



## King Rama IX

December, 5 1927 - October, 13 2016

70 Years on the throne

# SEEDS OF PEACE

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## His Holiness the Dalai Lama Expresses Condolences at the Passing Away of the King of Thailand

October 13th 2016

Zurich, Switzerland, 13 October 2016 – In a letter to H.M. Queen Sirikit, His Holiness the Dalai Lama expressed his sadness on learning of the passing away of H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand who the Thai people have looked to as a source of hope and inspiration for more than 70 years. He offered his condolences to Her Majesty, the members of the family and the people of Thailand in their grief. His Holiness recalled the honor of meeting the late King during his first visit to Thailand in 1967.

13 October, 2016

The four of us share in the profound grief experienced by the millions of Thai subjects around the world. There are no words to express the unfathomable depth of the loss that we feel in our hearts. We not only mourn the loss of our beloved King, but we also grieve for the passing of our own grandfather.

His Majesty sheltered and cared for his beloved subjects throughout his reign. As his grandchildren, we felt His Majesty's love and warmth every day of our lives. It is with a sense of utmost gratitude that we now recall all that His Majesty has provided for the people of Thailand. We pray that Lord Buddha blesses His Majesty and grants His Majesty peace and comfort in the highest heaven.

May our father be imbued with the strength, wisdom, and love to guide his subjects towards an era of peace and prosperity. Long live the King.

With utmost respect, loyalty, and highest consideration,

**We remain,**  
Juthavachara Vacharaesorn  
Chakriwat Vatchrawee

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BURMA:

# Why must we lobby Suu Kyi to respect human rights?

Mark Farmaner  
28 November 2016



PHOTO: Reuters)

In 2006, I received a phone call from a senior Burmese democrat activist in exile. It was the first time he had called me. In five years. His call was not to discuss human rights or international campaigning, it was to warn Burma Campaign UK against working for Rohingya human rights.

I explained that Burma Campaign UK was established to promote human rights for everyone in and from Burma, and that we would continue to support human rights for the Rohingya. He told me that the issue was difficult and sensitive, and we should not work on it. In the end, I told him that even if a National League for Democracy (NLD) government were in

power, if the Rohingya were still having their human rights violated, we would campaign to that NLD government. There was a long silence down the line.

At the time, perhaps naively, we never dreamed that such a thing would come to pass. Last week it did. We delivered a petition to the Burmese embassy in London, calling on the NLD-led government in Burma to take action to protect human rights for the Rohingya. It was addressed to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

We left the embassy, walking past the pavement where I must have attended more than a hundred demonstrations for human rights and democracy in Burma in the

past 20 years – the same pavement where we stood on Aung San Suu Kyi's birthday every year while she was in detention; the same pavement where once Burman, Karen, Kachin, Shan, Karenni, Mon, Chin, Rakhine, Rohingya (yes Rohingya) and other ethnic people in exile stood side by side, even hand in hand, demanding the release of Suu Kyi and freedom for their country.

Our petition last week had four key calls, which should be no-brainers for any government committed to human rights: take action on hate speech; lift restrictions on aid so that people who need it can receive it; repeal or reform the 1982 Citizenship Law which discriminates against the Rohingya and does not comply with international law; and support a UN investigation into human rights violations and the situation in Arakan State.

We are still being told that the situation is difficult and sensitive. This is used as an excuse for caution and inaction. But as the human rights situation for the Rohingya gets even worse under the new NLD-led government, it is becoming clearer that the approach of the NLD and the international community is an abject failure, which is costing lives and causing immense suffering.

No, there is no magic bullet; and yes, the situation is complicated. There are underlying issues which may take generations to resolve.

But every journey starts with a single step. There are steps that can be taken now to start the process of building long-term solutions, and there are other steps which can be taken now which will have an immediate short-term positive impact.

Lifting the restrictions on aid is one of these. There is no justification for restricting aid to people in need, but this is what Aung San Suu Kyi's government has been doing. Not just with the new almost blanket ban on aid, but even before the current crisis, severe restrictions on aid were kept in place. These restrictions led to loss of life, immense suffering, and denial of education to thousands of children.

Aung San Suu Kyi repeatedly talks about the rule of law, but the 1982 Citizenship Law does not comply with international law and Burma's treaty obligations. Instead of repealing or reforming it, she has made renewed efforts to fully implement it. This law will have to be reformed. There is no getting around it. There is unlikely to be a better time than now, with a fresh electoral mandate, and (rightly or wrongly) Aung San Suu Kyi having an iron grip over her party, government and parliament. It may be an unpopular move but it is one that has to be taken. Delay is a greater risk. Every year there is a new crisis, and in the long term this will do more harm to her government, let alone prolong so

much suffering. True, Aung San Suu Kyi has made things much harder for herself by failing to use her moral leadership and immense popularity to challenge the prejudice against Rohingya and Muslims. Instead, she has allowed it to be stirred up to an ever higher frenzy.

This brings us to hate speech, which she has also failed to tackle. We have seen a spate of arrests of journalists or activists who write articles or post on social media, things the government does not like, but those spouting hatred and inciting and organising hatred and violence against the Rohingya and other Muslims are allowed to continue to do so freely.

The NLD-led government may not have constitutional control over the military and security forces, but it does have moral authority to speak out against human rights violations taking place. What no-one expected is for Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD-led government to act as willing human shields for the military, denying abuses and defending their actions.

Establishing the Arakan Commission chaired by Kofi Annan was one small step in the right direction, but its mandate is limited and there is no guarantee that when it does finally report next summer, its recommendations will be accepted. It has left too many issues unaddressed. Aung San Suu Kyi doesn't need a year-long investigation to know blocking aid to peo-

ple in need is wrong. Establishing the Commission should have been one of many bold steps. This crisis is too serious; a 'softly softly' approach isn't working. In such a volatile situation, time is a luxury she does not have.

It is hard to understand the current thinking of Aung San Suu Kyi on this issue. It cannot be that she believes the propaganda from her own government; there is too much evidence to the contrary.

The argument that she has to tread carefully to avoid upsetting the military generals and present them an excuse to retake power is hollow. The entire reform process has been their plan, on their terms and the situation now is what they want. They have as much to lose as anyone if they resume direct control. Aung San Suu Kyi was not afraid of crossing one of their main red lines, making herself effective President by creating the State Counsellor post. In any case, if they want to retake direct power they can do so at any time, manufacturing any excuse.

The argument that taking steps to improve rights for the Rohingya could trigger unrest and further violence also makes little sense. If she was worried about this, she could start to tackle hate speech, tackling those who are stirring up hatred in the first place. She has chosen not to do so, and as we are seeing now, failing to act is not a solution either.

Many people assumed that the reason Aung San Suu Kyi was previously evasive and virtually silent on abuses against the Rohingya and other Muslims was an electoral calculation. That is in fact accusing her of being pretty cold and calculating, deciding that winning the election was more important than trying to defend a minority facing severe persecution. The election result demonstrated that if this was her calculation, it was unnecessary anyway. Her silence didn't stop Thein Sein's government and allies such as Ma Ba Tha in relentlessly branding the NLD as pro-Muslim. The NLD still won an overwhelming majority and could have lost a significant percentage of votes and still won.

Some suggest that privately, she shares the same prejudice against Rohingya and Muslims as much of Burmese society. Even if true, that's very different from being prepared to first tolerate widespread human rights violations, to now denying they are taking place, and defending and even praising those committing them.

Some people still argue today that she is just being sensitive to the prejudice in society, and has to tread carefully. That may sound reasonable but the logic of that argument is to effectively accuse her of being willing to accept the killing of Rohingya children and rape of dozens of women as being acceptable for the greater good. Can

we really believe that about her?

Aung San Suu Kyi has cited Mahatma Gandhi as a source of inspiration. He is famous for his struggle against British colonial rule and his hunger strikes. In fact, he went on hunger strike more often against the actions of his own supporters than he did against British rule. He was willing to challenge their actions and prejudice, even if it upset his own supporters. To date, Aung San Suu Kyi appears unwilling to do the same.

I am constantly being asked why Aung San Suu Kyi is doing what she is doing. Not just on the Rohingya, but also regarding continuing attacks against ethnic people in Shan and Kachin states, keeping political prisoners in jail, and many other issues. I can't give an answer. It doesn't make sense, either morally or politically. Yes, some issues will take time to resolve, while others can be acted upon now, but are not. I am sure she has her reasons, but the problem is – she isn't saying what they are.

Since 2012, she has had a policy of granting virtually no interviews with media. Normally, the only interviews she does are with journalists on foreign visits, journalists who usually have no expertise on Burma. The few interviews she has done in Burma have been short, and often questions have to be sent in advance before permission is given. At press conferences

she is evasive.

So we are left with a choice. Do we just have blind faith that she is doing the right thing even when it appears she isn't? Or do we act?

At Burma Campaign UK, we have decided to act. We were set up to promote human rights in Burma, and that's what we'll do, regardless of who is running the government. It may upset many people in Burma, especially as we are advocating for the Rohingya, but in the face of horrific human rights violations, we have to look at effective ways to have an impact, even if it makes us unpopular with some people in Burma and some of our own supporters.

We won't just hope she will change her mind, we'll

do what we can to persuade her to change her mind. Because at the end of the day, she has more ability than anyone else in Burma to resolve this issue. No one else in Burma comes close to having the respect and authority she does. Who else could begin to change the attitudes of society, challenge prejudice, and push through the legal changes which are needed? There is simply no-one else in the country who has as much chance as she does of starting to resolve the Rohingya issue.

At the moment she is being criticised as part of the problem, but it may be she is the only one who could bring about a solution.

.....

video evidence made public 12 months ago.

Sombath was last seen at a police checkpoint on a busy street of the Lao capital, Vientiane, on the evening of 15 December 2012. Sombath's abduction was captured on a CCTV camera placed near the police checkpoint. CCTV footage showed that police stopped Sombath's car and, within minutes, unknown individuals forced him into another vehicle and drove away. The CCTV footage clearly shows that Sombath was taken away in the presence of police officers. The footage also showed an unknown individual driving away from the city in Sombath's car.

In December 2015, Sombath's family obtained new CCTV footage from the same area and made it public. The video shows Sombath's car being driven back towards the city by an unknown individual. At a minimum, this should have prompted a review of other CCTV cameras along the main route the car was taking back into the city.

Since this new evidence was made public by Sombath's family, the Lao authorities have failed to take any initiative with regard to the investigation, or present any new findings. Police issued their last report on the case on 8 June 2013. After four years, it is apparent that the government has not undertaken a serious and competent investigation into Som-

bath's enforced disappearance, and that it completely lacks the political will to do so.

We also call on the Lao authorities to provide information on the fate or whereabouts of 10 other activists who are victims of enforced disappearance. Authorities detained two women, Kingkeo and Somchit, and seven men, Soubinh, Souane, Sinpasong, Khamstone, Nou, Somkhit, and Sourigna, in November 2009 for planning to participate in pro-democracy demonstrations. Uniformed men abducted and disappeared Somphone Khantissouk, an outspoken critic of Chinese-sponsored agricultural projects in Luang Namtha Province, in January 2007 and there has been no trace of him since.

These actions against Sombath Somphone and the 10 other activists, followed by the Lao PDR government's refusal to acknowledge their deprivation of liberty, amount to enforced disappearances under Article 2 of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED). Despite signing the ICPPED on 29 September 2008, Laos is yet to ratify the convention. The government should immediately ratify the ICPPED and adopt national legislation to effectively implement its requirements to ensure that no one else faces enforced disappearances in the future.

The Lao PDR government's ongoing failure to un-

## LAOS:

# On the Fourth Anniversary of Enforced Disappearance, Civil Society Demands to Know: "Where is Sombath Somphone?"

Bangkok, 15 December 2016: On the fourth anniversary of the enforced disappearance of prominent Lao civil society leader Sombath Somphone, we, the undersigned organizations, condemn the Lao PDR government's ongoing failure to adequately investigate Sombath's disappear-

ance. We urge the authorities to act to conduct an effective investigation with a view to determining his fate or whereabouts. In particular, we condemn the Lao PDR government's inaction to resurrect the investigation into his enforced disappearance after the discovery of new

dertake adequate investigations into all cases of enforced disappearances violates its obligations under Article 2(3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Laos is a state party. The ICCPR states that governments must provide an “effective remedy” for violations of rights guaranteed by the Covenant, including the right to liberty and security of a person.

We call on the Lao PDR government to end its denial

of basic facts around Sombath’s enforced disappearance, and immediately conduct a competent, impartial, effective, and thorough investigation into his disappearance, as well as all other cases of enforced disappearances.

We urge individuals, institutions, and governments around the world to join our call and demand the Lao PDR government to answer the question: “Where is Sombath Somphone?”

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SIAM:

## Buddhists welcome promotion of Phra Payutto

*Jeerawat Na Thalang  
Bangkok Post, 11 Dec 2016*

His Majesty the King presided over an annual ceremony on Monday to promote senior Buddhist monks in the cleric ranking system.

Among the 159 promoted monks, Venerable Bhikkhu P A Payutto received the title Somdej Phraracha Khana, the second-highest position after Supreme Patriarch in the ecclesiastical nine-tiered hierarchy.

Speaking to his followers after the appointment on the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej’s birthday, Bhikkhu P A Payutto told his followers to feel grateful to the late King

Rama IX for his contribution to Buddhism.

He also said humbly that much of the work to promote Buddhism at the temple came from his Buddhist followers, as he had not done much in recent years due to his poor health. He told people to treat him the same way they always had.

Widely called Phra Prayudh Payutto, his appointment was unexpected. “Phra Maha Prayudh Payutto was an outsider from the administration of the monks’ governing body, even though he is widely

respected and revered for his discipline and intelligence,” said Phra Palad Wisarut Thirasaddho, a monk from Wat Thumkaocha-ang Temple in Kanchanaburi who formed a network of progressive monks on Facebook.

