, patience and modesty.”

What I have said so far is the background of my interest in the life and work of Prince Naris because I was attracted initially to Prince Damrong when I first read his *Our Wars with Burma*. I was then twelve years old and did not like reading at all. However, it was because of this book that encouraged me to read all of Prince Damrong’s work –not only the books written by him, but also those edited by him, or his introductory chapters to various Siamese classics.

After the end of the absolute regime in 1932, Prince Damrong lived in exile in Penang for over a decade. During this period he corresponded with his younger brother, Naris. These letters were later published in multi-volumes called *Sarn Somdej (Royal Epistles)*. They are very lively and offer insights not only on both personalities but also on many of their contemporaries. These volumes also helped me to appreciate Prince Naris—his unassuming character, his sense of humor, his moral courage, his wit, and his understanding of languages, cultures, arts and religions. Not to mention the subtleties of royal ceremonies and how to apply them to the modern world.

## II

Perhaps a brief biographical sketch of Prince Naris is necessary. He was one of the sons of King Mongkut, Rama IV. His mother was a minor princess who was in fact Rama V’s aunt. But Naris was born only with the title of “Pra Ong Chao,” i.e., not a celestial prince with the queen as his mother. On the other hand, Rama V was born as Celestial Prince Chulalongkorn, although his mother was a minor princess too, but she was raised to be queen.

Naris was born as “Pra Ong Chao Chit Chareon,” meaning ‘the one with fully- developed heart,’ which turned out to be an apt name for him. Indeed when he

was ordained as monk, temporarily as was customary of any adult male in Siam, he did not want to disrobe. His elder brother, Rama V, had to ask him to return to the lay life to serve King and Country. Rama V also promoted him to be a celestial prince with the new name of Narisranuvadtiwong. His Majesty promoted Naris’s mother to be a royal-highness princess as well.

Of all Rama V’s brothers, Naris was perhaps the most intimate to the king. He had the moral courage to criticize His August Majesty quietly but firmly, especially in the area of womanizing, which was one of Chulalongkorn’s preoccupations. Prince Damrong admired the king so much that he never criticized his elder brother in front of him or behind his back. Prince Pichit, on the other hand, openly confronted the king and was subsequently dismissed from his cabinet position.

On the whole, Prince Naris did not express his opinion for or against polygamy which was a common practice at the time, especially among his peers. But he himself was monogamous. He married one wife at a time. When the first one died, he had a second wife, and after her demise, he then had the last one who survived him. So there was no ‘harem’ in his palace. He did not construct a new palace. Rather he inherited the old one which Rama I had built for his grandson who was also the son of the King of Thonburi. This palace was later occupied by Rama III before he came to the throne, and eventually it belonged to Prince Naris until his death. The palace is now part of Silpakorn University.

All sons of Rama IV and Rama V had their palaces built in the western fashion. Only Prince Naris chose to live in the traditional Siamese way. Even when Bangkok became unhealthy for Prince Naris, who was not well physically, he bought a farm house and built additional Thai houses like those of commoners to live among the inhabitants of Klong Toey, which was then an area at the outskirts of the city. He built no fence around the new palace. He said my compassion is my fence, for he was friendly to all his neighbors. Many people in Bangkok did not know that he was a prince. When he went to a Chinese dentist before the Second World War, the dentist thought that he was a civil servant and called him “Chao Khun” (or Sir), which amused him.

When Rabindranath Tagore came to Siam in 1927, the Indian poet and philosopher visited the leading Siamese princes in their palaces, including Prince Bhanurangsi, Prince Damrong and Prince Naris. Yet the Indian dignitary was only impressed by Prince Naris’s modest living in the traditional Siamese culture of his old

palace, next to the Grand Palace.

In the princely hierarchy a prince or princess could be promoted to be “Krom,” which is equivalent to a royal dukedom. But a Krom could be elevated from a “Kroma Muen” to “Kroma Khun,” “Kroma Luang,” “Kroma Phra” and “Somdej Kroma Phya.”

The prince’s name would then be known as the name of the Krom, i.e., Prince (Pra Ong Chao) Ditsawarakuman was promoted to be Kroma Muen Damrong Rajanubhab. He was then known as Prince Damrong. Later he became Kroma Luang (bypassing Kroma Khun), Kroma Phra, and ultimately Somdej Kroma Phya. Only with the titles of Kroma Phra and Somdej Kroma Phya that the names inscribed on gold plates would add his different qualities appropriate to his title.

As for Prince Naris, who was born as Pra Ong Chao Chit Chareon, he was raised straight away to be Chao Fa (Celestial Prince) Kroma Khun Narisranuvadtivong, and when he was promoted to be Kroma Luang, he also became Somdej Chao Fa Kroma Luang Naris. This was in the reign of Rama V.

In the next reign, he was elevated to be Somdej Chao Fa Kroma Phra Narisranuvadtivong with additional qualities as follows:

*Narisranuvadtivong*  
*Mahamakutapongsanarupadindra*  
*Paramindrarajadhibendra*  
*Paramindrarajabitula*  
*Syamibhaktevijit*  
*Sabbasilpasiddhividyadhara*  
*Suracirakarasubhakosala*  
*Prabondprichachanboranakadi*  
*Sangitivaditavidhicarana*  
*Maholarasitaladhyashraya*  
*Buddhaditraitratnasarananavatra*  
*Khattiyadejanubhabbpitra*

*Descendent of Kings*  
*Son of King Mongkut*  
*Brother of King Chulalongkorn*  
*Uncle of King Vajiravudh*  
*Loyal to the Kingdom of Siam*  
*Well-versed in all the arts*  
*Excellent painter*  
*Writer of many subjects of old time*  
*Master of music, songs and dances*  
*With great, good and cool heart*  
*With deep faith in the Triple Gems*  
*A prince with royal dignity.*

*district and again in this reign at Wat Thai Buddhagaya in India. However, neither of them has the beauty of Prince Naris’s original creation.*

*The monument at Sanam Luang which Prince Naris designed for those volunteers who fought in the First World War is modest, simple and elegant in the Sukhothai style. It is in sharp contrast to the so-called ‘Victory Monument’ which commemorated fallen soldiers in the French Indochina War as well as World War II, both of which we were defeated. Hence this monument cannot be a symbol of victory. Nevertheless, foreign guests of state still lay wreaths at this monument, which is quite grotesque or downright ugly in the fascist fashion – what a model to truth, goodness and beauty.*

*Vol. II showing one of his paintings. There are many more exquisite ones. His drawing is always appropriate such as his portrayal of the Bhuridatta Jataka—unlike many popular artists who made the illustration too larger than life.*

*Vol. III showing his poem on ecclesiastical fans used by Buddhist monks. He also innovatively designed many beautiful fans for religious ceremony.*

*Vol. IV showing his music composition skill. He was a master of traditional songs, dances and music,*

When I published *Notes on Knowledge* in five volumes to celebrate his centenary in 1963 I used the back cover of each volume to showcase his artistic talent.

*Vol. I showing his architectural achievement in the royal crematorium of King Rama VI which has been used for the cremation of Rama VIII and other queens until now. His architectural masterpiece in Rama V’s reign is of course the Marble Temple. It was replicated in the reign of Rama VIII at Wat Phra Sri Mahadhatu in Bangkok*

*adapting them appropriately for the modern time of Rama V’s reign. The royal anthem was in fact composed by him as Tagore composed national anthems for India and Bangladesh.*

*Vol. V showing the Royal Chakri decoration. He was awarded the highest decoration from Rama VIII. But the doors to the phra ubosot and phra viharn, adorned with mother of pearl, of Wat Rajabopit were not his creation. Rather they were crafted by Prince Pravij Jumsai whom Prince Naris praised as a better artist in this field than himself.*

Prince Naris never boasted that he was better than anyone whether in art, craft or official duty. On the contrary, he always acknowledged the superiority of others. He said he used to travel by rowing boat to see various temples, to appreciate their architecture, sculptures, paintings, etc. He deemed Prince Voravadhana Supakorn a person who could better understand the subtlety of Siamese culture than he could. It is said that he enjoyed watching the Nang Yai, the great shadow play. Prince Voravadh told him that using tinder was not sufficient; coconut shells must also be burned to create appropriate lighting to fully appreciate the beauty of craftsmanship in each figure of the Nang Yai besides the performance.

Prince Damrong trusted Prince Naris on every count concerning the arts of old Siam. The latter was more or less the final arbiter on matters of arts and archeology.

When Mr. Corrado Feroci came from Florence to seek employment in the Fine Arts Department during Rama VI's reign he was initially rejected. He then went to see Prince Naris who had taken early retirement due to ill health. The prince asked the young Italian to make a sculpture for him. Feroci did a small sculpture of Prince Naris. The prince immediately recognized that this young man was a genius. Hence Feroci got the job and went on to become the famous Silpa Bhirasri, the doyen of arts and crafts at Silpakorn University. The University later regarded him as the father of modern Thai art. And it was through Silpa Bhirasri that Fua Haripitak and Angkarn Kalayanapong became the custodians of traditional Thai arts or the building blocks of our contemporary arts.

Fua was the most promising Thai painter who excelled in contemporary western techniques. Yet Silpa Bhirasri convinced him to concentrate instead on conserving traditional Siamese mural paintings. Fua also used Prince Naris's work as a guide for his research on traditional Thai arts. He read Prince Naris's description of the old library at Wat Rakhang, which was originally the residence of Rama I before he ascended the throne. The building was an architectural marvel and the mural painting on the inside wall was astonishing. Yet the building was neglected in a dreadful state of decay. Fua asked me for help in its restoration. I then invited Prince Yajai Chitrabongse, a son of Prince Naris, to head a committee to restore the building. It was restored magnificently in time for the bicentenary of Bangkok in 1982

Mr. Sachandra Sahai wrote a very important book on Rama V's visit to India, and he was a student of George Coedes in archeology. He told me that when he

read French documents on Angkor Wat and when French scholars debated on critical issues pertaining to old arts or artifacts if someone mentioned that Prince Naris had given his opinion on such a matter, all the French savants would almost always agree. This led Sahai to ask me who Prince Naris was.

Prince Naris did not know English or French, but he felt that to know his Thai roots, he needed to learn not only Pali but also Khmer. He translated one Khmer book into Thai by transliterating many Khmer words with mutual old Thai vocabularies. When he completed it, he asked the Khmer scholars in the Royal Institute to check his translation. They unanimously agreed that his work was excellent, perhaps with only one minor difference in rendering a Khmer name into Thai.

Rama IV, his royal father, had 82 children. Some of them were brilliant in their fields such as Prince Devawongse in foreign affairs, Prince Patriarch Vajirayana in Sangha education, and Prince Damrong in provincial administrative reform. But as human beings the royal children were often jealous of one another. Even Prince Damrong was greatly looked down upon by some of his elder brothers and was even hated by one younger brother. But no one disliked Prince Naris, who survived all his brothers.

After the 1932 Revolution, Field Marshal Phibunsongkram wanted all the princes killed but Pridi Banomyong wanted to preserve the monarchy and did not want to harm the royal family members. Even so most of them had to live in exile or were imprisoned. Only Prince Naris remained in his modest palace, despite the fact that he was Regent before Rama VII abdicated.

Phibun declared that if Prince Damrong returned from exile in Penang, wherever he entered the kingdom, he would be shot right away. Later, however, the Field Marshal changed his mind and allowed the old prince to return to Bangkok to spend his remaining years.

Yet with Prince Naris, Phibun had nothing but admiration and adoration. This was because when the prince was Supreme Counselor of State in Rama VII's reign, Phibun, then a young first lieutenant, was his aide-de-camp. When Phibun was briefly incarcerated as war criminal after WWII he told Sang Patanothai, a fellow inmate, how much he admired the prince. Phibun said that whenever Naris was angry, he never scolded anyone or showed any sign of bad temper. Instead, the prince took to the xylophone and played it vigorously so that anger would be transformed into beauty and goodness.

## Sombath Somphone



and expand his activities throughout the country. As such, in 2005 Sombath was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership.

Sombath has a good wife. She is a Singaporean who is highly capable and has extensive international experience. She understands well Sombath and the nature of his work. Sombath has found a true life partner in her. Also, Sombath has good colleagues, especially from the younger generation, Laotians as well as foreigners. He has played an important role in alternative development and education not only in Laos but also in Burma and Bhutan. I have worked with Sombath through the International Network of Engaged Buddhists as well as the Gross National Happiness project. I consider him to be an important kalyanamitta from Laos. We meet regularly. We talk. We travel together. The last time I saw Sombath we were in Burma to discuss work with our Burmese friends. It took place at a restaurant in Mandalay on 10 December 2012. He then returned to Vientiane, and mysteriously disappeared on 15 December 2012.

A trustworthy source in Laos informed me that the Lao state (Communist Party or military) had mistakenly abducted Sombath. They can't release him now, fearing the loss of face. I was told that Sombath is still alive and is being held at an undisclosed place. The Party had done this before to several members of the Luang Prabang royal family. Some of them were even sent to reeducation camp. At the same time, another source suggested that Sombath was killed on the very first day of his abduction. The murderer was even named in this source. So which version is to be believed?

