

# SEEDS OF PEACE

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## Ambedkar's Contribution to Socially Engaged Buddhism



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**3** Editorial Note

**4** Country Reports

- 4** Bangladesh: Memorandum to honorable Prime Minister of Government of Peoples Republic of Bangladesh
- 5** Burma: Call on Thai students and Thai people to stand against military-based-constitution and its referendum
- 5** India: Finding the common spaces between religions
- 6** Indonesia: An idea for an interfaith religious violence warning system
- 7** Siam: Should buddhism be the national religion of Thailand?
- 8** Siam: Revenge of the Conservatives in Thailand

**10** INEB

- 10** The 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar's momentous conversion takes place on October 11th this year  
*Dharmachari Lokamitra*
- 12** Buddhist Leadership Training Program
- 14** Summertime with INEB *Preston Evers*

**16** INEB Institute

- 16** English for Engaged Social Service – Second Course
- 19** Learning with Pleasure and Confidence  
*Sunisa Jitraphai*

**21** SNF

- 21** 250 Years On from the Fall of Ayutthaya (and the Rise of Thonburi) – An Innovative Commemoration

**23** School for Wellbeing

- 23** Testimony: Chula Right Livelihood Summer School 2016: Solidarity for Mother Earth, Solidarity for all.

**25** Sulak Sivaraksa

- 25** Inspired by Dr. Ambedkar
- 26** In Memoriam Charoen Wat-aksorn 12<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of His Martyrdom
- 28** What It Means to Be a Buddhist in a Nutshell
- 30** Remembrance Upon Bidding Farewell to a Great Teacher

**32** Articles

- 32** Ambedkar's idea of India and his contemporary relevance *Mangesh Dahiwale*
- 35** The tribe of new brahmins: the problem that roots from the issue of control & submission
- 38** Education that is able to eradicate Self-Centeredness *Buddhadasa Bhikkhu*
- 41** "Buddhism, Environment and Social Justice: Temple of the Modern Buddhists"
- 46** The Re-Establishment of Theravada Bhikkhuni in 1998 *Dhammananda bhikkhuni*

**50** Obituaries

**58** Letters

**59** Book Review

Editorial Note:

We at INEB have decided that in the spirit of knowing each other's traditions well, we should assemble a comprehensive list of 100 of the most important books on Buddhism that includes at least three titles from each country/regional form of Buddhism. These titles can be canonical, they can be contemporary and/or they can even be works of fiction such as novels. Ideally, after collecting the list of titles, we would like to begin raising funds to be used in each of your countries for translating these titles into your respective languages. We would like every one of these books available in each language so that every Buddhist in his/her country – especially the younger generations – can have access to sufficient knowledge about the various extant Buddhist traditions.

Below are a few titles from Siam that we have selected for the list to share with you: *Constitution of Living* By P.A. Payutto – A wonderful handbook on Buddhism aimed at those new to Buddhism but relevant to the seasoned practitioner.

*Buddha-dhamma* By P.A. Payutto – Magnum opus on the core teachings of the Buddha based on the sutras. *Teaching Dhamma by Pictures* By Buddhadasa Bhikkhu – A book relevant and accessible to all levels of understanding combining illustrations with key Buddhist lessons.

With regards to the list of 100 books, we in Siam recently raised one million baht from a public health care organization to begin translation work. If this project is approved by our members, we hope to continue with a fundraising campaign so that each country can have every title available in their respective languages.

Over the past few decades, INEB has devoted its

efforts, along with members of other religious traditions, to overcoming dukkha (suffering) – not just personal dukkha but social and environmental dukkha as well.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of E.F. Schumacher's book '*Small is Beautiful*'. To celebrate and expand upon his ideas of Buddhist economics, INEB is in the process of organizing a seminar in Burma this December with International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) and more partners in Burma and beyond that hopes to bring some of the leading voices in alternative economics together. From there we are planning a larger conference in Bhutan and the publication of a subsequent book on alternative economics. We hope this text will become a new standard that will be used in various settings across the globe.

In other news, INEB has started its own school of higher learning, known as the INEB Institute. It aims to teach students from across the globe about socially engaged Buddhist theory and practice and how to apply it in everyday life. The institute recently completed its first English for Engaged Social Service program. The three month program was designed to foster English language proficiency, coupled with transformative learning for peace and justice that is grounded in Buddhist thought and practice. Students from across Asia attended the course and were able to make significant progress in their English language abilities.

The next INEB Institute initiative will be the Buddhist Leadership Training Programme in Siam, headed by Pracha Hutauwatra. The Leadership Training Programme will cover a range of important topics such as fundamentals of Buddhism, mediation practice and theory, neuroscience, management skills, non-violent communication and social movements and social change. This course is designed to help foster more effective leaders in a range of roles and will begin September 1st, 2016, until March 10th, 2017. For more information please visit: <https://www.facebook.com/blt.ineb>, <https://buddhistleadership.wordpress.com>

Following the Buddhist Leadership Training Programme, the INEB Institute will begin a year-long Master's degree program in socially engaged Buddhism. The MA program will consist of three terms of coursework that will take place at sites in Siam, Taiwan, India and Bhutan. In addition to a range of courses offered, the program includes a meditation retreat, completion of an internship or thesis as well as a summer seminar that will provide an opportunity for students to present their work to others.

The curriculum will include holistic training in individual and social transformation, and will provide education in the Theravada traditions of Siam, Ambedkarite Buddhism in Nagpur, India, Tibetan Buddhism, Gross National Happiness in Bhutan and Mahayana Buddhism in Taiwan. The MA program is connected with the Arsom Silp (Institute of the Arts) in Bangkok and will be fully accredited by the Thai Ministry of Education. Those interested in learning more or in enrolling in the program should visit: [www.inebinstitute.org](http://www.inebinstitute.org)

We sincerely hope all members take this proposal for a master list of the best books on Buddhism seriously and collaborate with us as much as it is possible. Next year, Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa will be 84 years old – seven cycles of life and the most meaningful cycle for Thais. If you want to best honor him and celebrate his next birthday, we hope that all of his Kalyanmitra will play a role in this important project. We would like to hear back from you with at least three titles by the end of August of this year so that we can complete this project in a timely fashion.

# Memorandum to honorable Prime Minister of Government of Peoples Republic of Bangladesh

Demanding to give exemplary punishment to the killers of Ven. Ugaaindya Vikku from Nakyangchari Upazila under Bandarban Hill District and ensure security of lives and properties of indigenous jumma people & religious minorities in CHT

17 May 2016

To Honorable Prime Minister, Government of Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, Tejgao, Dhaka.

Medium: Deputy Commissioner, Khagrachari Hill District.

Greetings from the Buddhist communities of Khagrachari Hill District. A venerable Vante named Ugaaindya (73) from 278 Baichaari Mouza of Nakyangchari upazila under Bandarban Hill District was killed on 13th May 2016 on Friday by the unknown perpetrators. Like other parts of Bangladesh, Killings and oppressions among the indigenous jumma peoples are the continuous process in CHT. It is noted that very recently a few numbers of Christian priests and monk of Sonatani religion have been killed in the plain districts. In addition to, bloggers, publishers and

university teacher of Rajshahi University including two foreigners have also been killed in the country. Rape and killing of religious minorities and land grabbing are the regular incidents in Bangladesh. It is also remarkable that a Hindu temple and 19 Buddhist temples at Patia under Chittagong District and Ramu under Cox's bazaar district have been looted and finally set fire on 29, 30 September 2012. Moreover, the culprits on that incident are still unidentified and justice will be crocodile tear. Religious minorities are not oppressed in other countries throughout the world whereas Bangladesh is exceptional. According to Hindu-Buddha-Christian Unity Council, there were 30% religious minorities and 10% in 2011. This ratio is high in CHT. Specially, the indigenous

jumma people in CHT have been suffering since 1975. On the other hand, the Rohingya refugees from Myanmar have been living in different parts of Bandarban Hill District since 1980. As a result, it creates a pressure upon the jumma people in CHT. Religious minorities including foreigners and progressive personalities at national level have been attacked by the fundamentalists accomplish with Rohingya extremists. It is notable that the perpetrators are not given to justice although rape, killing, looting, land grabbing and so on against religious minorities throughout the country including CHT happened by them. As a result, many Buddhist temples and orphanages have been acquired by the outsiders in CHT. Crimes and human rights violations are increasing day by day because of culture of impunity in Bangladesh. Many minority groups like Marma and Chak are taking shelter in Myanmar and India because they are feeling insecurity in Bangladesh. The Buddhist community of Khagrachari has decided to avoid celebrating the rally on upcoming Boishakhi Purnima. To ensure the security of lives and properties of Buddhist, Christian and Sonatanees of CHT, we want the following

demands-

1. To award exemplary punishment to those who were involved in killing Ugaaindya Vikku.
  2. To ensure the security of lives and properties of Buddhist, Christian and Hindu Communities.
  3. To take proper step as indigenous inhabitant area according to CHT Accord.
  4. To return the land of Buddhist temple and orphanages that was acquired.
  5. To take Rohingya refugees outside from Bandarban Hill District.
- May all living beings be happy!
- With Thanks
1. Agrajyoti Mohathero, president, Parbattya Bhikku Sangya, Bangladesh
  2. Satyananda Mohathero, president, Parbatya Bhikku Sangya, Khagrachari Unit
  3. Mr. Santoshita Chakma, Secretary General, CHT Jumma Refugee Welfare Society
  4. Mr. Kongchairy Mog, President, Marma Unity Council
  5. Mr. Jiten Barua, Secretary General, Kalyanpur Moitri Bouddho Bihar, Khagrachari.

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## Call on Thai students and Thai people to stand against military-based-constitution and its referendum

All Burma Federation of Student Unions  
6 August 2016

Our view on military-sponsored-constitution and its referendum.

Dear Comrades,

Thai military junta has drafted a constitution based on its own interest and on the purpose of holding permanent leadership role in Thai politics. According to our experience, our conclusion is that it leads the only way to elimination of democracy.

If the constitution is approved, we believe that all democratic rights will be deprived and the bad political situation which currently suppresses activists, politicians with different views and progressive intellectuals will be getting worse.

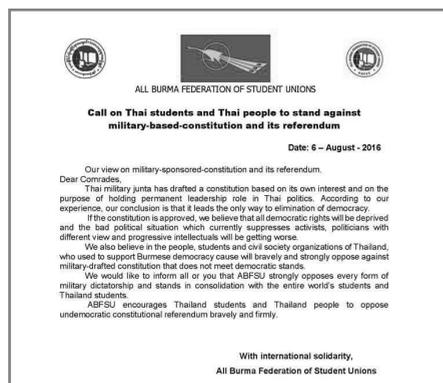
We also believe in the

people, students and civil society organizations of Thailand, who used to support Burmese democracy will bravely and strongly oppose against military-drafted constitution that does not meet democratic stands.

We would like to inform all or you that ABFSU strongly opposes every form of military dictatorship and stands in consolidation with the entire world's students and Thailand students.

ABFSU encourages Thailand students and Thailand people to oppose undemocratic constitutional referendum bravely and firmly

With International solidarity,



## Finding the common spaces between religions

Priyanka Borpujari  
*The Hindu*, 25 July 2016

In Tanzania in 1965, a young Imtiaz Yusuf was confused by a headline in a local newspaper: "Pakistan declares jihad on India." He asked his father if Islam was a threat within Pakistan, but his father explained that wars are actually a result of corruption, but are given religious colours.

That young Imtiaz is now Dr. Yusuf, a religious studies scholar, an alumnus of Pune University and Aligarh Muslim University, who has been teaching in Thailand for 27 years and is currently Director of the Center for Buddhist-Muslim Understanding in the College of Religious Studies at Thailand's Mahidol University. He was recently at Mumbai University to deliver a talk on Buddhist-Muslim dialogue in contemporary South-East Asia.

The similarities between the two religions sometimes get obscured by their ethnic origins. "The time and chronology of the birth and evolution of a religion is not important; what is important is the ideas that emerged and are exchanged," explains Dr. Yusuf. "Both Buddha and Mo-

hammad were against being deified. The Sharia and Koran are not the law, but only the way. Even 'Bhagwan' doesn't mean god; it means the enlightened person. But humans want to make god out of everything. This is merely a human condition."

"Since god can't be proven in a lab, the Orientalist understanding of religion reduces it to its rituals. "It is the colonial legacy of interpreting religion in their secular fundamentalist ways, and then dividing people on religious lines, thereby creating ignorance of one's neighbours, which then leads to violence."

On the recent terror in Europe, Dr. Yusuf is fatalistic; he says these attacks are likely to increase. "Radicalism has always been there, and today it is the turn of Islam, as a result of sociological, political and racial circumstances."

Closer home, things aren't better, he says. "Buddhism in Myanmar and Sri Lanka is actually racism, a dominance of the Burmans and the Sinhala, respectively, over other ethnic groups. India and China are not far behind in facing similar

challenges, as they attempt to be significant players in a global market.”

Dr. Yusuf finds the rise of the RSS and the changes in education curricula in India alarming. “The Constitution of India is one of the most democratic and it should be India’s holy book. But we end up talking about secularism and fundamentalism and not the essence of the Constitution.”

His experiences convinced him of the need to teach religion beyond ethnicity, starting from primary school. “American universities are now actively teaching world religions in universities, Asian countries still follow the British secular education system.” But for religious studies to work in Asia, he says, “we

need teachers who can teach in a non-biased manner.”

He is angry that the US does not condemn Saudi Arabia’s proselytisation of Wahhabism, which he says foments fundamentalism. He is also aggrieved by the lack of spirituality among Muslim youth, as evidenced in violence. “Sadly, some Muslims have made Islam into a missionary religion, as was Christianity. All religions have taken the extreme violent path towards liberation. But the church bell and azaan from the mosque externalise the call to god, while the drum in Buddhist temples stirs one within. This common search for liberation should not be forgotten.”

warning system, currently called the “Indonesian Interfaith Weather Station” (IIWS), designed to spot religious radicals and violent chatter in the same way a weather forecasting now aims to spot tsunamis like the one that devastated several countries including the Sumatra region in Indonesia in 2004. After meeting Dr. Sofjan in Indonesia recently, we wanted to hear more on this idea as a creative solution to religious strife in the world. So Paul Glader, a media scholar at the Berlin School of Creative Leadership, asked Dr. Sofjan questions about the project.

Paul Glader: How did you come up with this idea for an “early warning system”?

Dr. Dicky Sofjan: Academically, I am trained in political science and international relations, but have mostly focused on Islam, Muslim politics, democracy and civil society in South-east Asia and Middle East. The idea about the early warning system came about after tirelessly reading news and reports on religious conflicts, while observing how measures have been taken only after the fact. I also came to realize that religious intolerance and socio-religious conflicts can often spin out of control. What then came to my mind was: Can we not do something about this? Is there any way we can actu-

ally prevent these tragic events from occurring?

So, in a way, I got tired of post-factum analyses, and wanted to venture into other ways of thinking about religious conflicts. This was when the idea about the IIWS came into being. I got the initial inspiration largely from learning about the tsunami early warning system. As you probably know, the coastal areas around the Indian Ocean and the northern part of Sumatra were hit by a tsunami, which killed more than 100 thousand lives in late 2004. This got many people thinking about how to prevent such catastrophes from re-occurring.

So, as I observed the increasing incidences of intolerance and religious conflicts in Indonesia, I started to think about how to preempt, prevent and mitigate such potential ‘social disasters’. Thus, when a call for proposal from an international agency was announced in 2011, I tested the idea, and submitted a proposal. Out of more than 800 proposals submitted from around the country, the IIWS was among the 35 best project ideas. From there, I realized both the gravity and urgency of the idea, and sought ways on how to fund this rather “wacky” project, as many of my religious scholar-friends described it.

Glader: How does (or will) the technology work?

## Indonesia:

# An Idea For An Interfaith Religious Violence Warning System

*The Berlin School Of Creative Leadership*

Dr. Dicky Sofjan is a core doctoral faculty of the Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies (ICRS), which is located at the Graduate School of Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Dr. Sofjan regularly teaches on the topic of Religion and the Politics of Multiculturalism at the Ph.D. level. The con-

sortium is a unique Ph.D. program that celebrates religious diversity and trains roughly 65 Ph.D.s from more than 10 countries. It’s a partnership of three universities and professors from several faith traditions.

Sofjan received a small grant from the US State Department to build an early

Sofjan: The basic idea of IIWS is to preempt, prevent and mitigate both intra- and inter-religious conflicts. The logic behind the technology is to compile and combine historical, structural and event data in one database system, which could then generate forecasts, and help policymakers, social stakeholders and security apparatus to act on any early warnings. The beauty of this idea, however, is to use the metaphor of the interfaith weather station, where our team has created formal categories, such as “sunny”, “cloudy”, “drizzly”, “rainy” and “stormy” to represent the varied state of intra- and interfaith relations in any given country or context.

At this juncture, our team of researchers is still considering various options on the use of crowdsourcing technology, and how to get concerned citizens to participate in feeding information about any events that may lead to conflict escalation. The application of the overall logic itself could actually be used for all kinds of conflicts, be it religious, ethnic, or otherwise. The main challenge of course is to make sure that the interfaith weather station technology can intervene before tension or friction becomes violent conflicts.

Glader: Why is this kind of technology and project necessary in Indonesia?

Sofjan: It may come as a surprise to many that con-

flicts often reoccur with not much variations in terms of the causes and trigger events. In the case of Indonesia, what we have seen post-reform at the turn of the century is the phenomenon called “democracy,” wherein democratization has produced spurts of protests, demonstrations, riots, collective violence and not to mention intra- and interfaith conflicts. This is in part due to the declining power of the state (previously monopolized by Suharto’s militaristic regime) vis-à-vis the forces of society, whether they are civil or not.

What is clear is that we are seeing increasing incidences of intolerance, where religious minorities have experienced intimidation and persecution. Their houses of worships have also been demolished or had to face forced closure due to pressure from radical elements in some religious communities. This problem has been exacerbated by the rise of social media, where most (dis)information is unchecked, unedited and often times highly inflammatory.

The situation is further worsened by the incapacity of the government and state apparatus to handle these conflicts effectively and swiftly, especially in far-flung areas of the archipelago. Hence, IIWS could be part of the solution to this problem.

# Should Buddhism Be The National Religion of Thailand?

*Phra Bhavanaviteht*

Sometime ago I was asked if I would give my support to the campaign to make Buddhism the State religion of Thailand. I was reluctant and did not believe that a State religion was a good thing. I thought that it damaged the religion that was chosen and that because of that favouritism for one and the resultant bias others would be discriminated against. But as I thought about it and began to write I realised that we in this country have rediscovered a powerful argument in its favour.

On the one hand, it can be argued that any religion is better off without the baggage of national, cultural or political ties; and that the ethnic and religious diversity within a nation is safer when there is not a dominant, national religion.

But on the other hand, it can as well be argued that a nation without a national religion is one bereft of moral compass and encouragement to virtue and integrity; and without a national religious commitment the diversity of faiths and the freedom to practise a religion of choice is neither understood nor protected.

In the United Kingdom the Church of England is the established religion headed by the Monarch and the latter of those two positions has been our experience. Religion has been protected, not only the national, established church but the various minority faiths as well. We are free to practise our religion of choice and diversity is respected. For example, in February I was invited to attend, along with the leaders of other faiths working in prison chaplaincy, a meeting with the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is keen to understand and support our work.

Providing therefore that it is tolerant of other faiths, I have come round to supporting the establishment in law of a national religion.

Buddhism exemplifies and actively promotes loving-kindness and compassion, tolerance and understanding and has long been at the heart of Thai culture making a priceless contribution to its welfare and development. I believe, therefore, that it deserves to be recognised as the national religion of Thailand.

# Revenge of the Conservatives in Thailand

Nirmal Ghosh

Straits Times 8 Aug 2016

Sunday's referendum in Thailand which passed a new constitution by roughly 15.5 million Yes votes to 9.7 million No votes, ensures that for the foreseeable future electoral politics starting with a general election in 2017, will be played out only between very explicit red lines drawn by the conservative establishment.

The country's deep and dangerous political divide still persists; much of the north east and part of the north voted to reject the constitution.

Whether this divide can be addressed under what academic Thitinan Pongsudhirak has called "military-conceived" custodial "democracy" is not very likely. The current military-appointed government has made noises about addressing inequality in Thai society, but merely addressing economic inequality, even if that succeeds (and it will take time), is not enough; it is aspirational rights that need to be addressed.

The new constitution, billed as an anti-corruption

charter, constrains the role of elected politicians even further than the constitution produced by the military in 2007 and similarly put through a referendum, which it also narrowly passed even as the north east and north, strongholds of former prime ministers Thaksin Shinawatra and his sister Yingluck Shinawatra, rejected it.