Yet his promotion was welcomed by Buddhists who believe his presence will help boost the credibility of the Sangha Supreme Council, which has been criticised for failing to tackle a series of monastic issues.

Phra Palad Wisarut said: “His promotion may help restore the image of the Sangha Council, which has been criticised for being inefficient in tackling the Phra Dhammajayo scandal.”

With the title of Somdej Phraracha Khana, Phra Prayudh Payutto will automatically be a member of the 21-member Sangha Supreme Council, the Buddhist governing

body.

Phra Payutto, a prolific and authoritative writer and eloquent preacher, has written articles criticising the Dhammakaya teaching for deviating from real Buddhist principles. However, his supporters said the 77-year-old is unlikely to reform the Sangha administration.

“Phra Prayudh Payutto’s health is not good and he does not bother with the title. I think he would rather continue writing and preaching,” said Phra Palad Wisarut.

Phra Prayudh Payutto fills the position left vacant by the passing of the late abbot of Wat Suthat, who was also a Somdej. One Somdej position is available for promotion this year.

“The annual monk promotion is based on the old tradition that each monk is promoted based on their individual contribution to the



second in hierarchy: Phra Prayudh Payutto has been promoted.



society,” said Boonchert Kit-tithara, director of the Secretariat of the Sangha Supreme Council. The decision is based on a committee under the Sangha Supreme Council.

Under the ecclesiastical organisation, there are eight Somdej, excluding the Supreme Patriarch who is traditionally selected from these eight Somdej monks based on seniority or the duration that the monks have assumed the position of Somdej.

The eight Somdej monks consist of four monks from the Dhammayut branch and the other four from the Mahanikaya branch of Buddhist teaching. Phra Payutto represents the Mahanikaya branch.

Mano Laohavanich, a former monk and Buddhist lecturer, said: “Phra Prayudh Payutto is unlikely to be a front-runner for the currently vacant Supreme Patriarch position because he just assumed the Somdej title.”

At present, Somdej Phra Maha Ratchamangalacharn of Wat Paknam, also known as Somdej Chuang, has the longest seniority in terms of the Somdej title. However, he was said to have ties with Phra Dhammajayo and to be involved in the possession of luxury cars.

Under the new Somdej title, Phra Prayudh Payutto will be named Buddhaghosa, after the respected 5th-century Indian Buddhist monk whose best-known work is Visuddhimagga “Path of Purification”.

“Phra Payutto deserves the name of Buddhaghosa because he is a prominent scholar,” said Sulak Sivaraksa, social commentator and Buddhist scholar, who publicly campaigned and supported the promotion of Phra Prayudh Payutto.

Mr Sulak said that his promotion would mark an auspicious moment and boost the morale of Buddhists. “He is highly disciplined. He lives with austerity and is not attached to materials. He is an eminent monk scholar.”

Born in 1939 as Prayudh Aryankura, Phra Payutto has written many articles. His seminal single-volume treatise on Theravada Buddhism entitled Buddhadhamma is considered a crown gem of Buddhist teaching. Among the accolades that he has received is the Unesco Prize for Peace Education in 1994.

Mr Mano said Phra Prayudh Payutto’s rise was unconventional because he was the first abbot from a non-royal and upcountry temple to become a Somdej since the introduction of the Sangha Act, which has centralised monk administration since 1902.

Phra Prayudh Payutto is currently the abbot of Wat Nyanavesakavan in the province of Nakhon Pathom. He was also the abbot of Wat Phra Phiren in Bangkok from 1972 to 1976.

According to Mr Mano, King Rama V restructured monk administration in 1902 based on the structure of the Church of England to pro-

mote the unity of the Sangha and the state when Siam faced colonisation threats from England and France.

The Sangha Law was later amended in 1941 to incorporate the principle of democracy, creating three branches to decentralise the administration consisting of the ecclesiastical assembly, ecclesiastical cabinet and ecclesiastical court.

However, Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat amended the Sangha Law in 1962 to centralise the cleric administration. The monastic structure became hierarchical with a cleric ranking consisting of nine levels. Since then, the monastic governing body was seen as centralised and at times lacking transparency in its decision-making processes.

The appointment of Phra Prayudh Payutto thus represents fresh air in the rigidly

structured monk governing body, said Mr Mano. “It is a positive sign. The Sangha administration faces a crisis of trust for failing to address many cleric issues,” said Mr Mano.

Phra Palad Wisarut, however, said: “Phra Prayudh Payutto might not be able to do much to change the system, because the Sangha Council’s decision is based on the agreement of all members.”

Mr Sulak also did not think his promotion would lead to the reform of the Sangha administration.

Asked what should be done to reform the Sangha administration, Mr Sulak said: “Just change the cleric law and go back to the Sangha Law in 1941 to make monastic governance more democratic.”

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# In the eye of the storm

Kong Ritthdee

Bangkok Post, 30 Sep 2016

The photograph is brutal, because the reality is brutal. As memories fade and truth remains clouded, a particular photo has grown in implication, in reflection and in sheer horror. There's a lot of photographs and news footage from the morning of Oct 6, 1976, when the police and right-wing militia laid siege and attacked students at Thammasat University, killing and brutalising scores, in one of the worst bloodsheds in Thailand's modern history. But it is the one image taken by AP photographer Neal Ulevich that encapsulates the senseless brutality and the madness of that morning 40 years ago: a mutilated corpse dangling from a tree in Sanam Luang, as a man is about to bash the lifeless body with a folding chair. The photograph, even more chilling to some, also shows a boy standing among the onlookers laughing.

The importance of Ulevich's picture as a historical record is immense, becoming even more so over the decades as society has gone through other clashes of ideologies, leaving more dead bodies on the street. Today the "chair" photograph is

invariably used to exemplify the worst outcome of a conflict spiralling out of control after nationalistic propaganda plants fear and hatred of political enemies (In 1976 it was the communists.) The eerie power of the picture has also evolved over the past 40 years: it was used as an album cover of an American rock band (Ulevich didn't realise it until he saw it); it inspired several Thai theatre productions and movies; and has been used in countless satirical internet memes. The word *kao-ee*, or "chair" -- referring to the chair in the photo -- has also acquired a jokey, colloquial connotation in certain circles in Thailand, meaning a threat to those who have anti-establishment thoughts.

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The picture taken by Neal Ulevich outside Thammasat University in Bangkok on Oct 6, 1976. Photo: AP / NEAL ULEVICH

SRI LANKA:

## Ven. MADOLUWAWE SOBITHA THERA

### An irreparable loss to countrymen

Lacille de Silva

Daily Mirror, 7 Sep 2016

We must not forget that LTTE was formed five years before Hezbollah, ten years before Al Qaeda and Hamas and 15 years before the Taliban. We had also gone through two insurgencies in the South as well. Why did we so far fail to assess the shortcomings to plan the future course of action for the benefit of the citizens as one nation? Unfortunately, after having defeated the LTTE, why couldn't we resolve many of the post war issues too? Why did Ven.

Sobitha Thera come forward uncompromisingly to defeat the former regime? What was the late prelate trying to achieve as a member of the Maha Sangha, a member of the spiritual community, of our beloved motherland? Did he try to establish an evolution of a Dharmically - based political theory? No doubt, he fought for the establishment of an ethical government, a Government based on moral principles, based on the Dharma. Let me call it

a dharmarajyaya in this article. In a Dharmarajya, everyone upholds moral order so that all are required to behave towards each other based on consideration and justice. The Dharmarajya concept is found in Hinduism too. Rulers listen to subjects carefully to fulfil their wishes thus ensuring that all interests are taken into account in determining the policy of the state. Such a State would not involve power to serve a section of people. It does not permit elected representatives serving themselves - for the benefit of the rulers. In Asia particularly, there had been a symbiotic relationship among the king, the monks and the lay people, which no doubt was healthier for the benefit of the people. Ven. Sobitha, therefore, attempted to establish a good and just political system which guaranteed basic human rights that contained checks and balances to the use of power. Do we have good committed representatives elected by us representing the citizens? Our representative democracy is very often poetically described as a government 'of the people, for the people, by the people' because there are periodic elections held to the Presidency, Parliament, Provincial Councils and the local bodies.

Nevertheless, what we see and experience both theoretically and in practice are far more complicated and confusing. These complexities the prelate had were due to the actors and not due to the in-

stitutions. In fact, most of our leaders have been unexceptional. We could also see large numbers of Buddhist monks on numerous political stages of various parties at present. There is evidence that Buddhist monks have engaged themselves in statecraft from the time of the ancient kings for providing guidance and advise to the rulers regarding the proper application of teachings of Lord Buddha in day to day governance. However, in the past few decades, we also saw monks contesting elections and representing seats in Parliament. The Hela Urumaya contested parliamentary elections and won several seats. They argued that they would be able to improve the quality of the Parliament and the Parliamentarians in the interest of the citizens and the country. Did they succeed in their endeavour? Not at all.

Due to all these reasons, there came an era where politicians always had their say and neglected the country, consequently pushing the masses to poverty and endless economic, social, cultural and other problems. In Chakkavatti Sihanada Sutta, Buddha shows how the loss of values could lead to economic instability and social turbulence - "Because of goods not being accrued to those who are destitute, poverty becomes rife. From poverty becoming rife; stealing, violence, murder, lying, evil speech, adultery, incest, lack of respect for parents, filial

love, religious piety, and lack of regard for the ruler will result. Buddha had also preached - "when the higher officials are just and good, the rank and file become just and good; when the rank and file become just and good, people become just and good". Our rulers in the past several decades had failed to govern the country in a manner that would benefit the people. Ven. Sobitha provided leadership at a crucial period to other religious leaders and the civil society to fight against bad governance, including corruption. There is evidence on various instances of how Buddhist monks came forward to protect the country, and particularly the people from tyrannical rule. Ven. Sobitha campaigned with self-sacrifice that the rulers should follow the path that helped the well-being of the citizens.

Furthermore, there is good enough evidence that during the reign of King Dutugamunu, Buddhist monks had played a prominent role in numerous national, political, cultural and social events. During the time of King Bhatiya, the Judgeship had been given to a monk. There had therefore been instances when monks had taken an active role in activities of governance/national development decisions. It may be relevant to mention that after the death of King Saddhatissa, (77 - 59 B.C.) the Assembly of Monks had ruled that Prince Lajji-Tissa who should

have become the king, not be made the king and that Prince Thullanatha be appointed as the king instead. It is also on record that King Kashyapa assassinated his own father to become the king. The Maha Sangha thereafter unanimously had rejected to accept Kashyapa as the King, and had decided to dethrone the king and enthroned his brother Moggallana instead.

Again in another instance, monks had intervened to settle a dispute between King Gajabahu and King Parakramabahu, and had restored peace in the country. The two kings had thereafter entered into a peace treaty. The inscriptions found at Mandalgiri and Samagamu Viharas prove the involvements of the Maha Sangha for this purpose. During the reign of King Dutugamunu, there were numerous instances where monks had assumed a prominent role in the country.

Let me ask the question, why did Ven. Sobitha Thera come out having formed the Movement to establish a Just Society? After colonisation, and thereafter in the not so-distant past, the system of governance had changed drastically. These developments later alienated the Maha Sangha too from the role they played in politics and national issues for the benefit of the citizens. Owing to these reasons, several decades ago, Peliyagoda Vidy-alankara Pirivena being the leading Buddhist Monastery in Sri Lanka at the time had

issued a Public declaration in 1946 entitled “Bhikkhus and Politics”, which stated that it was nothing but fitting for Bhikkhus to involve themselves with activities conducive to the welfare of the people. It could now be seen that the Maha Sangha takes a lead role in shaping up the country’s destiny together with the support of other religious dignitaries in the country. The late Ven. K. Sri Dhammananda had stated that the Buddha Dhamma suggests the ways and means to approach the complications in society, and to reform individuals in a way through which society could be made to act more humanely with a view to provide equal opportunities to all human beings without being discriminatory.

Ven. Sobitha pointed out that politicians during the last several decades had destroyed the country economically, socially, and culturally. Party leadership had paved the way to greedy power-hungry eccentrics to rule the country. Politicians now openly misuse political power. They also give protection to their political associates who are corrupt. They craftily organise political deals undemocratically to strengthen political power. I was personally aware that Ven. Sobitha believed that there was an extra effort needed to improve the running of the State machinery to fulfil its duties and obligations towards the unfortunate masses. The State is currently controlled by a

remarkably small body of dishonest people who ultimately wield enormous power. They do not have a sense of empathy and goodwill for the ultimate benefit of the poor masses. In this sense, our leaders are not patriots because they do not have any love for their own subjects. Don’t they only love themselves? Aren’t they a band of pickpockets in spotlessly white national costume?

This is basically the CHANGE that the prelate wanted in the country for the benefit of all Nationalities. Ven. Sobitha emphasised the need to learn to love the country and its people, with a view to widen that love towards all human-beings irrespective of caste, creed or race. He always meant that he had the power, ability and the tenacity to resolve the issues faced by the country, that resulted due the lack of good governance. He wanted to transform an ordinary Rajya in to a Dharmarajya. He had even consented once to contest presidency as politicians cannot be trusted.

What therefore happened to Ven. Sobitha? He passed away after the dream government had been elected. As we know, the ‘Movement for a Just Society’ blossomed after a statement made by the Ven. Madoluwawe Sobitha at the BMICH. He assured the country that he would dedicate his life to abolish Executive Presidency and restore clean, ethical and rule of law in the country. He said

GOOD GOVERNANCE was a sine-qua non for achieving economic development and growth in the country.