I believe that many leading figures in the Communist Party and the military are not brutal and that they are still guided by the Dhamma. They will release Sombath (or turn a blind eye to his escape) when they are able to find a good pretext. This will be good for Laos's credibility. I am sure that if released Sombath and his wife will not press charges against the Communist Party. They are willing to leave the country and spend the remaining years of their lives in solitude because Sombath has been socially engaged not to gain wealth and fame but out of selflessness and genuine concern about social justice.

I came to know Sombath Somphone when he was a student in Honolulu, Hawaii. He became friends with several good Americans who were Quakers. The Quakers are members of what is collectively and officially known as The Religious Society of Friends. They dedicate their lives according to religious teachings. Like Buddhists, Quakers place great importance on having kalyanamitta and have confidence in nonviolence. Politically, however, they are often more progressive than most Buddhists. They courageously and creatively express their dissent and challenge the government and state in both speech and action.

I understand that Sombath's Quaker friends influenced him to work for social justice through nonviolence. After the victory of the Communist Party in Laos, many Laotians, especially from the upper-classes, fled the country in waves. But Sombath chose to return to Laos to work in the development of his country. Because he was deft and cautious, Sombath has had a modicum of freedom in his pursuing developmental work. He eventually established the Participatory Development Training Center (PADETC).

PADETC collaborates with many other organizations, including monks. Sombath has maintained good working-relations with state officials at all levels. This is crucial for his work. It has also enabled him to deepen

# 'Why do I (still) remain a monk'

Phra Paisal Visalo

The media consistently spreads the story that young believers, who have the liberty to choose whether to be Buddhist or not, no longer respect Buddhism. It is projected that Buddhism is losing its good reputation and that monks are falsely using their status for personal gain through so called "promotions" in which increasing donations are seen as the only path to heaven. This belief has caused doubt in people who are questioning Buddhism and the commitment of monks to Buddhism.



Nowadays people do not have to go to temple during Magha Bucha Day (3rd full moon day in lunar calendar). Buddhist religious books are downloadable in an easy way to understand Buddhism, and it is not difficult for youngsters to get into the subject.

For this edition of *Puey* magazine, we had the honor to interview Phra Paisal Visalo, who has unlocked curiosity on aspects of Buddhism as well as restoring Buddhism's reputation.

Puey: What is your main work?

Phra Paisal : I facilitate death and dying workshops around 15 times a year. Some workshops takes 3 days, some take 7 days. I also do around 10 other training courses each year. Altogether, it takes almost 3 months for just the training courses only, not to mention other activities.

Puey : Since you are so busy, how do you find time to write books and articles for many other magazines?

Phra Paisal : When I am at my temple, there are not many responsibilities. So I have time for writing books.

Puey : What kind of transport do you use when you are going to speak at a seminar?

Phra Paisal : The host will usually drive a car to take me to Bangkok.

Puey : How about a private jet?

Phra Paisal : No I am not as wealthy as him (Phra Nane Kum<sup>1</sup>) (haha)

<sup>1</sup> Phra Nane Kum was believed by a lot of people to be an arahant, the most accomplished adept, but it was revealed later that he had many wives and had committed many offences against the monastic rules. His wrongdoings caused much shock to Thai Buddhists. He is now sought after by the police.

Puey : What do you take with you on your journey?

Phra Paisal : I take an E-book reader, notebook, stationary, voice recorder, mobile phone, dental floss and books. It is all packed up very untidily.

Puey : A while ago, before I came to interview you, I walked past some female bankers talking in a lift saying, "Nowadays when I see a monk, I feel a bit unpleasant." So how do you perceive the current situation Thai Buddhism is facing?

Phra Paisal : This happens in every age and era. The reason it has become a big subject this time is because of the media. Currently, the media does not end at spreading the news, but also news, which is making monks famous. When monks get famous, wealth and worship follows. This makes them vulnerable to make mistakes. When they make mistakes, they become front-page news, spreading doubt among the people. This event is a mirror image of Thai society where people strongly value individuals. Actually, Buddhists must value dharma more than trusting individuals with all their heart. When someone gives too much trust to an individual, when he or she changes, dies, or does something wrong, the person will be miserable.

Puey : You are considered a "celeb"(famous) monk. Is being a "celeb" harmful? What are the advantages or disadvantages?

Phra Paisal : I have less time and more invitations. Just taking a photo takes a lot of time! I am currently full on with invitations and interviews, especially interviews from graduate students who are doing dissertations. I do not know if this is related to the so-called "celeb" monk culture. However, I don't have problems with privacy, as I don't go into the city often. However, because of this, I must be cautious in saying anything people may misunderstand. Moreover, some people use my words to support their groups against others or even for business purposes. For instance, they cut a part of my speech and put it as a headline, so I must be more cautious.

Puey : Do you use Facebook?

Phra Paisal : Yes

Puey : Then do you press "like"?

Phra Paisal : Nowadays I don't, as when people see me

as a "celeb" when I press "like" or "dislike" on something, it will have an impact on other people's emotions.

Puey : To come back to the crisis in Buddhism. When these things happen, some friends who are not interested in Buddhism turn their backs on the religion even more. We can even say religion becomes excluded from our lives. So how do you see the "crisis of faith" on the young generation these days?

Phra Paisal : The current decline of faith is only temporary. As time goes by, it will fade. Twenty years ago, Phra Nikorn and Phra Yuntra caused people to mistrust monks, similar to what is happening now. After ten years, this was forgotten and people started to trust monks again. When it happens, it will dissipate and then come back again, but with an unbreakable and whole-hearted trust that leads to disappointment. Then it will happen all over again. On the other hand, the situation among the young is critical. We must accept that religion does not provide answers for this generation, but I cannot say all young people are like this. I often meet university students at my lectures. In my opinion, it is related to age. When people are working age, they do not have time for religion, but when they get older, they come back.

Puey : Currently the teaching of Buddhism does not make sense to the younger generation as guidance for a way of life. When monks give advice to people, it is like complaining rather than helping. For example, if I am heartbroken and visit a monk for comfort, the monk will say something which is like reading from a textbook about suffering, extinction, and anger. Then, when I get home, I feel confused and still feel hurt. Therefore, it seems like the gap between monks and people is widening.

Phra Paisal : I accept that nowadays monks do not seem to understand the problems of people who come to see them. It's because they do not truly understand the concepts of Buddhism and cannot adapt these concepts to advise people appropriately. On the contrary, although there are difficulties in terms of the language and teaching if a monk lives a simple life, without greed and with generosity, people will trust him. People in general want to seek tranquility and one way to do this is to find

another who has this quality. If they cannot find it in other ways, they will find in someone else, namely monks. We can see this clearly with Luang Phor Chah (Ajahn Chah) who had many foreign followers without him being able to speak English and without knowledge of the modern world. This was mainly due to his kindness and generosity. Unfortunately, monks like him are disappearing due to the spreading of materialism. Additionally, Thai Buddhist education does not emphasize the importance of prayer, meditation or simple living. Famous monks become rich and live a wealthy life. This lifestyle has become a symbol of Thai monks these days. People who want to seek peace now have to go to a temple in the jungle.

Puey : Middle class people now seek monks with special powers who live in the forest, like Buddhist saints who can perform miracles. Like the monks in the forest, for instance Luang Phor Chah and Luang Pou Mun. I believe this is a growing trend.

Phra Paisal : If the objective in searching for a Buddhist saint is to find peace, then it is acceptable. However, nowadays it is done to make merit. Merit here is thought to bring money and success, hence Thai society overvalues success in the material world. Why does Dhammakaya have so many followers? It's because they offer hope of a better life in terms of wealth and power. Phra Nane Kum once promised power, wealth, and good health to those who donated money to him, and a vast majority of people only go to him because of this. They do not want Dhamma or peace, which I find worrying.

Puey : So what characteristic must a monk have?

Phra Paisal : Firstly, a monk must follow a strict discipline that allows him to live a simple life. If he meditates, he will be generous and peaceful. Then if he has knowledge of the world, he will be able to understand and adapt the Dhamma to solve people's problems.

Puey : What do you think causes these issues?

Phra Paisal : Firstly, the centralized structures of the Thai Buddhist Sangha enables bargaining for position, corruption, and low efficiency. Secondly, the poor education of monks emphasizes memorizing and does not clarify the true meaning of the Dhamma. Thirdly and most importantly is the lack of meditation practice that enables monks to have immunity against materialism, which nowadays

penetrates the temple gates. If this immunity is not cultivated, the technology that they use can become a tool of materialism, which destroys a monk's sense of simple living and creates desire for a luxurious life.

Puey : Would you suggest the failure of the Thai Buddhist clergy is a mirror image of the weakening of Buddhist followers?

Phra Paisal : Yes, since the clergy is inside and the followers are outside. If the inside rots, then the outside must have rotted a long time ago!

Puey : Why does the blame lie with the monks when these things happen?

Phra Paisal : It is because we believe that monks have more opportunities than common people. They have tried hard to overcome greed with support from laypeople. Therefore, laypeople have so much faith in them. It is a fact of life that when humans act poorly, they want someone to be a hero, a role model guiding them into the light. This explains why when taxi drivers are able to return money left by passengers to the owner, they get praised. One of them said that they returned millions of baht to a foreigner. Yet it turned out he was a liar.

Puey : I remember his name is Sompong Luadtahan

Phra Paisal : He made up the story, but people across the country believed him, praised him, and he was invited on almost every TV channel. The question is why Bangkok people are so easily deceived; is it because they want a hero? As a result, a monk like Phra Nane Kum can exist because people are blind to his weak spots and want a hero. Since people think they cannot become as good, they want someone to be better to compensate for their feelings.

Puey : What is the main source of suffering in people's hearts these days?

Phra Paisal : In the past, suffering was caused by greed, corruption, and power. Now it has multiplied into anger, hate, and fear. Anger, fear, and hate are increasing. Our country is polarized into different sides. We see the other side as the enemy. The yellow shirts suffer; they are angry and hate and fear the red shirts, while the red shirts are angry and hate and fear "Salim" people (those who oppose Thaksin). Huge sufferings can split families with

members becoming offended with those who do not think like them, be they son, mother, wife, or husband. Subsequently, anger is caused, followed by hate and fear that come together. This is the problem of intolerance, forming through the conflict of political ideology or even religions. Right now there are conflicts across the world due to ethics, religion, and ideology that cause anger, hate and fear, leading to the path of destruction. In conclusion, Thai people's sufferings resides in corruption, greed, and power, which are caused by craving. Anger, hate and fear are caused by conceit .

Puey : How many years have you been a monk?

Phra Paisal : Almost 31 years now.

Puey : Which passions stand out and are most difficult to control? Do you feel uncomfortable when you see women?

Phra Paisal : Sometimes my mind fluctuates and can happen occasionally. Anger still remains when I get taunted.

Puey : Coming back to sensuality, it can come without knowing for instance, as good colleagues working together. Do you ever have these kinds of feelings?

Pra Paisal : It can happen; nevertheless, after being a monk this long I do not think marriage is an answer to my life. I feel that love is impermanent. Love today may be hatred tomorrow that causes suffering. So I think it is not for me.

Puey : Sexual sensation is human nature. Does the act of conserving virginity make you distorted?

Phra Paisal : In reality, being a monk does not restrict sexual feeling but restricts it from being acted on. This is discipline. However, mentally, sexual sensation can occur. It depends on how you deal with it. If we decide to repress, it can disappear for a while. However, in the long term it can hit back. Yet if you are aware of it, it will pass away as it is. Sexual feeling could be harmful but at the same time it makes us know our weak points. If we put pressure on it, it can fade. When it fades, it makes me think that I have reached another level, but it can come back later. When it reappears, if we don't covet it, just watch it without doing what it wants, that is a more creative

way of solving.

The truth of being a monk forces you to find other forms of happiness that are more refined than sexual sensation. Since we are not able to have the same happiness as other people, we have to find alternatives. These alternative are peacefulness from meditation. From this perspective, being a monk is to encounter suffering. Suffering is when we have to fight with lust while we are not permitted to act on it. Suffering will force us to search for an alternative to sexual happiness. Once we find peacefulness or tranquility from meditation and insight, we can let go of sexual happiness and have no concern for it.

Puey : When you first ordained, I heard you thought about disrobing. Do you still want to?

Phra Paisal : I haven't thought about it for a long time

Puey : Do you plan to die as a monk?

Phra Paisal : If it happens, it is a good thing. However, everything is uncertain since there are many reasons that cause monks to disrobe.

Puey : Why would you want to disrobe? Boredom? Or to love a woman at the end of life?

Phra Paisal : As I said, I do not think married life would suit me. If I decided to disrobe, it would be for a different reason. But I cannot think of it in these circumstances.

Puey : OK so I will find a girl for you (hahaha)

Phra Paisal : Don't bother; you would make her suffer. About disrobing, no one can tell whether it will happen or not. Besides, there are many senior monks who disrobe due to health issues or feeling pressured. This kind of pressure does not relate to sex, but rather intimidation and depression.

Puey : I heard that there were many cases of long ordained senior monks who disrobe. Recently, there has been ridicule with sarcasm that they "value vagina more than nirvana" Do you see this as a failure?

Phra Paisal : It depends. For example, there is a famous meditation monk who has disrobed but he can still teach Dhamma. It depends on what they say or do before they disrobe and their life goals. For instance, if you believe that celibacy is your life goal and later you disrobe for

marriage, this is a failure. If you believe both monks and laypeople can reach enlightenment and then you disrobe, that is not a failure.

Puey : What is your life goal?