That constitution was evidently seen as not strong enough; in 2014 then-premier Yingluck Shinawatra lost her job, yet the rest of her Cabinet and government managed to cling on, and it took a coup d'état to remove them. Under the new constitution, if a party that comes to power has its own ideas that do not quite hew to the line of the military-bureaucratic establishment, it will be easy to pull the rug from under both the prime minister and the Cabinet.

Parliament will comprise of 750 people: 250 Senators in the upper house which will be essentially appointed; and 500 elected MPs in

A Thai electoral worker prepares to start counting ballots at a polling station during a constitutional referendum vote in Bangkok on Aug 7, 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS



the lower house. Of the 250 Senate seats, six are reserved for top commanders of the armed forces and the permanent secretary of the ministry of defence.

Electing a prime minister would need a majority of 376 votes out of 750. That means if the Senate votes in a bloc, which is a reasonable assumption, a person can become prime minister with 250 Senate votes and just 126 out of 500 elected MPs.

Unless a party or coalition of parties can form an unassailable majority, it may not even be able to elect a prime minister of its choice. Any prime minister will only function at the pleasure of the military-bureaucratic elites. And the Constitutional Court in particular can intervene in vaguely defined "crisis" situations to decide political directions.

The run up to the referendum was characterised by nothing like the infor-

mation and robust debate of a referendum or election. Any whiff of criticism of the draft constitution elicited a swift crackdown by the army, and charges under the military's draconian referendum law.

Most political insiders on the eve of the election, believed the draft constitution would be narrowly rejected; that it had not been explained as a desire by Thais for forward movement of any kind towards an election, a lack of information about the implications of the constitution, or simply apathy; some 45 per cent of registered voters did not vote.

That there is also underlying anxiety over the royal transition, King Bhumibol Adulyadej is 88, hospitalised and increasingly frail, would undoubtedly have been a factor as well.

Many Thais, privately at least given the constraints on any discussion about the monarchy, fear potential

chaos at the passing of a King who for over six decades has been seen as the ultimate moral authority and last resort in a still hierarchical, even feudal society.

That the military is concerned is no secret; regime leaders and spokesmen have continually emphasised that Thailand is going through a sensitive transition which foreigners, a term usually used for western countries and commentators, may not fully grasp.

From the army's point of view the monarchy in Thailand is intrinsic to national security.

Henning Glaser, Director of the German-South-east Asian Centre of Excellence for Public Policy and

Good Governance (CPG) at Thammasat University, at a panel discussion days before the referendum, made the point that "Thai constitutions are essentially conservative, they try to preserve heritage."

Writing in *The Straits Times* in May, Dr Thitinan, Director of Chulalongkorn University's Institute of Security and International Studies (ISIS) said the constitution was "part of a 20-year junta-sponsored reform drive to reset Thailand's political development."

Promulgating this constitution, he wrote, would invest the upper house with "unprecedented authority to supervise and scrutinise the post-election govern-

ment."

"It is like the military's own political party endorsed in the legislature without having to contest for people's support."

The Thailand based German academic Michael Nelson, who is also from CPG at Thammasat University, on his Facebook page on Monday argued that "The conclusion from this referendum is that, among the Thai population, there currently is no majority for a democratic form of government. What we have witnessed instead is authoritarian consolidation."

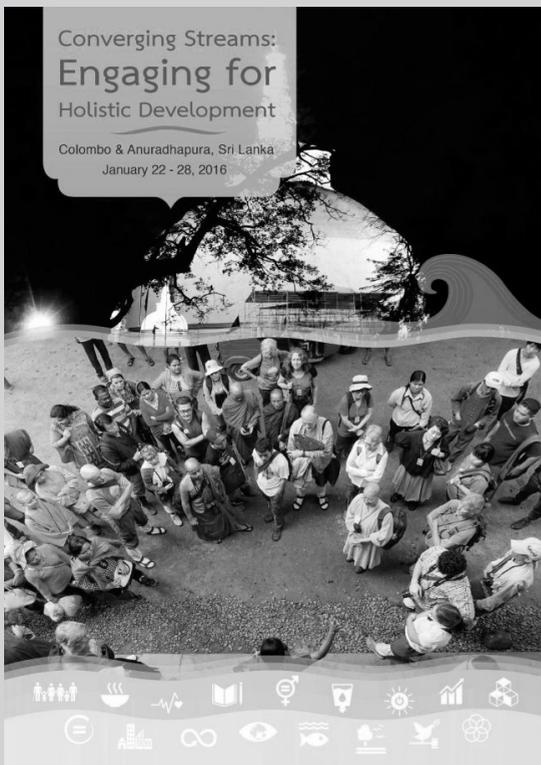
The signs are that the business community, with an interest in stability and policy continuity, is not too fazed by the result of the

referendum. Thailand's political conflict is likely to remain muted for the foreseeable future.

Speaking to *The Straits Times* on the eve of the referendum, a senior political figure who asked not to be named, said "If the constitution passes we will be back to where we were almost 40 years ago. And we will stay in the same place for another 20 years."

"There will be no turmoil anytime soon" he predicted. But he warned that "once people realise that they can't really choose the prime minister, they will recognise that the constitution is the problem."

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## Converging Streams: Engaging for Holistic Development

Colombo & Anuradhapura,  
Sri Lanka  
January 22-28, 2016

Available for download now at  
[www.inebnetwork.org](http://www.inebnetwork.org)

# The 60th anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar's momentous conversion takes place on October 11<sup>th</sup> this year.

Dharmachari Lokamitra



60 years ago his conversion was dismissed by most Indians and the Buddhist world, and was hardly noticed in the international arena. The picture is very different today. Now it is said that Dr. Ambedkar is the only truly national leader, being acclaimed by all political parties and most leading social activists. Buddhists throughout the world, especially socially engaged Buddhists are beginning to appreciate the social revolution he initiated through converting to Buddhism. More and more people throughout the world are grateful for the example he gave of non-violent social change despite coming from one of the most structurally oppressed communities the world has known.

In 1956, 500,000 so-called untouchables converted to Buddhism along with him. Now that figure could be 40 or 50 million and is growing all the time. The continual and numerous atrocities on Dalits all over India, remarkably result in Dalits looking much more at Dr. Ambedkar's peaceful solution in Buddhism than violent revenge. There are over 220,000,000 Dalits in India. Given the enormous gratitude and respect most of them feel for Dr. Ambedkar, and the seeming inability of many Hindus to give up attachment to caste, it is likely that most of them will one day convert to Buddhism. Besides that, many from the so-called Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes (erstwhile Shudras) are becoming interested in Dr. Ambedkar's solution to the inequality of Hinduism through converting to Buddhism.

To celebrate this great event, the full implications and greatness of which will take many more years to be fully realised, Nagaloka and INEB are organising a four day conference on the theme of "Social Engagement and Liberation", to which all those interested in engaged Buddhism are wel-

come (please register soon if you want to come as places may be limited <http://liberation60.squarespace.com/>, email [60liberation@gmail.com](mailto:60liberation@gmail.com)). During these few days we will be looking at aspects of his approach to Buddhism, and seeing how not only Indian followers of his but Buddhist from different traditions in east and west can relate to them through their own understanding of the Dhamma.

Dr. Ambedkar had no living Buddhist teachers or guides. He came to Buddhism entirely through reading (although there was little literature available in the first half of the last century), his deep reflection, and his overriding social concerns. He had been deeply influenced during the time he spent studying in USA, especially under John Dewey. There he came into contact with the values of liberty, equality and fraternity; they had such an impact on him that they became his final criteria for selecting a religion for himself and his followers. Buddhism, he concluded, was the only religion that was in accord with them. These and other ingredients make his conversion quite unique, and bring a welcoming freshness to Buddhism in the world today. In the conference, we will be exploring three central aspects of his approach to Buddhism, which correspond roughly to the values of liberty, equality and fraternity, and illustrate the freshness of his approach.

If anything my strongest experience in the 38 years of working with Dr. Ambedkar's Buddhist followers is the empowerment that the Dhamma brings on many different levels, from the enormous psychological freedom experienced through no longer having to see oneself as a lesser human being, through to the deep psycho-spiritual changes that take place through serious and committed practice. On every introductory retreat I have led here, after a few days of Dhamma practice, people understand from their own experience that they can change their mental states, they understand how Dhamma practice can empower them, and they are filled with joy and gratitude. At Nagaloka, we conduct an 8 month introductory residential course in basic Buddhist teachings and practices. The students come from some of the most deprived and oppressed backgrounds in India, often with little hope whatsoever. After a few months of Dhamma practice, most feel transformed, with a new vision of life. They no longer have to be passive in the face of the terrible situation into which they were born, but they have confidence they can do something with their lives, not just

for themselves, but for the wider society. One of my most dramatic experiences was in 1981, when I spent some time in Ahmedabad during the anti Dalit riots there. Every evening, I would give talks on Dr. Ambedkar and Buddhism in the different Dalit slums. These talks were some of the most well-attended I have ever given there, and many came in blood stained-bandages. The remarkable thing was that they did not want revenge, they wanted basic human respect and dignity, they wanted to raise themselves out of this cruel, symbiotic relationship. They wanted liberation and to gain empowerment for this they were looking to the Dhamma.

There is a discussion today of different approaches to liberation in Buddhism. In the west, it seems some people approach Buddhist practice to enhance a subjective and individualistic approach to life. This was not the empowerment that Dr. Ambedkar implied. While he emphasised the basic practices of Going For Refuge, Sila and the Noble Eight fold Path, he also emphasised the Paramitas, that enable us to overcome our weaknesses that limit us from effectively contributing to creating a better society. He saw the Dhamma not in an overly personal way, but as self transcending with immeasurable social implications. The Dhamma shows how to make the best of our human lives though going beyond our own personal needs and relating to the welfare of others and society at large.

This is brought out by the next aspect of his approach. In his book, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, he says the practice of Saddhamma has two functions, the purification of mind and the creation of a better society. Each is implicit in the other. Dr. Ambedkar suggests that our practice of Prajna, Sila, Karuna and Metta, have to be evaluated to the extent that they lead us to break down barriers between people and establish equality. One can appreciate how crucial this was to Dr. Ambedkar from his experience of untouchability, but he is making a point that is intrinsic to all Dhamma practice, whether it is meditating on sunyata, or satkaya-ditthi (the fetter of self view), or cultivating the four Brahma Viharas. If they are really Dhamma practices, he implies, they have to manifest in our behaviour, in the way we engage with others and the world.

If we want to accomplish something in the world, we have to organise ourselves. The third aspect of Dhamma that I want to touch upon concerns governance. The Buddha talked of the Dhammarajya, governance according to the principles of the Dhamma. Bringing about a society in which all could live the best of human lives was essential to the approach of Dr. Ambedkar; he used the term Prabuddha Bharat, Enlightened India, to signify this. The Sangha is the means by which we begin to bridge the gap between the transforming individual and the wider society we want to

see transformed. Furthermore, Dr. Ambedkar talked of Sangha as including dedicated lay people as well as monks and nuns. He talked of them being empowered through the Dhamma so that they could do better work for the welfare of the world. But he also talked of the Sangha as setting an example to the wider society of how to live skilfully; he saw it as constituting a microcosm of the better world to which it is committed to bringing into being. When he introduced the new constitution to the Indian Parliament, he emphasised that democracy was not new to India, but had been the basis of relations in the Sangha in the time of the Buddha. This was not mere political democracy; the essence of democracy to him was fraternity, and this, he said, was the same ethics and metta. This is the sort of example we can expect from the Sangha, to the extent that we consider ourselves Buddhists, to the extent that we want to see a better world, and to that extent we should be trying to imbue our work together with the spirit of fraternity or metta.

While these aspects of Dr. Ambedkar's approach to the Dhamma are not couched in traditional Buddhist terms, they represent questions that all Buddhists can usefully reflect on; to what extent does the Dhamma empower us not in a selfish sense but in a self transcending, other-regarding sense; how does our practice express itself in the way we relate to others, and overcome the samsaric tendencies of divisiveness; and to what extent does our practice of ethics and metta permeate the way we work together with other? It is these questions that we will be exploring in some depth, in Nagpur at Nagaloka from 11th until 14th October this year with the help of experienced and engaged practitioners from all parts of the world and from various traditions. Please join us.

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## Conference on Social Engagement and Liberation

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Celebrating the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of  
Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's Conversion  
to Buddhism

11<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> October 2016  
Nagaloka, Nagpur, India.

Registration forms will be available.

In the meantime please contact us at: >>

Email: [60Liberation@gmail.com](mailto:60Liberation@gmail.com)

Website: [www.nagaloka.org](http://www.nagaloka.org) and  
[www.inebnetwork.org](http://www.inebnetwork.org)



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## Buddhist Leadership Training Program

*Towards A New Paradigm of Spiritual Growth  
For Ecological Sustainability and Social Justice*

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**1<sup>st</sup> September 2016 – 10<sup>th</sup> March 2017**

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If you are a committed spiritual practitioner and want to work for social change this 6-month course is for you. It will provide a break from your busy schedule and give you space to deeply reflect upon your life, society and the state of our ecosystem and return back with rejuvenated energy, perspective broadened, skills enhanced.

You may be a leader or staff of a religious or a non-profit organization, a youth leader, an individual who aspires for deeper spiritual growth as well as social change or want to create or join an intentional community, you will benefit tremendously from this course. You do not need to be a Buddhist to enroll, as long as you agree with the core Buddhist values of compassion, wisdom, contentedness and non-violence.

### Students will ...

- Experience spiritual practice, participatory learning, critical thinking and enjoyment woven together holistically during this journey of learning.
- Participate actively in the learning process within a trusted community.
- Learn to look at issues from various perspectives and develop critical and systematic thinking skills.
- Practice mindfulness, and learn how to apply in daily life.
- Learn and experience community resilience and ecovillage values.



There will be a focus on fun within the learning process and enough time for rest. The course is designed and will be facilitated by accomplished, experienced facilitators/ teachers with decades of experience teaching new paradigm leadership empowerment courses in Southeast Asia, China and UK through SEM-Spirit in Education Movement, ETA-Ecovillage Transition Asia, Gaia Education and Findhorn College.

At the end of the course, you are expected to be a dynamic leader for change in the 21st century. You will be less self-centred and more important, more confident, more humble, more trustful and more careful, committed to working for society while knowing how to take good care of yourself and others.

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This programme is a joint venture of International Network of Engaged Buddhists & Ecovillage Transition Asia

<b>Supervisors:</b>	Sulak Sivaraksa & Lody Gyari Rinpoche
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<b>Course Fee:</b>	Full programme: \$12,000 USD (1 <sup>st</sup> Sep 2016 -10 <sup>th</sup> Mar 2017) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● First part of the Programme: Mindful Eco-leadership: \$ 6,800 USD (1<sup>st</sup> Sep – 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec 2016 )</li><li>● Second part of the programme: Shambala Warrior in Action: \$ 6,800 USD (12<sup>th</sup> December 2016 - 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2017)</li></ul>

Download and fill out the application form <https://buddhistleadership.wordpress.com/application-fee/> or <https://web.facebook.com/blt.ineb/>

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# Summertime with INEB

Preston Evers

This summer, INEB hosted two interns, Emmy Bender and Preston Evers, from Princeton University. Working principally under Theodore Mayer, the academic director of the INEB Institute, Emmy and Preston assisted Theodore with curriculum design for the upcoming master's program in Socially-Engaged Buddhism, a multi-sited program in Asia that will seek to integrate spiritual and social transformation, grounded in Buddhist traditions. The two interns were also given the opportunity to explore other INEB projects and affiliated organizations. Here, they reflect on their internships.

Babacar Mbaye, a teacher and mentor of mine from Senegal, calls himself an “eternal student”. I think I’d call myself the same. As I learn more and more, I realize that I know less and less. My father has frequently told me that I, and all other students who’ve graduated from the U.S. public school system, must unlearn most of what we’ve learned in the classroom. Initially, I interpreted my father’s advice to mean that the actual knowledge I’ve acquired, like Eurocentric histories, should be forgotten. Though after exploring various alternative education programs affiliated with INEB -- the MA in Socially-Engaged Buddhism, English for Engaged Social Service, Chulalongkorn University Right Livelihood Summer School, workshops at the Wongsanit Ashram -- I’ve come to think that it is actually the pedagogies that have been practiced on me over the past fourteen years, along with the worldviews and self-concepts I’ve internalized as a result, that require some unlearning. As such, I’ve been thinking about how education, and my personal learning, could be improved.

On one of my first days here in Thailand, I



participated in a workshop facilitated by Pi Natha Dannonthadharm with a group of American students. I was later told that we American students asked considerably more ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions than Thai students generally did. Both in Thailand and the U.S., and I’d assume everywhere else, our pedagogy must engender critical thought and the questioning of authority. And by authority, I don’t just mean political and religious leaders. Students should realize that universities, and the knowledge they produce, are also political. In fact, every single one of us is political, insofar as we are all implicated in unjust micro and macro systems of power, which skew our perceptions and beliefs.

Educators must encourage critical thought, allowing even their own authority to be questioned. That’s not to say that authorities shouldn’t be respected, but rather that authorities shouldn’t be respected or perceived as omniscient simply by virtue of their authority. This is both for student and teacher’s sake. We’re all eternal students, and an educational space should be a place of mutual respect and mutual learning. The teacher and student can learn

together, respectfully challenging each other along the way. I can't speak for other education systems, but in the U.S., students often don't feel respected, especially on university campuses, where we've been conditioned to respect only the expert, the text, and the best students. This makes for a competitive, intellectually combative, credentialist culture in which students must jostle each other for respect, even self-respect. Deep listening, a practice advocated by many educators I've met through INEB, is but one way to create respect in the classroom.

We elicit critical consciousness in the classroom not merely for the sake of the truth, but in order to subvert domination and exploitation. Ted hopes that the MA in Socially Engaged Buddhism helps students grapple with the truly perplexing questions of how to engage with world crises. My university has a somewhat similar mission -- Princeton in the nation's service and the service of humanity -- though this aim and its implications are never, at least in my experience, acknowledged in the classroom. That is to say, I learn about all the "isms" that plague society -- racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, capitalism -- but I'm never provoked to ask myself what I should personally do about them. In her book *Teaching to Transgress*, educator and social activist bell hooks insists that conscientization shouldn't be an end in itself, but always a means to meaningful practice. She says that "many of us are revolutionaries in the abstract, not in our daily lives. It is essential that in our individual lives, we should day to day live out what we affirm." Dr. Nilanjana Premaratna, a member of the INEB Institute staff, calls herself a scholar-practitioner. Why aren't universities, with all of their intellectual and material resources, spearheading social transformation? Why are there only student protests, and why are even those on the decline in the U.S.?

Perhaps the problem is that most universities lack an ethical framework with which to contextualize and integrate their abundance of knowledge. U.S. society champions its separation of church and state. One of the main reasons I wanted to intern at

INEB was because I hadn't ever intimately experienced the role religion could play in an organization. Writing about the secularization of society, philosopher and education reformer John Dewey says, "the essential point is not just that secular organizations and actions are legally or externally severed from the control of the church, but that interests and values unrelated to the offices of any church now so largely sway the desires and aims of even believers," and I would argue that these new interests and values are often capitalist. In the same book -- *A Common Faith* (1986) -- Dewey defines religiousness as the human ability to imagine a better world, and the devotion to the embodiment of the ideals that would actualize this better world. Whether the ethical framework comes from a religious tradition or not, I believe that our educational institutions require Deweyan religiousness. This Deweyan religiousness or ethical framework doesn't need to be vested in the institution itself, as long as it is carried in the hearts and minds of our educators.

In other words, intellectualization is inadequate. The philosopher Bernard Williams once regrettably remarked that his work "consisted largely of reminding moral philosophers of truths about human life which are very well known to virtually all adult human beings except moral philosophers." While at INEB, I've read a few books by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Needless to say, he believes that the world needs more compassion, and he gives a good argument for why this is the case. But I don't need to be intellectually convinced of the need for compassion. I need to be inspired. It's a cliché, but actions do truly speak louder than words. The embodiment of compassion, not an argument for compassion, will motivate us to be more compassionate towards others. Similarly, our educators must practice what they preach. This is how we inspire students to better themselves, their communities, and the world.

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## *English for Engaged Social Service - Second Course*

Set for January 2017

### About this Course

English for Engaged Social Service is a course designed to bring together young adults from around Asia who want to improve their English so they can work more effectively as agents of transformation.

This three-month course, offered in Thailand, is much more than an English skills program. We also look very holistically at what transformation consists of, and what it requires of us at this moment in time.

Thus, we read and talk about the crises of climate change and social inequality, of struggles for democracy and how to respond to violence. Students get a lot of practice in meditation, in being good listeners, and in social analysis and critique. Students also have many opportunities to learn

from Buddhists and others who model thoughtful, inspiring, and active leadership.