On the occasion where we commemorate his first death anniversary, time has come for all patriotic citizens to honour the Nayaka Thera by ensuring that we too should commit ourselves with firm determination, to achieve the dreams of the late Ven. Sobi-

tha in this precious land which had been previously called ‘Paradise Island’. Let us also extend our best wishes to Prof. Sarath Wijesuriya, who took over the leadership of the Movement after the untimely death of the respected prelate. May long live the ‘Movement for Just Society’ in our motherland.

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## TAIWAN:

# Religious leaders back gay marriage

*Lacille de Silva*

*Daily Mirror, 7 Sep 2016*

Religious leaders Saturday spoke out in favor of efforts to legalize same-sex marriage, ahead of a second public hearing on the issue slated for Monday.

Speaking at a press conference held at the Legislative Yuan, senior figures from several religious orders gave their support to marriage equality.

Shih Chao-hwei (釋昭慧), a female Buddhist Master and professor at Hsuan Chuang University, said marriage equality was a “natural thing,” given that “all of mankind is born equal.”

Based on the principle of equality guaranteed by Taiwan’s constitution, those in same-sex relationships should

have the right to “pursue their happiness,” Shih said.

“The ‘happy family’ slogan used by the anti-gay marriage campaign should be more applicable to same-sex couples than straight ones, as the former lacks the legal protection granted to the latter.”

Taiwan had the honor of being one of the most gay-friendly countries in Asia, and would likely become the first country to legalize same-sex marriage, Shih said.

“But unfortunately, this honor is being threatened by those who highlight ‘happy families’ but oppose same-sex marriage. Their logic is quite self-contradictory.”

Based on the causal theory of Buddhism, “the more you



abominate same-sex marriage, the higher is the possibility that gays will appear in your own family,” Shih said.

“What are you afraid of?”  
Former Legislator Cheng Kuo-chung (鄭國忠), a Presbyterian pastor, said he found the stigma in the church cast on same-sex couples “chilling.”

“What are you afraid of? Revising the Civil Code won’t deprive straight couples of their values and rights,” Cheng said.

The majority of local people did not understand the gay community, and tended to discriminate against those in same-sex relationships, he added.

“I’m standing up to say that all people are created equal by God, regardless of

their wealth, gender, complexity, and sexual orientation.”

Cheng said revising the Civil Code was the easiest and most practical way to achieve marriage equality. “Enacting a special law for same-sex couples will take at least three to five years to complete, not to mention that it is discriminatory against those in same-sex relationships,” he said.

Other participants at the press conference included: Chen Wen-shan (陳文珊), an associate professor at the Yu-Shan Theological College and Seminary; and Chen Pei-yi (陳佩儀), a pastor with the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan.

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USA:

## These Are The Protesters Fighting For Their Rights At Standing Rock

*Chris McGonigal, Damon Dahlen*  
*The Huffington Post, 24 Nov 2016*

For the past seven months, members of the Sioux Nation at Standing Rock Indian Reservation in North Dakota have been fighting for their way of life by protesting the planned construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Armed with a 4x5 large-format camera and audio equipment, New York City-based photographer Chris Callaway has documented in intimate portraits and audio interviews the stories of these protesters. The images and

audio capture the movement that has drawn people from around the world to help protect the lands that the Sioux Nation holds so dear.

“My objective is to personalize the protest by bringing the spirit, voice, and people of the camp to you,” Callaway told The Huffington Post in an email.

“As a photographer, I think it’s important to use my craft to help those whose voices can’t be heard.”

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# Happy Birthday Archan Sulak

## Love from all of us

Harsha Kumara Navaratne

“Listening is very important, when the voice is calling us...one has to listen to our body, our feelings, pay attention to the voice. Capacity to listening.. Listening to others. It depends on how we love ourselves....listening to the bell... the sound of the bell, the kind sound... we can practice listening... every time we listen to the sound of the bell, we follow our breathing and come back to our self .....listen ...listen...listen to the sound of the bell”

Thich Nhat Hanh - Being Love

Your 84<sup>th</sup> Birthday is so important to all of us in the INEB family facing complex situations, which are prevailing every where in the world. There are many sad things happening in many parts of the world. The Middle East is in a turmoil, daily people are dying. Once, at the most safest haven of the earth, where most people went for greener pastures—the West, is under security with threats and violent attacks. Political situations in many countries are moving towards nationalism and protectionism. One of the best modules for economic development of open trade without boundaries is collapsing. Countries are putting up walls, fences, and closing friendly border crossings. Globalization and free economy is now a bad word among its pioneers. Open-inclusive social values built in democratic societies are moving into isolation and prefer to look inward. Maritime free movements are challenged by regional powers. Friendly countries are changing their positions and looking only for their own benefits, dumping partnerships. Interestingly though, some breakthroughs for positive directions have also taken place.

In Paris (COP21), most of the powerful countries along with others agreed on climate change to work together.

In New York, all the member counties signed for new development agendas – sustainable development goals. So 2017 is coming to us with mixed feelings and good hopes. With this background, we INEB family members are coming to Bangkok on March 17th to Celebrate your Birthday.

We are celebrating a person who has rung the bell of warning and created the awareness, that something bad can happen to our human society if we don't work together. Archan, you have asked for a new paradigm of spiritual growth through engaged Buddhism which is a great opportunity to answer hopefully the coming complex situations in human society. INEB was born on those

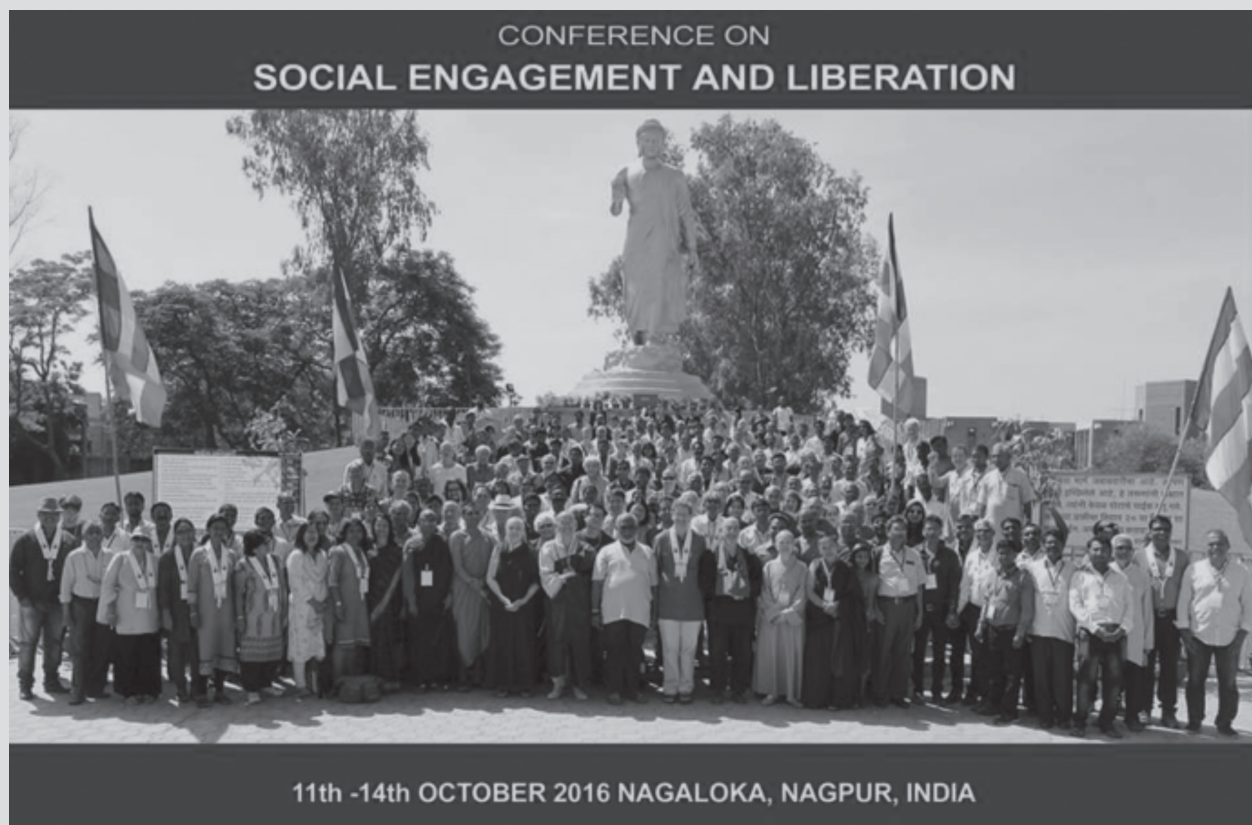
values and built as an answer to look for possible new alternatives to the on-going development model as a paradigm shift. Interestingly, INEB has grown and is possibly the leading alternative Buddhist movement in actively engaging most of the social, spiritual, cultural and ecological world issues in leading forums. Our voice is heard by many, who are now looking for partnerships and collaborations with the INEB family.

The World needs committed spiritual practitioners who are engaged with society and working for the goodness of fellow citizens. One of your greatest ideas to develop the INEB institute for a new paradigm of spiritual growth for ecological sustainability and social justice is the latest addition to INEB initiatives. When some were questioning on how to move forward, it was amazing to watch how you took the challenge and brought INEB Institute into living. Youth from different parts of the world are living and learning in the ashram, experiencing spiritual practice, participatory learning, critical thinking, and enjoying holistic development learning as a joint family. It is something to admire and praise. The INEB Institute will build a future group of youth leaders who will be capable to build a resilient, ecological, and sustainable society with social justice.

A few mouths ago, we were with you celebrating another great human being - Dr Ambedkar of India who had brought millions of people to see the new light of Buddhism. At your age, you travelled to Nagpur, stayed with us, and also went on a pilgrimage to the Himalaya's with Lody Rinponche. Whenever we meet with you, you say no more travel, but every month you are in one corner of the globe. Let me pray for you in front of holy Sri Maha bodhi and wish you a long life. Archan.....we will listen and listen and listen to the sound of the bell!

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# Social Engagement and Liberation: The Deliberations of the Conference



The 60th anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar's momentous conversion took place on October 11th this year. 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 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

organised a four day conference on the theme of “Social Engagement and Liberation”, which was attended by many interested in engaged Buddhism from India and abroad. During these few days, we looked at aspects of Dr. Ambedkar’s approach to Buddhism, and saw how not only Indian followers of his, but Buddhists from different traditions in east and west 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 by 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 him 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 welcome freshness to Buddhism in the world today. In the conference, we explored 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, that they wanted basic human respect and dignity, they wanted to raise themselves out of this cruel, symbiotic relationship. They wanted liberation and empowerment, and 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,





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. By the way, 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 better work for the welfare of the world. However 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, 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 explored in some depth, at Nagaloka between 11th until 14th October this year, with the help of experienced and engaged practitioners from all parts of the world and from various traditions.

but he is making a point that is intrinsic to all Dhamma practice, whether it is meditating on sunyata, or satkayaditthi (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 the Dhamma that I want to touch on concerns governance. The Buddha talked of the Dhammarajya, governance according to the principles of the Dhamma.

# Eco-Temple Community Development Project 2016 Year End Update

In collaboration with the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) & the Inte-Religious Climate and Ecology network (ICE)

Jonathan S. Watts



New solar panels at Wongsanit Ashram,  
Thailand

Monks participating in bamboo  
treatment training workshop

Zhengjue Temple: Mt. Lianhua,  
Shandong Province, China

Ven. Miao Hai with his master Ven. Ren Da have been very busy since our first meeting in late January, visiting various sites in the INEB/ICE network to do needs assessment and installation of a variety of localized solar energy systems.

Socially Engaged Monastic Schools  
(SEMS), Myanmar

The group has been busy further developing their work in bamboo construction technology and design at three monasteries in northern Myanmar, and are also looking forward to creating an “eco-center” for training monks, nuns, and school teachers.

Won Buddhism Eco-Network:  
South Korea

The Won Buddhism Eco-Network has achieved its goal that was set in 2013 of building solar power facilities

on 100 of its temples nationwide! See Ms. Eunsook Cho’s complete report on their anti-nuclear and clean energy activities from the INEB/ICE workshop at the IUCN Conference in Hawaii in September.

Sukhavati Eco Temple:  
Tamil Nadu, India

Gautham Prabhu has done significant work in laying the foundations for the project, locating an Indian ecological architectural firm named BIOM to partner in designing the temple, and connecting with Buddhists and civil society groups interested in helping to fund the temple.

The Smart Pagoda : Chonburi, Thailand  
Phra Sangkom is continuing with the building of the pagoda which is slated to open in late 2017, and engaging in reforestation and community development based on the late King Rama IX’s “sufficiency economy” principles.

## East Asia: Anti-Nuclear and Clean Energy News

- Sept. 23 : AYUS Buddhist Network (under Office Head Ms. Mika Edaki who helped lead the JNEB Energy Tour in 2015) held a public symposium in Tokyo to promote and support farmers in Fukushima wanting to develop solar sharing technology and install solar panels on their farmland, much of which is still difficult to develop for commercial farm products.
- Oct. 27: Japan's vote at the United Nations last week to oppose a resolution to start talks on a treaty outlawing nuclear weapons is regrettable. It contradicts the nation's long-standing call for the elimination of such weapons, given that it has been the sole country to have suffered nuclear attacks.
- Nov. 11: Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Friday signed a civilian nuclear cooperation pact with visiting Indian leader Narendra Modi as he pushes to promote exports of Japanese nuclear technology to keep the teetering economy afloat.
- Nov. 22: Vietnam's National Assembly voted to abandon plans to build two nuclear power plants with Russia and Japan, after officials cited lower demand forecasts, rising costs, and safety concerns.
- Jan. 2015: JNEB's International Project on Energy team visited Taiwan in January 2015 to build solidarity among East Asian Buddhist groups working on these issues.