Phra Paisal : I once wrote, “If an ordinary person like me is able to maintain my celibacy all my life without deteriorating Buddhism, that would be my success in life”

Puey : It sounds careless. Like you are saving yourself (hahaha)

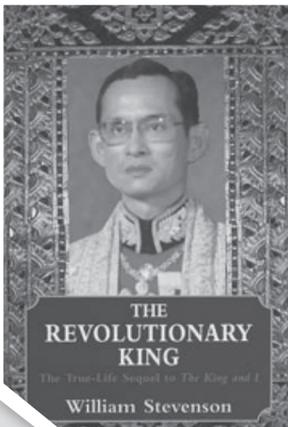
Phra Paisal : No. To be a monk is not easy. There are always chances to act wrongly, so carelessness is not an option. Just remaining a monk for your whole life without bringing any harm to the religion is already a success for an ordinary person like myself who may not have planned to be ordained until the end of his life. Despite this, if you are able to do more than that, then you should consider it as a bonus. Many years ago, I thought that I was going to die at the 6 October 1976 massacre at Thammasart University. But I have survived for another 40 years, which is a bonus, as I should have died while being an inmate at Chonburi when the army staged their coup d'état after the bloodshed in Thammasart University. They were ready to eradicate college students like they did in Chile and Argentina.

Puey : When we talk about the 6 October incident, we have to talk about Ajarn Puey Ungpakorn also. What comes up to your mind when you hear this name?

Phra Paisal : He had a rare combination of characteristics. Firstly, he was smart and captured the point accurately. Secondly, he was humble and generous. Thirdly, he sacrificed himself for others and never thought about personal gain. Fourthly, he had the courage to protect righteousness. Normally, those who are educated and smart are arrogant but Ajarn Puey was gentle and polite. He respected those who ranked below him and listened to their criticisms. Most smart people have big egos, do not listen to other people, and think about themselves. Ajarn Puey was not that type of person. That is why I said he was a rare combination.



About 40 years ago, I heard Ajarn Sulak say that of all the people he knew in Thailand, three stand out. Firstly, Ajarn Puey; secondly, Phra Payutto who at that time was not in a high position, and thirdly Nicholas Bennet. These three intellectuals had a similar combination of characteristics. They were gifted and smart yet gentle, humble, generous, and sacrificed themselves for others. They were courageous in terms of stubbornly resisting what is wrong without considering what might happen to them.



### William H. Stevenson

(1 June 1924 - 26 November 2013)

Condolences to the family and friends of Mr. Stevenson, who wrote ‘*The Revolutionary King*’ which is an unofficial biography of King Bhumiphol, and banned in Siam.



### Ms. Douangkhe Bounyavong (Pui)

(13 August 1979 – 31 October 2013)

Condolences to the family and friends of Pui (right hand side). She is a youngest daughter of Ms. Douangdeuane Bounyavong, an advisory committee member of INEB from Laos PDR.

# Why Buddhism and the West Need Each Other

David R. Loy

The mercy of the West has been social revolution. The mercy of the East has been individual insight into the basic self/void. We need both.

Gary Snyder

Another way to say it: the highest ideal of the Western tradition has been to restructure our societies so that they are more just. The most important goal for Buddhism is to awaken (the Buddha means “the Awakened”), which ends dukkha “suffering.” Today it has become obvious that we need both: not just because these ideals complement each other, but because each project needs the other.

The Western conception of justice largely begins with the Abrahamic traditions, particularly the Hebrew prophets, who criticized oppressive rulers for afflicting the poor and powerless. Is there a Buddhist equivalent? The doctrine of karma understands something like justice as an impersonal moral law of the universe. Combined with the doctrine of rebirth (necessary, since evil people sometimes prosper this lifetime), the implication seems to be that we do not need to be concerned about pursuing justice, because sooner or later everyone gets what they deserve. In practice, this has often encouraged passivity and acceptance of one’s situation, rather than the pursuit of social justice.

Does the Buddhist emphasis on dukkha provide a better parallel with the Western conception of justice? Asian Buddhism has focused on individual dukkha and

personal karma, a limitation that may have been necessary in undemocratic societies that could and sometimes did repress Buddhist institutions. Today, however, the globalization of democracy, human rights, and freedom of speech opens the door to new ways of responding to social and institutional causes of dukkha.

The Abrahamic emphasis on justice, in combination with the Greek realization that society can be restructured, has resulted in our modern concern to promote social justice by reforming political and economic institutions. This includes various human rights movements (the abolition of slavery, the civil rights movement, feminism, LGBT liberation, etc.), which have not been an important concern of Asian Buddhism. As valuable as these reforms have been, the limitations of an institutional approach, by itself, are becoming evident. Even the best possible economic and political system will not function well if the people within that system are motivated by greed, aggression, and delusion—the “three fires” or “three poisons” that need to be transformed into generosity, loving-kindness, and wisdom.

Good vs. Evil

The Abrahamic and Buddhist traditions have somewhat different attitudes towards morality. The Abrahamic religions focus on ethical behavior. God’s main way of relating to us, his creatures, is instructing us

how to live by giving us moral commandments. To be a good Jew, Christian, or Muslim is to follow His rules. The fundamental issue is good vs. evil: doing what God wants us to do (in which case we will be rewarded) and not doing what he does not want us to do (to avoid punishment). For many of its adherents, this world is a battleground between God and Satan, and the most important issue is whose side we are on.

Even the origins of human history in the Genesis story of Adam and Eve—which seems to me a myth about the development of self-consciousness—is understood as an act of disobedience against God: we suffer now because of an original sin by our ancestors. Later God sends a great flood that destroys everyone except those in Noah's ark, because people are not living in the way He wants them to. Later God gives the Ten Commandments to Moses. Jesus emphasizes loving one another, yet this does not reduce the importance of living according to God's commands.

Although many people no longer believe in an Abrahamic God, the duality between good and evil remains our favorite story (think of James Bond, Star Wars, Harry Potter, The Lord of the Rings, every detective novel and TV crime series). From a Buddhist perspective, however, our preoccupation with that theme is ... well, both good and evil.

Good vs. evil is perhaps the most problematical example of dualistic thinking, because their interdependence means that we do not know what good is until we know what evil is, and to be good is to struggle against that evil. Hence inquisitions, witchcraft and heresy trials, and, most recently, the War on Terror. What was the difference between Osama bin Laden and George W. Bush? They were not only polar opposites but mirror images: both fighting the same Holy War of Good against Evil, each leading the forces of goodness in a struggle against the forces of evil, because that is what the forces of good are supposed to do.

The War on Terror illustrates the tragic paradox: historically, one of the main causes of evil has been our attempts to destroy (what we understand as) evil. What was Hitler trying to do? Eliminate the evil elements that pollute the world: Jews, homosexuals, Roma gypsies, etc. Stalin attempted to do the same with the kulaks, and the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia with anyone who was educated.

There is, however, also a beneficial aspect of the duality between good and evil, which brings us back to Hebrew prophets such as Amos and Isaiah. They speak on behalf of God, and address themselves primarily to

rulers. Speaking truth to power, the prophets call for social justice for the oppressed, who suffer from what might be called social dukkha.

According to the Pali Canon, the Buddha was consulted by kings and gave them advice, yet apparently he did not castigate or challenge them in that way. Nor did the sangha do so after he died.

The other source of Western civilization is classical Greece, which realized that human institutions are not pre-determined in the way that nature is: so we can reorganize our society to make it better (for example, more democratic). Bringing together the Hebrew concern for social justice with the Greek realization that society can be restructured has resulted in what seems to me the highest ideal of the West, actualized in revolutions, reform movements, human rights, etc.—in short, social progress.

So, with such lofty principles, everything is fine now, right? Well, not exactly: even with the best ideals (what might be called our “collective intentions”), our societies have not become socially just, and in some ways they are becoming more unjust. An obvious economic example is the gap between rich and poor in the United States, which today is not only obscenely large but increasing. Why? One obvious reply is that our economic system is still unjust because wealthy people and powerful corporations manipulate our political systems, for their own self-centered and short-sighted benefit. So we need to keep working for a more equitable economic system, and for a democratic process free of such distortions.

I wouldn't challenge that explanation, but is it sufficient? Is the basic difficulty that our economic and political institutions are not structured well enough to avoid such manipulations, or is it also the case that they cannot be structured well enough—in other words, that we cannot rely only on an institutional solution to structural injustice? Can we create a social order so perfect that it will function well regardless of the personal motivations of the people within it, or do we also need to find ways to reform our basic motivations? In short, can the social transformations that our ideals seek be successful enough without also considering the challenge of personal transformation?

Perhaps this helps us to understand why so many political revolutions have ended up replacing one gang of thugs with another gang. And there is plenty of evidence that democracy does not work very well if it simply becomes a different system for certain individuals and groups to manipulate and exploit.

If we can never have institutions so good that there is no need for people to want to be good (in Buddhist terms, to make efforts not be motivated by greed, aggression, and delusion), then our modern emphasis on social transformation is necessary but not sufficient. That brings us to the Buddhist focus on personal transformation. Ignorance vs. Awakening

Of course, moral behavior is also important in Buddhism, most obviously the five precepts. But since there is no God telling us that we must live this way, they are important because living according to them means that the circumstances of our own lives will naturally improve. They are exercises in mindfulness, to train ourselves in a certain way.

That is because for Buddhism the fundamental issue is not good or evil, but ignorance/delusion or awakening/wisdom. In principle, someone who has awakened to the true nature of the world (including the true nature of oneself) no longer needs to follow an external moral code because he or she naturally wants to behave in a way that does not violate the spirit of the precepts.

The Buddha said that what he taught was dukkha and how to end it. Did he have in mind only individual dukkha—resulting from our own thoughts and actions—or did he possibly have a wider social vision that encompassed structural dukkha: the suffering caused by oppressive rulers and unjust institutions? Some scholars have argued that the Buddha may have intended to start a movement that would transform society, rather than merely establish a monastic order. Certainly his attitudes toward women and caste were extraordinarily progressive for his day.

In either case, what apparently happened after his parinibbana is that within a few generations much of the sangha settled down in monasteries and became relatively comfortable. Early Buddhism as an institution came to an accommodation with the state, relying to some extent on the support of kings and emperors, a development that may have been necessary to survive. But if you want to be supported by the powers-that-be, you'd better support the powers-that-be. Because no Asian Buddhist society was democratic, that placed limits on what types of dukkha Buddhist teachers could emphasize. The tradition as it developed could not address structural dukkha—for example, the exploitative policies of many rulers—that ultimately could only be resolved by some institutional transformation. On the contrary, the karma-and-rebirth teaching could easily be used to legitimate the power of kings, who must be reaping the fruits of their benevolent actions in past lifetimes, and to rationalize the

disempowerment of those born poor or disabled.

The result was that Buddhism survived and thrived, spreading throughout most of Asia and developing its extraordinary collection of contemplative practices that can help us transform ourselves. The emphasis, obviously, has been on the spiritual development of the individual. Today, however, globalizing Buddhism finds itself in a new situation, in most places no longer subject to oppressive governments, and we also have a much better understanding of the structural causes of dukkha. This opens the door to expanded possibilities for the tradition, which can now develop more freely the social implications of its basic perspective.

Another way to express the relationship between the Western ideal of social transformation (social justice that addresses social dukkha) and the Buddhist goal of personal transformation (an awakening that addresses individual dukkha) is in terms of different types of freedom. The emphasis of the modern West has been on personal freedom from oppressive institutions, a good example being the Bill of Rights appended to the U.S. Constitution. The emphasis of Buddhism has been on psycho-spiritual freedom. Freedom for the self, or freedom from the (ego) self? Today we can see more clearly the limitations of each freedom by itself. What have I gained if I am free from external control but still at the mercy of my own greed, aggression, and delusions? And awakening from the delusion of a separate self will not by itself free me, or all those with whom I remain interdependent, from the dukkha caused by an exploitative economic system and an oppressive government. Again, we need to actualize both ideals to be truly free.

Conclusion

The Western (now worldwide) ideal of a social transformation that institutionalizes social justice has achieved much, yet remains limited because a truly good society cannot be achieved without the realization that personal transformation is also necessary. In the present generation—thanks to globalization, air travel, and digital communications—these two worldviews, with different but not conflicting ideals, are learning from each other. They need each other. More precisely, we need both.

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The full version of this article is available at :  
<http://blogs.dickinson.edu/buddhistethics/files/2013/09/Loy-Why-Buddhism-final.pdf>

# Nuclear Power Is Incompatible with the Way of the Buddha: A Declaration from Critical Self-Reflection on Past Mistakes

Rev. *Taitso Kono*

*Rev. Taitso Kono, born in 1930, is Chief Priest (kancho) of the Myoshin-ji branch of the Rinzaï Zen Denomination and the former President of the Japan Buddhist Federation (JBF), which brings together all the major traditional Buddhist denominations in Japan. He is also author of numerous books in Japanese such as Tatakau Bukkyo (Confrontational Buddhism, Shunjunsha). The following is from an extended interview in June 2012 conducted by Sekai (World) magazine in Japanese. This English excerpt is from the new volume Lotus in the Nuclear Sea: Fukushima and the Promise of Buddhism in the Nuclear Age available through the INEB Office.*

## Buddhists Must Send a Message

Q: After the nuclear incident at Fukushima happened last year, in your role as President of the Japan Buddhist Federation (JBF), you helped to draft in December 2011, some 9 months after the incident, the declaration entitled "Appeal for a Lifestyle without Dependence on Nuclear Power." Today we would like to hear about your thoughts since the time that these declarations were made.