As director of our first course in 2016, I would like to do two things in this article: 1) announce our second course, which will be offered January 7 – April 7, 2017 at the Wongsanit Ashram near Bangkok; and 2) reflect on what made our first course enjoyable and successful.

### Who is Involved?

Our 2016 course included 16 students from across Asia. They came from Sri Lanka, Nepal, Burma, Siam, Laos, South Korea, and China (both ethnic Chinese and ethnic Tibetans). This fact is very important because such diversity forces the students to

use English if they want to communicate with the other students and participants (and they do and they must). Many students said this diversity was one of the highlights of their experience in the course.

Our students also included both male and female, monks and a good balance of men and women, some of whom were lay Buddhists and others who were Hindu or Muslim.

The 2016 program also included three native and near-native tutors who offered small-group tutoring to the students and interacted with them informally in many ways. For this idea we have to thank Jennifer Yo from Taiwan, who has designed English programs for monks and nuns. The tutors help to model good English and to guide students one-on-one when necessary.

Finally, we had two professional teachers as part of the core staff, myself (Ted Mayer) and Nilanjana Premaratna from Sri Lanka. We each led our own regular courses and took joint responsibility for mentoring the students.

In addition to this regular teaching team, supported by the friendly and hard-working staff of the Wongsanit Ashram, we had many short-term teachers and workshop facilitators, both on site and at other locations. Here we want to thank Phra Paisal Visalo, Ven. Dhammananda Bhikkhuni, Sulak Sivaraksa, Dr. Yo Hsiang-chao, Pracha Hutanutrat, Ouyporn Khuankaew, Jon Watts, David Loy, Hans and Wallapa van Willenswaard, Suraphot Thaweesak, Chanchai Chaisukkosol, and Atcharee Amphaikitpanich. All these individuals gave generously of their time and attention, asking for only the most minimal compensation or none at all. We are deeply grateful to all of them.

I am pleased to say that Nilanjana and I will once again take on the leadership of this course when it begins in January of 2017. While the list of short-term teachers and facilitators will change each time based on their availability, we do hope to have many of them back again for the 2017 course.

## Highlights of Our Approach

Here I want to highlight three things: 1) how we reclaim the joy of learning; 2) learning by doing; and 3) the role of meaningful content.

### **How We Reclaim the Joy of Learning.**

Education today at all levels is saturated with the need to measure and to rank. It inculcates in students a deeply felt need to prove their value to a market-based economic system—now worldwide in scope—that has proved itself unable to value everyone. The work of measurement and of proving one's own value through competition takes place in the classroom. And both forms of labor rely heavily on the idea that intelligence can be objectively measured—leading to the deeply held conviction that some are by nature brilliant while others are dull.

We reject this entire apparatus. Instead, we start from the assumption that all human beings are profoundly intelligent, and that everyone faces lighter or heavier obstacles in accessing their intelligence and putting it to good use. We assume every student's high intellectual potential, and the students quickly understand this. We further assume that the world desperately needs every single human being's creative and well-intentioned thinking, acting, and being.

Furthermore, we know that when people's good qualities are appreciated, and when they are listened to with respect and genuine interest, they tend to find their voice and their thinking. Not only that; they also appear to be more ready and able to be themselves, and to decide to do what they themselves think is important. Thus our course began by providing practice in appreciating each other, listening to each other, and affirming each person's intelligence and potential to do good.

When we consistently approach learning and the classroom with these attitudes, and back them up through concrete practices, we find that learning becomes a form of play. Everyone—students, tutors, and teachers—turns their attention ever more to observing and enjoying the play of

their own and others' minds. When this happens, learning is fast, enjoyable, and virtually unstoppable.

While we struggled at times in our first course in 2016 to realize these possibilities in every situation, and while we may have failed on occasion, on the whole this is the atmosphere we were able to create. And it showed in the students' engagement in the learning process, in their support and appreciation for each other, and in the growth we observed in their skills and understanding.

### **Learning by Doing.**

It is by now well established that to learn a language one must hear it repeatedly and use it often, and one must want to keep doing these things. One must have multiple opportunities to interact with others and with different kinds of content in such a way that the language becomes a genuine medium for meaningful communication. Explanations about structure and other features of language play a role, but they are minor in comparison with the need to communicate in a meaningful way using the language.

We apply the same principle to the many other forms of learning that we engage in during this course. Students learn meditation through guided introductions and then extended practice. They learn the skills of appreciation and listening by having many chances to do these things. They learn social critique and analysis by having the opportunity to engage in them. Furthermore, they are inspired to think more creatively and to broaden their sense of what is possible by meeting with and learning from leaders who model compassion and creativity, as well as the courage to apply these qualities in action.

### **Meaningful Content.**

When the content of a language class involves communicating about things that are important to us and significant for the world at this point in time, learning is inherently engaging. Our course ad-

resses a broad spectrum of questions—from how we can grow as individuals, to how we can support each other, to how we can confront the crisis of climate change. While we are still learning how to present and work through this broad material with different kinds of students, we can demonstrate in each case the importance of the questions. And this brings the learning community together around goals that are profoundly human and potentially very widely shared.

### **We Will Offer This Course Again**

English for Engaged Social Service is a course that is intended to support those working for personal and social transformation. It is also intended as a preparatory step for students interested in the INEB Institute's MA in Socially Engaged Buddhism, scheduled to open in August of 2017. For these reasons the INEB Institute plans to offer this course on a regular basis.

Our next course will be held at the Wongsanit Ashram from January 7<sup>th</sup> to April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017. If you are interested in this course, or if your organization would like to support one or more individuals to attend this course, please write to registrar@inebinstitute.org or download the application form from <http://inebinstitute.org/english-for-engaged-social-service/>, then follow the instructions on the form.

The course tuition is \$3500; living expenses, in-country travel, and visa and other fees come to \$2800. We welcome all inquiries, whether or not you have the funds to pay for the course. Some scholarships are available. We also welcome donations from individuals or organizations who would like to make it possible for deserving students with few resources to attend this course. You may make such donations anonymously, with acknowledgment through a public list of donors, or through a named scholarship that honors your generosity. Thank you very much!

Ted Mayer

# Learning with Pleasure and Confidence

Sunisa Jitraphai



I grew up in an education system that does not teach people to use their potential. Thai people are not trained to use the critical thinking process, or thought, or rational judgment to consider or reason about things. This is why Thai people, including me, are always followers and prefer to stay in the safe space. Like many Thai people, I always worry about stepping outside of my comfort zone.

English is one thing that made me feel unsafe. I always dreaded learning English because I always felt uncomfortable when having to participate in the class. In addition, students have to remember all the things the teacher has taught, it is hard to remember everything and it is such a boring learning process. Each class I would just be waiting for time to

pass, ignoring what the teacher lectured about. Day by day, I felt like I was going further and further away from English.

However, the English for Engaged Social Service program was different. This program gave me new and inspirational experiences. I didn't realize how time flew with each session. One moment, I was sitting in the classroom for the first class and the next moment, I was sitting for the final exams. When I was standing on stage in front of many people for my final public speech, I realized that this was the last section of this program, and I wanted to do my best. Of course, I did it well! This was the direct result of learning with pleasure and confidence.

Each morning session we

practiced short sentences like:

One thing new and good for me is....

One of my heroes is....

One thing I would like to appreciate about you is...

All kinds of sentences led us to share positive energy with each other as friends, creating a healthy relationship amongst us, and encouraged us to be confident. We looked to others in a positive way, which changed my behavior a lot. Instead of perceiving people from the outside and their English speaking levels, I looked deeper at them and at myself. We realized that everyone is good and not perfect, everyone can make mistakes. You allow me to make mistakes; I allow you to make a mistake too. You are good, I'm also good.

The program created a safe space for us to share our talents and strengths and also our weaknesses. Everyone would sit around in a circle, discussing ideas, and finding solutions together. We were able to create a comfortable place to live and learn together. We practiced active listening, and being good leaders at the same time.

The program provided comfortable accommodation, and healthy food which was cooked by the students at times. We had exercise sessions in between our classes. We also practiced having positive conversations, deep listening, giving warm hugs to friends, and opening a safe space for sharing personal emotions. All this was there to support all students and provide them with an opportunity for learning while building positive teacher and student relationships. For students, it is not all the time that we need advice, sometimes

we just need a hand to hold, an ear to listen, and a heart to understand.

We were also encouraged to involve ourselves in the day to day management of our learning space. All of us cleaned the classroom, library, cafeterias, and even the toilets by ourselves. We were divided into small groups and were assigned tasks that rotated throughout the week. This taught us to work in a team and help each other. At the same time, it was a way to respect our own work and others' work, promoting a sense of community among us. We were free to take part in an activity or enterprise or to undertake a task.

The program taught us to use English as a tool to understand ourselves and issues faced by society such as peace and justice, social movements, spiritual traditions, and climate change. We learned through different activities like reading books, playing games, listening to music, reading poetry,

singing songs, watching movies, writing articles, public speaking, attending workshops with experienced people, and going on field visits. The classroom was never monotonous and was always full of excitement and activities. All of these activities encouraged us to reflect upon self-discovery, to develop our abilities, and inspired us to believe in the transformative role we and others can play in contributing towards realizing our dream of a sustainable world. I found the program enjoyable, and I was confident about using my English inside and outside the classroom.

Once the fear of being humiliated and failure is eliminated, our experiences of life becomes more valuable and meaningful. In moving ahead of these fears, I have moved forward beyond any range of limitations. I am free to shine as fully as I am. My body and mind are clear, calm, peaceful, and serene. The program was the best learning experience in my personal life.

Education is what enabled me to follow my dreams and aspirations, and English for Engaged Social Service is an integral part of my life. It gives me the power to rise and shine in my own way. I wish to realize knowledge to ensure maximum benefit, so that I can enjoy the journey of life. You empower my spirit.

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## 250 Years On from the Fall of Ayutthaya (and the Rise of Thonburi) - An Innovative Commemoration

Phat Chantachot

*“The Portuguese, who arrived in the early 16th century, marked Ayutthaya as one of the three great powers of Asia, along with China and the Indian empire of Vijayanagar.”*

*From Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit’s  
A History of Thailand, 3rd Edition, p. 10, 2014.*

The ancient city-state of Ayutthaya, with a history that stretched from 1351 to 1767, was at its height one of the largest and most cosmopolitan cities of Asia. Its role in trade, finance, and the creative integration of local and foreign technologies, statecraft, and cultural traditions, made its position in Asia in the 17th century comparable perhaps to the role of New York, Berlin, or Tokyo in the contemporary world.

2017 marks the 250th anniversary of the fall of this major urban center. The organization that gave birth to the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, the Sathienkoses-Nagapradipa Foundation, has joined with the Thai Ministry of Culture to produce an ambitious public commemoration of Ayutthayan civilization and of the many threads that carried its ideals, monuments, and practices forward into Thonburi and to the place we now know as Bangkok.

Historical commemorations of this kind can all too often serve only to inspire nationalistic fervor, provide huge profits to their corporate and media sponsors, or offer elites yet further chances to justify inequality and privilege. The organizers of

this commemoration hope to do something different, however. This article provides a brief description of their overall plan and the key activities envisioned to realize it.

The Sathienkoses-Nagapradipa Foundation and the Thai Ministry of Culture are joined by a large number of affiliate organizations—universities and academic departments, governmental agencies, artistic and cultural bodies, as well as progressive NGOs—in producing this commemoration. The commemoration itself is conceived of as a three-year event, having begun already in 2015 and culminating in the year 2017.

The aims of the sponsoring and affiliated organizations appear at first glance to be rather conventional, and what one would expect in a national commemoration. They want to highlight the historical, economic, and social significance of Ayutthaya, for example, as well as its importance as a source and model for Thai arts, culture, and traditions. They also want to make this significance visible and palpable to the younger generation.

But a number of features of the commemoration are potentially highly innovative and may well present a challenge to traditional attitudes. The

organizers hope, for example, to use the commemoration as an occasion to not only unify Thai people around common traditions and aspirations, but to promote unity, cooperation, and closer relationships with neighboring countries. This is remarkable given that Ayutthaya was destroyed by Burmese armies, and that this historical event has been used repeatedly to depict the Burmese or the state of Myanmar as natural and determined enemies of the Thai people.

How would the sponsors accomplish this difficult aim? Here is one hint from the materials disseminated by the sponsors. Among the various concrete activities involved in the commemoration is a series of lectures planned for each of the three years. The idea behind the lectures is to gather together bodies of knowledge from and about the Ayutthaya period that have been effectively lost or unavailable to the general public, and make them visible and accessible once again. For 2017 the focus will be on the nation-states in the region during the Thonburi era. This brief description suggests that organizers hope to explore the social, economic, and historical setting within which the various city-states of this region developed their particular characteristics and through which their relationships were structured. This is potentially a very progressive and enlightening way to approach the establishment of the current Thai capital, one that shifts the focus away from presumably inherent or timeless national and ethnic hostilities and towards understanding larger and shared historical patterns.

The focus of the 2015 lectures on water and its management in Ayutthaya from the time of its heyday to the present illustrates another feature of this commemoration. City planning, architecture, crafts, fashion, and many other aspects of Ayutthaya life are to be mined for their potential contribution to the present, whether in solving social problems, creating new economic opportunities, or inspiring aesthetic reformulations in art and music or clothing and design. Thus some of the lectures and activities around water in 2015 investigated how

lengthening certain canals to their original size in the Ayutthaya period could prevent flooding in present-day Ayutthaya and Bangkok. (Given major recent floods, especially those of 2011, this is a very real and pressing concern.) On the aesthetic side, Thai composers will debut music inspired by the musical rhythms and styles of Ayutthaya in June and July of 2017, while eight fashion collections by Thai designers seeking to emulate and modify the patterns of Ayutthaya fabrics will be exhibited in November of 2017.

Such activities make it clear that the organizers hope to do much more than memorialize a fossilized past. One of their key aims, for example, is to create a movement that will encourage broad participation in restoring and reviving the present-day municipalities of Ayutthaya and Thonburi. The restoration envisioned is one that involves the participation of local communities in cooperation with academic and other institutions in various ways. Thus students from the city planning division of Chulalongkorn University's School of Architecture will develop plans for the restoration of ancient sites in Thonburi along with local residents, then present these plans to the public. Similarly, local communities will play a role in conserving ancient sites as well as canals in Ayutthaya, in consultation with the Ayutthaya Office of Arts and Culture, and the Rajabhat University of Ayutthaya. There are also plans to promote sustainable forms of historical and cultural tourism by involving local communities in their planning and implementation.

These are only a few of the highlights of the many activities planned for the remainder of 2016 and the entirety of 2017. For more information on concerts, exhibitions, lectures, fashion shows, projects for the revival of local economies and much more, please send an email to: [ayutthayathonburi250@gmail.com](mailto:ayutthayathonburi250@gmail.com)

## Testimony: Chula Right Livelihood Summer School 2016: Solidarity for Mother Earth, Solidarity for all.

Charanya R. , Food Sovereignty Alliance, India.

*'Everybody has equal responsibility to the commons and shares a direct responsibility to transfer its wealth to future generations. The commons radically oppose both the State and private property as shaped by market forces, and are powerful sources of emancipation and social justice.'*

*-Ugo Mattei , First Thoughts for a Phenomenology of the Commons.*

This quote aptly captures the predicament that society faces today, a paradigm of corporate control and private property that opposes the reality of commons: commons as shared resources, cultures, knowledge, histories, freedoms and justice. Historically communities, especially indigenous people have been custodians of commons, but today the commons paradigm and sovereignty of people is threatened and destroyed by the capitalist economy and neoliberal policies. In this juncture, the CURLS 2016 brought together people from different countries and highlighted significant aspects of strengthening the commons, building communities and nurturing compassion as a radical re-imagination of society.

The pedagogy of the course incorporated dialogue, lectures, group discussions, field work, and also creative action through mind and body exercises. The important themes of discussion were Buddhist Economy, the Commons theory, private property, the myth of development, Participatory Research Action and other related topics. The field visit to the fishing community of Prachuap Kiri Khan, was particularly an insightful experience in understanding the commons of the sea. The fisher



folk are struggling to preserve the species of crabs and fish, and sustain a local market. They are confronted by large fishing companies that exploit the sea through mass scale fishing and destructive fishing practices. While living with the community, accompanying them to fish and exploring their histories; I realized that the vast oceans in their very essence are the commons of the earth, connecting shores and people. However today, these waters are corporatized, the seabed are rung for oil and shores captured for mass tourism. Yet, many communities like the fisherfolk of Ao Noi village continue to articulate a future of sustained livelihood and a sovereign sea for people and fish. It reinstates a philosophy that community is not only that of people, but the intrinsic link between nature and humans. The CURLS also provided a space for participants from different regions to share experiences. It was an important learning for me to know about the social and political realities of Bhutan, Myanmar, Thailand, Philippines and Indonesia through interaction with the people in the course. This regional solidarity is im-

portant, given that today most of the mass information and research is Global North centric. Moreover as a visual artist during the course, I could draw upon the experience and explore ways in which creative expression could build a collective.

Being a member of the Food Sovereignty Alliance, India, I believe in the vision of the alliance to defend the commons and rights of mother earth, through ascertaining people's governance of resources, strengthening agro-ecological food farming systems and building collective knowledge through inter-generational learning. Initiatives like the CURLS 2016, builds a narrative that brings together people, ideas and actions of solidarity that further strengthen such visions of people's sovereignty and commons.

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For more information about CURLS(Chula Right Livelihood Summer School), please visit [www.wellbeingsummer.wordpress.com](http://www.wellbeingsummer.wordpress.com)



### Call for participants

The 4th of July 2016 marks the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Adam Curle, peace scholar, Quaker activist, international mediator and Founding Chair, of Peace Studies at Bradford. To mark the occasion, Bradford's Peace Studies is hosting the Adam Curle Centenary Symposium. Academics and practitioners around the world are invited to a dialogue on peace in the 21st Century in the light of Curle's philosophy and practice.

We would welcome proposals for sessions and activities that will enhance this aspect of the Symposium

## Peaceful Relations and the Transformation of the World

Bradford Peace Studies' Adam Curle Centenary Symposium  
An Academic-Practitioner Dialogue on Peace in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century 5-6 September 2016, University of Bradford

(John Paul Lederach and Tom Woodhouse will be launching their collection of Adam Curle's papers.) The emphasis is on coherence between Curle's approach to peace and knowledge production and a Symposium methodology which encourages exchange between scholars and practitioners. There will be opportunity for Open Space discussions parallel with the Symposium streams and a final keynote listening panel will bring together the learning from the streams in a participatory final event on "What Next for Peace?"

## Inspired by Dr. Ambedkar

Dr. Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism did not only mean that he helped liberate the so-called "Untouchables" (or Dalits) in India from the most oppressive caste system, but his writings have also inspired many of us who are committed to socially engaged Buddhism to look to the Sangha as a model for authentic democracy in the world. Equality, fraternity and liberty may be a wonderful slogan from the French Revolution, but it was so violent that these ideals could not be achieved. Today, existing democracies have no room for fraternity whatsoever. Great inequality is also highly conspicuous in them. At best democracy in northern Europe might have helped a little in bridging the gap between rich and poor (e.g., the Labour Party in the UK tried hard in this endeavor after the Second World War, but it generally failed afterward.) As for liberty, in every country which adheres to neoliberal capitalism, it primarily means the freedom of capital; that is, the absolutism of capital.

Dr. Pridi Banomyong (11 May 1900 -2 May 1983) was a pioneer introducing democracy to Siam in 1932. His successful political revolution meant that all Thais came to live under the rule of law. Previously, the king was above the law. However, he failed to establish a form of social democracy in the country. Unfortunately, he did not know or hear about Dr. Ambedkar.

Nevertheless, Pridi managed to have serious discussion with Bhikkhu Buddhadasa (27 May 1906 -8 July 1993), and it was perhaps intended to pave the way toward Dhammic socialism. But he was removed from power and forced into exile by a military coup d'état in 1947. Since then the country has been governed by military dictatorship, alternated by brief spells of civilian rule. Sometimes the military sought a synthesis by dressing up in democratic garb.

Dr. Ambedkar reminds us of the importance of the Bhikkhu Sangha and the Bhikhuni Sangha as a model for real equality. Brotherhood and sisterhood are not only practiced among members of the ordained Sangha, but extend to the lay supporters of the Bud-

dhist Order. Sangha members dedicate their lives to liberation from greed, hatred and delusion.