## Upcoming Gatherings & Site Visits: Come Join Us!

- Feb 2017: site visits (2): Thailand (Phra Sangkom's Smart Pagoda) & Myanmar (theme: ecological use of bamboo)
- August 2017: Indonesia (3rd ICE conf.) & site visit to Muslim eco mosques
- November 2017: Taiwan (INEB general conf.) & site visit to Zhengjue Temple in China



Ms. Eunsook Cho (speaker) & Rev. Okochi at IUCN

## Inter-religious Climate and Ecology network (ICE) & other interfaith news:

- Sept. 5: Rev. Hidehito Okochi presented on his eco-temple community development work as part of INEB and ICE's workshop on Ethics and Ecology: Faith-based Models for Reconnecting with All Sentient Beings at the International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress (WCC) in Honolulu, Hawaii.
- Sept. 30: The Seoul Catholic Archdiocese's Pastoral Committee for the Environment is proposing to build a solar power generation plant in all its parishes, to use and produce eco-friendly energy by as early as the end of 2017. The project is based on a Memorandum of Understanding between the archdiocese and the Seoul Metropolitan Government in 2013.
- Oct. 19: Coordinator Jonathan Watts gave a talk at the Jesuit Social Center of Tokyo located at Sophia University, entitled "Towards Collective Action: A Buddhist View of Laudato Si".
- Nov. 10: GreenFaith, one of the oldest religious-environmental organizations in the US, produced (Light for a New Day: Interfaith Essays on Energy Ethics), and presented it at the COP 22 conference in Marrakech. The presentation session also included "Shift the Power: Buddhist Temple Communities for an Energy and Social Revolution" by Rev. Hidehito Okochi & Jonathan Watts

# Towards Collective Action: A Buddhist View of *Laudato Si*

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Jonathan S. Watts  
International Buddhist Exchange Center @ Kodosan  
Yokohama, Japan

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The Papal Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si* by His Holiness Pope Francis, entitled ‘On Care for Our Common Home’, issued on May 24, 2015, has been hailed by many as a radical and groundbreaking document for the wide scope of issues that it encompasses. Indeed, His Holiness offers a simplistic portrayal of environmental issues and an admonition to be more ecologically minded. His Holiness has stood courageously with great insight to link our ecological crisis with the deeply interconnected problems of our economics, politics, and culture. *Laudato Si* is not the typical religious declaration that avoids the difficult issues of power and how it is wielded in destructive ways in our world.

Drawing on a rich history of ecological teachings—embedded in the prominent tradition of forested monasticism—Buddhists both in Asia and the West have been engaging in a variety of forms of environmental activism, such as protecting endangered forests in Southeast Asia and contributing to the Deep Ecology and Anti-nuclear movements in the West. This has led to a plethora of books on Buddhism and the environment, which go deeply into a variety of issues as *Laudato Si* does. Further, in response to the landmark publication of *Laudato Si*, Buddhists have drafted their own joint declaration on climate change and the environment.<sup>1</sup>

From a Buddhist standpoint, and especially

a socially engaged Buddhist standpoint, there are many areas of common insight and agreement with *Laudato Si*, such as the valuation of the earth and the self being vehicles for our liberation (# 98), the interdependence of all things (#86), a deep compassion for all sentient life, which is so intimately connected with ourselves (#89), and the eradication of greed, anger, delusion through a sense of sufficiency and simple living (#9). His Holiness, however, does not stop with the locus of the problem at the individual level. From the very beginning of *Laudato Si*, His Holiness speaks deeply about “eliminating the structural causes of the dysfunctions of the world economy and correcting models of growth which have proved incapable of ensuring respect for the environment”. (#6)

From a Buddhist standpoint, one of the most striking and outstanding aspects of *Laudato Si* is His Holiness’ constant emphasis on social justice. In general, Buddhism has been greatly lacking in an awareness of the problems of the larger forces of society on individuals and communities, believing that karma determines one’s larger fate in life and delivers a kind of natural justice. In its most extreme form, Buddhists may understand suffering as deserved from some mysterious karma of a previous lifetime and that this suffering must be endured as a penance for the bad actions done in the past. This kind of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://gbccc.org/buddhist-climate-change-statement-to-world-leaders-2015/>



understanding has been applied to explain the plight of the poor and the fortune of the rich, the misfortune of the physically disabled, and especially the inferiority of women. Numerous aspects of this understanding are erroneous, because popular Buddhism has been mixed together with other understandings of karma that come from the variety of spiritual traditions in India. A few years ago, a group of colleagues and I worked on an entire volume addressing these erroneous views, how they manifest in Buddhist societies today, and how a proper understanding of karma—as intentional ethical action, not passive resignation to fate—can empower Buddhists to engage in social justice work.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, over the last few decades, the emergence of the socially engaged Buddhist movement has marked an increasing awareness of Buddhists towards social justice issues, such as our environmental crisis.

While Buddhists have much to learn from Christians concerning social justice, I think there is a reciprocal learning in which Christians can deepen their understanding of environmental justice from Buddhists. In Chapter III, Section III of *Laudato Si*, His Holiness speaks at length on the “crisis and effects of modern anthropocentrism” and makes a wonderful and powerful repudiation to the modernist impulses which came out of the Christian West that are responsible in many ways for the problems we are facing today. He then draws two conclusions to remedy this situation, which are 1) we need “a Father who creates and who alone owns the world” in order to practice proper self-restraint with our human creative powers (#75); and 2) we “cannot be expected to feel responsibility for the world unless, at the same time, their[our] unique capacities of knowledge, will,

freedom and responsibility are recognized and valued” (#118). I understand that His Holiness is trying to find the proper balance, or as we Buddhists say a Middle Way, between the destructive anthropocentrism that dominates our world now and a kind of utopian biocentrism that sees humans just passively living in harmony with nature.

A Buddhist approach, however, would go about this in a different way, seeking to develop self-restraint and responsibility by appealing not to an anthropomorphic authority who lords over us but rather to a more natural inner impulse that comes forth from our total interdependence with the natural world, which is indivisible from the creative power of the whole universe. The great Thai forest monk Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1906-1993) offers these insights: “It is important that our conservation efforts be beneficial, correct, and genuine. This raises the question of what kind of power or authority is to be used for the sake of conservation. The power which directly forces people to do our will is one kind of authority. Yet there is also the power of creating a proper understanding of reality such that we see our duty clearly and carry it out willingly ... Dharma is the ecology of the mind. ... The Dharma has arranged everything quite well already, in its natural ecology, but we don’t appreciate this wonderful fact at all.<sup>3</sup> ... When the mental Nature is well conserved, the outer material Nature will be able to conserve itself.<sup>4</sup>”

The key point that I am trying to emphasize here is that it continues to be an up hill battle to convince people to act for the benefit of the environment using moral exhortations for self-restraint and responsibility for other life forms. This

<sup>2</sup> Watts, Jonathan S. Ed. *Rethinking Karma: The Dharma of Social Justice*. (Bangkok: International Network of Engaged Buddhists, 2014, 2nd Edition).

<sup>3</sup> Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. *Conserving the Inner Ecology*. Trans. Santikaro. March 1990. <http://www.theravada-dhamma.org/blog/?p=8331>

<sup>4</sup> Santikaro “Buddhadasa Bhikkhu: Life and Society through the Natural Eyes of Voidness” in *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*. Eds. Christopher Queen and Sallie King. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996). p. 142.

kind of approach still implies a basic disconnection between us as human agents of action and the earth as a more passive or pliable object of our action. While His Holiness rightly criticizes the problem of human hubris in anthropocentrism, from a Buddhist standpoint, an anthropomorphic God still perpetuates the metaphor of human agency acting upon an external, if not alienated, external environment. Joanna Macy, the American Buddhist eco-philosopher and a leader of the Deep Ecology movement, notes that healing this fundamental dualism and alienation changes our notion of self or being to include all things—“self as world” and its non-dual partner “world as self”. In this way, a biocentrism based on the elimination of human agency is averted, and this sense of complete interpenetration with the natural order gives rise to a deep sense of compassion—“feeling the suffering of others.”<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, I think His Holiness has a very similar understanding of mutual love and care, but the anthropomorphic appeal I think can be misunderstood by those of less insight than His Holiness.

Having looked at ways that Christian and Buddhist understandings on the ecological crisis can augment each other, I would like to finish with clearly the most essential issue of collective action. Indeed, His Holiness speaks directly to this need to shift from well meaning individual actions on behalf of the environment to a major collective thrust needed to face this issue. I think a step that needs to be taken is an emphasis on the collective power of religious communities on local and regional levels to enact lifestyle shifts that take on greater impact because they are practiced on a social level. If you consider the existence of a temple, church, mosque, or some other religious facility in the majority of communities all over the world, the power of each of

them acting along the line of an ecological gospel, as His Holiness and other concerned religious leaders have articulated, would be transformative, as well as offering a power check on the destructive forces of our global economic and political order.

The International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), with which I have worked for over 25 years, is trying to develop such movements through the Inter-Religious Climate and Ecology (ICE) Network formed in 2012 through education, advocacy, networking, pilgrimage, and developing eco-temple communities. ICE’s Eco-Temple Community Working Group, with which I am closely connected, has emerged from the vision and activities of Rev. Hidehito Okochi of Japan in his efforts since the early 1990s to create a nuclear free Japan and to develop environmental awareness in his own community.<sup>6</sup> The working group has sought to: 1) share experiences, identify needs, and begin collaboration among core members to support the development of eco-temple communities; and 2) from this shared knowledge, further develop and articulate an Eco-Temple Community Design Scheme, which can be a planning tool for our own and other eco-temple community initiatives.<sup>7</sup> The Eco Temple Community Design is a holistic development process that involves much more than simply putting solar panels on the roofs of temples. It involves a comprehensive integration of: 1) ecological temple structure and energy systems, 2) integration with surrounding environment, 3) economic sustainability, 4) engagement with community and other regional groups (civil society, business, government), and 5) development of spiritual values and teachings on environment (eco-dharma). This fledgling network has already established partnerships with temples in China, South Korea, Myanmar, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India,

<sup>5</sup> Macy, Joanna. *World as Lover, World as Self*. (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1991) p. 191.

<sup>6</sup> For details of Okochi’s work see: <http://jneb.jp/english/japan/faithnuclear>

<sup>7</sup> The design matrix and details of the project are on line at: <http://jneb.jp/english/activities/buddhistenergy/eco-templeproject>

and Japan, supporting the expansion of solar facilities and the implementation of a variety of ecological construction methods.

The Eco-Temple Community Development Project is but one, basic example of the transformative power that religious communities steeped in a sense of social justice and environmental justice can manifest. In *Laudato Si*, His Holiness Pope Francis has offered us a detailed road map in bringing together the economic, social, political, and cultural aspects in harmony with environmental justice and well being. We have spent many words in speaking out about the global environmental crisis of today. As much as we need to continue to exercise our voices,

we also need to enact collective action. Although there are many climate change cynics, I believe very few would be against their own religious community enjoying the quality of life of a center offering green spaces, refreshing architecture, and economical sustainability from low consumption and localized energy production. May we all live to experience such simple joys.

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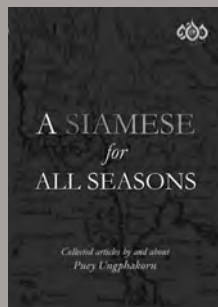
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This paper was prepared for a talk given to the Jesuit Social Center of Tokyo located at Sophia University on October 19, 2016.

## Recommended Readings



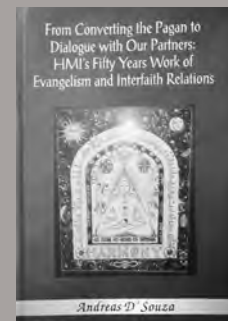
**Best Wishes for Asia:**  
A Chronicle of Hope  
from Womb to Tomb

**Compiled:** Sulak Sivaraksa  
**Publisher:** Thammasat University



**A Siamese for All Seasons**

**Author:** Puey Ungpakorn  
**Publisher:** Komol Keemthong Foundation



**From Converting the Pagan to Dialogue  
with Our Partners: HMI's Fifty Years Work of  
Evangelism and Interfaith Relations**

**Author:** Andreas D'Souza  
**Publisher:** Henry Martyn Institute/ISPCCK



**A Planetary And Global Ethics  
For Climate Change And  
Sustainable Energy**

**Edited:** Imtiyaz Yusuf  
**Publisher:** Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung



**Hatred in the Belly**

**Author:** Ambedkar  
**Publisher:** The Shared Mirror  
Publishing House



**Journal of The Henry  
Martyn Institute**

**Edited:** M.M. Abraham  
**Publisher:** The Henry Martyn  
Institute



**Emergent Social Space:  
GLT,PLT 20 years anniversary  
(1996-2016)**

**Publisher:** SEM Myanmar

# Seventh International Conference of Tibet Support Groups

Brussels, 8-10 September 2016

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Naphawan Sittisak

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The seventh International Conference of Tibet Support Groups (TSGs) was convened in Brussels by the Tibet Interest Group in the European Parliament, and co-hosted by the International Campaign for Tibet, Light on Tibet, les Amis du Tibet and the Tibetan Community in Belgium, and facilitated by the Department of Information and International Relations of the Central Tibetan Administration. Over 250 delegates representing support groups from 50 countries and all continents, members of other NGOs and special guests participated in the conference.

The conference drew inspiration and strategic benefit from the diverse skills and perspectives of the various support groups, and from the sense of common purpose of TSGs from around the world. It examined the current situation in occupied Tibet, especially the political, human rights and environmental developments there, assessed the state of the Tibet freedom movement, and drew up plans for coordinated action.