Rev. Kono: Since the Fukushima nuclear incident occurred, there are still tens of thousands of people who cannot return to their homes. As President of JBF, I have expressed my concern that our planet that creates human life is not compatible with nuclear power. There has been talk about why something wasn't said more quickly. However, the issue is not about waiting for someone to say something, but rather that anyone who has such awareness should have the courage to just go ahead and say something. I think there are common points with the previous situation of the silence of the Japanese Buddhist world in development of the Pacific War, such as thinking about what is right as well as looking into what is around us.

Q: In the JBF declaration, there is the assertion, "We must

choose a path in which personal happiness is harmonized with human welfare, instead of wishing for prosperity at the expense of others." Isn't this kind of thinking along with an anti-nuclear stance the same as the one that critically self-reflects on the Pacific War?

Rev. Kono: During the war, I had a teacher who pushed me very strongly into militarism. After the war, he said, "From now on, this is the age of democracy." In this way, we became unable to trust our teachers and other adults. I thought to myself, "Will the center of the world change again? Is there a way to live that doesn't fall victim to the vicissitudes of change?"

In primary school, I was made to listen to the story of Sogen Mugaku (Ch. Wuxue Zuyuan, 1226-1286), the Chinese monk who founded the great Rinzaï Zen temple of Engaku-ji in Kamakura. He came to Japan in 1279 following the invitation by Hojo Tokimune<sup>1</sup>, the regent and defacto head of the Kamakura military government. Tokimune studied and practiced Zen meditation from Mugaku, and it is said that this training helped him to develop the strength and courage to lead the way in repelling the Mongol invasions of Japan at this time, subsequently popularizing Zen amongst the warrior class. I too had instilled in my young mind the desire to become such a great person that would practice Zen meditation and save a troubled nation. With this kind of role model, I came to want to practice Zen as a way to come to an end of the suffering and anxiety of the path of life.

After becoming a novice monk at a Zen temple in Kyushu in the southern part of Japan. I entered Hanzono Buddhist University in Kyoto, where I met Prof. Hakugen Ichikawa. I remember taking Prof. Ichikawa's class on the History of Contemporary Buddhist Thought when he told students about the war responsibility of Buddhists. The core of his thinking was a heartfelt self-reflection and feeling of shame for how those children

<sup>1</sup> *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism. Edited by Charles Muller. <http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb/>*

raised as Buddhists were “persistently” encouraged and dispatched to the war zones. Beyond the critical self-reflection towards oneself, there was also a criticism directed towards the Buddhist denominations. It was a heavy class.

There was one other jarring incident that happened to me. At my temple in Kyushu, I heard a layperson call out to our chief monk, “Commander, Commander.” Thinking about what he was saying, I realized that our chief monk had gone off to the war as a soldier and that the layperson had been his subordinate.

One of the particular tenets of Buddhism is explained as valuing human life. However, this teaching is not only about human life, because the Buddha taught an awareness of the equality of all sentient life from animals all the way to a single tree or blade of grass. Buddhist priests who gave such teachings also participated in the war carrying weapons and taking sentient life. This became a shocking thing to me, because I had been enthralled by a way of living that sacrificed itself to the one life of the nation and had abandoned the body of the Buddha’s way that calls for valuing sentient life. Nevertheless, the Buddhist denominations took part in the war and in pushing the young people to join it. I, therefore, became confused about becoming a Buddhist priest.

At the time of the 50th anniversary of the end of the war, both our sect headquarters and I thought it best to offer a confession of our mistaken participation in the war and so I prepared a public talk on this. However, from that point it took the headquarters seven years to draft a public confession that was finally issued in 2002.

Q: So from this critical self-reflection on the war, we now have the declaration against nuclear power.

Rev. Kono: Yes, I feel that the war issue and the nuclear issue are the same. They both involved national policy, but not everyone agreed with such policy. There were only a handful of them in both cases, but there were people who opposed and courageously made warnings. However, this never became a large voice, and so we met with disaster made by this massive mainstream. On this point, nuclear power and the war followed the same trend.

When looking at the teachings of the Buddha, how should we regard nuclear energy? Right now, who is it that is taking control since the Fukushima incident happened? It is an incredibly dangerous task, but the people who promoted atomic power are not the ones dealing with this task. Isn’t this some form of discrimination?

I would especially like to call upon the critical self-reflection of the scientists involved in the promotion of atomic energy. While understanding the extent of the danger, they silently became involved in its promotion. Shouldn’t they be making a confession?

Everyone wishes for happiness. To secure such happiness, we have pursued economic benefit, but since this is simply a matter of our physical nature, it will certainly collapse. Mustn’t the pursuit of individual happiness become a part of the benefit for all in society? Wouldn’t it be good if we took all the money for making nuclear reactors and the billions of dollars it requires to make them “safe” and used it instead for the research and development of renewable natural energy? The abilities and interests of the people who work for Tokyo Electric Power Company should be used for the happiness of all people and future generations. Coming out of a critical self-reflection on the Fukushima incident, Japan should become the world’s leader in natural energy. I think it would be good if this happened.

Q: As it must have taken courage to make such a social comment, what would you say to young Buddhists today?

Rev. Kono: Young people entering the way of the Buddha must hold fast to and install in their gut the fundamental idea in Buddhism of the value of sentient life and respect for human rights. I want them to speak and act with courage in anything they do. Not just in the time of the war, but even today, there are many people who do not speak the truth because of the prevailing stance in society.

There are so many people in society who want to say something but don’t. Workers are in a difficult situation. They have bosses who are keeping an eye on them. They must provide for their families. Buddhists don’t really need to care about prevailing social trends, so they should speak out clearly. What is it that they are worried about? Unless they commit a crime against the laws of the nation, they will not lose their jobs as abbots (he laughs). I would like them to think that their role as abbots is to say what is right and to protect sentient life and human rights.

By not understanding the fear of nuclear energy, we use as much electricity as we like. So first we have to engage in critical self-reflection. I think it is not about returning to some pre-modern lifestyle but dealing with things in different ways and how it would be good to develop a simpler lifestyle. In Buddhism, we speak about this by saying, “Know what is enough (Pali: santutti; 小欲知足).”

# Towards Community-based Reconciliation in Myanmar

Jill Jameson

On arrival in Yangon at the end of August, and in meetings with old friends, I heard of many peace initiatives and community programs for the strengthening of civil society. There are many inter-faith groups, workshops and seminars on peace for wide-ranging groups in society - civil society, ethnic minorities, police and district authority staff - as well as media training, and the 88 Movement had many programs working on 'land grabbing' issues and training peace-makers. I also met with many participants from my earlier peace-building trainings, who wanted to tell me ways they have been sharing these skills with their communities and organisations. It was especially encouraging to hear how some Saffron revolution monks - who had earlier felt discrimination in their communities and sanghas - had become very active in their communities. And there were plans for the up-coming International Day of Peace, for civil war to be stopped with 'one voice.' But I also heard people were afraid, fearing another 9/11 or terrorist strikes.

The 'conflict', seen and portrayed in the media as between 'Buddhists' and 'Muslims', has a long and complex history. It is seen by some as fear of Islam combined with nationalism, at a time of weak leadership. I heard many fragments, stories, perspectives and contradictions that were interspersed with reports of violence, and fear of the next outbreak. Now, in times of greater openness and certain freedoms I was able to meet in Yangon some old friends from the democracy movement on the border, who now felt safe to return. However, there seems to be increased avoidance of difference, and fear of the 'other'.

I heard from a monk active in inter-faith work that there were three groups of monks - the 88 and Saffron revolution monks, the extremists, and a middle group. Up until a week ago the State had not said anything about the discriminatory '969' campaign being used against Muslims, using certain media and widely distributed videos etc. This is being propagated by the extremist Buddhist

monks and increasingly by lay people as this campaign widens. Hatred towards Muslims is being included, I heard, by some monks in their Dharma talks. And fear is being ignited through talk of the 'old and new maps' - where countries which were once Buddhist - like Afghanistan - are now Muslim. A friend reminded me that we saw some of these books having been written and distributed by a prominent teacher we had gone to meet nearly two years ago. Fear is being further ignited around the proposed inflammatory Marriage Law and by rumours about rape of Buddhist girls. At the core of the conflict I heard, there is a long held nationalistic view that Buddhists do not accept the Rohingya (minority Muslim), and that the main problem is immigration and border police. On this, Australia has a similar problem through the inhumane treatment of 'boat arrival' asylum seekers.

I heard from moderate Muslim leaders I met in Yangon that there were two Muslim groups - extremists and moderates. The latter practice peace, work with inter-faith groups, and do welfare work. On the other hand, there were stories of some extremists being trained by Al-Qaida, and a Rakhine youth at a peace-building training told us of a recent Muslim-headed NGO where weapons had been found. Since then, 'no one trusts NGO's in that area', this youth said. I also heard from various sources that some of the inter-faith work is not so effective. People often did not know what to do when there was a conflict, and because the inter-faith groups do not connect with most of society, and do little to change entrenched attitudes fired by fears. The 'Pray for Peace' campaign - a coalition of six progressive groups - had begun after the violence in Meikhtila in central Myanmar back in March, 2013. They distribute stickers with peace messages saying 'religion is not the problem'. They also call on the local authorities to protect them when they do this work, but this was felt by participants in our training to possibly be provocative. I asked how citizens responded to their message of peace, and was told it was often with abusive words, and being told they 'must be Muslims'. A student from one of the universities in Meikhtila, who



had seen and been traumatised by the violence, participated in a recent peace-building training for Shan farmers in the hope it might help in his healing. At the end of this training, he told me that unlike at this training, there was no diversity in Meikhtila, and no organisations offering such training, which he felt would be useful for students at the various universities. On a more positive note, he said that after the violence there had been support for displaced people in camps in schools, football stadiums and monasteries, and monks were helping to reduce the explosiveness. But fear is still high, he said – fear and hatred inside people, which can't be expressed.

The suffering from the legacy of the past military dictatorship continues, with a need for healing of relationships, a transforming of relationships characterised by conflict, injustice and violence, and towards community –based reconciliation. This is what the training being planned with old friends from COMREG and Paung Ku was to address in a small way, where it was suggested that we should work with and across difference. Participants for the five day training were contacted by an old friend and former political prisoner, who has organised many of the trainings I have facilitated over the last few years. Included were Buddhist monks, Muslims, '88 Generation, former political prisoners, members of student unions, 'Pray for Myanmar' inter-faith group, a range of ethnicities and some people who had studied communal violence in Cambodia at the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies. The aims were to include basic skills facilitation and practical tools starting with peace from within. There should also be self-reflection, 'do they really want peace?' The NGO Marie Stopes offered their training facilities in Yangon free of charge and also provided refreshments. Further

support for training costs such as for transportation of participants and stationary etc, came from friends in Australia.

The participants in this training were all very active in their communities such as working with street children, HIV, blood donations, raising awareness of child soldiers and working with various agencies towards their re-integration, environmental campaigns, conflict prevention, training in human rights and psycho-social support for women.

Starting with small group discussion of a vision for a harmonious Myanmar, there was a common agreement that 'regardless of race, religion and gender, we should see each other as human beings...and accept our diversity'. So hard to put into practice, so some of the tools in training helped participants to see some of the potential barriers. Mapping of conflicts and looking into the needs and fears of the main parties in the conflict were opportunities for sharing stories and were found to be useful tools both for sharing the conflict with others and for the negotiation process. There was a wide range of issues, such as exploitation of local people in the copper mine at Monywa. The conflict map highlighted the complexity of the issue, and could be overwhelming in seeing where to start. Exploring possibilities for negotiation, a small group discussion suggested that the mine should go ahead, but only if there were to be fair compensation for local people. This would involve amending the agreement between the government and the China company – with the help of potential allies –so as to be less discriminatory against the local people.

Another map depicted a family issue of conflict, discrimination and violence. Coming out of the discussion

of this issue was the suggestion of the need for support groups for anyone marginalised, but there was also a challenge, as families are seen as private and beyond any interference. And yet, situations like this are increasingly common, we were told.

Yet another conflict was presented by a monk, the mapping of 'Buddhist –Islam' conflict in Meikhtila. On each side of the divide there were less extreme groups trying to work towards cooperation. There were repercussions for those taking a more moderate stance, such as that taken by the National League for Democracy political party, where support for them had since dropped. Also mapped were the surrounding towns where Buddhist monks had encouraged inter-faith groups. However, in an approach to negotiation, this monk suggested that 'if only the extremist Islamic group would go away, they would all be fine, and there was a need for the rule of law to punish extremists'. There was much discussion on ways to possibly transform the tradition of top-down punishment and work towards cooperation, where appropriate. An issue presented by another monk involving land confiscation by the military where the monk had been helping the villages to form a committee to seek return of their land. This was a good example of successful cooperation and negotiation resulting in return of most of the land held by the army.

At this stage we sang Ko Myat San's song he composed in prison, 'freedom from fear', after which someone commented on feeling the letting go of fear ... and some lightness.