Modern Buddhists worldwide, both the ordained and the lay devotees, have lost sight of the ideals of equality, fraternity and liberty. Most have embraced the new demonic religion of capitalism and consumerism, consciously or otherwise. The forest tradition of the Sangha upholds a simple way of life and may serve as a model for those who wish to subtract or keep a distance from this demonic religion. Unfortunately, it is exceedingly difficult to find contemporary Buddhists (no doubt profound in their teachings) who could inspire the majority of lay Buddhists to seek alternatives to mainstream economics, politics and education, which are rooted in greed, hatred and delusion.

Fifty years ago, E. F. Schumacher (19 Aug 1911- 4 Sep 1977), a nonbeliever who became a Roman Catholic, inspired us with his Buddhist Economics. We need to build on his work so that Buddhist Economics could become a widespread theory and practice taught in many universities. Likewise, we need to develop a politics of nonviolence parallel to the mainstream one. As for alternative education, people should be free to help others to breathe properly, mindfully, lovingly, and peacefully. Through this practice, the heart can help the head to be less arrogant and more humble and compassionate. We should go beyond the Cartesian concept of *cogito ergo sum* as well as Newtonian physics to something more spiritual, making Nature our Mother—abstaining from exploiting fellow humans, animals and natural surroundings as we have been doing in the name of progress, development and economic growth.

The Buddhist word for development is "Bhavana." It entails appropriate physical growth based on nonviolence, social growth on harmony, mental growth on selflessness, and spiritual growth on liberation of the individual as well as all sentient beings.

# In Memoriam

## Charoen Wat-aksorn

### 12<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of His Martyrdom



Charoen was killed following the order of a land owner on June 21st, 2547, a day that was also the birthday of Prince Damrong – an important occasion in Siam. Even though, throughout his life, the Prince faced envy and defamation from the ruling class, the Thai government acknowledged their mistake on his 100th anniversary and proposed his name to UNESCO, and guaranteeing that he was recognized as a world-class person.

The death of Charoen woke up the consciousness of the middle class and the poor, including NGOs. A splendid monument to Charoen was built three years after his death by independent artist and sculptor Pisan Tiparat. This sculpture brought back memories of Jit Phumisak who was killed on May 5th, 2509 at the hands of the government. He was a great contemporary writer, who also had a duty to wake up the consciousness of the people about the domination of Thai society by the ruling class. He was killed because he accepted the beliefs of the communists and joined the fight with the Communist Party of Thailand against the government. The death of Jit

happened to fall on Coronation day that includes a grand celebration. In the circles of the elite who control the lower classes, did they know about his death?

The fame of Jit Phumisak will endure for a long time. We now have a statue built in his honor – an important symbol – though not as meaningful as his actions.

I admire Jit's status as a writer and thinker, as he dedicated himself to the poor and fought for fairness within Thai society. Yet, I do not agree with using violence - with the communists – neither their theories nor practices. Jit's case, I believe, is significantly different than Charoen's, because Charoen was a normal person who believed only in good things. He was ready to give his life to the fight against businesses, land owners, other powerful people, and multinational corporations who use power in unfair ways. These forces often cause trouble for local people and harm the environment for the benefit of capitalism and consumerism. Charoen was ultimately killed by a land owner.

One of the best things in Charoen's life is his

wife Korn-uma. She understood him and supported his work for Santi Pracha Dhamma. Even though he is dead, his wife continues to work for fairness in Thai society and balance in nature. Not only that, Charoen has many poor colleagues who have spread his work to many places. Such people are the real power in Thai society. If the middle class wants to change the decaying, rotten parts of our nation, including the power of dictators who lack legitimacy, they should turn to study these grassroots campaigns.

If the Red and Yellow shirts are motivated to understand skillful means, then they should turn to learn from the people like Charoen Wat-aksorn and Wanida Tantiwitayapitak, who have been deprived of their lives but whose achievements still remain. We must learn from the efforts and struggles of Korn-uma and others who still have their lives, especially the brave, bright women who will not be defeated.

A proverb states that we sometime only see the hair in front of us and miss the mountain in the distance. If you take my proposal seriously as practical and correct, Thai society should have an answer in the path of Santi Pracha Dhamma according to Pridi Banomyong, Prince Sitiporn Kridakorn, And Puey Ungpha- korn.

This year, we celebrate the centennial anniversary of Puey Unphakorn who was betrayed by the Thai ruling classes just like Pridi was. UNESCO held a centennial celebration for both of them. Now however, UNESCO will celebrate whoever the Thai government nominates regardless of whether or not those people have excellence and no matter how unremarkable they may be. (Not to mention how much these individuals may have contempt for innocent citizens demonstrated in such actions as stealing ideas and writings of people, taking them to be their own.)

Charoen died twelve years ago – one full cycle. If those of us who miss him, want to help remember his life and accomplishments, and help spread these memories, then Charoen will never die. His name will be immortal. If we do not do this, then in the future, we will know only the names of famous members of the elite, even if they are fakes transformed into deities in order to lead people astray.

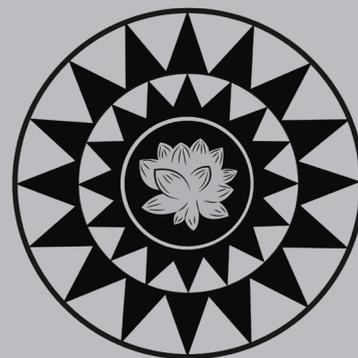
We must be brave and challenge dishonesty for

the sake of truth – truth that reveals and signifies the difficult suffering of the people and the natural world that surrounds us. Truth is synonymous to beauty. At the very least, Charoen’s monument is an aesthetic display that shows his life of struggle, a life that thoroughly inspires. Tiparat created the sculpture with beauty and goodness, thereby challenging mediocrity, dishonesty and evil.

When the age of Charoen reaches a century, the state should courageously offer his name to UNESCO, and announce that he is a person worthy of the world’s respect. This will likely mean that the Thai government is truly following the way of Santi Pracha Dhamma. UNESCO in turn will demonstrate that they are truly a superb organization.

On this occasion of the first anniversary of the first cycle after Charoen Wat-aksorn’s death, I wish to publish the speech I gave on the 3rd anniversary of Charoen’s passing during the inauguration of the monument, to him. It has been translated into English as well. I hope that the speeches given at this ceremony of the first cycle of Charoen Wat-aksorn will be more eloquent than my words given then. I also hope that the next generation will bravely speak the truth and strongly challenge unjust power more than I was able to do. Only then will Siam truly enjoy influence beyond its borders.

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**EMERGENT SOCIAL SPACE**  
*Commemorating 20 Years Anniversary of GLT*

25-27 November, 2016  
Asia Light Monastery, Pyin Oo Lwin

## What It Means to Be a Buddhist in a Nutshell

Many farangs have become increasingly interested in Buddhism because they feel that it's a religion that doesn't force them to believe in things that cannot be proven. The Buddha's teachings appear reasonable. At the same time, they are also open to debate and reinterpretation. By farangs I am not only referring to those from Europe and North America. I also include the people from South America and Africa. Some of them have studied the Buddhist scriptures, which are available in many foreign languages. Some are practitioners of Zen Buddhism. Some engage regularly in deep meditation as practiced in Tibetan Buddhism. Many of them don't even proclaim to be Buddhist.

(South) Korea had been a Buddhist country. The Buddhist masters there had encouraged the people to practice meditation and chanting. But they were impervious to the changing social and historical circumstances. When Korea became a Japanese colony, these masters even urged the people to be loyal to the Japanese emperor. This led to a public backlash. Many young people converted to Christianity, and there were many English, American and German missionaries who worked to protect the rights and freedom of Christian Koreans. In South Korea, there are now more Christians than Buddhists, especially the politicians and business leaders.

Recently, Buddhism is gaining more attraction in South Korea in large part because of Venerable Pomnyun Sunim. The Venerable stresses the fact that those who value the Dhamma should be able to practice it without having to convert to Buddhism. The Dhamma benefits everyone, Buddhist as well as non-Buddhist. For instance, the practice of mindfulness may help to lessen self-attachment and maintain non-exploitative inter-personal relations. The Venerable however feels that converting to Buddhism is a big issue. Those who possess the wrong view or are devotees of other religions may not be spontaneously ready for Buddhism. To prove that they are ready for taking the Three Refuges, they have to practice the Ashtanga prostration for 100,000 times. Why? The rea-

soning is that it will help foster authentic humility in a person. Once a person no longer sees the self as important, the Three Refuges' importance will be absolute. Humility is thus a necessary precondition for taking the Three Refuges, for converting to Buddhism.

Likewise in Tibetan Buddhism, the lamas will teach the Dhamma to anyone who is interested. But if a person wants to convert to Buddhism' s/he must practice the Ashtanga prostration for 100,000 times.

Most Thais incorrectly assume that they were born to be Buddhist. However, one is not born a Buddhist but becomes one. One becomes a Buddhist by taking the Three Refuges: "I go to the Buddha for refuge. I go to the Dhamma for refuge. I go to the Sangha for refuge." This is the heart of Buddhism. Let me make a brief clarification on what going to the Buddha for refuge means. It means I don't go to ghosts, spirits, celestial beings, the Evil One, etc. for refuge. Nor do I go to the military generals, bankers, politicians, fortune tellers, and so on. I do not depend on them for protection from danger. Only the Buddha is able to help me to truly overcome danger or fear. We are filled with fear. Fear is part of our nature. We fear pain, old-age, death, suffering, losing our property, losing our loved ones, etc.

When we overcome fear, danger will disappear. We will learn to forgive—even our enemies. This is because for Buddhists, the real enemies are greed, hatred and delusion. When we overcome them, we transcend fear.

Going to the Buddha for refuge implies that as ordinary people, we can follow the Buddha's path, that we can likewise be enlightened. The path is spelled out in the teachings—the Dhamma—and embodied by the Sangha. Hence, Buddhists have to take refuge in the Dhamma and the Sangha in order to travel on the Buddha's path.

When the monk Nguam Indapanno declared himself a servant of the Buddha (i.e., Buddhadasa), he made it clear that he would not depend on anyone or any-

thing else aside from the Buddha. As such, superstitions, nationalism, and the quest for social prestige and wealth did not hold sway over him. They couldn't interfere with his simple and humble way of life. Taking the Three Refuges, he led a celibate life. Ordinary people like us can likewise use Bhikkhu Buddhadasa as a role model.

When we realize that the Three Refuges are absolute, we will be able to see suffering, the causes of suffering, and the means to their cessation in accordance with the Noble Eightfold Path.

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

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

In Thai society, Buddhist ceremonies often begin with taking the Three Refuges followed by accepting morality. It's often a meaningless exercise. This is highly

unfortunate because as noted above, taking the Three Refuges is truly crucial for being a Buddhist. It is a preparation for the internalization of the sacredness of the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. It helps to reduce self-attachment. Since we cannot fully eradicate selfishness and impurities spontaneously, we need to observe moral training to be simple and humble in both actions and deeds. Morality will enable us to live as normal human beings. A normal person exists in harmony with Nature, and doesn't exploit her as well as others.

Training in mindfulness teaches the heart to see things more clearly. Observance of morality enables a person to dwell in normality. This is a precondition for the emergence of wisdom or the ability to see things as they really are. If all these are incorrectly interpreted, they will likely lead to fetishism or self-attachment. For example, I can meditate longer than you, I observe morality more steadfastly than you, I observe more moral principles than you, And so on.

As mentioned above, Mahayana Buddhism stresses the importance of practicing the Ashtanga prostration to instill humility and to prepare a person for taking the Three Refuges. Taking the Three Refuges nourishes the ground for the seeds of Buddha-nature to grow in a devotee. Put another way, Buddha-nature is latent within each and every one of us. Will we enable it to flourish or stifle its growth?

The essence of Buddhism in a nutshell is as follows: it is a process whereby an ordinary person who is often dominated by mundane and animalistic tendencies transforms into a noble person—a simple, normal human being with a robust Buddha-nature.

### The Knowledge Café on Dealing with the Value of Nature

**Date:** 4 September 2016/Time:8.30-10.30

**Venue:** The Hawaiian Convention Center **Room:** 311-6



**IUCN  
World  
Conservation  
Congress  
Hawai'i 2016**

### Ethics and Ecology: Faith-based Models for Reconnecting with All Sentient Beings

**Date:** 5 September 2016/Time: 17:00 - 19:00

**Venue:** The Hawaiian Convention Center  
**Room:** 318B

● **Contact:** Junghee Min,  
**Email:** mujin21@gmail.com,  
**Tel:** +82-10-5612-7504

## Remembrance Upon Bidding Farewell to a Great Teacher

I went to the cremation of Khun Sumali Viravaidya at Wat Don Yannawa (which now has a new and beautiful signboard adorning the front of the temple) on the 28th of April, 2016. And I felt it was necessary to write what I was feeling so that a larger public could know.

Khun Sumali was someone whose life was given direction by virtue, and by the determination to follow through on good intentions. She made a will that directed her daughter to support a wide variety of charitable activities. For example, she helped me to establish a Buddhist university of a new kind, a university for social engagement, through a donation of 3 million baht. She dedicated 1 million baht to Wat Songdhammakalyani, for the support of the bhikkhunis there. In addition, and worthy of our praise and appreciation, she contributed to the support of various centers for Dhamma practice, and helped the Quakers of the U.S. who are working for the improvement of society in a number of countries, using nonviolent means. Along with all of this she dedicated funds to support the care and welfare of elephants and other animals, which shows that she saw the life of animals as being no less important than that of humans.

Finally, in what I feel is an admirable act, she dedicated her remains for the purpose of study and the gathering of knowledge by medical students. For these students would of course take that knowledge and apply it to the care of the living, to the care of those needing medical attention. When the students had completed the study of her remains, those remains were joined with the remains of others and underwent a symbolic cremation first, with all the remains brought together in a single place. And the words they used at this event were the following: "Paying our respects to a great teacher." That is to say, they held up those remains as a great teacher who allowed them to learn and then to take that knowledge and apply it to the care of the living.

This paying of respects to a great teacher that was related in this way to Khun Sumali, was held at Wat

That Thong. All of the relatives of the people who gave up their bodies for study were invited to celebrate this ritual together in what turned out to be a very large event to honor those great teachers.

After that, if no relatives came to claim the remains, they were cremated in the way that is used for a corpse with no attending relatives. If the relatives came to claim the remains, they would take them to do the religious rituals and organize the cremation themselves, which is the right of the relatives to do. Or they would ask the university, which was responsible for organizing the ritual involving all the different remains as great teachers, to find a temple where they could be cremated.

For the relatives of the deceased who wanted to take the remains and make merit in the proper way in a temple of their choosing, they were able to do so in a way that was hardly different from the cremation of a person who had not offered their body for study by medical students. For some this occasion was a very big event that involved the printing of very elaborate volumes as a form of remembrance of the deceased. These were events where the donations received by the hosts amounted to no small sum, much like the funerals we are accustomed to having these days, which go no small way towards being Buddhist commerce, in which no small number of temples and monks are involved making money, wittingly or unwittingly, from the spirits.

Many temples have built very elaborate and beautiful crematoria (symbolized in their name as Mt. Meru) and modified their temple grounds into parking lots. And it seems the cremations have become very boring rituals, in which it is difficult to find any content whatsoever related to cultivating mindfulness about death.

Speaking specifically about the cremation of Khun Sumali Viraraidhaya, her children are all of mixed parentage; her daughter's father is American and her two sons' father is German. All three have residences in Germany. So it's understandable that none of them would be

familiar with the details of a cremation ceremony. But all of them returned to Thailand to pay their last respects to their mother, requesting that the university (Chulalongkorn University) advise them on the cremation ceremony.

The university suggested that the cremation be carried out at Wat Don, as I mentioned earlier. I understand that at Wat Don they held five cremations on that day, from noon on, with Khun Sumali's held at 3:00pm. I understand that Chulalongkorn University arranged for many cremations like this at many temples, and that after the magnificent ceremony at Wat That Thong, no important representatives of the university attended these actual cremations. In the case of Wat Don, about 10 second year medical students did come to help handle the arrangements, though none of these young adults had any experience in these matters at all. So that undertakers were the ones who handled the ceremony in its entirety. And at Wat Don, when I attended Khun Sumali's cremation, one could see clearly that some of the undertakers were wearing shorts or had no shirt on; that they placed the casket on the ground; that there were no vases of flowers to beautify the occasion at all. They had simply told the hosts to bring a photo of the deceased in a large frame to be placed in front of the casket. And there was a cart to carry the casket as they circled the Mt. Meru crematorium three times, with the monks who carried the sacred thread leading. And there was no evidence that anyone attending understood the symbolism of circling Mt. Meru three times. When the casket was placed on the funeral pyre, people were instructed to place small artificial flowers on it. Then the casket was placed in the oven, and this was the end of the ceremony for the friends and relatives who had come. It was left to the immediate offspring and close relatives to collect the ashes on the following morning, and to place them in containers or scatter them on a body of water, or to make merit as the case may be.

This situation shows us that the people who manage affairs like this for the university, and who are involved with medical instruction, do not really understand what is at the heart of living. When they make use of the remains of each person who has donated them, they arrange the funeral in such a way that one cannot find any content that has to do with Dhamma at all.

If those who are involved with these affairs were

to do so with a higher level of awareness, they might do well to look to the Tzu Chi Foundation in Taiwan, whose leader is a bhikkhuni. This foundation supports social welfare activities nearly all over the globe, and it has established very large and excellent Buddhist hospitals. These hospitals use both Western and Chinese medicine in the treatment of patients, and they train their doctors and nurses to understand Dhammic approaches too in the following way: that the suffering of patients comes not only from physical ailments; one has to use Dhamma as a method of healing as well. One does this in such a way that the patients see the value of spirituality, that they understand the cycle of death and rebirth, that life does not end only in death, but that life is about accepting death peacefully.

When the Tzu Chi hospitals are offered the remains of the deceased so that medical students can study them, they not only receive the remains; they also contact the relatives who are close to the deceased and make sure that they follow through on making merit at the hospital, where they chant and share merit with the deceased and with all beings, and where they are reminded of the value of meditating on death. Once the medical students have completed their study of the remains, the relatives may carry out the last rites themselves, or they may have the hospital do so. But in that case the hospital will arrange for a very simple Buddhist ceremony, such that the relatives are able to understand the core issues at the heart of living and at the heart of Buddhist Dhamma. A hospital sends a person to visit the relatives and speak heart-to-heart with them in a way that prevents the possibility of a purely empty funeral ceremony.

I understand that Ajan Prawase Wasi has visited the main Tzu Chi hospital in Taiwan, and it seems that Dr. Wichai Chokwiwat has also written admiringly about the Tzu Chi Foundation's activities. If our own medical doctors who teach specifically about working with the remains of the deceased were to take lessons from this Buddhist group, perhaps our own teaching and instruction related to the treatment of remains and including the manner of their cremation would take place in a way that brings wholesomeness to the situation we see today that is characterized by only halfhearted performance of these rituals.

# Ambedkar's idea of India and his contemporary relevance

Mangesh Dahiwale

**B**abasaheb Ambedkar has emerged as the symbol of social and economic democracy in India. From Kashmir to Kanyakumari, Indians from different social strata follow him and look upto him for inspiration. On his 125th birth anniversary, two major political parties competed to co-opt him. A host of regional party throughout India and Indian Left are also trying to claim his legacy. The Indian National Congress declared yearlong celebration. The RSS, which is the right wing organisation, published "Collector's issue" on him. Both of them distorted and contorted history to claim that they were a part of his life long struggle for liberation. Ironically, Babasaheb Ambedkar was opposed to their brands of nationalism and their idea of India.

He truly represented "We, the people" and conceived an idea of India that includes India's diverse and fragmented communities in the process of building new India based on justice and humanity. Who are we in "we, the people"? The answer to this question explains the rising importance of Babasaheb Ambedkar. For a vast, populous, and diverse country like India, to have a political democracy is itself an achievement as it ensures that all the citizens can participate in governance.

Babasaheb Ambedkar opposed colonialism and the British Raj, but supported the creation of democratic institutions and democratic India since the process of transfer of power began in India after the August declaration of 1947. He played a leading role in creating opinions and documents that will promote democratic form of governance since then. This process evolved into formation of the Constitution of India in 1950.

The Indian National Congress was elitist and led by the upper castes, mainly the Brahmins and Banias.