During the inaugural ceremony on September 8, 2016, His Holiness The Dalai Lama, who addressed the Conference as the Guest of Honour, explained his three commitments in view of his recent devolution of political authority. Other speakers at the inaugural session included members of the European Parliament, Thomas Mann and Christian Dan Oreda, a speaker of the Flemish Parliament, Jan Peumans, former President of the European Economic and Social Committee, Henri Malosse, and the Chairman of the International

Campaign for Tibet, Richard Gere. Sikyong Dr. Lobsang Sangay reiterated the Tibetan leadership's commitment to resolve the issue of Tibet through the Middle Way approach and called on the international community to support these efforts. The Conference was graced by the participation of the Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament, Claudia Roth, and member of the European Parliament, Csaba Sogor, who addressed the closing session.

The Conference welcomed the strong participation of Chinese lawyers, scholars and human rights activists in its deliberations, and regards their engagement as an expression of the growing solidarity between the Chinese people and the Tibetan people.

The Conference noted with great concern the worsening of the human rights situation in Tibet, including the repression of religious freedom and the suppression of the Tibetan national identity and language under the increasingly authoritarian regime.



It expressed solidarity with all Political Prisoners in Tibet. In this context, the Conference welcomed recent joint actions by concerned governments on China and, building on this, urges increased action on Tibet.

The conference was dismayed at the hardening of the positions of the Chinese Communist Party and the government authorities towards His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration and their refusal to engage in dialogue with them to resolve the issue of Tibet. It is deeply saddened by the many Tibetan men and women who have chosen the ultimate sacrifice –of taking their own lives—to express their yearning for freedom and determination to save the Tibetan identity and religion, to protest the destruction of both by the PRC, and call for His Holiness the Dalai Lama's return.

The conference was profoundly concerned about the devastating impact of China's policies on Tibet's fragile and globally vital environment, notably the damming of Asia's river, destructive mining practices and coercive settlement of nomads, all of which exacerbates the impacts of climate change and environmental destruction on the Tibetan Plateau and the surrounding regions.

The Conference expressed its complete and continuing solidarity with the non-violent struggle of the Tibetan people for freedom and for a restoration of their fundamental human rights. It commended the initiatives of parliamentarians and government officials of many countries who urged its leadership to resume dialogue with representatives of His holiness the Dalai Lama and to respond positively to his efforts to pursue a mutually beneficial solution through the Middle Way Approach, which calls for genuine autonomy for the whole Tibetan people.

The Conference considered the Chinese government's demand that His Holiness declare that Tibet has been a part of China since antiquity entirely unacceptable both because of the falseness of this historical claim and because this precondition

forms an obstacle to earnest negotiations. It reaffirms its conviction that Tibet has not historically been a part of China and that the Tibetan people have the right to determine their own destiny. The Conference emphasized that the PRC cannot obtain legitimacy for its rule over Tibet by attempting to force His Holiness and members of the international community to endorse its untruthful claims. It can only gain legitimacy for a role in Tibet from the Tibetan people themselves, through a mutually beneficial agreement and by implementing real changes in its policies and behavior towards the Tibetans in accordance with the latter's needs and aspirations. The conference consequently called on the Chinese government to unconditionally resume dialogue and on other governments to resist Chinese government pressure to endorse China's claim on Tibet, and to persuade China's leaders to abandon the shameless precondition.

The Conference commended the Tibetan community in exile and individual Tibetans for exercising their democratic rights in electing the leadership of the Central Tibetan Administration, the legitimate representative of the Tibetan nation and people.

Conference participants reaffirmed their commitment to supporting the Tibetan people in their struggle for freedom respect for their human rights and protection the plateau's environment. They fully supported His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration leadership's persistent call for earnest dialogue to resolve the Tibetan issue and will strengthen their efforts to press the international community to persuade the Chinese leadership to do so. The Tibetan Support Groups will continue their dedication until a satisfactory solution has been achieved.

# Back to the Simple Life: Sustainable Learning Process

Yuphin Prasertpornsrri



To develop the essentials of Buddhist teachings into values and benefits that nurture changes in self, community and society requires the “Power of Learning.” This means to study and foster the discovery of our inner potential. It is important to know oneself and create a beautiful connection in harmony with other beings. It is equally important to respect differences in cultural diversity and to employ local wisdom and culture. These are the values of Buddha-Dharma. These values can serve as the foundation of culture in the 21st century, which is currently struggling with the streams of modernism and consumerism, which have harmful impacts on the environment and rapidly deplete natural resources. Buddha-Dharma serves the personal, economic and social needs of human beings.

Buddha-Dharma suggests returning to a slow life with awareness of living in a beautiful society full of natural resources, food, water, forests and atmosphere that nurtures life. It further implies having inner assets that inspire the life forces of love, unity, inner happiness, and seeing the values in one’s work. These values strengthen the heart and mind.

The power of learning is a fulfilling path for both the individual and society. This path helps us touch and discover meaning in life with a foundation of Buddhist

thinking. This empowers us to study and alleviate social problems such as the environmental crisis, poverty and cultural problems.

The effort of understanding and developing society has been in practice for centuries. This path engenders local wisdom that has been passed on through the principles of self-sufficiency, simple living and guidance by Dharma to nurture inner growth. These tools foster the ability to analyze and understand the structure of society to most effectively fulfill the needs of the people.

Over the last four centuries, many Thai intellectuals and social activists have promoted unity between Buddhism and society, with the belief that there should be no separation between the two. This movement is called “Socially Engaged Buddhism.” It is based on Buddhist Dharma to enhance wisdom and seek social solutions. This path aims to reduce violence by nurturing hearts that are committed, attentive and faithful. This includes nurturing lives that are happy, meaningful, living in harmony, and sustainably preserving nature.

These values have become the foundation of socially engaged monks who use cultural knowledge as a foundation of local wisdom and way of life. The monks observe the problems of villagers and local communities. They are enthusiastic to play an important role in creating

a learning space to change communities. They help villagers understand the world, as well as personal problems, and issues in the family, group and community. Taken together, these values contribute towards creating an effective social and cultural structure.

The monks create activities that enhance society through powerful and practical innovations with a cultural foundation. This helps develop society through Buddhist practices such as forest ordination, the river longevity ritual in Nan province, the Dhammayatra walking project in Songkhla and Chaiyapoom provinces, truth savings in Trad province, Buddhist agriculture, Buddhachayandhi and self-sufficiency.

This learning process empowers learning for self, the group and society. It promotes valuable changes and helps the community gather greater strength. It also helps awaken people, gain wisdom, improve understanding, and deepen creativity to gain insights to solve their own problems through self-reliance. This is called the Buddhist way of improvement, it is a Buddhist-based method to study diverse issues for the establishment of a solid foundation of culture and wisdom.

Distributing knowledge into communities and society is a very empowering, meaningful and valuable experience. The objective of the “Porpiang Kiangtham bookmaking” activity has been to share the lessons learned, to spread knowledge, and to establish a learning center as a supportive social network. It strives to develop the learning network Bhuddhachayanti Porpiang Kiangtham at Buddhist temples. The project has collected valuable lessons from all twenty learning centers in the project.

Monks are the most important agents at each learning center. Their key role is to provide inspiration (chanddha). The monks in the Porpiang Kiangtham network have established learning power from their inner lives. This connects them with the environment, family and society. In this way, they instill the values of developmental work. They also demonstrate the factors of encountering adversity and poverty in their lives. This is at the heart of their learning experience that helps them go beyond problems and perceive the reality of life as it truly is. Their teachers have taught them to gain insight spiritually and to understand themselves deeply. This helps them truly know and understand the difficulties of the people and the communities. This awareness helps them determine the best method of applying Buddha-Dharma to support

others. Their purpose is to help villagers prosper and experience happiness and wisdom. In this way, they can discover themselves and be beneficial to the community and society.

The personal experiences of the monks are a reflection of their discipline and stability. This includes the practice of meditation that is most suitable for them. Meditation helps them know themselves better, understand society, have fun, and be joyful. It also fosters loving kindness and the ability to face the reality of society.

The second important lesson from this project is the way in which the monks improved the well-being of the people and community. The learning process helps people overcome their real life troubles with concrete developmental solutions. Some examples include organic rice farming, vegetable farming, saving group, planting trees in the forest and building dams. These projects help the locals become self-reliant in terms of physical needs and community connection, as well as living in harmony with nature. This leads to a simple life of happiness, and maximizes the potential of the villagers. It empowers the villagers to find solutions for themselves. For example, a project at Khlong Hae temple in Songkhla province requested elders to renew and promote the art and culture of the southern region. This created beauty and growth mentally and physically. It also established the connection between mind and wisdom. These are all key points of Buddhism for developing human potential.

The third lesson from this project is developing knowledge from wisdom. A practical example of this lesson is the preservation of the forest by the monk Prayuth Thammarat at Tamot temple in Patthalung province. The monk persuaded people in the community to make a pledge to take care of the local forest together. He used colorful cloths to wrap around the trees to pay respect to the forest spirits. This was a very effective tactic to unite the locals to protect the community forest and protect natural resources. The results from this activity reveal how spiritual belief can be employed as guidance. This particular spiritual belief resulted in reduction of deforestation. This example confirms that knowledge applied from local wisdom can resolve environmental problems. Additional spiritual activities that have been used to help protect nature include forest ordination, the water bank, walking the Dhammayadtra path.

Dharma knowledge and local wisdom are meaningful because of faith, thought and belief. More importantly, this knowledge already exists in the way of life and is correlated with the social and cultural context of Thailand. The lives of villagers and the community are being improved through a new theory of agriculture, community forests, local museums and volunteering. These projects demonstrate the connection between Buddhism-based knowledge and meaningful work to improve lives in the community. This also helps people understand the social role of monks as supporters of learning and raising awareness of the paradigm of sustainability through local and cultural contexts.

The process of learning through concrete work contributing to community and society is the fourth key lesson learned from this research. The findings reflect the important lessons of creatively solving problems such as deforestation, creating educational opportunities for children, and walking the Dhammayatra path to restore lives and nature. These projects demonstrate experiential learning through practice and reflection. Each individual involved in the project exchanges ideas and experiences in the search for a common and shared path to find

solutions. This knowledge is meaningful and valuable, it can be called firsthand knowledge gained through experimentation, trial and error. Additional internal and external factors serve as catalysts to generate deeper knowledge, to fix problems, to improve the quality of work in the community, and to improve each person individually. The process of combining context and practice parallels the connection of body and mind. This process leads to deep and spontaneous understanding.

The fifth lesson experienced through this research concerns the development and improvement of one's inner life. Concurrently, it comprises the effort to benefit the community and society. Social workers and socially engaged monks need to understand society. Meanwhile, they need to improve themselves as they nurture their inner lives. The childhood background of socially engaged monks includes the practice of meditation and other practices that guide them in their lives. Devotion to the well-being of others is called loving-kindness. This supports and connects people while working together, and helps them determine what is most important during conflict. This implies much more than just the words that are spoken. More importantly, it involves sincerity and trust in the friendship based on the foundation of siblings and family. In essence, it is an expansion of the heart.

Finally, the Porpiang Kiangtham project fulfilled and expanded the concept of Buddhism - A Way of Life. This research clearly shows that the Buddha's teachings are still powerful. They provide the type of education that can enable humans to become complete again. This education focuses on discovering the way of life, the reality of the community, and solutions for personal and social problems based on a philosophy of sustainable development. Promoting Dharma-based knowledge along with planting the seeds of meditation in the learning experience contribute to continual improvement in the inner lives of people. Metaphorically, this style of learning experience can be compared to the continual sharpening of a pencil in order to clearly write important messages to the people, community and society. This approach leads to profound awareness of reality and society. In turn, this process nurtures inner seeds for life as we work for community and society evolving into something ever more beautiful.

## Parichart Suwanbubbha

(1958-2016)



It is with very deep sadness that we share the news of the passing of Prof. Dr Parichart Suwanbubbha on the morning of 6 December 2016 in Bangkok, Thailand after a long battle with illness.

Parichart Suwanbubbha was a Vice Director at the Mahidol Research Center

for Peace Building and a famous, widely recognised mediator in Buddhist-Muslim conflicts in South Thailand and in national conflicts in Thailand.



# Celebration and Reflective Evaluation of 20 Years Grassroots Leadership Training in Myanmar

Asia Light Foundation, Wah Poe Yae monastery, Wah Poe Yae Village, Kangyigone village tract, Anisakhan, Pyin Oo Lwin, Mandalay Division, Myanmar  
25-27 November 2016



253 participants represented 57 community-based, faith based and civil society organizations from all parts of Myanmar, and 8 donor partner organizations, both local and international.

Overall, the event looked back into what we have been doing and where we are at present, political analysis of the country, and exploration of future possibilities and potentials for collaboration and movement building.

The first day focused on getting to know each other and building relationships through different activities for interaction. The participants represented alumni from GLT batch 2 to 10, and PLT batch 1, 2. All alumni present took part in the days' activities, participating together to share experience and draw learnings from reflection and analysis.

Most alumni continue to be active in the social field, across a wide diversity of activities. Many alumni are now working for land protection and land rights, human rights, small business, agriculture, awareness raising, livestock husbandry, microcredit, community banking (cow, pig, buffalo, rice, etc.) peace process, people empowerment, learning and teaching, consumerism and environmental protection, community schools and education, livelihood and food security, chemical reduced product making, organic farming,

media advocacy and newsletters, youth focus activities, women empowerment, interfaith interethnic and green movements.

The GLT and PLT alumni reflected the highlights of their learning from GLT/PLT. Despite many having attended more than 10 years ago, participants could reflect on what important learnings were gained from activities and lessons were for them during the training.

Overall, it was a fruitful exchange among the diverse generations of alumni, getting to know each other from different regions, ethnicities, religious groups, and learning from the work that each have been doing, as well as planning to do. This was a natural networking opportunity to build relationships and build solidarity among actors and organisations mostly working at the grassroots level with the most marginalized in society.