We had small group discussions to explore what might be relevant in the cycle of aggression and reconciliation, and what steps to transform conflict and injustice could be taken. One group felt that the conflict maps were a useful way to share stories, but they could also possibly express themselves through paintings and poetry, as a means towards touching inner feelings and moving towards accepting loss and grief and overcoming fears. They also suggested they could encourage a community practice of metta or loving kindness. We were inspired to hear of actions by monks in a part of Yangon where many Muslims and Hindus also live, who have been looking at issues from a wider perspective and have been able to de-escalate provocation and potential violence with both sides agreeing to work together using non-violent action. Another example mentioned of working together across difference was the action taken by many different groups to have work on the Mytsone dam in Kachin State halted. Cooperation could be further

promoted among peace groups, and collaboration across many different groups – sanghas, students, ethnic and environmental groups. It was suggested that other environmental activities could also be a focus for working together, especially as hatred was increasing and 'peace' and 'religion' have become so sensitive.

We finished the training with small groups practising and presenting a range of tools and topics they felt would be useful, and then making plans as to how they would share these with their communities. One of the monks said, 'now is the time for metta practice, which was used during the Saffron Revolution, but people are now joining a movement towards peace'.

The dynamics in the training at first were tentative and hesitant...across wide differences, with a focus on 'us and them'. Despite the many encouraging changes in Myanmar - such as increased freedoms and strengthening of civil society - rumours, contradictory stories and outbreaks of violence continue to fuel fears. There are few opportunities to express feelings and fears. In the process of our training, exercises and games, building trust, small group discussions with opportunities for sharing their stories and vulnerabilities, singing and laughing together, participants came to practice and experience community reconciliation. This was expressed as a deepening of relationships, and movement towards mutual understanding and support. Community and religious leaders have a significant role to play in the healing of relationships and the transforming of fears and hatred into trust and loving kindness, and in working together towards cooperation and social justice.

May all people in Myanmar be free from suffering.  
May all be at peace.

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

# Ontai Ecosettlement and Ecovillage Festival Chiang Mai

Celebration to support sustainable living

*Jane Rasbash & Kosha Joubert*

**B**icycle water pumps, meals served in banana leaves and beautiful hand woven cloth were just some of the attractions at a recent Ecovillage Festival at Wat Phar Tung, an old Buddhist monastery at the centre of a municipality comprising 11 villages in Northern Thailand. Hundreds of villagers, local officials, indigenous leaders and other stakeholders gathered together to share and learn about transitioning to eco-settlements. They listened to talks about sustainability and ecovillage, contributed to panels and exhibitions, proudly displayed their eco-projects and sold ecowares like pottery and organic rice. Ecovillage Transition Asia (ETA), an arm of the Institute of Management Consultants Association Thailand, put on the event. ETA is a new body consolidating especially the Ecovillage Design Education (EDE) course.

An invitation from ETA to support the emerging Asian Ecovillage movement led to us joining the event as Board member of Gaia Education and President of GEN International. Ousmane Pame representing GEN-Africa also attended. It was a great honour to join hands with ETA to support exciting ecovillage strategies for sustainable development in South East Asia.

Prior to the festival we visited some of the Ontai neighbourhoods, including a 40-year old community forest, described to us as an eco-supermarket where villagers supplement their diet with wild berries, fruits, bamboo shoots, mushrooms and herbs. Many of the trees are 'ordained' with orange monks robes tied round them, signifying the sacredness of the forest. They also symbolise an engaged spirituality activist movement in Thailand that uses the respected monks robes to protect trees from deforestation.

The Ontai area has deep spiritual roots and Wat Phar Tung is where a renowned meditation master practiced and taught until he passed away a few years ago. His peaceful presence fills the energy of the monastery and we heard that Buddhist practice is strong among the local communities. The deep caring for nature and spirituality

is one of the reasons this area was chosen for a pilot ecovillage project.

ETA is in the preliminary stage of supporting the transition process of Ontai. For more than six months there have been intensive consultations to pave the way. Local people have been fully involved in the process and are very committed. This has been achieved largely due to the participatory action research (PAR) well known in South East Asia as a process to empower villagers with full inclusion in development interventions. The PAR process will be augmented with the support of Thai experts and feed into a community master plan outlining the ecovillage design.

Planned improvements span the four keys of sustainable development namely social, ecological, economic and world view/culture. The plan to meet identified needs has been further categorised into 11 core areas, namely spiritual, ecological, good governance and social justice, economic and agriculture, appropriate technology, education, disaster and water management, eco tourism, culture, land use and healthcare. Steps to transition to sustainability in each of these areas will be detailed in the Community Master Plan, a joint collaboration between community and local government.

ETA have been plugging away, getting the Ecovillage concept known not only to local villagers, but to multi-levelled stakeholders from the Governor of Chiang Mai to the local villagers; from investment business men in Singapore and Malaysia to village chiefs from ethnic minorities. Thus a multi-sectorial ecovillage movement for sustainable change, although in the early stages, is fast gaining momentum with potential to inspire far beyond Thailand and South East Asia, linking to similar trends elsewhere.

In an open-sided Sala close to the ancient meditation hall presentations were given. Jane spoke of the need for sustainability education in response to overuse of planetary resources and the need to address the four dimensions of sustainability that are the basis of the EDE curriculum. Kosha spoke of the international

nature of the ecovillage networks, and the global trend of ecovillage strategies for sustainable development, which can bring together a powerful coalition of civil society, government, and business. Ousmane, who's cheerful and friendly persona was very well accepted by the locals, spoke inspiringly of the ecovillage scene in Senegal where many traditional African villages are transitioning. He gave an introduction to GEN-Africa, where an ecovillage movement from the village up is taking off, and announced the intention of GEN to have a World Summit for Ecovillages in Senegal in December 2014, inviting representatives from Ontai, ETA and the local authorities to join. Dr. Baofeng, an academic from China, gave a fascinating presentation on old irrigation systems in China built more than 2000 years ago, that have stood the test of time. He also outlined eco-projects like Anlung Ecovillage and the Chengdu Urban Rivers Project, that are taking small steps to counter the massive industrialisation of China. A key part of the celebrations was the signing of an MOU with the Governor of Chiang Mai to

pledge support to the ecovillage plans.

Prior to this occasion on the 18 August in Bangkok a smaller event took place.

In addition a Declaration of Intent to support a Farmhouse Bank in Myanmar (Burma) was signed. The proposed Farmhouse Bank is a visionary concept concerned with 'transitioning to a new sustainable paradigm of banking so that the farmers of Myanmar will empower themselves to transition towards resilient agriculture and an ecovillage way of life whilst eliminating poverty and social injustice'.

The visit was an incredible example of how the ecovillage movement has the potential to fly in South East Asia with ecovillage communities that are supported by local government and businesses. We were both very glad that Ousmane attended, spearheading more possibilities for south-south exchange, where significant ecovillage actors can learn and share from each other. We are both looking forward to continuing collaborations and following progress on this exciting initiative.



**Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela**  
(18 July 1918 - 5 December 2013)

*Nigel Crawhall*

As grief sweeps across South Africa, we bow our heads in gratitude for this great gift of a man. A traditional Xhosa leader, a goat herder, a political leader, a President and one of the great icons of justice and hope in our time.

We recognize in Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, so many of the virtues extolled by another Prince, Siddhartha Gotama - humility, diligence, compassion, free from anger, inspired by love and an unrelenting belief in human goodness, in the smiles of children, and the possibility of reconciliation, forgiveness and the ability to shape our future by knowing our hearts and minds.

We thank you Madiba for all you have given us, for the peaceful transition to a democracy, for inspiring millions through your actions. We as South African Buddhists will do what we can to carry your legacy and gift to those who need it most - those still trapped in anger, fear, poverty, vulnerability, corruption, confusion and those seeking a path of peace, transformation and enlightenment.

May all beings be free from suffering. Our deepest condolences to your family and our infinite compassion for all who mourn today.

Hamba kahle Tata Madiba.

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## His Holiness the Dalai Lama Expresses Condolences on the Passing Away of the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand

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26 October 2013

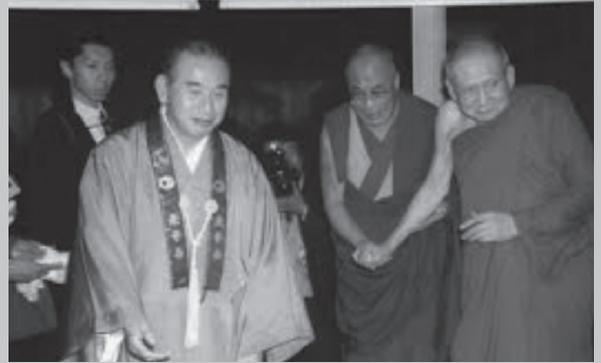
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Immediately on hearing news of the passing away of the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand, His Holiness composed a letter expressing his sadness:

“Dear Spiritual Friends,” he wrote, “I am saddened to learn of the passing away of His Holiness Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara so soon after celebrating his 100th birthday. While offering prayers for the late Supreme Patriarch, I would like to convey my condolences to the Supreme Sangha Council of Thailand and his millions of followers in Thailand and around the world.”

He observed that in his passing we have all lost a remarkable spiritual friend.

“I met the late Supreme Patriarch many years ago and had the deepest respect and admiration for the way fulfilled his religious responsibilities. Throughout his long and meaningful life he remained thoroughly dedicated to the service of humanity.”



He advised that at such a time we may feel bereft, but the best tribute we can pay to him is to do whatever we can to develop peace and wisdom just as he did. He stated that he hopes to send a personal representative to offer prayers and condolences to the people of Thailand as a mark of respect.



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## Vivacharawongse Condolences for His Holiness, the Supreme Patriarch

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25 October 2013

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We join with the Kingdom and other Buddhists around the world, in mourning the lost of His Holiness the Supreme Patriarch, Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara Suvaddhana Mahathera.

His Holiness' passing comes as a tremendous loss to the four of us. When we were all very young, our parents often brought us to the temple to receive the gentle guidance of His Holiness so that he could instill in us the teachings of Buddha. Each of us recall being received into the faith as novices by him, and we contemplate the Buddhist teachings he so graciously imparted on us in our youth.

Each of us fondly recall our respective sojourns in the temple as novice monks. His Holiness not only personally supervised the pedagogical aspects of our training, but also taught us the more subtle things that may only be learned through close observation, such as the proper demeanor of a monk. We will always recall the serene grace of His Holiness, and the way he passed to contemplate after bowing to the Buddha Image at prayer time. As young boys, we were so proud to be novice monks under his tutelage. Now, as men, we are grateful to have the opportunity to carry on His Holiness' teachings. We shall forever cherish the blessings he bestowed upon us, and we pray that His Holiness' teachings are reflected in all aspects of our daily lives.

We sincerely wish that we could travel to Thailand to pay our respects to His Holiness in person. However, we have not received instructions or permission to return to our homeland. Nonetheless, with heavy hearts, we pray in remembrance and respect. We will do our best in maintaining the integrity of Buddhism in His Holiness' honor.

*With continued loyalty,*

*Mom Chao Juthavachara Mahidol*

*Mom Chao Chakriwat Mahidol*

*Mom Chao Vacharaesorn Mahidol*

*Mom Chao Vatchrawee Mahidol*

## In Memory of the Most Venerable Sali Kantasillo

(17 March 1933 - 11 September 2013)

*Sulak Sivaraksa*



Venerable Sali Kantasillo was the Vice-President of the established Lao Sangha Organization, which is a very important position. This is because the role of President, which is equivalent to the Thai Supreme Patriarch, often went to very old monks who were widely respected by both the lay and ordained communities but were incapable of carrying out the official duties. Thus for a long while Venerable Sali was by and large responsible for fulfilling these duties. We must not forget that Laos is still officially a socialist state governed by the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, the only legal political party. The Party held religion in disrespect from the very beginning of the communist revolution. But through time the Party has allowed the Buddhist Sangha in Laos to have a modicum of self-rule. The Buddhist Sangha in Laos thus must exercise its limited autonomy with great tact so as not to be seen as interfering with political or state affairs. In Siam on the other hand the Sangha is completely under the sovereign control of the state.

Under the leadership of

Venerable Sali the Buddhist Sangha in Laos attempted to make the dhamma relevant to the contemporary world. The Venerable clearly stated that he would not send Lao monks to study in Thai Buddhist universities. This was because they often disrobed after completing their studies or became arrogant—seeing themselves as superior to fellow monks who didn't go to study abroad.

Venerable Sali founded the Buddhism for Development Project (BDP) approximately one decade ago. BDP is also a member of the International Network of Engaged Buddhism (INEB). The Lao Sangha emphasizes the strict observation of the dhamma vinaya, in terms of studying the scriptures as well as practicing meditation. The Venerable himself was a great vipassana meditation master who followed the lineage of Ajarn Mahaparn of Wat Rakang Kositaram, which was once a leading center of meditation practice in Siam. Venerable Sali was also the abbot of Wat Nokhounoi Forest Monastery, which is located outside of Vientiane. This forest monastery is ideal for vipassana meditation. It offers courses on vipassana meditation for monks and lay people, locals as well as foreigners.

To realize BDP's objectives, Venerable Sali had asked some of us to provide training courses for Lao monks and novices. For Buddhism to remain relevant in the contemporary world, the ordained must keep pace with and be capable of rethinking Buddhism within the context of the changing times. Buddhist monks in Burma and Sri Lanka have tilted in this direction. Perhaps it is too much to ask the Thai Sangha to learn from Venerable Sali's initiatives.