This is the reason why Jotiba Phule, the grand father of India's social democracy, was opposed to the Indian National Congress. Instead, Phule advocated an idea of India that will ensure social justice to India's oppressed majority. He saw Brahmanism as the greatest threat to India's future. And therefore, he started a social movement for the liberation of India's lower castes, women, and the untouchables. His fight was directed at breaking the hegemony of Brahmins and Banias whom he saw as exploitative even compared to the British. Shahu Maharaj, an enlightened ruler, also saw similar anomaly in his administration. It was over represented and dominated by the Brahmins. He started the policy of inclusion, now known in modern India as the reservation policy to correct this anomaly and skewed representation in 1904. The social revolution was set to destroy the exploitative nature of religious exploitation over many centuries, and the so called freedom struggle was directed as freeing land from the British. Amidst the process of transfer of power, around 1915, the idea of Hindutva (Hindu Nationalism) arose. Simultaneously, the idea of separate Islamic state for Muslims began to take shape. Indian politics became competitive to get the share in the power. With this competitive politics, emerged the competition to define India. Indian republic unlike American republic was not constituted after revolution. Indian republic progressively evolved through the process of transfer of power in 1947 and creation of democratic republic in 1950. In 1947, Babasaheb Ambedkar gave a remarkable speech in the Constituent Assembly pleading for United India. This speech is a turning point in the Indian history. He reiterated his idea of India as united India which could be negotiated with peace and pragmatism, in place of communalism, civil war, and violence. Though partition of India became inevitable, the clouds of civil war were hovering on Indian subcontinent. He is remembered and will continue to

be remembered by “We, the people”, because he was the true representative of the “We, the people”. A little statistics will bring forth this reality. Indian society is a segregated society. Among the Savarnas (people with Varna), the majority of them are the Shudras, who are officially called, the Other Backward Classes. They constitute 54 percent of India’s population. In a remarkable book written by Babasaheb Ambedkar, *Who were the Shudras*, he proved that the present day Shudras were not the Shudras in the Brahmanical scheme of Varna. They were the original inhabitants of India and have ruled various parts of India throughout the history. Even in the modern times, some influential Princely States (There were over 500 Princely States) were ruled by Shudra princes like Maharaja of Baroda, Maharaja of Gwalior, and Maharaja of Kolhapur. These rulers were sympathetic to the social justice movement for liberation of the Shudras and the Untouchables. The untouchables and the tribes constitute 30 percent of India’s population according to NSSO survey of 2012. We, the people of India, are majorly from these communities. It is this India that Babasaheb Ambedkar represented. Therefore, the form of polity and the constitution that he authored gave a recipe for the social and economic justice for India’s majority. Indian state is nothing but the mechanism to create liberty, equality, and fraternity to ensure social, economic, and political justice. This idea of India was established and foundational values of India were defined as justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity. These values are the essence of India. They make what India is and shall be.

As far as the constitutional morality is concerned, the question as to what constitutes India is settled. But in practice, caste violence, communal violence, and degradation of women continues. The Shudras and the Untouchables do not have a fair share in the administration, judiciary, military, and media. The question of Indian Muslims is beginning to become acute as their social and economic conditions are becoming worse day by day. These questions were important to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. It is his quest to resolve these fundamental contradictions within India that makes him the true founding father of Modern India. He formulated these questions very clearly and provided solutions. The frame-

work, which is clearly reflected through his important writings and speeches, in which he was eager to solve these difficult problems did not change. India is still a nation in making as there is a huge gap between the ideals enshrined in the constitution of India and that of the political, social and economic realities of Indian society.

Right wing fundamentalists envision to see India as a Hindu India. There is still a strong movement especially led by the upper caste fascist Hindus to overthrow the present constitution of India, and make it subservient to Dharma Shastras, which necessarily means India based on the Caste hierarchy with Bramhins at the top. This project of hierarchical India has given rise to extremism which leading to gross violence and lynching of Muslims and Dalits. The strategy of the Hindu Militia is to create a fear amongst the masses of the growing Islamic terrorism, and to forge a pseudo Hindu identity to subsume sub-nationalities like Shudras and the untouchables. They are largely successful in some states of India in initiating the state sponsored terrorism, which is a blot on the constitution of India and Democracy. The idea of Hindu India is anti-constitutional, and hence anti-national. The proponents of this idea come in various colors starting from Tilak, whose idea of Hindu Nationalism was based on the supremacy of the Bramhins, and that of Gandhi, whose concept of India was based on Hinduism with Varna system strongly and firmly in place. Religious nationalism has done more harm to India than any good. There was a growing discussion in India about the future India since 1920s. In this period, various Hindu nationalistic organizations were formed. The Hindu Mahasabha was formed in 1915, along with RSS in 1925. At the same time, Muslim League was formed, which was later taken over by Jinnah, initiating political wing of the Muslims in the Indian subcontinent. Indian Muslims benefitted from the western education and it is a mild force compared to radical Islam all over the world.

Similarly, Indians also started taking interest in Socialism, and its core ideology of Marxism. They even participated in the International conventions. Nehru participated in one of such conventions. The socialists in India were in touch with the international organizations for revolution of proletariat throughout the world. (They

have an idea of India as a communist India.)

The idea of Islamic India led to the formation of two nation states exclusively based on religion, later divided by linguistic identity. Pakistan is the Islamic republic and Bagla Desh is based on both Bengali and Islamic Nationalism. Even today Indian Muslims constitute over 13 percent of Indian population, and in modern India, they have been degenerated into second class citizens of India as demonstrated by the Sacchar Committee report.

Let us look at the profiles of the leaders who led the various movements in defining India. All of them were elite upper caste and educated in England. Most of them were lawyers and hailed from established families. Gandhi came from established Bania family and had a network of Banias to support him in his political action. Nehru's father was already a rich and famous man. Jinnah also came from a rich family. In contrast, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar came from Dalit background, a self made man, who rose to prominence due to his own efforts despite of all odds. While the rest of the leaders built on already existing political and social structures, Babasaheb Ambedkar had to formulate his own political structures and create a social organization to dismantle the very structures that supported politics of other elite Indian leaders. His vision of India was not a narrow view of acquiring political power, but to rebuild Indian society on the basis of liberty, equality and fraternity, which he eventually did when he drafted the constitution of India.

As he came from the untouchables caste, he was well acquainted with the suffering and day to day struggle of a common man. Having lived in the villages and poor urban localities, he was closer to masses than any Indian leader of his times. While others tried to create artificial poverty around them, he had no choice but to live among the poor and the wretched. In short he represented illiterate and unconscious majority of Indians. Undoubtedly with the awakening of this mass, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar has acquired a central figure in any discourse of India.

What was Ambedkar's idea of India?

He advocated India as a social democracy firmly based on the principles of liberty, equality, fraternity, and humanity (Manuski). For him, state (Government) was a mechanism to bring about a radical change in the society.

He wanted a welfare state to fight two evils plaguing Indian society; social exclusion and economic exploitation. Therefore, his vision for India is casteless and equal India. This necessarily defines Indian nationalism in a broad sense of the word nationalism. This is what Indian constitution aimed at, bringing radical changes in the lives of the people of India.

Ambedkar's India is the only hope for India. The Hindu Nationalism cannot serve for the majority, because the OBCs, SCs, STs and women will have no place in it. Islamic Fundamentalism will wreck havoc in India with its fundamentalist ideology. The Mao's India that a Naxalite groups are trying to bring will create an autocratic state. (Marxist India can't solve problems social exclusion and economic exploitation as clearly seen in the states of Kerala and West Bengal.)

Dr. Ambedkar's India is enlightened, equal, free, just and compassionate. While he advocated a total revolution in India, his methods are firmly rooted in democracy and use of intellect in the Modern world. Similar intellectual challenges were posed by the Buddha in ancient India to make society reflect deeply on the problems prevalent with an outlook to solve them.

Babasaheb Ambedkar presented a criticism for various anti-human ideologies. In a sense he criticized the notions that cause immense suffering to fellow human beings. Ambedkar's idea of India is based on the tradition of criticism, both personal and social, with a view to uplift the society to the higher planes of existence. He was not a status quo-ist. He wanted to dismantle the structures that enslave individuals and do not let them realize their human potential fully. From this perspective, he opposed the idea of the caste system and religious fundamentalism. He supported a tradition of debates and discussion to alter the minds of the people for the better. Alone he stood against the powerful forces of his time. He laid the strong foundation for India by strenuously advocating democracy and embracing Buddhism as a method to create peaceful, just, democratic, and compassionate India. His idea of India was an enlightened India.

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## The tribe of New Brahmins: The problem that roots from the issue of Control & Submission

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Chao-Hwei Shih, Bhiksuni, Taiwan  
Translated: Chen Hsiongcai, Dharmacharya, Singapore

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There is a serious doubt within the Buddhist community's perception on laymen teaching the Dharma on stage while ordained monastics listen & learn sitting below the stage. I have always wondered why is there a stress on Laymen rising onto the seat to teach the Dharma? This is a living example of the superiority of ordained monastics versus the inferiority of laymen householders known as white robes 白衣居士 status at odds! If we all agree that the focus is on the Dharma which leads towards the elimination of suffering and enlightenment, then does it really matter who is teaching the Dharma? It is more important for us to observe if a person is teaching the Dharma in accordance to the righteous views of the Buddha. As long the Dharma teachings taught are righteous and receivers truly benefit from it immensely, then one should take this person as a learned teacher. There is no issue of status when teaching the Dharma.

Ordained monastics were heavily suppressed, looked down at & ill-treated in the earlier days, this is my primary reason of helping ordained monastics to speak out. But in view of the positive rising social status of ordained monastics in recent years, I also see a need to make a fair critique on them as ordained monastics that could unknowingly become more and more arrogant by raising their own status & platform. This is the reason why I have strong criticism for the internal Buddhist community. there are times when I put myself in the shoes of leyman householders to look at their problems – there should

anyhow never be competition between the ordained monastics and laymen householders to begin with. However this competition has arisen where ordained monastics have raised their status way above laymen, leaving the laity orders with lesser authority within Buddhism, this is an issue of cause & effect. This is why both ordained monastics & laities should self reflect on the issue of this problem.

I often frown upon ordained monastics as the New Brahmins. It is notable that India's Brahmanism had claimed exclusive rights & access to its teachings, religious rites and comprehension of its teachings. The game was played in accordance to the rules laid by them. Thus self-appointment of the highest status, claiming superiority of the Brahmins 婆羅門至上. The original intention of the Buddha's teachings were to 「remove the influence of Brahmins, and deny the exclusive rights of Brahmin priests in the Buddha's time. Therefore, ordained monastics should not defy against the Buddha's original spirit and should carry the intention to claim exclusive rights and access to the Buddha-Dharma. Bikkhu vs Bikkhuni, Learned teacher vs new learner, monastics vs layman house holders – all these are examples of the desire to suppress & gain control over another; I usually classify them as The Tribe of New Brahmins 新婆羅門族 .

I believe and emphasize on fairness, and therefore when the quality of the monastic sangha orders has turned weak and monastics are being defrock upon, I will then stand on the side of the monastics to speak up for them. But, I will not take sides nor display favouritism to cover up for the monastics. If an ordained monastics has no reason nor

show any qualities with self conceited arrogance, I will speak up against these ordained monastics. where they stress upon their status more than the focus on Truth, and the status of high or low is decided and controlled by them instead. If they truly had the intention to receive ordination as a monastic in order to learn the Dharma, and that the Dharma is of utmost importance, then they should rejoice as long as there are people teaching and preaching the righteous Dharma. Why should be bother if their heads are shaven or not? We should instead think in this manner: The propagation team of the Buddha's teaching has now increased by more capable people. Why should we be disturbed with layman householders teaching the Dharma? 白衣說法.

The laity Buddhist order should be out of the classification as the lay devotees of the ordained sangha order, since the laity had formed their own structured organization, there are also those who do not see eye to eye or even go against the Sangha monastics. This reflects another problem of the roles and exchange played by both ordained monastics and layman householders. I feel that both monastics and layman householders need to do some self reflection, but being a monastic myself, I believe that ordained monastics should deeply reflect on the issue. I often hear monastics accusing layman Dharma Teachers as the fourth Gem outside the Buddhist Triple Gem. But to seek the root of this issue, monastic should ask themselves – Are we truly a Gem? 』 why do we see ourselves (monastics) as a gem and argue with others saying : Only my home has this gem, your house cannot have it; I am a true Gem, your are not a Gem! Isn't this more un-reasonable?

Although I had debates with Buddhist friends from the Modern Zen Buddhist Order in the past, but the late Mr Lee Yuan Song 李元松老師 had built a strong foundation of friendship with me, I never had the attitude of I am a Gem and you are not one. In my perspective, the Modern Zen Buddhist Order 現代禪教團 often perceived as aganist the sangha monastics, this should also let monastics to so a self reflection often claiming I am from a righteous sect while you are not, only I can have exclusive rights to teach & propagate the Dharma, you should not step over my borderline or even

claim that the phenomena of layman teaching the Dharma as a sign of Dharma ending age which provoked their reaction?

If there wasn't such views and exchange of words, the monastics and laity would have no problems with each other, it wouldn't further arise in the aggressive critics drawn by Ouyang Jingwu 歐陽竟無 in the past, to put oneself in the shoes of Ouyang Jingwu when he was teaching at The China Buddhist Institute 支那內學院, how would he feel and what is he facing when those whom had benefited from his teachings, full of self confidence when outsiders are gossiping and criticising him a layman who teaches the Dharma? It is no doubt that he would feel that monastics have arrogant attitude because of their status and claim exclusive rights to teach the Dharma.

The problems between Bikkhu and Bikkhuni, learned and new learners, ordained monastics and layman householders all arise from the issue of control & submission 控制與臣服. Such attitudes is an obstacle in life, the original intent to learn and practise the Dharma is to remove and even surpass all these obstacles, but instead it has re-created a caste system to strengthen all these problems. what true positive effect does it have on our path towards enlightenment?

I have a student assisting me as my translator, Venerable Yi Yue; she once saw a diligent meditation ten precept lady 十戒女 known as Venerable Dipankara kneeling down to a Bikkhu monk to teach him meditation methods while the Bikkhu monk is sitting there listening to Venerable Dipankara teaching him. Venerable Yin Yue asked Venerable Dipankara not to kneel down to the Bhikkhu monk to teach the dharma, even if she feels extremely compassionate towards the monk. If the monk is a true seeker of Dharma, he would not accept you kneeling down. Dharma is above all status and a display of attitude based on one's status only reflects that one is himself not well acquainted with Dharma.

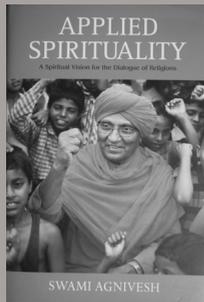
It is only lack of self confidence that gives rises to insecurity, and therefore a feeling of hierachy of high and low. Contrary to that, a person who is full of self confidence always engages in a positive exchange with people, which is devoid of any pressure, control or threatening thoughts. It always makes

others feel self contained within their own hearts. But this is some thing which I seldom see in many Dharma practitioners: they are always engrossed with their status, choosing positions which are most beneficial for themselves. There are times where I forcefully change their attitude on looking down on females. I speak daringly without being pretentious. This will become a threat to them, but the difference is that I choose to fight for equality instead of my personal status. However, heaven is attained here and now if we carry out our responsibilities correctly. Prior to the Buddha, people thought of heaven and hell as places; heaven above and hell below the earth. The Buddha did not object or argue about this statement as a misunderstand-

ing but simply said, “If you want to be in heaven, you should do good acts; doing bad acts leads to hell. Heaven and hell are in our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and heart. When we act improperly and incorrectly, we find ourselves in hell; likewise we find heaven through our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and heart when we act in the right manner.” This is what the Buddha taught regarding heaven and hell. We must be very careful of our thoughts, actions, and daily activities, for heaven or hell is realized through them in the here and now.

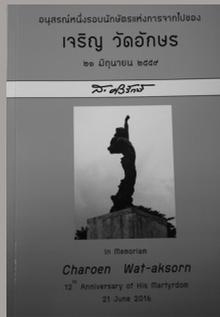


### Recommended Readings



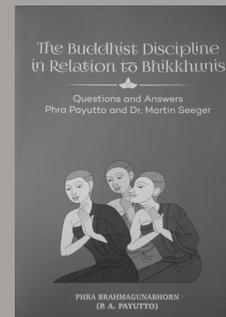
Applied Spirituality  
A Spiritual Vision for the Dialogue of Religions

**Author:** Swami Agnivesh  
**Publisher:** An Imprint of HarperCollins



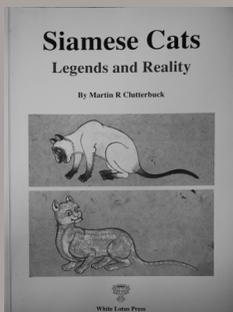
In Memoriam Charoen Wat-aksorn

**Author:** Sulak Sivaraksa  
**Publisher:** Sathirakoses Nagapradipa Foundation



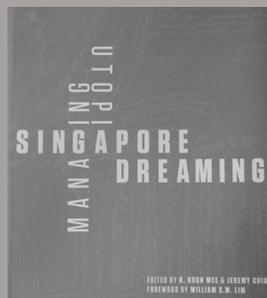
The Buddhist Discipline in relation to Bhikkhunis

**Author :** Phra Brahmagunabhorn  
**Publisher :** Phlidhamm Publishing



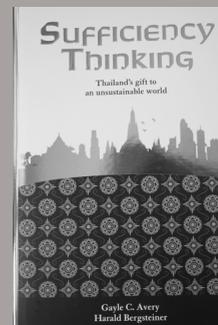
Siamese Cats  
Legends and Reality

**Author:** Martin R Clutterback  
**Publisher:** White Lotus Press



Singapore Dreaming  
Managing Utopia

**Edited:** H.Koon Wee&Jeremy Chia  
**Publisher:** Asian Urban Lab



Sufficiency Thinking  
Thailand's gift to an unsustainable world

**Author:** Gayle C. Avery, Harald Bergsteiner

# Education That Is Able to Eradicate Self-Centeredness

(Kansuksa Thī Sāmāt Kamjad Qwamhen Kae Tua).

Way To Salvation Series. Dhamma Lecture #10. Bangkok:  
Dhammapūja, B.E. 2532/C.E. 1988.

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Buddhadasa Bhikkhu,

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Everyone throughout the world is suffering the negative consequences of various types of ego-centered selfishness. I have often characterized this problem as “education that cuts off the tail of the dog,” an education that teaches one only how to be clever or shrewd (*chlāt*) with no limits, and interprets democracy as doing whatever one wants. This promotes a non-reflective kind of self-centeredness that creates all kinds of problems. We must have the kind of education that limits or prevents *selfishness* [italics mine]. To have a Ministry of Ethics (*sīla-dhamma*) that oversees all the other ministries would greatly benefit education [in Thailand].

Today, our education system is inappropriate, a conventional kind of vocational training, where the ethics part is minimal and conventional. Education teaches cleverness for its own sake rather than with a sense of vocational purpose and an appropriate way of acting. Today, education is unable to limit selfishness. It does not promote ethics, but focuses primarily on politics, economics, and military training. Politics and economics rife with selfishness lead to violence. When selfishness is absent, however, there will be peace. Because today education does not promote ethics, politics and the economy do not promote responsibility. In sum, our education today does not serve an ethical purpose

but, rather, serves to promote a self-centered politics and economics, and education is left to the service of self-centeredness.

If we take a moment to look back at an earlier age, education was different. Society, then, was grounded in an ethical and cultural foundation; hence, ordinary education did not need to deal with those kinds of issues. Today, however, cultural and ethical matters are absent from education which is floating in the comfortable and convenient, or merely matters of good citizenship. We must design an education that is appropriate for a population that is lacking in ethics and culture. In an earlier age, customs and traditions were strict regarding ethics that served as the foundation of culture. Today the emphasis in education is on being clever (*chlāt*) rather than being ethical. We must consider how to make up for this loss.

In sum, in the past ethics and culture were at the very heart of citizenship, rather than simply being clever. Now, however, ethics and culture have largely disappeared from education and are replaced by promoting cleverness and there is no outcry for their return. This trend serves to promote selfishness and crushes culture leaving only its remnants. It is a problem not only for Thailand but throughout the world.

Now we must turn our attention to the meaning of the term, “education.” Genuine education should follow the tenets of Buddhism. The term

for education in Pali, Sanskrit, or Thai (Thai: *suksā*) is all about understanding oneself. This entails three aspects: observing, perceiving, and understanding oneself. The “self” is the problematic heart of suffering (*dukkha*), and understanding this truth is essential to addressing the problem of suffering. We must first look inside of ourselves to understand this truth, and then we shall be able to direct our outer behavior, rather than the other way around.

What is the meaning of the term, “education” (*suksā*) in Pāli, the language of the Dhamma? If we understand the inner meaning of the term, we can then address its outer dimensions. Today we tend to focus on the outer or external aspects such as politics and economics; however, to understand the true meaning of education we must explore its inner dimensions.

There is another matter that I must address—and this may anger some of you—namely, that we lack genuine teachers who are respected because they are leaders in heart and spirit, and work to build a better world rather than for money. Such individuals deserve to be called “respected/honored teachers,” Those, however, who are in the job for their monthly salary are only “manual laborers” (*kammakara*). I have run into this when I was lecturing elsewhere. The teachers who came to the lecture were not interested in a teachers’ cooperative but only on making money. Consequently, their students are delinquent fools. If teachers are truly honored and truly respected, conditions like this will not develop.