The second day focused on panel discussions, by looking back over twenty years of experiences, analyzing the present situation and looking towards the future. Panelists included Jane Rasbash and Pracha Hutanawatr (founders of the GLT programme), Dr. Kyaw Thu (Paung Ku), Min Zin (political analyst), U Thin Maung Than (political analyst), Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa (Thai social critic), Ko Tar (writer and social



activist).

All panelists reflected the difficult times twenty years ago when GLT/PLT started, where there was hardly space for people to come together to discuss and talk about social change. Mapping the work, GLT / PLT alumni started with different community initiatives for community resilience and over the years, these initiatives have grown, and now many alumni have become involved with many different social and political movements as activists, calling for social transformation and social change. A key point made emphasized that the political setting and present challenges increasingly call for peoples' participation and civil society organizations to become active agents for social transformation.

Questions arose on the need for the inclusion of religious institutions in the civil society sector, as they have a central role of public opinion making and respect. Other discussions focused on whether to choose between working only for community resilience or move on for social change and transformation. The discussion also highlighted the important role of CSOs, CBOs and NGOs in transformation and nation building.

On the third day discussions focused on the review and reflection of the GLT course as a feedback for GSMI/SEM, and for other alumni who have been implementing their own GLT style trainings in their target areas. Discussions also included exploration into the way forward for collective actions, collaboration and networking. Participants were grouped according to geographical settings and brought up suggestions

and propositions to the large group.

Before ending, the participants agreed together to work on the Stop War campaign relating to the existing armed conflicts in Kachin State, Northern Shan State and Rakhine State. This was especially prescient as escalation of conflict in Kachin and Northern Shan had stopped some alumni from being able to attend the event. People raised

their concerns and collaboratively developed a statement to send to the State Counsellor, the engaging armed troops, the Commander in-Chief, the Ministry of Defense, and the Joint Monitoring Committee. Posters were developed, photos taken, and statements released and sent to the above stakeholders. (Please see attached statement below).

### Feedback from participants

"It was so inspiring to be here and meet all these people, who are doing development work in other parts of the country. I am refreshed and my energy renewed." Female, Mon State

"After fifteen years working in the organization, right after the GLT, this is a very good time to meet all old friends and new. Learning that others also struggled a lot in their work encourages me to move on". A Kachin alumnus, Myitkyina

"I am very happy, encouraged and strengthened by this event, many friends shared their empathy with us, willing to support for what we have to do in the Naga region. Moreover, I got contact with new friends who are interested to come to our place, and I feel good about it." An alumnus from Naga area

"It is very interesting to see all these people around. They are very happy, so close and heartwarming. I don't know GLT but I am moved to see these people and their friendship, their sharing and their joy." A volunteer at the event

"I am very happy to see this big group of people from all parts of the country, the vast diversity of religious, ethnic, and geographic backgrounds. This is

very unique to see these people having this event in this place. It is the evidence of unity and union spirit". The abbot who hosted the event

## Overall Outcomes

This was the first time that GLT/PLT alumni have been able to gather together in such large numbers, and across geographical regions. This is by-large a result of the changing political landscape that has opened such a space. At the same time, it was recognized that the opening of this space for social action has caused increasing complexities when working at community level, so the gathering was an important opportunity to learn from each others' experiences and gain inspiration to continue the work, despite difficulties.

This was a key outcome of the overall gathering, the inspiration and energy gained by attending alumni to continue their work and re-establish connections in order to develop new activities and integrate community empowerment values into their existing work.

The gathering offered space to step back and reflect as a diverse national-level movement on what different alumni had been doing, their successes and challenges, and what needs to be improved in order to take their work forward towards just social transformation.

For inspiration, some alumni from original GLT batches were able to share experience, including those who had been working ardently for communities for almost 20 years with continuous effort and commitment. A great example was Sao Noi Sah Taw, who is now over 80 years old, and continues to work as a community development mobiliser in Kachin State.

The gathering was also a great opportunity to reconnect and also meet new friends, and use these connections to begin new activities, and help to support each other. Throughout the gathering it was obvious to see the strong bonds of kalyanamitta that had developed over the years within the different batches, and across GLT batches. It was inspirational to see how much collaboration had been informally occurring between alumni, both in their community work, and as supportive friends who help each other at a personal level.

Over the 3 days, there were many informal outcomes, especially the encouragement to continue

working within the current context which had produced increased complexities and challenges. It was good to see the recognition given to each other of challenges being faced, and to build synergy from this in order to keep working and continue to commit to support communities across the country to achieve happy and peaceful lives.

It was also observed how much GLT-type trainings and capacity building that integrates personal growth continue to be in demand. Some alumni are doing their own extension trainings to meet these needs, and GSMI continues to offer yearly GLT courses. Yet there is still demand beyond this to provide trainings to more marginalized communities.

The discussions on day 2 on advocacy from perspectives of civil society intellectuals and activists was very important to enable alumni to look beyond the ground work they are doing. At the same time, it offered these intellectuals (for example, Min Zin and U Thin Maung Than) the opportunity to hear the reality being experienced directly from the ground. As a result, alumni could also see a wider perspective, of their struggles and successes within a wider framework and contribution for social change. While there were no concrete action plans for direct implementation developed, geographical groups were set up and strategies discussed. These will provide GSMI ample space for follow up through their zone coordination structure for future supporting alumni collaborative activities in order to move the movement forward.

It was also encouraging to hear feedback from the group of volunteers from KMF (Kalyara Mitta Foundation) who also gained a lot of inspiration through being able to attend the gathering. This was an unexpected outcome that they also gained benefit and felt inspired by the long term commitment shown by all batches of GLT alumni, and their commitment for long term social transformation.

The gathering was an auspicious event, and as a result, a decision was made to hold the event bi-annually. Tentatively, the next gathering will take place in Kachin State in two years.

# Chuchawal Pringpuangkeo's Speech to congratulate the Spirit in Education Movement in Myanmar's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa on his 84<sup>th</sup> Birthday

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Saturday, 26 November 2016  
at Asia Light Monastery, Pyin Oo Lwin, Myanmar

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**Mingalaba Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa, U Mint,  
distinguished guests and all of my  
Kalayanamitras,**

First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the “Spirit in Education Movement” or GLT Project in Myanmar on their 20th Anniversary.

I am, tonight, so happy to be here with all of “my Kalayanamitras” friends in Myanmar. I also strongly believe that this auspicious occasion will certainly bring changes towards “a new world of democracy”. Why do I say so? Because I firmly believe that, at this moment, the world truly needs education that stems from the combined spirits of all people to establish their own “national main policies” for the purpose of governing their own countries. On the other hand, if we allow the politicians or political parties to act on our behalf in national main policy making, it will result in further division in all respects within the countries and probably the whole world. The United States of America is an evident example of today. You, no doubt, agree with me “how important this recommended solution is to the transformation of our world!”

Now, let me bring you again to how “Spirit in Education Movement” was formulated through the relationship between two prominent people:

During the time that my father, Dr. Sem Pringpuangkeo, was alive, he regularly met Ajarn

Sulak. Both of them have four prominent similarities. They constantly enjoy thinking, reading, writing and learning. The topics on which they exchanged their views were mostly related to the principles and practices of Buddhism as well as the learning of new issues created by the current changes across the world and in our society. Another similarity which I cannot avoid to mention is that both of them have visionary leadership as they always look for innovation, alternative thinking, alternative intelligence as well as civic development for trial with our society.

It is absolutely strange that although both Dr. Sem and Ajarn Sulak have some outstanding similarities, they, at the same time, are quite different as well. Dr. Sem was a government officer, and would always comply with government's rules and regulations. However, when changes were required for any circumstances, he dared to make major changes, for example, he played a major role in the bureaucratic revolution of the Thai Ministry of Public Health about 40 years ago when he served as the Public Health Minister. For Ajarn Sulak, he has never been a government officer. He, therefore, was free from regulatory framework and had the freedom of thinking liberally. Nevertheless, both Dr.



Sem and Ajarn Sulak were able to work closely and combined different ideas together for the development of our nation and globalization. This is the significant evidence of their mutual respect under the basis of their leadership through their wisdom and integrity.

Every year on Ajarn Sulak's birthday, Dr. Sem always visited Ajarn Sulak at his house and gave him his best wishes. He emphasized that he would like Ajarn Sulak to be his successor in inheriting his wisdom. This was due to the fact that Dr. Sem grew older, and he might one day pass away first. Although both of them have approximately 20 years age difference, they were always good and close friends who normally fulfilled their thoughts to each other, think and work together, and deliver exhortation to each other, while I, myself, only occasionally met and worked with Ajarn Sulak.

As my father had passed away almost 6 years ago, I therefore had opportunities to see Ajarn Sulak more often. Although Ajarn Sulak is just 7 years older than me, I do respect him as my father's close friend. I have chances to learn new things which have been

created by the spirit of Ajarn Sulak, and subsequently join him in passing them on to our youth as well as our middle-aged friends who, in the future, will definitely become the important engines in developing our globalization.

On the occasion of Ajarn Sulak's 84<sup>th</sup> birthday, I would like to wish him the best of health filled with a bright and persistent spirit. May he live a long life for more than a century, and join all of us who are gathering here tonight in everlasting achievement of "peace and liberty" for our fellow mankind.

Lastly, I would like to use this opportunity to strongly emphasize that when good-hearted people get together like the proverb which says "Birds of a feather flock together", respect for each other will follow, and it will eventually bring PEACE and LIBERTY to the whole world.

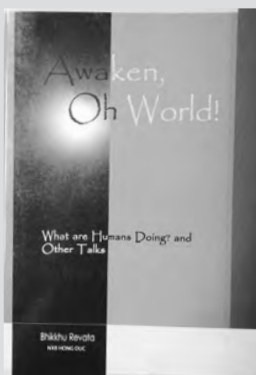
Thank you very much everybody

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Babasaheb Dr.B.R. Ambedkar on Buddhism

**Compiled:** Mangesh Dahiwal, Pradip Bansode, Ravi Shende  
**Publisher:** Jambudvipa Trust



Awaken, Oh World!

**Author:** Bhikkhu Revata



Towards Liberation: From Social Emancipation to Aesthetic Fulfillment

**Painting:** Savi Sawarkar  
**Curated:** Maitrveer Nagarjuna

# We Love Inle Lake Green Youth Movement

Jane Rasbash  
Programme Consultant



The forest was cool, and there was a sacred atmosphere as the young people led us in deeper and showed us the shrine to honour the indigenous water spirits and the cave where the water came out of the mountain. The youth leaders were honored to take us on the long walk to the forest spring that supplied two villages with fresh, clean water. Along the way they stopped and sliced off bamboo shoots for a tasty curry and cut a large leaf that served as an indigenous umbrella when it started to rain. They pointed out herbs that grew naturally, mushrooms and leaves that were used as salad. The forest supermarket was open and all types of useful items were freely available.

Kalyana Mitta Foundation (KMF) in Myanmar run empowering programmes for youth on sustainable livelihood, community engagement and care for nature. In August 2016, mid term of the 3 year 'We Love Inle Lake' programme, I visited several target villages in the Nyaung Shwe (Inle Lake) area and further downstream in Pekhon. It was inspiring to see how engaged the young people were after attending project activities such as the 3 month eco-farming training or shorter disaster risk reduction (DRR) and eco-social enterprise (ESE) training. I also joined the inaugural event of the eco-café in Nyaung Shwe that Ecosocial Enterprise trainees and the local youth group are setting up.

Water sources drying up because of deforestation is a problem for several villages in Nyaung Shwe and Pekhon village tracts. The diversity that supplies natural food, medicines and vegetables is lost as well as an abundant water supply. The DRR training has raised awareness of the connections between deforestation and clean water, bringing renewed respect for the forest. On World Environment Day in June, several groups of young people planted trees. In Kathe village, where we visited the water source, around 90 youth from nearby communities joined this event. A longer-term dream is to plant trees all around the village for shade and shelter from storms.

In Kyaut village upland Nyaung Shwe, joyful youth in green tee shirts welcomed us with drums and cymbals as we arrived at the village after a perilous taxi ride along dirt tracks and a walk through the forest. They are part of around 40 very active youth, including 3 ecofarming, 4 ecosocial enterprise and

26 DRR alumni. The young people made biscuits and raised funds for the t-shirts they proudly wore the day we arrived. The youth aged from around 15 / 30 are campaigning on plastic and small-scale waste management. The ecofarming alumni have started a communal village plot for organic vegetables and upland rice cultivation, and the ESE alumni are planning to establish food processing facilities to add value to some of their produce (e.g. ginger candy, pumpkin candy). There is no piped water to the village, and the stream has been reduced to a muddy, dried up gully. It is a 30-minute walk away to the water source where villagers go to collect water daily. 325 children have no access to running water. There is a muddy pool in the village where people and animals bathe together. The village has been identified as one of the DRR target villages, which is currently vulnerable to the risk of drought due to deforestation. A preliminary training in the village started the process of establishing a DRR plan and associated activities. The charismatic village tract leader of 8 villages was very supportive of the youth and interested in resolving the water source / supply issues for the village. He was 'very happy the youth are so engaged working on DRR, NRM and Ecofarming, which will give hope for the next generation'. The project is working on a participatory process with village leaders and youth on a proposal to the Inle Lake Trust to bring piped water to the village.

In Kontu, a village in the mountains in Pekhon, San Naing, an Ecofarming alumni has been inspired to change the attitudes and practices of farmers. They are now more aware of environmental issues, and there is a willingness growing to move away from shifting cultivation. He is working with local villagers in 62 households to set up a 30-acre tribal community forest. The plan is for long-life plants (e.g. coffee, fruit trees, avocado etc.). This strategy will support a claim for land rights for the villagers. They are also monitoring the land to stop land grabbing and encroachment, which is a real risk in these areas. A longer- term plan is to grow organic

fruit and vegetables for income generation for villagers.