BDP organized an event in Vientiane to celebrate Venerable Sali's 80th birthday in February 2013. He requested it to be small and simple, particularly because his kalyanamitta Sombath Somphone had mysteriously disappeared a few months

earlier. His health was also deteriorating. BDP published in the Lao language a book in honor of the Venerable's lifetime achievements. I was a contributor to this volume. A short while later, Venerable Sali passed away on 11 September 2013.

## S. N. Goenka

(30 January 1924 -29 September 2013)

*Sulak Sivaraksa*



Goenka was an Indian who was born and raised in Burma; the British colonial policy treated Burma as an appendage of the Indian subcontinent. After Burma's independence, the Ne Win dictatorship embarked on a policy of mass deportation of the Indian population. They were dispossessed of all personal belongings and forcefully expelled from Burma. Goenka too lost all his personal possessions, but he was not saddened by it. The vipassana meditation masters of Burma had taught him the essence of the Dhamma. He resettled in India and started teaching meditation. He quickly became an influential figure in introducing Indians to meditation technique.

Buddhism virtually disappeared from India after the Muslim conquest of the subcontinent hundreds of years ago. Its revival in India was due

to three main figures: 1) Ambedkar, 2) His Holiness the Dalai Lama and 3) Goenka. Ambedkar was a Dalit who converted to Buddhism and the so-called father of the Constitution of India. He helped to spark the conversion of hundreds of thousands of Dalits to Buddhism. At present, there are millions of Buddhists in India. His Holiness the Dalai Lama and a number of Vajrayana Buddhist masters have spent their exile from Tibet in India. Together they have spread the Dhamma to middle-class Indians. Goenka's meditation technique has also won many Indian converts to Buddhism.

Goenka not only taught vipassana meditation to ordinary people but also to prisoners. His meditation technique quickly spread worldwide, including to Siam. He taught meditation courses for free. In other words, these courses were sustained by voluntary donations. They were not dependent on the capitalist system.

Goenka was a humble person who led a simple life befitting a great man. Ven. Revattadhamma who was the abbot of the Burma Buddhist temple in Birmingham, England, introduced me to Goenka in 1999 while we were attending a United Nations conference on world spirituality in New York City. But I have respected Goenka well before I met him in person. His passing is a great loss not only to Buddhists worldwide but also to humanity at large. The proper way to pay respect to the late Goenka is through practice: cultivating inner peace in order to use it as a power to change the world through non-violence.

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

## In Memory of Pisarl Thiparat

(1 June 1942 - 30 September 2013)

*Sulak Sivaraksa*

We called him by his nickname, "Piak." He was a very gifted artist, a real genius in both painting and sculpturing, who did not commoditize art. Nor did he bootlick the powers-that-be. He was always humble and often found the humor to laugh at his own follies or misfortunes. He used his artistic skills to serve the common good and the people. For instance, the Charoen Wat-aksorn monument was his work. Perhaps, it is the only monument in this kingdom that is dedicated to ordinary people who have bravely struggled for social and environmental justice and against reactionary forces. All the other monuments in the kingdom are intended to glorify representatives of absolutism, authoritarianism, and the status quo. Charoen was brutally assassinated by henchmen sent by the capitalist investors. The ruling class and judiciary system were indifferent to Charoen's courage as well as to his passing. But Piak had the eye, and therefore sculpted this

unique monument as a testimony to Charoen's actions and the power of common people.

If contemporary Thai artists increasingly identify with the path that Piak had trailblazed, then we will have an art form that is put in the service of the people, not of the state and capital. And it will be an art form in the service of Truth, Goodness and Beauty.

I feel personally indebted to Piak as well. He was kind enough to paint the portraits of my mother and wife. Also, he had sculpted my bust and even full-size body sculpture. I accepted the sculptures with reservation as I didn't want people to come and 'worship' them. I've barred the organizations that I founded to display any of these sculptures. I've allowed them to put my portrait on the wall as long as it is simply a part of the interior decoration.

Piak passed away today (30th September 2013). He would surely rest in peace given the great merits that he had accumulated throughout his life. Hopefully, contemporary Thai artists would see in him a role model and identify with his artwork.



23 October 2013

Dear Moo and members of the INEB Advisory and Executive Committee.

I kept looking in my driving mirror but my age and disability finally caught up with me . I tendered my resignation last year but still follow your activities with great interest. I would like to wish you all a successful and rewarding Conference. Planting Seeds of Peace and enabling Sustainability in the South of Thailand, the Middle Way is so greatly needed.

Here at Dhamma Park we commemorated the International Day of World Peace in September, with our traditional ceremony round the Peace Pole and in the Gallery , with nine Monks and Students from eight local primary and secondary schools . Dr Mark Tamthai came with his assistant to entertain us with his stories and songs of Peace. He is Director of” The Giving Tree” an independant organization, promoting Peace and Conflict Resolution and Sustainability in southern Thailand. His peaceful presence will be well known to many of you.

May I offer a simple poem before closing.

*Yin and Yang.*

*Yin and Yang, can we unite,  
And find the middle way,  
To be together, black and white,  
With all the shades of grey ?  
To reconcile our differences,  
See beauty in diversity,  
To live together peacefully,  
In Life's great university ?  
For Nature is our teacher,  
As we observe each day.  
Yin and Yang our peaceful ducks ,  
Are showing us the way.*

With all Good Wishes  
In the Dhamma  
From Venetia Walkey ( Pa Maem )

26 October 2013

Dear Moo,

Thank you for sharing with us this serene image of His Holiness Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara, Supreme Patriarch of Siam who sadly passed away. Of course His Holiness lived a long life but nevertheless what a great loss.

Due to the kindness of Ajan Sulak, my wife and I together with our son, Minling Penam Rinpoche were able to have an audience to receive his blessings in 1997. It meant a lot

to us because our son was on his way to India to start his life as a monk.

I am sharing with you a photo of my son with His Holiness during that audience. His Holiness showed tremendous happiness in my son pursuing a life of monk-hood and was very affectionate. You met my son during our recent IBC conference in Delhi, where he was representing the Mindroling tradition.

He is now a fully ordained monk.

With warmest regards,  
Lodi Gyari Rinpoche



6 November 2013

Dear Sulak,

I bring you best greetings. I saw your photo today in an email from one of my students, a Shan woman living in Sri Lanka, who sent two Burmese monks to the INEB conference in Malaysia. There you are, looking well and apparently still engaged in urging peace and justice in all our troubled countries. I did consider attending INEB this year and discussed it with Alan, but life is already overly full and it did not seem wise or feasible. I understand that it was a successful event and I am so pleased that INEB continues to thrive after all these years.

Today I am especially writing you to introduce Dr. Tatsushi Arai, known as Tats, a colleague, scholar, and peace practitioner from Japan but living near my community in the US. Tats is a remarkable scholar/activist, as well as a committed Dharma student. He has heard me speak about you for many years, and now finds himself in BKK for a peace research conference, most eager to meet you.

Below is his letter to you, asking for a possible meeting. I hope you will honor him by allowing a visit.

Perhaps someday you and I will find ourselves at the

same event, or at least in the same city, so that we can visit. I wish you continued health, so that you may spread your wisdom as far as possible.

In the Dhamma, and with best wishes.

Warm regards,  
Paula Green

*Founder, Karuna Center for Peacebuilding  
Professor and Director of CONTACT Programs,  
School for International Training*

## BURMA - SEMINARS ON 16TH - 17TH NOVEMBER IN CONNECTION WITH HR-DAYS IN STOCKHOLM

14 November 2013

Dear Sulak,

It was such a long time since we met and I miss your wise words. I do hope all is fine with you and I notice, mainly through *Seeds of Peace*, that you still are very active and engaged. This makes me very happy

And recently - yes everything is recently now with age and even things that happened may be a year or two ago - I noticed you were engaged in the Rohingya - issue, and I believe together with Maung Zarni. This is most tragic - and some Swedish including Rohingya friends try here to bring to the media and awareness of the Swedes what actually is happening in Burma - not that everything is going smooth and in the right direction, unfortunately. We believe it is of utmost importance that today's reality in Burma is well known so that the proper steps and actions can be taken, and thus support the country towards democracy and human rights. This knowledge is unfortunately not the case in today's Sweden.

I had a hope that you would have been able to participate here in Stockholm, but, please forgive me, I did not even ask you since I realized Sweden is far from Thailand. Originally we also had a hope to have Maung Zarni come here but regretfully he could not. I hope that next time we will organize something in connection with Burma I will try to induce him to come here.

So, I just wish to say hello to you and wish you all the best. I do hope to be able to see during my next trip to Bangkok - whenever that will be?? But certainly I will let you now.

May I wish you to be well and happy

Sincerely yours  
with many kind regards  
Jan



22 November 2013

Dear Ajarn Sulak,

It is very nice to be writing to you today with good news. I wanted you to be among the first to know that on December 1, 2013 Matteo Mecacci will be the new President of the International Campaign for Tibet. As someone who cares deeply about the Tibetan people and ICT's work on their behalf I know that you will be as pleased with his appointment as I and my colleagues on the ICT Board of Directors are.

As the situation in Tibet worsens and China's global influence increases the work of the International Campaign for Tibet becomes ever more important. The Board of Directors sought out the person we believe will best be able to lead our organization in its pursuit to help restore self-determination and other fundamental rights to the Tibetan people.

After considering many candidates we determined Matteo is the best fit for our organization given its international presence, strengths in advocacy and plans for the future. Matteo is a former member of the Italian Parliament and has dedicated much of his life to the promotion of human rights and democracy throughout the world. As a member of the Italian Chamber of Deputies he served on the Foreign Affairs Committee and was a member of the Italian delegation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Matteo has been involved with the Tibet issue for quite some time and he brings with him an admirable range of diplomatic and advocacy experience. He has a familiarity and understanding of the Tibetan situation as well as an awareness of the political, social and cultural dynamics within China.

Matteo will join ICT at a critical point in the organization's development. The board and staff are concluding a five-year strategic plan that will help us make an even greater impact on the future of Tibet and the Tibetan people.

In the coming months ICT will host opportunities for our friends around the world to meet Matteo and hear more about our plans for the future; I hope to see you at such events if not sooner.

I hope that I can count on your support for Matteo as he takes up the important task of leading the International Campaign for Tibet into a new era and that you will join me in welcoming him to the ICT family.

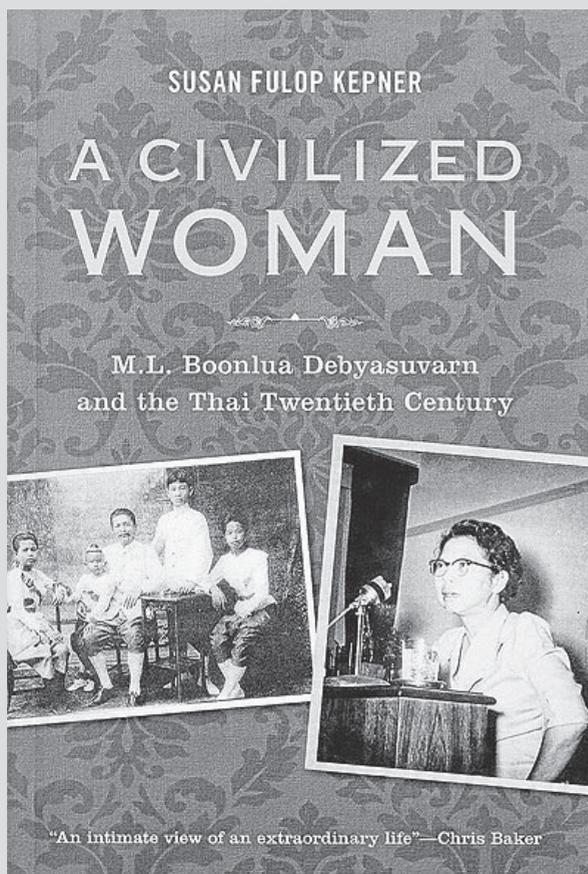
With regards,  
Lodi Gyari

## Intimate view of an extraordinary life

A fine biography of a free thinker who spanned two eras in history and whose story in many ways mirrors that of Thai society in the last century

*Bangkok Post*, Published: 4 Nov 2013

*A Civilized Woman: ML Boonlua Debyasuvarn And The Thai Twentieth Century* By Susan Fulop Kepner  
Silkworm Books, 725 baht ISBN 978-616-215-061-6



The life of ML Boonlua Debyasuvarn slices diagonally across the social history of 20th-century Thailand. She was born in 1911, the 32nd child of a senior noble from a core royal lineage (Kunchon). Her father was keeper of the royal elephants and manager of the royal drama troupe. While the Fifth Reign court ardently pursued modernisation, he remained totally traditional, innocent of English, scarcely literate in Thai, devoted to traditional arts, and polygamous. His drama troupe doubled as a personal harem.

As a child Boonlua was not pretty but very precocious. Encouraged by her father and Prince Narit, she developed an outspoken, prima donna-ish side to her character which never faded.

Both her parents had died by the time she was 11 and the environment of the Thai court was replaced for her by that of a Catholic convent, first in Bangkok and then in Penang. And what a change.

From Thai to English (and French), from Buddhism to Christianity, from traditional Thai pedagogy to an education in thinking, from the extended family to a multicultural community. Personally, she felt lonely and abandoned. Academically, she prospered, topping her class and learning to deal with farang society.