If education throughout the world is conducted properly, then the current problems of peace and justice will be addressed. Otherwise, selfishness will not be eliminated, but will increase. This should be the responsibility of our own nation and of the United Nations, namely, to foster an education that addresses the problem of self-aggrandizement, and promotes the betterment of morality and culture that, in turn, will serve to improve politics and economics...

In past times, education focused on moral-

ity regarding students, friends, community, laity, and humankind. A good child is able to satisfy his parents; a good disciple is able to be directed by his teachers; student friends should not argue and nothing dangerous should occur among students here at the teachers’ college; citizens should truly love their country; laity should know the Dhamma and should have an adequate knowledge of their faith; and, finally, one should not create problems for others. In particular, children should love their parents, be grateful, honest, self-sacrificial, and sympathetic. They should lift their parents and all others out of the throes of hell. Today, however, we too often meet children who act hellishly toward their parents and make them weep.

In earlier times education promoted the study of and service to Buddhism. A boy studied Buddhist teachings diligently, and ordained [as a novice] in order to study the Dhamma, understand his role in society, cast aside the superstitions that weakened his intelligence, and strengthened his understanding. Today we should study the tenets of Buddhism in order to counter the belief that spirits or divine beings (*devatā*) can help us or that we should rely on them. Those who cleave to the Dhamma do not appeal to the spirits or believe in the power of auspicious objects.

The results of studying the Dhamma include the reduction of spirit shrines, mental illness, nervous disorders, police stations, and various crises in the world. Today, there is no reduction in spirit shrines, mental illness, police, or mental hospitals; rather they are on the increase. The number of people in the world is increasing, but is not keeping up with the rate of the increase of evil in the world.

What would happen if people were not selfish, if they adhered to the Dhamma, and were concerned for the well-being of others? We should pay particular attention to what constitutes the proper study of things. Especially in our age, education should limit selfishness and the value placed on mere cleverness. Education should be geared to cor-

rect the problems we create that result from our selfishness. Even if we were able to cause rain to turn into gold, selfishness would increase in equal measure. There would still be murder and robbery, and an increase in self-centeredness. The only solution is to decrease selfishness. Education must limit ignorance and the animal instincts in the human heart.

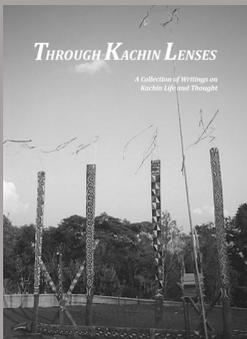
Laws are not adequate to this challenge; rather, control must come from limiting selfishness. Education must teach us that we cannot exist in the world in isolation, but, rather, that we are a part of nature. Education should teach that different people can live together, and address such questions as: “What is the meaning of ‘humankind’? Why were we born? What is the best that humankind can do? What are the lasting, overarching, relevant principles that define humankind? What are the religious principles that we should study regarding what it means to be human?” We are both mind and body. Religion applies not only to the spirit and matters of the mind, but also to the body. Education, therefore, must include what we term “religion” (sāsanā). (20)

If we ask what is more important, mind or body, the answer is mind/consciousness (cit-cai). The subject of religion is more important than the subject of study of that which teaches us merely to

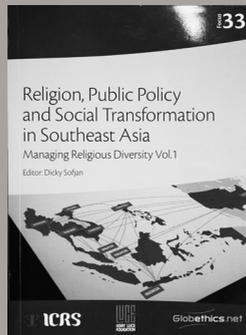
be clever. There must be religion to challenge cleverness in order to lead us on the right path. The study of society in the humanities should be grounded in understanding the truth, and of overcoming selfishness. The two are interrelated. Understanding that which is right or correct entails being concerned about humankind and is part of overcoming selfishness. The cleverness or mental agility that one achieves through education is not sufficient. There is a correlation between cleverness and selfishness. If one cannot govern oneself, selfishness abounds. The world is going in this direction. Consequently, you should be interested in the kind of education that keeps mere cleverness in check.

In conclusion, education should be geared toward keeping in check an attitude of mere cleverness that might arise from education. Education that produces a sense of mere cleverness leads to selfishness while education that calls into question mere cleverness challenges selfishness. Let us, therefore, promote the latter. This will be of great benefit to the world. I hope that everyone will advance in this direction, namely, to be more unselfish in the future for the wellbeing and happiness of all.

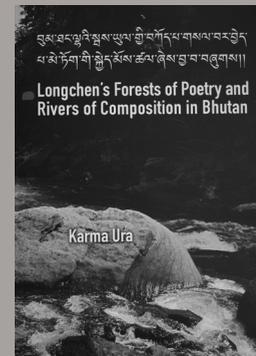
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Translated by Donald k. Swearer



Through Kachin Lenses  
A collection of Writings on Kachin Life and Thought  
Editor: Lahpai Nang-Kai



Religion, Public Policy and Social Transformation in Southeast Asia  
Managing Religious Diversity Vol.1  
Editor: Dicky Sofjan  
Publisher: Globethic.net International



Longchen's Forests of Poetry and Rivers of Composition in Bhutan  
Author: Karma Ura  
Publisher: Dasho Karma Ura

# “BUDDHISM, ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: Temple of the Modern Buddhists”

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Presented in the 8th International Lay Buddhist Forum by  
Gauthama Prabhu Nagappan

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## Background:

The world is witnessing suffering, as told by the Buddha, in every sphere of life, particularly the environmental and social sphere. The substantial challenges imposed by the modern society especially of environmental crisis and structural violence has given homogenous opportunity for the Buddhist teachings as Buddhism provides the perfect path of emancipation through its critical teachings of the interrelatedness of all life forms and progression through the reclamation of human personality. The Buddha's teachings on cause and effect stresses the interdependence of all sentient beings as referred in Bhava Chakra (Wheel of life); non-duality of humans and nature; and moral restoration through compassionate action has become quintessential for the modern society. Environment disasters are due to the three poisons: greed, hatred and delusion, and so are our social problems too. Quite often it is manifested through colonization and the corporate mentality that grew out of it have been ravaging India for centuries, and increased industrialization had stepped up the scale of destruction to Mother Earth. The commission of nuclear reactors in India is a big threat to the coastal economy and to the entire eco-

systems. The construction of big dams in India has devastated the life of forest and forest depended communities. Most temples are inaccessible for former untouchable communities. Large amount of displacements among the indigenous communities has increased poverty and inequality. Most of the temples in India contribute substantial amount of wastage that is either left untreated or ignored. Industrial pollution is increasing day by day and carbon emission is also in the increase where people seemed to ignore their human responsibility and remain indifferent. Many places in India where there is dense population especially near industrial areas have witnessed many diseases pertaining to respiration etc. caused due to industrial effluents and pollution. The greed for acquiring more and more, over exploitation of natural resources, lack of loving-kindness, and lack of awareness have all contributed to the climate change which also leads to scarcity of resources and further increasing the intensity of vulnerability and social discriminations. Climate change has affected the average weather conditions and in the time variation of weather. Human activities, due to ignorance leading to greed and hatred, have been significantly contributing for the causes of climate change.

## Environmental problems in India

An estimate of 500 million Indians have no access to a proper toilets. Over 10 million people in India fell ill with waterborne illnesses in 2013, and a shocking 1535 people died in the same year most of them were children. India has a major water pollution issue. Discharge of untreated sewage is the single most important cause for pollution of surface and ground water in India. The problem is not only that India lacks sufficient treatment capacity but also that the sewage treatment plants that exist do not operate and are not maintained. The waste water generated in these areas normally percolates in the soil or evaporates. The uncollected waste accumulate in the urban areas cause unhygienic conditions and release pollutants that lead to the surface and groundwater. Over 100 Indian cities dump untreated sewage directly into the Ganges river. It is also a shame that the temples in India contribute huge amount of wastage. The haridwar Hindu temple alone contributes 7 tons of waste per week. Every day over 25 tons of garbage is transported to dumping yard from the Hindu Tirupathi temple alone. The nuclear reactors in Koodankulam in India are causing a major threat to the coastal economy, as the nuclear waste will change the coastal ecosystems leading directly to the issue of global warming. The coolant water and low-grade waste from the Koodankulam nuclear power plant are going to be dumped into the sea. The WHO estimated in 2007 that air pollution alone causes half a million deaths per year in India. India was the third largest emitter of CO<sub>2</sub>, a major greenhouse gas, in 2009 at 1.65 Gt per year, after China and the United States. It is really shocking to see nearly 30% of India's gross agricultural output is lost every year due to soil degradation, poor land management and counter productive irrigation. India has inadequate or lack of access to vital fresh water resources. This is largely due to over exploitation of ground water resources by industries. Many companies and industries in India were also the cause for huge droughts

and contamination. Indian forests are not spared. It is predicted that almost 5.3 million hectares of forest have been destroyed since the independence. It is estimated that the number of mangrove forests have more than halved in the last 20 years. India has lost 367 square kilometres of forest cover in the past two years. According to the India State of Forest Report, 2011, released by the Forest Survey of India (FSI) on February 7, the total forest cover in the country is now at 6,92,027 sq km. This accounts for 21.05 per cent of the total geographical area of India.

## Social Impacts of Environment Problems

Industrial activities are a major source of air, water and land pollution, leading to illnesses and loss of life all over the world. The World Health Organisation estimates that outdoor air pollution alone accounts for around 2% of all heart and lung diseases, about 5% of all lung cancers, and about 1% of all chest infections. One of the worst industrial disasters of all time took place in Bhopal, India, in December 1984. In the three days after the first leak occurred, around 8,000 people died. Many thousands more still feel the effects two decades on. Worldwide, indoor air pollution accounts for about 34% of all respiratory illnesses. In agriculture, there has been a huge crisis in India especially witnessing farmer's suicide. India has become the capital for farmer's suicide. In India more than 2000 farmers commit suicide every year. In the year 2015, more than 2997 farmers committed suicide. Monsanto has already started selling GMO seeds to the farmers in spite of 80% of all GMOs grown worldwide are engineered for herbicide tolerance which increases the application of toxic herbicides by more than 15 times. The former untouchable communities have become direct victims of these products due to their rural indebtedness and marginalization. Their stakes in environment are high due to their dependence on natural resources for livelihoods. They are highly dependent on earnings from agricultural labour,

livestock rearing, and dependent on forests and other common lands. The internalization of discrimination and exclusion continue to deprive them of their social, economic and political rights and opportunities. Their locational, social and economic vulnerabilities place a greater strain on their adaptive capacity to climate change and ability to deal with shocks, stresses and change. For the past six years, people of Thervoy Kandiagai, a village in India, have been fighting a battle to save their natural resources and livelihood. The protest began in 2007 when the government decided to set up industrial park covering an area of 1,127 acre. since six years now, even before the park begins its full operation, villagers, most of whom are former untouchables, say that they have already lost their precious forest and many water resources forever. The Sardar Sarovar dam in India has displaced the entire tribal belt in the Narmada valley, which came under the submergence zone. Environment problems in India are directly connected to the vulnerable communities such as the former untouchable communities and tribal as they are first and largely affected communities of India.

### **Lack of Buddhist Temples & Spiritual training centers**

South India was once a gateway for internationalizing Buddhism. The South Indian sea routes were chosen as the best route to carry the treasure of Buddha Dhamma to different countries particularly to the South Asian countries. It is not astonishing to see why South India has more ancient Buddhist statues than any other state. It is also quite fascinating to see ancient statues of Buddha belonging to different countries, which was once given by the rulers as gifts to the local Buddhist population in South India. Another fascinating feature of Buddhist shrines and temples in South India is that it has several aspects of protecting and respecting environment. Most of the architectures are environment friendly, harvesting rainwater connected to reservoirs or ponds, and

well known for herbarium. The sanitation part was well maintained and Buddhist temples were known for producing the least amount of garbage, as the material procuring was minimal due to the practice. Buddhist temples were centers of excellence where issues related to individual and society is diagnosed, consulted for etiology, prognosis, and prescribed for preventing and curing. The Buddhist temples were also known for their activities related to social equality where women and people from different ethnic background were given equal opportunities and status unlike the Hindu religion, which was based upon graded inequality called the caste system. This perhaps is the reason behind destroying the Buddhist shrines by the Hindu rulers and later followed by the Muslim rulers. Hence, there has been a deficiency of proper spiritual training and the raise of structural violence, which povertised the Indian society with inequalities, and perpetuated violence against the marginalized communities. Now in South India there is no Buddhist temple though there is a huge community of the Buddhists thriving for learning the teachings of Buddha Dhamma. Most of the Buddhist shrines are in ruins, and the statues of Buddha are being smuggled to different countries for auction.

### **Environment, social justice, and the contribution of Buddhist leaders**

Buddhism views people as part of nature. If the environment is destroyed or degraded, people cannot survive or have a quality life. By abusing the environment, people abuse themselves and the descendents as well as future generations. Buddhist teachings recognize that all things are interdependent and conditional upon each other. Every condition follows another and all part of an orderly sequence of cause and effect. One of the greatest Buddhist king called Ashoka, constructed thousands of percolation tanks, watershed management programs and developed forest protection programs. Buddhists

were the pioneers in protecting the forest resources as well as the animals and people who were dependent on it. The Dalai lama says, “If we develop good and considerate qualities within our own minds, our activities will naturally cease to threaten the continued survival of life on earth. By protecting the natural environment and working to forever to halt the degradation of our planet we will also show respect for earth’s human descendent – our future generations – as well as for the natural right life of all of the earth’s living things. The same is the case with Buddhism and social justice. The Buddha did not live in seclusion, but amongst people. Every day he walked barefoot to villages to beg for food, and enquire about their well-being. When he met a farmer, he used examples from farming to talk about the meaning of life. No matter whom he met – a butcher, a prostitute, a bandit, a slave, a scholar, or a child – he would talk, according to their temperament and intellectual faculty, in order to inspire them a little and alleviate their suffering. In the 1950s, Master Yin Shun observed that the Buddhist monks and nuns in Taiwan, similar to those in his hometown in China, seemed to be only concerned with performing rituals, and not educating other monks, nuns or laypeople with the Buddha’s philosophy. Worried about this unfavorable situation, Master Yin Shun decided to reverse the trend. The society, including the Buddhist sangha, of that time saw women as inferior to men. Women had fewer chances to receive an education. Inspired by Master Yin Shun’s belief that studies would enhance a nun’s spiritual growth, a nun named Xuanshen opened the Hsinchu Women’s Buddhist Institute in her convent. In addition, Master Yin Shun set up the first Buddhist lecture hall on the island known as the Hui Ri Lecture Hall. Through lectures and discussion, attendees were encouraged to study the orthodox Buddhist teachings. Similar is the case with great Buddhist revivalists like Dr. Ambedkar and Pandit Ayotheethas. They developed centers of excellence to spread the Buddha Dham-

ma, and connected us with our Buddhist roots. They developed organisations for eliminating structural violence. In the 1890s, South Indian Buddhist revival movement was at its peak. Pandit Ayotheethas was forerunner of a campaign for preserving a locally healing tradition called “Siddha”, and developed the indigenous medicinal plants for treatment purpose. He fought diligently for the land rights of underprivileged sections, and was instrumental in bringing laws that protected the minorities. Dr. Ambedkar in the 20th century created a peaceful revolution by helping more than 800,000 former untouchables to embrace Buddhism on October 14th and 16th, 1956. He is also the chief architect of the Indian constitution, which gave the fundamental rights to the people of India overcoming the barricades of caste system and other forms of discrimination. However, the caste-based atrocities are in rise and discrimination against the former untouchable community is still being practiced.

### **The Temple of the modern Buddhists - A manifesto**

A Buddhist temple, also known as Vihara, is a structure not only for spiritual rituals but also for activities that are constructive for the society. The Buddhist temple is for the society and not the otherwise. Temples in Buddhism represent the pure land and the statue of the Buddha represents the ideal of human enlightenment. So, as the ideal of Buddha represents the perfect human, the ideal Buddhist temple too should have its ideal features. Therefore, an ideal Buddhist eco-temple should have the following features: eco-friendly resource materials, eco-friendly architectures, low maintenance cost, mindful usage of natural resources, make the temple accessible for all communities, and impart teachings on environment, ethics, social responsibility and social justice. In India, a Buddhist revival movement by the name VIHARA is trying to develop a model Buddhist eco-temple. The temple project architecture is based upon the traditional

stupa, which represents the 5 elements. These 5 elements will explain the non-duality factors and how every being is inter-connected. The Buddhist way of communication was primarily through concepts and images. Hence, Buddhist temples should have images that are culturally connected to the local population. The raw materials for the eco-temple should be locally produced or gathered from local sources. The project proposes to use compressed stabilized earth blocks (CSEB), which is a non-fired brick. The CSEB bricks are much stronger than the conventional fired bricks and are much cheaper in price. The compression also helps in maintaining a low room temperature during hot weather conditions. Usage of cement plastering is not required for CSEB constructions and so the application of chemical paints does not arise at all. The eco-temple will have provision for rainwater harvesting systems connected to a pond for creating temple pond ecosystems. The same mud, which is excavated from the pond, shall be utilized for the production of CSEB bricks. Open wells against bore wells shall be used in this project as the open wells provide better percolation and water recharging systems than bore wells. The temple shall have bio-gas toilets which will produce fuel for domestic consumption, and waste from the bio-gas plant will become farm yard manure which shall be used to produce vermi-compost and bio-fertilizers. This compost shall be used in kitchen garden, herbarium, and nurseries in the temple premises. Waste segregation units will be created to separate biodegradable waste from the non-biodegradable waste. The temple premises will be a no-plastic zone area. The residential areas of the temple shall have solar panels on the roof for generating solar energy, which shall be used for electric utilities and also for the kitchen. Solar based equipment and products shall be encouraged to be used for the kitchen purpose. The temple shall have enough space for teaching, meditation, and reading. It shall provide free access to all communities irre-

spective of castes, class, gender, race etc. Apart from this, the temple shall provide teachings on ethics, environmentalism, spiritual practices, social engagement, sustainable livelihood, and social justice apart from the regular discourses in Buddhism and meditation practices.

### Conclusion

The growing environmental degradation and increase in structural violence has caused several problems in our society. Climate change and social justice are very much inter-related though not commonly realized even among the contemporary activists and scholars. The human greed for power, money and status has resulted in exploitation of natural resources, and hegemony of one community over the other with tyranny. A society with such a structure, needs models of change for people to realize the truth and exemplify a practice that brings peace and harmony with the environment and society in which they live. Buddhist temples are not just for performing rituals and teaching philosophy. Buddhism is a ‘darsna marga’ (Path of vision) which means, a path that can be realized, envisioned, and practiced. The temple of the modern Buddhists should exemplify the practice of three marks of existence, which are impermanence, suffering and no soul; and manifest Bodhisatva (Embodiment of compassion) through overflowing compassion, inexhaustible spiritual energy and uninterrupted creativity. Buddhist temples should teach people the Buddha Dhamma not just as a personal practice but also for taking social responsibilities while realizing the nature of interconnectedness, and strengthen democratic process for good governance. Such a temple becomes the manifesto of a Buddhist Temple. Such a temple becomes a living example of Buddhahood where Buddha walks towards the people. In such a temple walks the Buddha towards the people.

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# The Re-Establishment of Theravada Bhikkhuni in 1998

Dhammananda Bhikkhuni

## Introduction

The Theravada bhikkhuni re-establishment in recent decades started from the historic ordination in 1998. It is therefore of utmost importance to understand how it was organized so that it will be accepted by the mainstream Theravada bhikkhu sangha. This paper will provide all the necessary details to understand the issue at hand.

## Historical background

Sri Lanka has her unique place in Buddhist history as it is the only land to have received the lineage of bhikkhuni ordination directly from India as early as 3rd Century B.C. from the mission of King Asoka. The bhikkhuni lineage in Sri Lanka was established by Ven.Princess Sanghamitta and Ven.Mahinda. The bhikkhuni sangha prospered side by side but died out along with the Bhikkhu sangha in 1017 A.D. with the invasion of Jola King from South India. Luckily in 433 A.D., Ven.Bhikkhuni Devasa and her group were invited to China, and the bhikkhuni lineage was established in China from that time onward without disruption up to present.

Sri Lanka and India had maintained a supportive relationship since the time of King Asoka in 3rd Century B.C. But Buddhism in India also died out between 11th -12th C.A.D. with the invasion of Turk Muslims. The disappearance of both bhikkhu and bhikkhuni sangha in both countries happened in more or less the same period. Thus, it was difficult for them to support each other to revive the sangha.