Konwha in Pekhon has many active alumni. At an elevation of around 1400 meters, this beautiful mountain community is emerging as an ecovillage. This village has Buddhist and Christian inhabitants, and the young people are joining together regardless of religion in their activities. There are now 6 young male and female farmers who have joined the 3-month ecofarming training. There is a large natural farming demonstration plot in the village abundant with beans, corn and many other crops. We picked fresh green beans from the vine and enjoyed them that evening for dinner. The group will grow long life plants and upland paddy in the longer term. They are applying eco- farming techniques using seed selection, bombing, composting and natural pest management. Upland farmers in Pekhon are already applying chemical free practices so they are keen to learn and use the techniques the young farmers are implementing. It is very encouraging to see that all the villagers are now practicing bokhasi (fermented organic matter) composting. This kind of informal extension is an unexpected outcome of the project. Young people are entering so enthusiastically into natural farming is a good sign for the future.

In the Inle Lake area Taungchay Demo Plot is a great example of lowland, integrated agriculture. Three of the ecofarming alumni are working together on land that belongs to one of them. Even though they started just a few months ago, they are already growing 120 varieties of plants including harbor plants. This plot is at the edge of a bamboo forest and the rice field, where the land is slightly raised so that it does not flood. Many tourists cycle along the road quite close to this plot, and the alumni invite them to see what they are doing, and offer them a cup of tea and organic banana. We also dreamed of providing the eco-cafe in Nyaung Shwe with organic bananas for pancakes, as tourists like banana pancakes a lot ! wguke we were at the demo plot two youth wandered up while we were talking. They were curious to know about how to manage the pests without chemicals - they pointed out that some of the leaves

of the vegetables growing had holes in them. The youth were told by young ecofarmers to use some local bitter herbs as natural pesticides, and some other techniques that they had learned. Locals farmers were also curious to know of pest management without chemicals, and may be convinced when they see healthy crops, especially in terms of the reduction in inputs that lead to lesser expenses.

Further downstream at Puche in view of Pekhoh Lake, there is another demo plot of five acres of wet paddy, worked on by two Ecofarming alumni Lay Reh and Taw Reh. The plot has been rented from the owner for 3 years for 10 bags of rice per year. The expected yield in a good year is 60 bags. This demo plot has reduced usage of chemicals for farming, rather than the application of 100% ecofarming techniques. This is because, although the young farmers are not using chemicals the plot is in the middle of many other plots that use chemicals in farming, which results in chemicals entering into the main water source. This has resulted in chemicals entering into the demo plot. The two farmers will have 25 bags of rice each, and 25 will be saved for the following year. The alumni could not yet convince their families to pass over their family plots to organic, naturally grown rice, this demo plot will be a chance to show them how this can be done. The other farmers in the vicinity are also curious to know of growing organic rice.

In addition to all these alumni activities, the project team is getting engaged in advocacy for the natural resource management of the broader watershed area. This kind of advocacy work is new to Myanmar. The project Director Bo Bo Lwin mentioned, 'The Environmental Conservation Department in Myanmar has been recently formed and is still quite weak, so we need have a strong network of young green youth circles with ecological concepts for stronger movement in the future.'

In both Inle and Pekhoh Lakes, there are trust funds that come from the entrance fees tourists pay, and these are available for local projects that care for the environment. There has been little uptake so far as local organisations are uncomfortable to work with government funding. The Natural Resource

Management coordinator is currently chairing a group of Civil Society Organisations in the Inle area, advocating for more transparency and community inclusion for Inle Trust funded projects. Downstream, the Project Manager has been approached to sit on the board of the Pekhoh Trust Fund. In both areas, there have been invitations from the trusts to KMF to submit proposals to improve natural resource management. There are also several community-based projects currently being explored that reduce expenditure, increase community self-reliance and care for the environment.

The visit was inspiring as the positive energy and entrepreneurial spirit of the young people was infectious. It is notable that farmers are most likely to shift to natural farming practices by observing and seeing how ecofarming works. I imagine the interest will increase as the demo plots have their first successful seasons. The farmer circles are taking a less formal approach than expected. Rather than having organized meetings, farmers finish their work for the day and come and share a cup of tea with the demo plot workers, curious to see what is happening and what they are doing. In Pekhoh, where the upland farming is already using less amount of chemicals the farmers are more open to applying composting and other techniques, as they are able to see the added value the young people are gaining with their crops. The DRR training inspired many youth towards a green agenda, strengthening local youth groups and building some new ones. The young people were excited about linking with the eco café by providing fresh naturally grown produce and added value items such as jam and preserves. Many are already embarking on modest natural resource management efforts in the villages with small-scale waste management and tree planting. These activities without need of outside resources are a good indication for a Green Youth Movement in Inle and Pekhoh that will sustain beyond the project term.

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# How to Banish the Gloom from the King's Subjects in the Tenth Reign



Chao Phraya into a dangerously polluted and garbage-filled river. The rate of coastal erosion is alarming. Higher and higher concrete dykes along the river are being built to prevent floods. More precisely, Bangkok's commercial heartlands are protected from floods by keeping communities in less commercially important areas inundated.

If groups of ordinary people join hands to oppose the river promenade as well as similar projects and demand the government to clean up the Chao Phraya and dredge the canal networks, would responding positively to these demands not enhance the government's popularity? Surely, it is not beyond the power of the National Council for Peace and Order and the government to do so. More importantly, would such an act not express authentic loyalty to the new King?

The waterways were central to our culture and livelihood since the time of Ayutthaya. The Thonburi and Rattanakosin Kingdoms had followed closely Ayutthaya's footsteps in this matter. Protecting the Chao Phraya is thus rooted in this appreciation. We began paving our canals with concrete and neglecting our river systems when we started to look down on our ancestors and worshipped farangs instead. Adapting age-old wisdom to the present context may provide a key to mitigate the crisis of ecological degradation.

Puey Ungphakorn was on the right track when he spearheaded a program involving Thammasat, Kasetsart and Mahidol Universities to improve the Mae Klong River and its riverside communities. This pilot program aimed to cultivate strong and self-reliant communities. It was hoped that once the Mae Klong communities became more self-reliant, the pace of rural to urban migration would be moderated. If the project proved successful, Puey intended to extend it to other riverside communities in other parts of the kingdom, including the more

Many people are worried about whether the new King would be respected and loved by his subjects like the late King, whether the monarchy would be stable and durable well into the future, whether it is possible to truly limit the power of the monarch under the constitution in order to prevent the return of absolutism in various guises, and so on.

Although these big questions are important, I don't think that they are truly beneficial for us—ordinary people who are outside the domains of power. Nevertheless, we must not be disempowered. We should organize and act collectively to improve the quality of life of ordinary people in the kingdom. This is possible if we rely on wisdom and the correct means and methods.

Let's start with those of us who are opposing the construction of a promenade along the Chao Phraya River. We are struggling against major adverse impacts on the environment and the livelihood of numerous riverside communities—all seen as the necessary price of progress, development or economic growth. Decades of development have turned the

impoverished Northeast. The simple idea was to make the King's subjects glow with happiness. Of course, Puey's initiative didn't have any lasting impact. It had to give way to Western-style development, which was based on the latest technology, the construction of mega-dams, and so on. Look at the Pak Moon dam as a case in point. The environment was destroyed to build this dam. The local communities were uprooted. To this day, successive governments have yet to provide compensation to the dislocated villagers. This pattern can also be seen in the construction of almost every dam, including the Bhumibol Dam—the first big dam in the kingdom.

To sum up, my first point is that building a collective subject that questions the blind faith in mainstream economics and development and the imperative of economic growth is one of the best gifts to bestow upon the new King. It is more precious than lavishing him with worldly treasures and sweet words.

My next point, which is equally important, is on how to uphold the dignity of farmers, to ensure that they have equal dignity to the middle class. In this respect, we still have a lot to learn from His Serene Highness Sithiporn Kridakara (sometimes also known as the Farmer Prince), who had undertaken pioneering work in agriculture in the kingdom since the Sixth Reign. When Puey was governor of Bank of Thailand, the prince reminded him that the agricultural sector constitutes the real economy, not finance. Puey collaborated with the prince to promote the dignity of farmers in Thai society. There's a Thai saying that farmers are the backbone of the country. Building a stronger and healthier backbone at the outset of the new reign will definitely brighten up the faces of the King's subjects. Strengthening the backbone also entails confronting the powers-that-be, locally and internationally, that is undermining it.

Pridi Banomyong's "Draft Economic Plan" (1933) is perhaps the first official document in which farmers are treated as equals to government officials. In this plan, farmers would get pensions after retirement like civil servants. The plan would pave the way for the emergence of a welfare state in Siam.

Unfortunately, Pridi was accused of being communist, and the plan was scrapped. Puey too was ultimately condemned as a communist stooge. Were Sithiporn not a prince, he would have suffered the same tragic fate as Pridi and Puey.

It is high time to recognize the greatness of these three individuals. Let me single out Pridi Banomyong. He laid the groundwork for constitutional monarchy in the kingdom. When Pridi was Regent, he protected the monarchy from dictatorial powers that sought to undermine it. He also consulted with Buddhadasa Bhikkhu on how to reorganize Thai democracy along the lines of "Dhammic Socialism" in order to concretely overcome craving, and cultivate contentment in economy and society. Note the similarities to King Rama IX's concept of "sufficiency economy." The previous King of Bhutan had endorsed the replacement of Gross Domestic Product by Gross National Happiness. We too should learn from this initiative.

If we are able to unlearn the Wrong View promoted by farangs, we will have the possibility of reaffirming the Right View and travel down the Noble Eightfold Path. This is the real Path to social and personal happiness. This is the real Path to overcome suffering—social, personal, and environmental.

Overcoming suffering requires mindfulness and wisdom. We must not rely solely on the brain. Rather, the heart is even more important. This entails mindful breathing. In other words, through mindful breathing the heart will learn to tame the brain. The more we are able to reduce self-attachment, to see the importance of others (people, animals and the natural environment) and to realize how we are all interdependent, the better we will be able to cease or minimize suffering. This will be the ultimate gift worthy of the new King as well as the real index of our loyalty.

Long live the King.

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Written on 29 November 2016, immediately after learning that Parliament had invited the Crown Prince to be the new King

# Awakening our Energy: A Buddhist Perspective

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David Loy

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**T**oday, no issue is more important than climate change, which is the most urgent aspect of an ecological crisis that threatens civilization as we know it, and perhaps even our survival as a species. Reliable scientific research has determined that between two-thirds and four-fifths of the fossil fuels (oil, coal, and natural gas) already available to us cannot be used without catastrophic results. At the recent COP21 Paris conference, governments acknowledged that most of those fuels must remain in the ground, unburned, if we are to avoid global temperature increases that will far exceed the 1.5°C limited endorsed by that agreement. As the Bank of England governor, Mark Carney, declared: “the vast majority of reserves are unburnable.” At present, however, most of the energy we consume is produced by fossil fuels, and the powerful corporations that market and use those polluting fuels are working hard to keep it that way.

What does Buddhism offer that might help us understand this situation and respond to it?

Needless to say, global warming is not a topic addressed in traditional Buddhist texts or practices, because Buddhism originated and developed in pre-modern Asian cultures where that was not an issue. Nevertheless, Buddhism includes many teachings that are quite relevant, because they have implications that can be applied to our new predicament. When we understand the basic teachings shared by all Buddhist traditions, we can see how they support the importance and urgency of switching from fossil fuels to renewable sources of energy such as solar, wind, and hydrothermal.

The most important concept in Buddhism is *dukkha*, usually translated as “suffering.” Shakyamuni, the historical Buddha who lived about 2400 years ago, emphasized that what he had to teach was *dukkha* and how to end it. The earliest Buddhist texts distinguish different types of *dukkha*, but at the core of our suffering is the common delusion that I am separate from other

people and from the rest of the world – which implies the further delusion that my well-being is separate from the well-being of other people and the rest of the world. Thus this teaching also emphasizes our interdependence, that all of us are not only interconnected but actually dependent on each other for our very existence. “We are here to overcome the illusion of our separateness,” according to the influential Vietnamese teacher Thich Nhat Hanh. That means realizing not only our intrinsic relationship with other people, but also our nonduality with the ecosystems of the earth. The biosphere is not just an environment (where we happen to live) but a living organism that we are part of. We are not “in” nature, we are nature, one of its many mutually dependent species.

This means that we cannot damage the earth’s intricate web of life without injuring ourselves – which is exactly what we are doing. Climate change is only part of a larger ecological challenge that our species is responsible for, including the extinction of many plant and animal species, but it is an essential part of that

crisis -- the most urgent aspect of it -- and already causing vast amounts of suffering. To cite only a few examples: increasing carbon in the atmosphere has already melted enough polar ice to swamp low-lying Pacific islands and force their residents to abandon their homes; warmer ocean water is producing more destructive storms, as well as damaging coral reefs; weather patterns are becoming destabilized, causing more extreme droughts and floods. All the world's coastal cities are threatened by higher sea levels. The number of "climate refugees" is rapidly increasing.... And these problems will continue to worsen as long as we remain dependent on fossil fuels.

In Buddhist terms, all of this involves a massive increase in *dukkha* – not only for humanity, but for many other species and ecosystems as well. What do Buddhist teachings say about the causes and the end of suffering? And are those teachings applicable to this burgeoning, now global issue?