Returning to Siam, marriage was the conventional next step. Only much later did she learn that her family head had rejected all suitors without telling her.

Probably he could not imagine a man of their class (and none other would qualify) getting along with this strong-willed, outspoken lady whose mind had been shaped by an odd combination of royal tradition and Western ideas.

History intervened. In 1932, the absolute monarchy was overthrown and the old nobility lost many of its privileges. Like most of her peers, she fiercely resented the new commoner politicians, yet they helped cause a shift towards egalitarianism that gave Boonlua a future. She was in the first class at Chulalongkorn University when it began admitting women. She followed the natural route from graduation into the public service. She found her calling as a teacher of literature, and more unsteadily made

a mark as an educational administrator.

While she resented the overthrow of the absolute monarchy, she did not mind the strong nationalism and state-building of the new regime. She worked on committees implementing Prime Minister Phibun's conventions on dress, rules for civil servants and revisions of the school curriculum. While some royalists fled and some violently opposed the new regime, others like Boonlua quietly worked in the engine-room of the administration. Continuities in Thai official practice can be traced to stories like these.

With the arrival of US influence after World War II, Boonlua got a scholarship to study for an MA at the University of Minnesota. She loved the US and the freedom of being away. On her return she found an additional role for herself as a go-between for the growing number of Western scholars interested in Thailand. Among students and junior colleagues, especially women, she inspired great admiration. But like many born aristocrats, she tended to treat colleagues and bosses with condescension, and like many very clever people, she suffered fools not at all.

Her official career stalled. Constantly sickening from stress and frustration, she retired early in 1970.

If Boonlua's story had ended there, it would be a minor thread in the plot of the Siamese aristocracy's fate in the 20th century. But two things happened.

First, at the age of 49, she had married a debonair doctor and divorced{aac} whom she had met through a group of Minnesota alumni. His lack of lineage would have prevented the match in their youth, but that no longer mattered.

They were mutually devoted and very happy.

Second, she wrote five novels. She had always wanted to write, but her older and prettier sister Buppha had made an early splash as a novelist under the pen name Dokmai Sot, and Boonlua was discouraged by the thought they would be compared. But Buppha had not written anything new for many years.

Boonlua produced four of her five novels in the five years after her retirement. The most popular, like most Thai novels of this era, was a family story of great complexity. Unlike most others, however, it was also a political novel. The central characters were loosely modelled on Field Marshal Phibun and his wife. Boonlua damned the Phibun-like figure, not by making him the swaggering dictator of conventional accounts, but by portraying him as drearily ordinary.

Another of her novels was a fantasy set in a Southeast Asian country run by women. Her inversions of Thailand's gender politics were probably ahead of her time, but she forgot to make the book entertaining as well. In the same mercurial period, she also turned out a flood of essays on literary criticism. She punctured the mainstream view of old Thai literature as something sacred by insisting that classical and modern works be subjected to the same discipline of criticism, and by celebrating the earthier and more realistic aspects of the classical corpus.

When literature suddenly became a political matter amid the student revolts of the 1970s, Boonlua found herself invited onto public forums alongside the new firebrands. She surprised audiences by her mixture of traditionalism, liberalism, passion and personal quirkiness.

Few biographies have been written about people from this period, in part because of the lack of sources, but Boonlua and her circle wrote a lot about themselves and one another. From these writings and many interviews, Susan Kepner has crafted a fascinating "inner" story of Boonlua's development against the background of her family circumstances and the seismic shifts in Thai politics. Kepner is best known for her translations from Thai (especially *Letters From Thailand* and the stories of Sidaoruang), but here delivers an extraordinarily accomplished work.

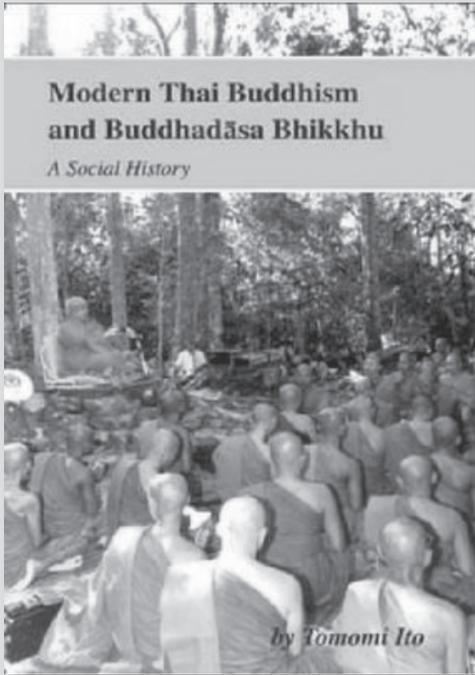
Like any good biographer, she loves her subject, but does not shy from revealing that subject's arrogance, wilfulness and contrarianism.

The Thai aristocracy faced a crisis after 1932. They lost privileges and they lost purpose. Many of them spiralled downwards, clinging to past privilege and flirting with reactionary politics while gradually selling off their remaining property. A few embraced change with only a modicum of grudge, building on the cultural capital they had inherited from the old order to become prominent educators and artists.

Boonlua is a great example of the small group who embarked on this second journey. Susan Kepner succeeds in conveying the sheer complexity of her life, resulting in not only a fine biography and literary appreciation but also a unique essay in social history.

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<http://www.bangkokpost.com/lifestyle/book/377952/intimate-view-of-an-extraordinary-life>

# Modern Thai Buddhism and Buddhadasa



Attachment to our own views of the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha [could] block the way to the truth.

*Buddhadasa, lecture, 1949*

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Patrick Jory

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With a population approaching 70 million people of whom around 90 percent are nominally Buddhist, Thailand counts among the world's most populous Buddhist countries. Of the five officially Theravada Buddhist countries Thailand has the largest number of Buddhists. Yet in the international scholarly literature on Buddhism Thailand is poorly represented. The impact of Thai Buddhist scholars on the broader Buddhist world is similarly limited. One exception to this rule is the work of the monk Buddhadasa (1906-1993). His writings have been translated into English and other languages. He has been the subject of a steady stream of academic studies by international scholars of Buddhism. Donald Lopez lists him as one of thirty-one Buddhist thinkers globally who have helped construct "modern Buddhism" (p. 2). He has even been officially listed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural

Organization (UNESCO) as one of the world's "great personalities". Buddhadasa is thus one of Thailand's very few public intellectuals of international repute. This contrast between Buddhadasa's international prominence and the relative obscurity of Thai Buddhism on the academic landscape is partly due to the reputation that his work has for embodying a "rational" approach to the study and practice of Buddhism. His greatest supporters, both in Thailand and in the international scholarly community, have been broadly speaking, the educated, liberally-inclined middle-class, the historical bearers of rational thinking but a politically weak minority within the monk's own country. It is interesting, therefore, to consider Buddhadasa's career in the context of this Buddhist country's problematic and unfinished transition to a modern bourgeois society over the course of the twentieth century. This is the theme that Ito Tomomi attempts to

develop in this new book on the famous monk.

Ito's study presents a picture of the scholar-monk as a pugnacious modernizer, engaged in all the intellectual and political battles of the day. It is important first of all to acknowledge Buddhadasa's membership of a rising Thai nationalist bourgeois elite. He was born in 1906 into a wealthy provincial family in the comparatively prosperous southern province of Surat Thani. His father was a well-to-do assimilated Chinese merchant and his mother the daughter of a middle-level ethnic Thai provincial official. His younger brother and long-time intellectual collaborator "Yikoe", who later took the name of Dhammadasa, attended the elite Suan Kulap College in Bangkok as one of only around 2800 students in the entire country in the mid-1920s to complete secondary school (pp.31-32). He went on to study medicine at the newly established Chulalongkorn University. Buddha-

dasas's own formal education was curtailed after the third year of secondary school because of the death of his father and the need to run the family shop. However he continued his education informally. Besides studying the textbooks for nak tham examinations and other Buddhist works, he read the writings of anti-establishment figures critical of monarchical absolutism such as Thianwan, K.S.R. Kulap, and even Narin Phasit (the subject of a biography by Peter Koret, recently reviewed in this TLC/New Mandala review series by Dr Arjun Subrahmanyam). He taught himself English and subscribed to English-language Buddhist journals, later even translating works on Buddhism from English into Thai. He ordained in 1926 at the age of 20 and moved to Bangkok to continue his Pali studies to the Parien 3 level, before abandoning his formal studies and returning to Surat Thani in 1932 (pp. 30-33). Buddhadasa was thus partly self-taught. Along with his social background, this factor helps to explain the independence of his thinking and his characteristic tendency to attack the status quo.

As Buddhadasa's reputation as an original, progressive thinker grew, he became acquainted with and gained the patronage of the most influential political and intellectual figures of his generation. These included the leader of the People's Party that brought Siam's absolute monarchy to an end in 1932, Pridi Phanomyong (1900-1983); lawyer and later prime minister and privy councillor Sanya Dhammasakdi (1907-2002); leading jurist, later Supreme Court president and minister of justice Phraya Latphli Thammaprakhan (1894-1968); Supreme Patriarch Wachirayanawong (1872-1957); the controversial senior monk of the Mahanikaya order and a later.

Actig supreme patriarch, Phra Phimonlatham (Aat) (1903-1989); the Marxist journalist and intellectual Kulap Saipradit (1905-1974); and, later in his life, the social critic Sulak Sivaraksa (b. 1933), to name just a few.

Buddhadasa shared the idealistic aims of this generation. For example, he was heavily involved with the Buddhist Association of Thailand, which had been established in 1934 – two years after the overthrow of the absolute monarchy – by figures associated with the People's Party. The Association was seen in some quarters as having been founded in order to counter royalist domination of the Thai sangha at a time of intense political conflict between the People's Party and supporters of the old absolutist regime. The Association also had a greater focus on the lay community, which Buddhadasa must have identified as being where the future of Buddhism in Thailand lay, rather than with the community of monks, the traditional concern of the sangha. In his concern for lay practice and his sometimes fraught relations with the sangha establishment, Buddhadasa can therefore be seen as an early "secularist". Buddhadasa's sympathy with the political aims of the Association and the People's Party was also clear. For example, in 1947, and with Pridi in attendance, he gave a lecture entitled, "The Buddha's Dhamma and the Spirit of Democracy" (p. 70). His temple, Suan Mokkh, was founded in the same year as the Revolution of 1932, in Buddhadasa's words, "a sign of a new change in order to make things better..." (p. 38).

Buddhadasa's stance made him many enemies, both within the sangha and without. His radicalism earned him quite early in his career the accusation that he was a "communist" (p. 70). His association

with figures on the left like Pridi, Kulap and the British-trained mining engineer and philosopher Samak Burawat, and his development of the concept of "Dhammic Socialism" (pp. 188-215) during the Cold War era, did little to counter this particular attack on his reputation. His open assault on Abhidhamma studies (pp. 137-161), which enjoyed growing popularity in Thailand from the 1950s onward, seemingly in parallel with the rise of reactionary politics during that period, earned him the ire of influential supporters of this school, both lay and monastic. In a famous lecture in 1971 Buddhadasa condemned contemporary Abhidhamma studies in Thailand for overemphasizing the sacred and supernatural, for packaging themselves as "consumer goods", and for leading their supporters into "delusion and addiction" (p. 159). Buddhadasa also clashed with Kittivuddho – a monk who became famous for his support of anti-communism and his association with the Thai far right – ostensibly over issues of doctrinal interpretation. Buddhadasa's most famous critic was the arch-royalist and minor aristocrat-politician Kukrit Pramot, who attacked the monk for decades in his newspaper *Sayam Rat*, including with the claim that Buddhadasa's ideas were a risk to national security (p. 119). Again, while the disagreement was outwardly over religious doctrine, there was a clear political subtext. Defending the monk from Kukrit's attacks, one of Buddhadasa's publishers and strongest supporters, the former high-ranking diplomat Pun Chongprasoet, wrote, "... [People] are deluded to be afraid only that communists will destroy Buddhism when someone of the capitalist and sakkina[feudalist] class is openly destroying Buddhism in this way..." (p.120)

It's book thus helps us to

understand Buddhadasa's work as part of the progressive worldview held by a class of statesmen and intellectuals who shaped Thailand in the mid-twentieth century – figures whose legacy has been marginalized under the royalist-military hegemony which developed in the late 1950s and continues to exercise political and intellectual influence today. Indeed, compared with the ideals of the People's Party or the Thai left, arguably it is Buddhadasa's influence, couched in the "indigenous" and therefore familiar intellectual form of Buddhism, rather than the perceived "foreign" Western liberalism or Marxism, which has best survived this era.

*Modern Thai Buddhism and Buddhadasa Bhikkhu* is a rich and extensively researched book. It contains an enormous amount of material that will be of value to the student of Thai Buddhism in general and of Buddhadasa in particular. Nevertheless, some criticisms can be made. Ito is on occasions a little too admiring of her subject. At times she risks appearing too willing to come to the monk's defence. The book also bears the traces of the thesis from which it originated, with the understandable desire to include every interesting piece of information that has been found in researching it. But for this reviewer perhaps the main criticism that can be made is the hesitation to fully affirm Buddhadasa's political affiliations – and even sometimes apparently to deny them. There is a sense that as a Buddhist monk Buddhadasa was above the "worldly" realm of politics. For example, Ito writes, "Buddhadasa's reference to sangkhomniyom [socialism] in combination with the dhamma should not necessarily be interpreted as a sign that he was inclined toward

leftist ideologies..." (p. 193). Yet the author herself has provided much of the evidence that supports just such an interpretation. Despite the fierce independence of his views, Buddhadasa was clearly, like many of the modernizers of his generation, a man of the left with a modern progressive agenda, even if his ideas were expressed within a Buddhist idiom – the idiom which perhaps resonated more deeply with an educated Thai public than the foreign conceptual language of political economy.