Bhikkhu Sangha in Sri Lanka was eventually revived through the support of the Thai royal patronage in 1753 A.D., when a group of monks led by Ven.Upali were sent to Sri Lanka at the royal request and successfully Bhikkhu sangha was established as Syamvamsa.

However, as there was no bhikkhuni sangha elsewhere, therefore bhikkhuni sangha was not revived.

However, in Sri Lanka there was a movement where women sought to lead monastic life as early as 1905 when Catherine de Alwis went to receive ordination from Burma and came to start a lineage of *dasasilmata* (women who keep 10-precepts). Though they did not receive *pabbajja* (lower ordination of samaneri) they wore a yellow robe, and a lead monastic life style. The movement was supported by Lady Blake, wife of the English Governor based in Sri Lanka at that time.

Before the actual bhikkhuni ordination was introduced in Sri Lanka in 1998, approximately 2500 female monastics in Sri Lanka were *dasasilmatas*. The robe they wore were a single piece of cloth,

not patched like the actual *civara* as described in the Vinaya. But to the eyes of outsiders, they wore yellow robes.

### From Dasasilmata to bhikkhuni

In 1988, there were 11 *dasasilmatas* who went to HsiLai Temple in Los Angeles, U.S.A. for bhikkhuni ordination. This group was led by a laywoman by the name Mrs.Rajapakse. Upon arrival in LA, they were afraid that they will not be accepted once they returned to Sri Lanka. Some educated Sri Lankan monks tried to encourage them to take *Upasampada*, but only five of them actually received the ordination.

Upon their return to Sri Lanka, they went back to their own small *aramas*, living separately in the same context when they were *dasasilmatas*. They did not keep up any of the vinaya requirement. They did not recite *patimokkha*, as the *patimokkha* given to them was in English, and none of them could read English. They were not trained to continue monastic requirement as bhikkhunis, so eventually they were assimilated back into their former lifestyle of *dasasilmatas*.

Some of them however took bhikkhuni ordination again, once when it was fully established later in Sri Lanka.

### Preparation for bhikkhuni ordination

Among all Asian countries, Sri Lanka is best prepared for bhikkhuni ordination. This is because Sri Lanka has played an important role of being a hub of Theravada Buddhism. Many senior monks were supportive of the revival of bhikkhuni sangha with the fact that Sri Lanka was the only country to have received the bhikkhuni lineage directly from India with royal support from both countries.

History and culture play very important influence for the revival of the bhikkhuni sangha. In fact, Sri Lanka takes it as her pride to be responsible for the revival of bhikkhuni sangha in modern time.

Fo Guang Shan has a farsighted leader like Ven.Master Hsing Yun, who understood the impor-

tant link between Sri Lanka and China. He recognized the importance of the bhikkhuni lineage China received from Sri Lanka as early as 433 A.D. when the ordination was given to 300 Chinese women at The Southern Forest Monastery in Nan King.

Now that the bhikkhuni lineage is lost in Sri Lanka, it is the responsibility of China part to lend assistance to help Sri Lankan sangha to re-establish the bhikkhuni sangha which the Chinese sangha received from Sri Lanka in the past history.

After much consultation and preparation, in 1997 Fo Guang Shan hosted a Monastic conference that focused on the preparation to provide bhikkhuni ordination for Theravada Buddhists.

In 1998, an International Upasampada (full ordination) was organized in Bodh Gaya, India. The ordination was for both bhikkhus and bhikkhunis. This paper will present only on the bhikkhuni lineage.

In Sri Lanka, the senior monks, many of whom were Maha Nayakas, came forward to assist in selecting the most eligible *dasasilmatas* as candidates for this historical ordination. Registration forms for ordination were selected by a committee i.e.Ven.Somalankara Maha Thero, Ven.Gunaratna Maha Thero, Ven.Sri Sumangalo Maha Thero to select the most promising candidates from the applications. Twenty of them were selected and sent for ordination to Bodh Gaya, India.

### The actual ordination

The venue of the actual ordination was held at the Chinese temple in Bodh Gaya, India. As practiced in Chinese tradition, the ceremony consisted of three stages, novice ordination (as samanera or samaneir), full ordination (as bhikkhu and bhikkhuni), taking the bodhisattva precepts.

Prior to each step of the ceremony, there would be 10 days of training, So altogether the ordination would take some 32 days.

The author witnessed all the mentioned events, from the ordination of 1988, the monastic conference of 1997 and the actual ordination in 1998

as Vinaya academic.

So this paper is written with the information from first hand experience.

The nun candidates coming for full ordination were 148 from various countries. In this paper, the focus will be on the 20 candidates sent from Sri Lanka. All of them had been *dasasilmatas* for more than 3 decades. None of them could speak English, though some of them later improved their English considerably well. They had some Buddhist education from their homeland; some of them were with leadership qualities.

### Ordination ceremony

The actual ceremony was conducted by the bhikkhuni and bhikkhu sangha of Fo Guang Shan. In order to make it acceptable to the Theravada Buddhists, many of the senior bhikkhus were invited to witness the ordination. There were at least 10 senior monks from Sri Lanka, and 4 monks from Thailand. Somdech Depvong from Cambodia, all Theravada bhikkhus, i.e. Burmese, Bangladeshi, etc. stationed in Bodh Gaya were invited and participated at the ordination as witnessing *acharyas*.

### Training

Before and after ordination, Ven. Hsing Yun himself gave dharma talks preparing the candidates to be good monastics.

### Confirmation as Theravada

What Theravada lack is bhikkhuni sangha, so in the above event, the candidates have already been purified by the Chinese bhikkhunis of Fo Guang Shan. The actual requirement is the bhikkhuni *kammavacacarinis* will ask the candidates of the 24 dangerous obstacles, the candidates could answer all of them, they have then been purified and accepted by the bhikkhuni sangha.

This is the missing part that the Theravada needs, and it has been fulfilled in this ordination.

The actual ordination given by the Chinese bhikkhu sangha may not satisfy the Theravada sangha, as they belong to Dharmagupta vinaya and not Theravada vinaya.

This need to fulfill the vinaya enquiry from Theravada is met by another confirmation by the Theravada sangha.

Immediately after the ordination in Bodh Gaya, the senior Sri Lankan bhikkhu Maha Thera proceeded to Sarnath, where they have *sima* (boundary) consecrated according to Theravada vinaya, and performed yet another *upasampada*. This time it was done purely by Theravada monks according to the allowance of the Buddha, "O Bhikkhus, I allow you to give ordination to bhikkhunis." (Cullavagga, Vinaya Pitaka)

This allowance was the very first one, and it was not lifted up, even when the Buddha allowed the bhikkhunis to come in and assist the bhikkhu sangha in asking the 24 dangerous obstacles (*antarayikadhamma*)

This was how the Theravada bhikkhu sangha revived the bhikkhuni sangha in Theravada in present day.

There is a booklet by Ven. Analayo from Hamburg University focusing on the legality of this ordination. If you are interested, he provides further discussion on the topic.

### Keeping the lineage alive.

All the existing Theravada bhikkhunis in various countries now sprang from this historic bhikkhuni ordination of 1998.

Upon returning to Sri Lanka, Ven. Sri Sumangalo Maha Thera (now also Maha Nayaka) appointed two bhikkhunis to work as *Pavattinis*, one of them is Ven. bhikkhuni Rahtungoda Saddha Sumana. The third one was appointed, and she travels to various Asian countries seeking for ordination is Ven. Sumitra.

When Barbara Yen and her Buddhist group

celebrated the opening of Gotami Vihara, the most senior Theravada bhikkhunis presented, came together to form a Network of Asian Theravada Bhikkhunis. This network is now chaired by Ven.Dr.Lieu Phap, and the network also co-organized the ABC 2016 in Thailand. We are very much inter-dependent on each other in our formation of our own sangha.

The most senior bhikkhunis of these countries realized the need to train the samaneras and newly ordained bhikkhunis, they often worked together to make available the training.

In 2014 they came together to train themselves to prepare for *Kammavacacariyi*. On Nov.29 2014, at the first Theravada bhikkhuni ordination, Ven.Dhammananda (Thailand) was appointed as *Pavattini* by the sangha led by Maha nayaka Mahinda Maha Thero. Ven.Dr.Lieu Phap was appointed a *Pavattini* by the Sri Lankan sangha prior to bhikkhuni ordination in Sakyadhita Center, Jan.30 2016.

Both Ven.Dhammananda and Ven.Dr.Lieu Phap acted as *Pavattinis* for the first time, giving bhikkhuni ordination to 11 bhikkhunis from Thailand, Vietnam and Bangladesh.

In 2011 Ven.Dr.Lieu Phap organized a historic Theravada bhikkhuni ordination first time in Vaishali, home of bhikkhunis from the Buddha's time. There were 8 international nuns receiving bhikkhuni ordination at that time.

In 2015 Ven.Santini organized the first Theravada bhikkhuni ordination in Maribaya, Indonesia with Ven.Saranankara, leading the bhikkhu sangha. She herself acted as *Pavattini*.

### ASEAN Bhikkhuni Conference

In 2015 at the very same venue, Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University, the Network of Asian Theravada bhikkhunis co-organized a conference. There were Theravada bhikkhunis from Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia and India, who presented their papers about the activities of Theravada bhikkhunis

from each countries. There were 1000 participants in the audience including bhikkhus, bhikkhunis, and Rajabhat University students.

It was quite a success, and the present ASEAN Buddhist Conference sprang from this conference.

### ASEAN Buddhist Conference

We realized that there are only four countries in ASEAN where we can find bhikkhuni representatives. In Singapore, there must be also Theravada bhikkhunis but they are usually not based in Singapore. In order to be inclusive, we need to span out to cover all our brothers and sisters in ASEAN countries. Thus came the seed idea of organizing the ABC conference.

### Conclusion

When we talk about Theravada bhikkhunis there is also a chapter of our sisters in Australia. The first ordination took place in 2008 in Perth, Australia. As a result Ven.Achaan Brahm was ousted from the forest tradition in Thailand. Without giving up determination to fulfill responsibility given by the Buddha, he is organizing yet another ordination for bhikkhunis on Sept.4,2016 in Perth, Australia.

I have not covered this material herewith, as my paper intends primarily to deal with the ASEAN only.

Looking forward into the future, Theravada bhikkhunis will be strengthened and accepted by larger audience and by their brother sangha, provided that bhikkhunis themselves are well trained in dhamma and vinaya. This is what was instructed by the Buddha some 2600 years ago. It is certain that the Theravada bhikkhuni sangha will prosper with the support of our senior bhikkhus who know their responsibilities.

This is how the Buddhist community in each country will be going forward together.

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## Lord Avebury

(1928-14 February 2016)

We regret to report the death of Eric Reginald Lubbock, Fourth Baron Avebury, chairman of the Human Rights Commission in the House of Lords. He took his jobs seriously and cared for Human Rights abuses all over the world.

He was a practicing buddhist and patron of Angulimala which promotes the teaching and practice of buddhism in British prisons.

INEB has lost a good friend.



## Bishop Julio Labayen

23 July 1926 - 27 April 2016

ucanews reporter, Manila



Bishop Julio Xavier Labayen of Infanta who died on April 27 at the age of 89, was known for his love and service for the poor and for social justice. (ucanews.com photo)

The Communist Party of the Philippines-led National Democratic Front has paid tribute to Bishop Julio Xavier Labayen of Infanta, who died on April 27 at the age of 89.

“His love and service for the poor for social justice, freedom and national and social liberation are a lasting legacy and inspiration to the masses,” the National Democratic Front of the Philippines said in a statement.

The front is a coalition group of leftist organizations, including agricultural and trade unions.

During Bishop Labayen’s tenure as head of the Catholic Church’s social action secretariat during the years of martial law, the church’s programs “became a

powerful instrument of organization for the rural masses throughout the country,” the group said.

“Militant mass organizations empowered the people to fight for their rights and strongly oppose dictatorship,” said Luis Jalandoni, chairman of the coalition.

Among Bishop Labayen’s “valuable contributions to the Filipino people’s struggle for social justice, national and social liberation” was the establishment of social action centers around the country from 1966 to 1982, he said.

“[Labayen] was the inspiring organizer of the Catholic Church’s program for serving the rural masses,” said Jalandoni.

When Ferdinand Marcos imposed martial law in September 1972, Bishop Labayen was one of 17 Catholic bishops who condemned the dictatorship. He became a target of the military because of his resistance to martial law and his condemnation of human rights violations.

“Bishop Labayen exuded his love for the poor and oppressed. He was a firm proponent of a church of the poor, for the poor,” said Jalandoni.

The late bishop was born in 1926 in Talisay, in the central Philippine province of Negros Occidental. He was ordained a priest of the Order of Discalced Carmelites in 1955. He was appointed prelate of Infanta in Quezon province in 1966.

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# Eleanor Zelliott

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7 October 1926 - 5 June 2016

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Mangesh Dahiwale

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Portrait of Dr.  
Eleanor Zelliott by  
Sudhir Waghmare

Just after the sad demise of Babasaheb Ambedkar in 1956, Eleanor Zelliott came to India in the 1960s to conduct her field work for her PhD dissertation. She was pursuing her PhD in history. Those were the days when the Sun was just gone beyond the horizon, but his impact was felt everywhere and was alive. Eleanor came as a scholar to study Ambedkar and his movement, but in the end, she dedicated herself to serve Ambedkar and his movement. Her life is a remarkable journey of one person and her determination to help the cause of liberation of India's untouchables from the shackles of the caste system. Together with Gail Omvedt, they form the shining binary stars in the constellation of the Ambedkarite movement.

When she started conducting her field work in Maharashtra, she lived in the villages amongst the villagers as one of them. She lived in Maharwadas and conducted many interviews of the people who worked with Babasaheb Ambedkar. It was fun and delight to hear stories of her field work in those days. She always sprinkled her communication with her sharp and timely wit and humor.

She got her PhD dissertation submitted as "Ambedkar and Mahar movement", and later on she became very unhappy with the unfortunate title of "Mahar movement". She was aware of the all India movement, but somehow she could not cover the entire Ambedkarite movement in her thesis. This was a shortcoming she wanted to overcome in her four decades of dedication to the movement in India and through publishing many papers and essays on various dimensions of Babasaheb Ambedkar and his movement. Her thesis was not pub-

lished for a long time. She became largely popular in the Ambedkarite movement through her papers, some of them were compiled in the book "*From untouchables to Dalits*", and her talks delivered all over Maharashtra in fluent Marathi.

I would be always delighted and happy with the small part that I played in getting her thesis published, but I will share that story later. She tried to cover as much ground as possible in exploring, studying, and documenting the Ambedkarite movement. The book "*from untouchables to Dalits*" is just the tip of the iceberg of papers and essays she wrote on Babasaheb Ambedkar and his movement. She had in her writings also documented "from the Dalits to Buddhists". I used to urge her to publish all her papers which would eventually be compiled into a couple of books. But during those days, hard copies were printed and sent to seminars and conferences, there were no soft copies. Due to this, She had lost track of many of her papers and essays.

Besides contributing to the academic and scholarly work on Babasaheb Ambedkar, she initiated many young Americans to study Babasaheb Ambedkar and his movement. I know many people who were directly inspired by Eleanor Zelliott to study Babasaheb Ambedkar and his movement. The burgeoning interest in Ambedkar studies abroad is one of the great gifts of Eleanor Zelliott to the Ambedkarite movement. There is a network and informal association of scholars that Eleanor activated and encouraged. Through the American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS), she got many young Americans to study Marathi and various aspects of the Ambedkarite movement. She contributed to the development of AIIS which is now a major refuge for scholars in America even today.

Eleanor developed lifelong friendships with Ambedkarite people and communities. She used to travel regularly and extensively in India, particularly Maharashtra. Her Quaker background made her a relentless fighter for peace and social justice. She had zero tolerance for hypocrisy in the name of religion, and she remained fighter for the cause of liberation till the end of her life. Her good friends included the Moon couple. Vasant Moon Saheb and Minaxi Moon hosted her in Nagpur. Without the Moon couple, it would have been difficult for Eleanor and Gali to get the Ambedkarite movement documented. The highest mark of their collaboration was the English translation of Vasant Moon's autobiography "*Vasti*," which was translated by Gail

Omvedt as “*Growing up as an Untouchable*” of which the preface was written by Eleanor Zelliott. It is a shining document of struggle and movement.

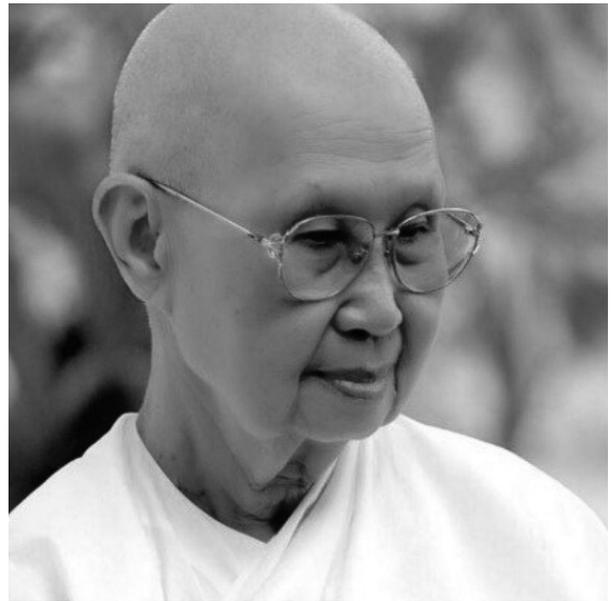
She was a good friend and mentor to me. I first came to know her through emails which she wrote in the Buddhist circles and other egroups. She coined a word for the likes of young Ambedkarites like us, “Digital Dalits”. She used to read every single email with interest and write whenever she could with her unparalleled intelligence and wisdom. She introduced many people and many ideas then through her communication. In fact, I owe one of my first publications of an essay to Eleanor Zelliott, which was a very small article on Guru Ravidas. So when she came to New Delhi, we organized a program in Ashoka Mission. It was great to see Eleanor and Gail together; two grandmothers of Ambedkarite movements. By the way, she never used like being addressed that way, and she used to ask me to call her “Maushi” in Marathi, which means “Maternal aunt”.

I wanted to read her PhD thesis, which was not available then, she was very shy about the unfortunate title. She sent a copy of that in 2003. It is really an important work. She didn’t want the title and she was reluctant to publish it. Mr. Rawat of the Blue Moon publication was my friend and we worked on republishing a book of Lakshmi Narsu: *The History of Caste*. I showed him the thesis and he was immediately interested. We got that book published as “*Ambedkar and the Untouchable movement*” then, now that book is republished by Navayana as “*Ambedkar’s World*”: a better title than the original one!!

Her compassion was exemplary. In 2007, Maitreyanath and I went to tour USA to talk about our work. Eleanor was supportive of this initiative. She was in her late 70s then and she didn’t drive the car at all. But, on that day, though she was old, fragile, and not well, she came to the airport to receive us and drive us to her home. That face full of radiance, compassion, and warmth is difficult to forget ever. She lived as the part and parcel of the Ambedkarite movement, and she will be long remembered for her commitment to the movement in India. For the service she had rendered to the people of India, particularly to India’s discriminated communities, she deserves the highest honor of the land. She has already earned a place of respect and reverence in the hearts of millions of Ambedkarites.

## Ranjuan Itharakamhaeng: From Medal of Distinction to Dust of the Earth, with Dignity, Serenity, and Beauty

Pracha Hutunuwat, 5 May 2016



The 95 years of life of Ajan Ranjuan Intharakamhaeng have great value and are worthy of study in many dimensions, whether from the perspective of the world or from the perspective of Dhamma. She was a person of both an earlier era and of the modern era, both in Thailand and abroad. She associated with the elite and with ordinary people, and lived in the lay world as well as in the monastic world. She was a thinker, a writer, and a practitioner.

She was born at the end of the Sixth Reign, the daughter of a colonel of high rank and a mother who was part of the palace retinue, but her life was not smooth or easy. Her father left the military service and took up a business venture, but he was not successful in it. Her mother had great foresight, far beyond the era in which she lived. She was determined to have her daughter receive a very good education so that she would have the freedom to be herself. In the end her younger daughter, Ranjuan Itharakamhaeng, completed a teaching certifi-

cate as her first step. At the age of 19 she took work as a teacher in the provinces and after 10 years transferred to a teaching position in Bangkok so that she could take care of her mother.

Not long after that she transferred to a position in the Ministry of Education, which she held until she received a scholarship to continue her studies in the United States, where she completed a master's degree in Library Science. When she returned her work and duties continued to blossom. Even though there were many difficulties she had to overcome, she relied steadily on perseverance, faithfulness, and honesty, following that era's model of the virtues, a model that had not yet become as shaky as it has at present.

In addition to her official duties, Ajan Ranjuan employed no little time and effort as a volunteer with the National Library Association of Thailand, and the Women's Higher Education Association of Thailand. At the age of 47 she received a national medal of high distinction for her efforts, much to her surprise, because she had not sought such recognition in any way whatsoever. Someone in the civil service system or someone who believed in mainstream values must have felt this would be an important lifetime honor for her.

Ajan Ranjuan's library work provided her the opportunity to read books and to critique them, and this became an important part of her writing work in the period when she was still a lay person. It also led to her being well-known in literary circles. Most important was her very famous work, *Images of Life from Novels*, which was followed by *The Critique of Literature*. Both books continue to be a regular part of course readings in a number of educational institutions today.

At the age of 51 she took a civil service pension in order to be able to maintain and nourish the life principles she took to be important. She began to teach as an adjunct professor of Library Science and Literature in various universities, especially at Ramkhamhaeng University. There she was an adjunct professor of Library Science in the Faculty of Humanities at a key turning point in Thai politics, namely the period from 1972 – 1981. She was also President of the university-wide Faculty Council there in the most important period from

1974 – 1976.

The traditional Thai virtues held dear by persons of authority and leadership, which saw compassion as a higher principle than political commitments and cliques, meant that Ajan Ranjuan became an advisor and mentor for many progressive students. This led in turn to her being investigated by the secret police. But she remained steadfast and unmoved in her commitments; during the same period she taught in the police academy, holding fast to the same principle of compassion. This kind of principled behavior could be seen elsewhere at times, but not that often in the period of dramatic change that the country was going through at the time. Ajan Sumon Amornwiwat of the Faculty of Education at Chulalongkorn University would have been another example.

It was at this time that Ajan Ranjuan began practicing Dhamma at various forest retreats and temples. By chance it was at Wat Hinmakpeng that she began, followed by a period at Khao Suan Luang in Ratchaburi, then at Wat Nong Pa Phong under the care and instruction of Ajan Cha.

In 1981, at the age of 60, she left her position as adjunct professor, shaved her head, and gave up her home to set out as a fulltime Dhamma practitioner with Ajan Cha. She was only to be with him for a short time, however. The following year Ajan Cha fell seriously ill, and was unable to give Dhamma instruction any longer. Ajan Ranjuan therefore came to study with Buddhadasa Bhikkhu at Suan Mokkh, and made Suan Mokkh her regular residence until 1995.

Two years after Buddhadasa Bhikkhu passed away, she moved to Wat Pa Nong Phai in the Thai province of Sakon Nakhon. In the last period of her life, she was a patient at Siriraj Hospital in Bangkok and passed away on the 2nd of May, 2016, just a month short of her 95th birthday.

The fact that she left the householder's life to become a homeless practitioner certainly must have been a very resolute and heartfelt decision. And the fact that she chose to set out on this path while she still enjoyed quite good physical health, one could consider a highly intelligent decision. This in the sense that she was able to see the suffering of this material world in time, before her

physical body was too weak to be able to make the effort required by Dhamma practice. Her decision conformed to the ancient principle of dividing life into four phases, according to which there were two phases of our lives that should be devoted to study: the first in the early period of life and before establishing a family, and the second after middle age when family matters had already been taken care of.

Many people in the modern period have forgotten the second of these study periods envisioned in the ancient model. Thus they miss the opportunity to engage in life's second phase of study, in which one seeks to understand Dhamma in a very deep way, so that one can live a life that fulfills the potentials of being born a human. According to the principle of the Buddha, if one who is born a human is unable to bring their eyes to see Dhamma before death, they have wasted a lifetime.

For a woman, setting out to practice Dhamma is not at all easy, as it is for a man who has the institution of the sangha to support him. For this reason, Ajan Ranjuan chose her teachers very carefully. When she saw people becoming attached to their teacher, to the point of becoming possessive or competing for attention from that teacher, Ajan Ranjuan would immediately withdraw from the situation.

Ending up at Suan Mokkh was very fitting for her, because she was able to receive theoretical and practical knowledge that were appropriate for a person who sought self-knowledge as resolutely as did Ranjuan Intharakamhaeng. Even though in the beginning period the culture of the forest temple and of Suan Mokkh did not suit her that well, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's skillful means allowed Ajan Ranjuan to practice Dhamma there. Her practice included being a teacher for people who sought instruction in the Dhamma, in spite of her initial intention to find a place of retreat for personal practice alone. In the early period she taught many people who came to Suan Mokkh, both Thai and foreign. Later on she received invitations to teach outside of Suan Mokkh as well. For practitioners who were sincere, and not self-deceptive, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu felt that teaching others was always a way of teaching oneself as well. He therefore supported many of his disciples to take this path of

"learning so as to discover oneself as a teacher."

A life journey that progressed from a woman decorated with a medal of honor to the dust of Suan Mokkh—and the training she received from Buddhadasa Bhikkhu about which there are many enjoyable and thought provoking stories, including Ajan Ranjuan's adaptation to a very simple life—all this is deserving of the highest respect.

Her departure from Suan Mokkh when a new figure with neither sufficient leadership qualities nor sufficient self-confidence took on the position of authority, was another very big decision for someone who had voluntarily chosen the homeless life.

After her move to Wat Pa Nong Phai, one can say that her new residence proved to be quite comfortable for her. The abbot too was a person of great generosity. Even though her role in sharing the Dhamma was reduced somewhat, it became an occasion for her to devote herself more fully to Dhamma practice. This meant that she did not have to toil too hard in the work of teaching, and that she was able to spend rather more time in taking care of her health.

If we were to use ordinary language, we might say that Ajan Ranjuan had the good and meritorious fortune to have a student who was like a daughter to her. This student took care of Ajan Ranjuan very closely for roughly 27 years. The student's background was very much like Ajan Ranjuan's, in the sense that she was a woman who had experienced success, who was of the modern world, and who voluntarily gave up her home to practice Dhamma while she was still in good physical health. She was able to care for Ajan Ranjuan until the last moments of her life.

She made a very interesting observation about Ajan Ranjuan's acceptance of physical suffering:

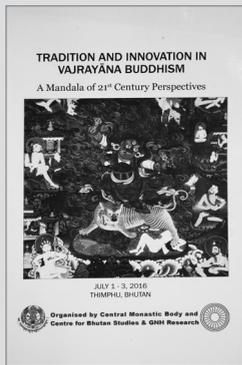
For a period of 10 years I saw that Mother Ranjuan always practiced the virtue of patience and forbearance to a truly amazing degree. So it was that whenever she reached the limits of her tolerance of physical pain, she would consult a student of hers who was a medical doctor. It was only then that I heard and understood that she had put up with

that pain for a long time, a full month, without a single complaint, and without a single outward sign that a person could observe that she was experiencing anything unusual. It seemed to others that she had nothing but a charming, beautiful, and peaceful smile to offer them. At times she was in severe pain, and she would come out to rest on the porch. But even at those times if there were those who came to visit and pay their respects, she would welcome them with her normal peaceful disposition, without any indication to others at all of the pain she was experiencing. Everyone who came and paid their respects would say the same thing, “Mother Ranjuan looks beautiful and radiant.” She would only smile in a very calm way, which was characteristic of her. There were no words of tearful complaint or sighs about her condition that could be a source of anxiety for her visitors at all.

It was very likely the fact that she made physical pain the focus of her mindfulness practice for such a very long time, that she was able to accept even very severe pain with such serenity before her death. It is also quite possible that it was this pain that she took as a vehicle, enabling her to travel on the highest of paths.

Her student tells of how in the very last days, though Ajan Ranjuan’s legs and arms were very weak and she was scarcely able to eat, she would sit in a deep and courageous stillness. And on the day she passed away, she knew in advance that death was approaching, and she told those close to her already in the morning that it would be on that day. And she was able to gather within herself a very clear mindfulness, and when the time came, she spoke these words, “I see the Buddha, I see the Dhamma, I see the Sangha.” She spoke them very slowly three times, at first very clearly, and gradually less distinctly, and then she passed away peacefully.

In the eyes of this student, her teacher died with the grace and bearing of someone who is a genuine teacher, with such courage and beauty that none of her three female renunciate disciples felt that they were even in mourning. Instead they felt deeply moved that their teacher had demonstrated the very highest Dhamma to be found in the word “teacher” before passing away. The one who took care of Ajan Ranjuan for 27 years said that if she had to define her teacher’s life in three words, she would say that her teacher was a person who never deceived the world, but “was ever faithful” to the Dhamma, from beginning to end, regardless of whether others were present as witnesses or whether they were absent.

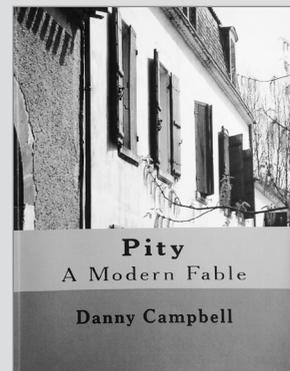


Tradition and Innovation in Vajrayana Buddhism  
A Mandala of 21st Century Perspective

**Publisher:** Central Monastic Body and Center for Bhutan Studies&GNH Research



The Nalanda Network  
Fostering Collaboration and Mutual Respect Across Buddhist Traditions



Pity A Modern Fable

**Author:** Danny Campbell  
**Publisher:** Amazon

July 15th 2016

Dear Ajarn Sulak

Peace from the odder side of the border! Is a silent one in our mausoleum at Wat Kandal in Battambang. The cooling rains are most welcomed after that brutally hot dry season. Let it rain!

Of course they are already predicting severe flooding, come October. Aint' easy being a rice farmer. The weather is as fickle as the farmer.

Dhamma yietra 26' walked into Khmer history in March. The walks now begin on March 13, The date Maha Ghosananda walked on. Next year we will be remembering the tenth anniversary of his passage. Yep, The walk continues.

Presently, I am helping develop a section on Maha and the early Dhamma yietras for a peace musuem in Siem Reap. (In progress, slowly, step by step) You shall be remembered.

Enclosed is a souvenir for a great grand son, in gratitude for his grand dad. May the walk continue; Let the walk begin...

In peace,  
Bob Matt



Dear Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa,

Its about more than 2 months that we met at WFP-Rome. I personally enjoyed meeting you and sharing your perspective about Zero Hunger with all the urgency it deserves. My 30 seconds encounter with Pope Francis and a beautiful picture with him (attached) is a treasure with me. His inaugural speech was an exhortation for all of us faith based organizations to work in unison to overcome the scandalous daily list of thousands of starving and dying children.

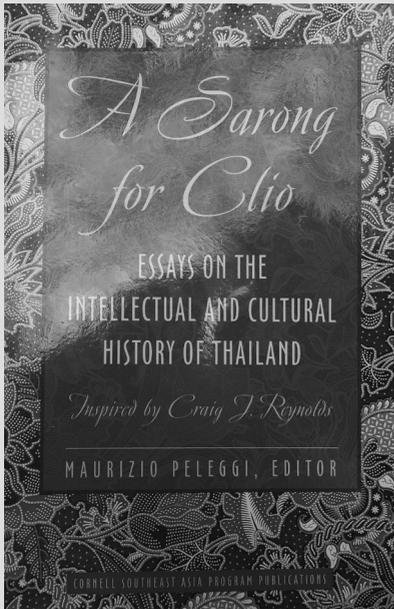
I wrote two e-mails to ED- WFP seeking guidance and action plan for follow up. It seems they are still busy formulating one.

I will be visiting Rome again 15-16-17-18 September as part of my Board Meeting of KAICIID. I would like to meet with Ms. Ertharin Cousin the dynamic Executive Director and her colleagues.

Secretary General KAICIID Faisal bin Muaammar has shown keen interest in WFP'S commitment towards Zero Hunger.

I would like to be in touch with your organization on the issue of combating hunger as imperative for Peace with Justice.

With warm regards,  
Swami Agnivesh  
KAICIID – Board Member



## The farang who knows Thais best

Scholars gather in praise of Craig Reynolds, who's made Southeast Asian studies his life's work

*Kupluthai Pungkanon*  
*The Nation*, 9 May 2016

Craig Reynolds is earning due praise for charting important aspects of Thai culture. Now 74, the American professor is well known among students of local history. He has for decades been an inspiring teacher whose writings are a rich resource for their own papers.

Reynolds was back in Bangkok recently, at Jim Thompson House, for the launch of the book *"A Sarong for Clio - Essays on the Intellectual and Cultural History of Thailand Inspired by Craig J Reynolds"*.

The event was packed with respected Thai and foreign scholars. A panel discussion featured social activist Sulak Sivaraksa, Waruni Osatharom, Professors Charnvit Kasetsiri, Thanet Arpornsuwan and Saichol Sattayanurak of Chiang Mai University, Dr Tyrell Haberkorn of Australian National University, Dr Patrick Jory of the University of Queensland, and Associate Professor Villa

Vilaithong.

Independent scholar Chris Baker offered the closing remarks along with Reynolds himself.

More famous names were in the audience, including Professors Chatthip Nartsupha and Pasuk Phongpajit, Dr Attachak Sattayanurak, Thanet Wongyannawa, Associate Professor Viengrat Netipho, Chalong Soontravanich, Dr Thanapol Limapichart and Rasmii Paoluengthong.

No one was distracted by the word "sarong" in the title of the book. It's only other reference is in a 1964 photo of Reynolds wearing the cloth draped from the hip. He was in Thailand with the Peace Corps at the time and teaching English in Krabi.

Seen as a "wrap-around", though, the sarong affords an apt metaphor for the influence of Reynolds' writings, which have played a vital role in shaping our

understanding of Thai social history. His famous studies include *"The Case of KSR Kulap: A Challenge to Royal Historical Writing in Late Nineteenth-century Siam"* and *"Thai Radical Discourse: The Real Face of Thai Feudalism Today"*.

Reynolds preferred to joke about the old snapshot, accusing the book's editor, Maurizio Peleggi, is forging a conspiracy. "It's a picture of someone I don't know anymore," he said to appreciative laughter.

The Clio of the title is the muse of Greek myth who "conveyed the idea that history offers maternal sustenance, as well as stern example", as Peleggi writes in the introduction.

Reynolds remains academically active and continues to inspire Thai scholars and students with his scholarship and his famously sharp criticisms of their papers, Peleggi notes. For three generations he's been in this position among "peers, his former students and increasingly their students".

*"A Sarong for Clio"* contains nine commentaries by 10 scholars - Baker and Pasuk, Thongchai Winichakul, Villa, Peleggi, Jory, Tamara Loos, James Ockey, Yoshinori Nishizaki and Kasian Tejapira.

Reynolds told *The Nation* that, of necessity, the language first held his interest in Thailand. He studied linguistics in graduate school with Professor Oliver Wolters, who taught early Southeast Asian history at Cornell Uni-

versity.

“That’s when I converted to history, and almost immediately,” Reynold said. “And ever since I stayed in Krabi, I’ve had great affection for Thailand and the language.

“I became pretty good at some of the difficult terms in Thai, so when I went back to the US I wanted to keep using the language. That’s why I went into linguistics, but then I met this inspiring teacher, so the two things came together and I become a historian - actually of all of Southeast Asia. I’ve also taught about Indonesian, Malaysian and Cambodian history.”

Asked to comment on one panellist’s insistence that Thailand has “no social history”, Reynolds suggested it might be construed as true since academic work “can’t touch on some of the important conflicts that had to do with the structure of society, including the monarchy”.

Other aspects of social history are amply documented, though, he pointed out. “There’s a young man studying the use of leisure time in Thai society from the reign of King Rama V to 1932, and others have written about sport and film history. So I wouldn’t say social history is totally neglected.”

Still, the politics and hierarchy of Thai society limit public discourse, Reynolds said.

“People outside, the country have to understand that being inside the country is different. Up until the coup in May 2014, it

seemed that if you spoke in English, you could say things you couldn’t say in Thai. Now even that’s changed. Some subjects are too difficult to work on even for Westerners.

“But that doesn’t mean you can’t study things. Some of the young historians’ projects are very inspiring. There are many things to study that don’t necessarily involve the social structure at the present moment.”

Reynolds said he was impressed by Varunee’s comments on one of his favourite but least-discussed pieces, “Tycoon and Warlord: Modern Thai Social Formations and Chinese Historical Romance”, which deals with the Thai-Chinese community leader *Sam Kok*.

“She made a point about how *Sam Kok* has been reproduced online in games, cartoons and so forth. Thailand is now saturated with mobile phones and Thais use the social media more than most other people. The present historical circumstances require people to find other means to express their opinions, not to protest but to exchange ideas. In the West people actually study the social media - it’s not surprising because they’re an important source of information, and in fact there’s so much information that it’s impossible to read everything.”

There is much anticipation at the moment over the publication of Reynolds’ conclusions on Khun Phan, the formidable authority fig-

ure of the South regarded as both *nakhleng* (a tough guy) and *kru* (a guru). Peleggi points out that the subject entails “several strands of Reynolds’ scholarship - Buddhism, magic, local knowledge and power”.

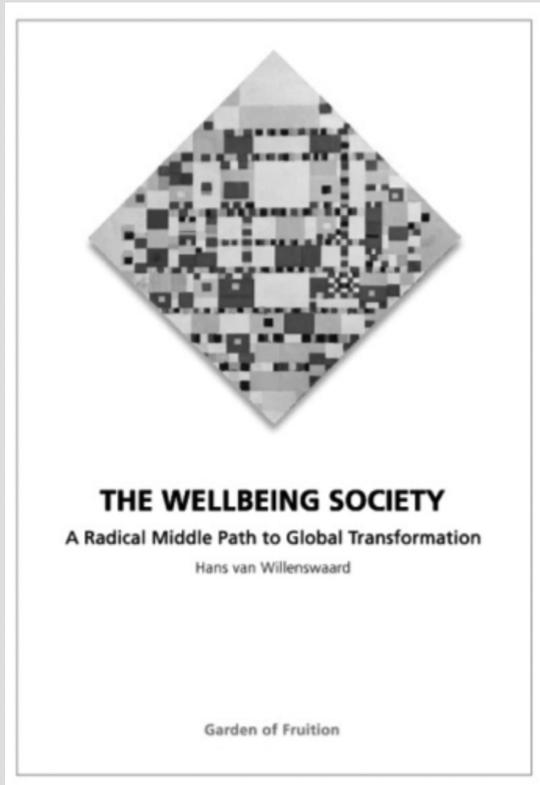
“I’m pretty sure it will be a perfect piece,” Sulak said. “Khun Phan was on the police force, a part of the bureaucracy, an oppressor, and an expert on southern amulets, so superstition is now mixing into the national subconscious.”

Thanet recalled meeting Reynolds in the US in 1967 and was struck by his distinctive smile, “a kind of mix between a smile and a laugh”.

“What Craig has been doing for the last 40 years is pushing for Thailand to have a social history. The way Thais think about society forms the thinking of the nation. We can switch between *sangkhom* [society] and *chart* [nation] with no trouble at all. No contradiction was noticed until Craig pointed it out, and then we began asking questions about the society and nation. Sometimes crossing the language barrier allows us better understanding.

“This is Craig’s contribution to Thai studies. I see some young faces among the historians here, and surely they will pick it up and do more.”

.....



## The Wellbeing Society. A Radical Middle Path to Global Transformation

Author: Hans van Willenswaard

Publishers: Garden of Fruition

Publication date: 23 August 2016

The author was born in the Netherlands and lives in Thailand together with co-founder Wallapa. Educated as a 'cultural worker' in the revolutionary 1960s, he became active in the organic movement after a training at Emerson College, U.K.

This year, Suan Nguen Mee Ma social enterprise celebrates its 15th anniversary. The social enterprise manages a bookshop, coffee house and restaurant in the old city centre of Bangkok. At this occasion, Hans van Willenswaard, co-founder, compiled a thought provoking book for Sulak Sivaraksa's 84th birthday in 2017. Ajarn Sulak enabled the start-up and was the first chairman of the shareholders' community. The book describes an engaging learning journey that begins from meeting Ajarn Sulak in the Netherlands and reflects on a remarkable diversity of encounters in Thailand, SE Asia, and in Bhutan. The book leads to the question on how interactions between activists, intellectuals and practitioners from Asia and Europe, in particular around The Hague City of Peace and Justice can play a creative role in the search for a new development paradigm, a new understanding of rights and duties regarding land and 'the commons', and a Wellbeing Society with organic agriculture at its heart.

### Information and book orders:

[hans@schoolforwellbeing.org](mailto:hans@schoolforwellbeing.org) or  
[publishers@suan-spirit.com](mailto:publishers@suan-spirit.com)  
Price 320 THB or 12 euro.

Book launching of *The Wellbeing Society. A Radical Middle Path to Global Transformation*, with author Hans van Willenswaard at Srinakharinwirot University 114 Sukhumvit 23 Bangkok 10110 Thailand, 13.30 – 15.30 hours, Tuesday 23 August 2016.



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