How influential are Buddhadasa's works in Thai Buddhism today?

While publishers continue to reprint Buddhadasa's works and bookstores display them prominently, it is the less rational beliefs and practices that tend to characterize contemporary Thai Buddhism, and that have attracted the attention of scholars in recent years. Such things include the phenomenon of "commercial Buddhism", the plethora of cults and rituals, the worship of an ever-expanding pantheon of gods and spirits, and the diverse beliefs in the supernatural which Buddhadasa once derided, now collectively referred to as "practiced Buddhism" – which have been brilliantly analysed by Justin McDaniel in his *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk* (2011, reviewed a year ago in the *TLC/New Mandala series by Erick White*). While it may be argued that these beliefs and practices have been associated with Buddhism since time immemorial, it is hard to deny that the contemporary character of Thai Buddhism owes at least something to the fossilization of a century-old system of monastic administration under a gerontocratic and semi-feudal monastic bureaucracy, to the atrophication of "village Buddhism" due to the slow death of

the village society that once sustained it, or to the strange detour to the irrational that large sections of the Thai middle class took in the Bhumibol era, for example in supporting politically reactionary movements like Santi Asok or the enormously successful Dhammakaya temple network, whose abbot purports to have knowledge of the heavenly realm in which Steve Jobs has been reincarnated.\* It is tempting to ask whether Buddhadasa's efforts to reform Buddhism in Thailand, as with other aspects of the country's political, cultural and intellectual modernization, have been a failure.

Such an environment is not conducive to producing intellectuals of international calibre. Ito's book reminds us of an era and a political and intellectual milieu which were.

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*Patrick Jory is Senior Lecturer in Southeast Asian History at the University of Queensland.*  
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Source: New Mandala Reference

\*What is perhaps more surprising than the abbot's claim is that it was reportedly made in response to a question sent to him from a senior Apple software engineer, Tony Tseung, apparently a follower of Dhammakaya, from Apple's headquarters in Cupertino, California < [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/21/steve-jobs-after-life-known-by-buddhist-cult\\_n\\_1818716.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/21/steve-jobs-after-life-known-by-buddhist-cult_n_1818716.html)>.



Collective wisdom: Preservation and Development of Buddhism

**Editor :** B. M. Pande  
**Publisher :** Asoka Mission, New Delhi and Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private limited, New Delhi, India



On being an Engaged Buddhist: To the Pinnacle of Perception through Meditation and Service

**Author :** Bhikkhu Sanghasena  
**Publisher :** Mahabodhi International Meditation Centre, Ladakh, India



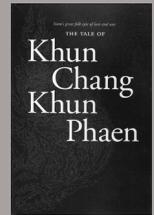
Cultural, Power and Practices: The Globalization of Culture and Its Implications for Asian Regional Transformations: The Work of the 2010/ 2011 API Fellow

**Author :** The Nippon Foundation Fellowships for Asian Public Intellectuals  
**Publisher :** API Regional Coordinating Institution, Institute for Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand



Confluences: An American Expedition to Northern Burma, 1935

**Author :** Erin L. Hasinoff  
**Publisher :** The Bard Graduate Center : Decorative Arts, Design History, Material Culture, New York, NY



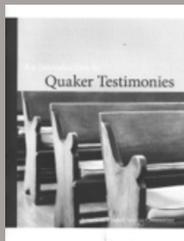
The Tale of Khun Chang Khun Phaen: Siam's Great Folk Epic of Love and War

**Translators and Editors :** Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit  
**Publisher :** Silkworm Books, Chiangmai, Thailand



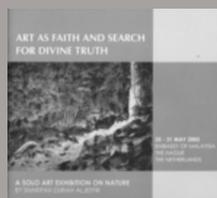
Mahabodhi Films

**Producer :** Mahabodhi Zita & Horst Norberg Studio  
**Director :** Mahabodhi International Meditation Center, Ladakh, India



An Introduction to Quaker Testimonies

**Author :** The Working Group on Quaker Testimonies at AFSC  
**Publisher :** American Friends Service Committee



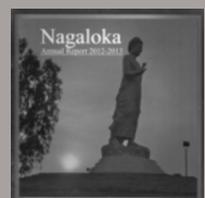
Art as Faith and Search for Divine Truth  
 A solo art exhibition on nature by Sharifah Zuriah Aljeffri

**Photographer :** Sharifah Zuriah Aljeffri  
**Exhibitor :** The Embassy of Malaysia, The Hague, The Netherlands



Strategic Peace Building for Asia: Supporting Asian Peace Processes through Research, Facilitation, Capacity Building and Resources, 2012 Annual Report

**Author/ Publisher :** Center for Peace and Conflict Studies, Siem Reap, Cambodia



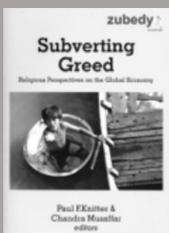
Nagaloka: Annual Report 2012-2013

**Author/ Publisher :** Nagarjuna Training Institute, Nagpur, India



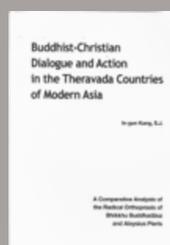
Alien in Our Own Land (Refugee in Homeland): Bhagrachari Hill Districts

**Author :** Hills Peace Group  
**Publisher :** Hills Peace Group, Chitagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh



Subverting Greed: Religious Perspectives on the Global Economy

**Editors :** Paul F. Knitter and Chandra Muzaffar  
**Publishers :** Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY in association with Boston Research Center for the 21st Century



Buddhist-Christian Dialogue and Action in the Theravada Countries of Modern Asia: A Comparative Analysis of the Radical Orthopraxis of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa and Aloysius Pleris

**Author :** In-gun Kang, S. J.  
**Publisher :** Heythrop College, University of London



Essays on Thailand's Economy and Society for Professor Chatthip Nartsupha at 72

**Editors :** Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker  
**Publisher :** Sangsan, Bangkok, Thailand



Recognizing the Dharma

**Author :** Thanissaro Bhikkhu



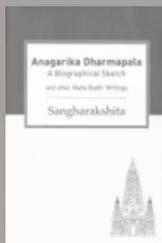
Discernment: The Buddha's Strategies for Happiness: II

Author : Thanissaro Bhikkhu



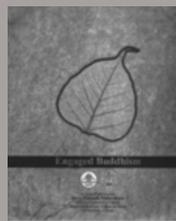
Beyond all directions: Essays on the Buddhist Path

Author : Thanissaro Bhikkhu



Anagarika Dharmapala: A Biographical Sketch and other Maha Bodhi Writings

Author : Sangharakshita  
Publisher : Ibis Publications



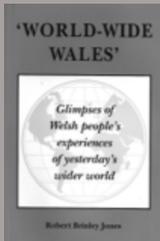
Engaged Buddhism

Editor : Dr. Ravindra Panth  
Publishers : Nava Nalanda Mahavihara (Deemed University), Nalanda and Department of Art, Culture & Youth, Government of Bihar



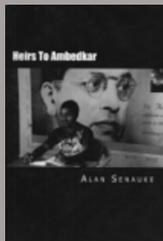
Buddhist-Christian Studies

Editors : Wakoh Shannon Hickey and C. Denise Yarbrough  
News and Views Editor : Jonathan Seitz  
Book Reviews Editor : Sid Brown  
Publisher : University of Hawai'i Press for the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies



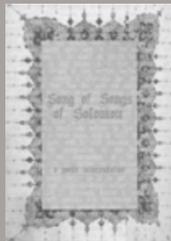
'World-Wide Wales': Glimpses of Welsh People's Experience of Yesterday's Wider World

Author : Robert Brinley Jones  
Publisher : The Drovers Press



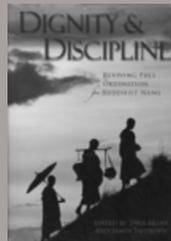
Heirs to Ambedkar

Author : Alan Senauke



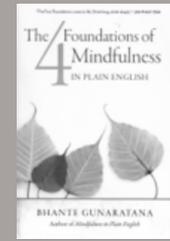
Song of Songs of Solomon: A Poetic Interpretation

Authors : Falvey, John Lindsay



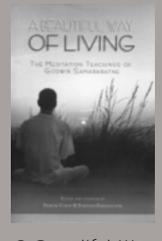
Dignity & Discipline: Reviving full Ordination for Buddhist Nuns

Editors : Thea Mohr and Jampa Tsedroen  
Publisher : Wisdom Publications, Boston, USA



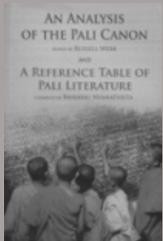
The Four Foundations of Mindfulness in Plain English

Author : Bhante Gunaratana  
Publisher : Wisdom Publications, Boston, USA



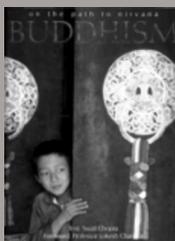
A Beautiful Way of Living: The Meditation Teachings of Godwin Samararatne

Editor and Compiler : Dennis Candy and Sampath Dissanayake  
Publisher : Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka



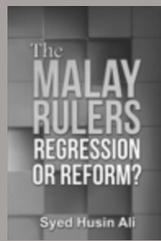
An Analysis of the Pali Canon: A Reference Table of Pali Literature

Editor : Russell Webb  
Compiler : Bhikkhu Nyanatusita  
Publisher : Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka



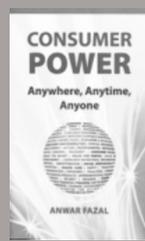
On the Path to Nirvana: Buddhism

Editor : Shalini Saran  
Photo Editor : Lance Dane  
Publisher : Brijbasi Art Press, Uttar Pradesh, India



The Malay Rulers: Regression or Reform?

Author : Syed Husin Ali  
Publisher : Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia



Consumer Power: Anywhere, Anytime, Anyone

Author : Anwar Fazal  
Editor : Lakshmi Menon  
Publisher : Neo Sentuhan Sdn., Penang, Malaysia



The Collected Teachings of AJAHN CHAH: TSK on daily life practice

Publisher : Aruna Publications, Northumberland, UK



Chulalongkorn University Right Livelihood Summer School

## 'Intercultural Dialogue on Food, Water and Wellbeing Economics'

with Right Livelihood Award (the "alternative Nobel Prize") recipients:

**Anwar Fazal, Malaysia; Sulak Sivaraksa, Siam; Seikatsu Club Consumers' Cooperative, Japan\***

Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok;  
Ashram Wongsanit, Nakorn Nayok Siam  
7-18 July 2014

In developing further the goal to advocate for an alternative development paradigm and right livelihood, the School for Wellbeing Studies and Research will co-create an annual summer school event, Chulalongkorn University Right Livelihood Summer School. The summer school will be organized as an interdisciplinary program in collaboration with Chula Global Network and the Indian Studies Centre of Chulalongkorn University, and the Right Livelihood College (RLC). The RLC, a global capacity building initiative of the Right Livelihood Award Foundation aiming to harness and spread the knowledge and experience of the Laureates of the Right Livelihood Award, is based in Penang (Malaysia) and has campuses in Bonn (Germany), Lund (Sweden), Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Port Harcourt (Nigeria), Valdivia (Chile), and California (USA).

The Summer School will be held in early June 2014 for ten days including a Right Livelihood public lecture and panel discussion at Chulalongkorn University. Participants will spend seven days in Bangkok. A three-day stay will be organized at Ashram Wongsanit, in Nakorn Nayok focusing on experiential learning and community spirit. Ashram Wongsanit was set up by social critic Sulak Sivaraksa as an alternative learning space and retreat for development workers.

As an international forum of intellectual exchange for future activism based on sustainability, the program joins together recipients of the Right Livelihood Award and likeminded resource persons to promote the

concept of right livelihood by living lightly on the earth while offering a foundation for academia – civil society networking.

Resource persons include Anwar Fazal (Malaysia), Founder of the Consumers Association, Penang; Director RLC. Sulak Sivaraksa (Siam), Founder of Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) and the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB); Timmi Tillmann (Germany), Advisor RLC; Maruja Salas (Peru), RLC; Surat Horachaikul (Thailand), Director Indian Studies Centre, Chulalongkorn University; Somboon Chungprampree (Thailand), Executive Secretary INEB; Carl Middleton (Thailand/UK), Lecturer of M.A. International Development Studies, Chulalongkorn University; Hans van Willenswaard (Thailand/the Netherlands), Advisor School for Wellbeing Studies and Research. And more...

Join us in establishing an alumni platform and a network of Right Livelihood activists as focal points for a growing Movement for Right Livelihood!

For more information on the program, please contact Nadia Al-jasem at [nadiajasem@gmail.com](mailto:nadiajasem@gmail.com)  
Tel. +66 (0) 26222495

\* to be confirmed