In addition to the problem of delusion, mentioned above, the earliest Buddhist texts emphasize the role of *tanha* "craving" – in other words, our desires. Traditionally, these have been understood in individual terms: one's personal sense of being a separate self, and the insatiable desires of such a self, end up causing suffering. In accordance with this, until quite recently Buddhist institutions and practitioners in Asia seldom engaged in movements for social justice or environmental preservation. This restriction was probably unavoidable: no pre-modern Buddhist society was democratic, and Buddhists had to mind their own business to avoid authoritarian repression. Today, however, the globalization of Buddhism, along with modern developments in many Buddhist nations, have opened up new possibilities for the tradition, and such transformations are consistent with Buddhism's emphasis that everything (including Buddhism!) is impermanent and change is inevitable. These include the development of a more socially engaged Buddhism that is more aware of what might be called social *dukkha*: the suffering caused not by one's individual karma but by social institutions. There is no better example of that than the ecological crisis, and most urgently the challenge of climate change.

An increasing number of Buddhist teachers

now acknowledge that delusion and craving also function collectively, and have even become institutionalized. Our species has created a global civilization that feels increasingly separate from the natural world, treating it as little more than a collection of resources to be exploited for our own benefit. Craving, in particular, has been institutionalized into a ravenous consumerism where individuals never consume enough, and the economy is never big enough. Why is more and more always better, if it can never be enough? From a Buddhist perspective, these are the root of the ecological crisis, as well as at the heart of modern discontent and anxiety. But these issues cannot be addressed without finding ways to alleviate the most urgent issue of all: the still-increasing levels of carbon in the atmosphere, largely due to the continued use of fossil fuels.

Given these basic Buddhist principles, it is not difficult to derive perspectives on energy conversion that can be translated into policy recommendations. The following suggestions are not the only ones possible, but they are consistent with the broad Buddhist concern to minimize the suffering of individuals, groups, and the other species of our interdependent biosphere:

- Due to the various types of suffering caused by the present use of fossil fuels, and the vast increase in suffering that will occur if we continue to burn them, we must convert to clean, renewable sources of energy, as quickly as possible.
- Amazingly, the governments of many nations, including the United States, still subsidize the extraction of fossil fuels, despite the fact that fossil fuel corporations are among the most profitable in human history. Such benefits should be immediately repealed, and in their place subsidies should be provided to aid our transformation to an economy that runs on clean energy.
- A study released in June 2015 by Stanford engineering professor Mark Jacobson demonstrated that we already have the technologies needed to completely convert all 50 states of the United States to 80% renewable energy by 2030, and to 100% by 2050.



Since atmospheric carbon levels are already very high – the highest they have been since at least 800,000 years ago -- it is important that this conversion become one of our highest priorities, and be fully completed by 2050.

- As an important intermediary to support this transformation, governments should impose a carbon tax, which could be gradually increased as cleaner sources of energy become more readily available. Fossil fuels should be taxed at source, and, to minimize the burden that this would impose on working-class and middle-class families, tax refunds should be provided to families that earn below a certain threshold.
- Although the issue of how much global temperatures should be allowed to rise is controversial, the 2015 Paris Agreement acknowledges that a 2 degree C. increase (since 1951-1980) is too high, given the disastrous effects of the smaller increases that have already happened. Participating nations agreed to aim at a maximum increase of 1.5 degrees C – which may soon be impossible, given the amount of carbon already in the atmosphere – and it is important to support efforts that aim at that limit.
- There is also the issue of employment losses that will occur with the conversion to clean energy. New policies should take account of this by providing job retraining and other programs to improve economic conditions for those who may be adversely affected.
- Historically, modern developed nations such as the US and Western Europe have emitted the most carbon into the atmosphere, and in the process have benefited the most economically. Ironically, poorer nations in Africa and south Asia have emitted the least carbon, but some of them are presently suffering more from climate change, and stringent limits on their future emissions threaten the economic development that their populations naturally seek. This means that wealthier nations such as the United States have a responsibility to

aid them, financially and technologically, not only to help them achieve carbon-emission limits, but also to assist in development projects that promote their health and well-being – and, not incidentally, the well-being of their ecosystems.

- To promote these changes, institutions such as churches and private schools should divest themselves from all investments in fossil fuel corporations, and invest instead in clean energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydrothermal. The fossil fuel industry remains extremely profitable and extraordinarily powerful; its ability to influence our political institutions is enormous, and we cannot naively expect that the usual political channels available to concerned citizens – for example, voting, writing letters to elected representatives, and so forth – will be sufficient to bring about the change of direction that is needed. It is essential to emphasize that this disinvestment is a crucial moral issue as well as an economic one, in order to “delegitimize” continued reliance on polluting sources of energy. Institutions such as churches and private schools should not continue to profit from the use of fossil fuels. Whether or not this has much effect on the share prices of such companies, it is important as part of an educational process that focuses on how crucial the issue of energy conversion is.
- Other nonviolent measures may become necessary and, in my opinion, they are compatible with Buddhist teachings: for example, resistance movements such as that against the Keystone pipeline, and more recently the Standing Rock encampment protesting the Dakota pipeline.

In such ways, the primary concern of Buddhist teachings and practice – to understand and alleviate dukkha suffering – can be applied to understand and respond to the greatest challenge of our time.

October 2016



# Nothing Stands Between Us—Breaking Down Barriers Between People

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Hozan Alan Senauke  
Nagaloka, 13 October 2016

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The Indian constitution, a visionary document of justice and equality, was confirmed by India's new parliament on January 26 of 1950. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who led the drafting of this complex document, played a central role in establishing a government of liberty, equality, fraternity, and justice, by which India to this day stands proudly as the world's most populous democracy. In the remaining years of his life, Dr. Ambedkar turned to writing *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, and moved towards conversion to Buddhism as his chosen religious path. On October 14, 1956, he received the Three Refuges and Five Precepts. Then, in a radical act, he turned and offered them—along with Twenty-Two Vows renouncing Hinduism, superstition, and other oppressive beliefs—to 400,000 Dalit followers at Nagpur's diksha ground. This conversion movement, by which one takes on the Dhamma and sheds an old caste identity, continues. On December 6, 1956, Dr. Ambedkar passed away, just three days after completing his legacy, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*.

The messages of the Indian constitution and *The Buddha and His Dhamma* run on parallel tracks: secular governance and spiritual liberation. They may appear separate, but Babasaheb Ambedkar understood the Buddha's teachings to embody the exactly same principles of liberty, equality, fraternity, and justice as the constitution he wrote.

The barriers we feel to exist between people don't just seem to exist. They begin, of course with mind, from which flows all thoughts, fears, and self-centeredness. From delusive thinking we turn our fears into oppressive systems and institutions. From delusive words and deeds we continuously create societies, communities, and institutions. As they are built on delusion, these communities and institutions often divide us from each other, privileging one group and giving them the power to exploit and

oppress others. Dr. Ambedkar described this as a "system of graded (or degraded) inequality." As animals, we have a hard-wired instinct to protect our existence. As mammals, we instinctively form various kinds of communities, tribes, and societies for the same. We readily band together as family, clan, caste, or race, "us" against "them." 20th century philosopher Martin Buber spoke of "I and Thou." Buber's "I"—much like the Buddha's "I"—is the separate self that views other people and beings as objects, as things to be used and discarded.

But as human beings and as potential Buddhas, we also have the ability to see ourselves connected to all beings. This is Buber's "Thou," a relationship of subtle and infinite interdependence, complete subjectivity, the essence of Dhamma, as expressed in the Mahayana image of Indra's Net, in

which each of the countless jewel mirrors reflects each other jewel. Our potential is clearly expressed in the Bodhisattava's vow: Beings are numberless; I vow to save them.

In the United States we see barriers between a shrinking majority of so-called white people (like myself) and what we awkwardly call "people of color" —those of Black, Hispanic, and Asian background. If you follow the U.S. news, more than two-hundred twenty African American men have been killed by police this year, an average of almost one shooting daily. Even a hundred and fifty years after the end of slavery, despite all legal and constitutional protections, barriers of race hatred and fear in the U.S. persist and are constructed of deadly violence. Across India, the barriers of caste are likewise dangerous despite constitutional protections, with accounts of terrible caste and gender-based atrocities reported daily.

The roots and branches from which we create social and personal barriers have always been with us. They are the Three Poisons of Greed, Hatred, and Delusion. The good news is that Buddha's teachings offer an antidote, a way to restore the harmony and balance of all beings.

In Book 3 of *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, Babasaheb Ambedkar speaks of saddhamma, which serves to purify the mind and transform society. These two dimensions of saddhamma are inseparable and mutually creative in our lives. Saddhamma means "the good law" or "one's own dhamma." Here, Dr. Ambedkar offers an integrated vision of spiritual practice and social liberation. Internal and external barriers fall away. He is very clear that:

1. "Dhamma to be Saddhamma must break down barriers between Man and Man" (or Person and Person, Man or Woman).
2. "Dhamma to be Saddhamma must Teach that Worth and not Birth is the Measure of Man."
3. "Dhamma to be Saddhamma must Promote Equality between Man and Man."

To this last point, Babasaheb Ambedkar writes:

Men are born unequal. Some are robust, others are weaklings. Some have more intelligence, others have less or none. Some have more capacity, others have less...All have to enter into the struggle for existence. In the struggle for existence, if inequality be recognized as the rule of the game, the weakest will always go to the wall.

He asks:

Should this rule of inequality be allowed to be the rule of life?...What society wants is the best, and not the fittest. This was the viewpoint of the Buddha, and it was because of this that he argued that a religion which does not preach equality is not worth having. Is not that a better religion which promotes the happiness of others simultaneously with the happiness of oneself, and tolerates no oppression? The religion of the Buddha is perfect justice, springing from a man's own meritorious disposition.

These points are the spiritual basis of our social practice. The question, of course, is what is the practice itself?

Dr. Ambedkar explains that Metta/Lovingkindness, Karuna/Compassion, Sila/Ethics, and Prajna/Wisdom are all necessary. The principles are straightforward, but the practices are difficult. In this world where someone might insult us, or beat us, steal, and even kill those we love, how shall we respond in order not to build the barriers between us higher and wider? Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh writes that we must "love the unlovable."

When we come into contact with the other person, our thoughts and actions should express our mind of compassion, even if that person says and does things that are not easy to accept. We practice in this way until we see clearly that our love is not contingent upon the other person being lovable.

— from *Peace Is Every Step*

How can we accomplish this? We rely on meditation as our foundation. It is true that Babasaheb Ambedkar was critical of some Buddhist monks he saw as exemplifying passive meditation ignoring the suffering realities of injustice and inequality. But meditation we undertake as engaged Buddhists is a practice of deep and wide awareness, not passive acceptance. It is the acupuncture needle of Dhamma, bringing forth sila, samadhi, and prajna. In concrete terms meditation is something that fully engages each person's mind and body, even as we sit in the middle of personal, interpersonal, and transpersonal manifestations of pain, grief, and loss.

As we sit cross-legged (or in a chair, or as we walk upright), we become aware of each thought, feeling, and physical sensation as it arises and as it falls away. Moment by moment we can see the nature of impermanence and of interdependence. When we understand the impermanent nature of our own mind and how quickly suffering and clinging can arise, we have a compassionate sense how the minds of others work. It helps us to see how each person builds barriers between self and other out of our own fears and self-centered concerns. As our meditation practice deepens, we find ourselves little by little letting go of our deepest fears.

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Meditation is a beginning, but it is not the whole of the dhamma as Babasaheb Ambedkar understood it. As I quoted above, "Dhamma to be Saddhamma must break down barriers between" each person and between each community. As early as 1936, speaking of conversion to the Bombay Mahar Conference, Dr. Ambedkar said:

I tell you all very specifically, religion is for man and not man for religion. For getting human treatment, convert yourselves. Convert for getting organized. Convert for becoming strong. Convert for securing equality. Convert for getting liberty. Convert so that your domestic life should be happy.

Dr. Ambedkar was not yet pointing directly to Buddhist conversion, but to deep human values. Conversion means dropping violence, privilege, and destructive self-hating, turning towards basic goodness. Babasaheb Ambedkar found that basic goodness is abundantly present in Buddha's way. That is why he chose to convert.

The Buddha's social teachings are completely clear about the equality of all beings, and each person's capacity for awakening. Throughout the Pali Suttas and, of course, in all the Mahayana Sutras, he enumerated teachings for liberation not just in our meditation, but in our lives. The Eightfold Path guides our daily life. Each of the Five Precepts instructs us in our relationships with each other. There are the Four Brahmaviharas, Six Paramitas, Seven Factors of Enlightenment, Thirty-Seven Wings to Awakening. For many years I have tried to follow one short teaching, derived from early Buddhism's "Sangaha Sutta" (AN 4:32), the "Four Means of Embracing Others":

Monks, there are these four means of embracing others. What four? Giving or generosity/dana, kind speech/piyavaca, beneficial effort/atthacariya, and cooperation or equality/samanattata. These are the four means of embracing others.

Giving, endearing speech,  
beneficent conduct, and impartiality  
under diverse worldly conditions,  
as is suitable to fit each case:  
these means of embracing others  
are like the linchpin of a rolling chariot.

If there were no such means of embracing others,  
neither mother nor father  
would be able to obtain esteem  
and veneration from their child.

But these means of embracing exist,  
and therefore the wise respect them;  
thus they attain to greatness



and are highly praised.

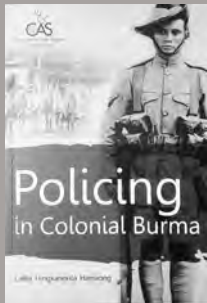
In the Mahayana tradition, this teaching appears in the Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra, the Lotus Sutra, the Vimalakirti Sutra and other well-known texts. In my own Soto Zen tradition, these four practices are presented by our 13th Century ancestor Eihei Dogen in his fascicle “Bodaisatta Shishobo” or “the Bodhisattva’s Four Embracing Dharmas.” Giving, Kind Speech, Beneficial Action and Cooperation are methods for connecting with each other, even with those who treat us badly. Because we are truly not separate from each other, such teachings allow us to become free from the three poisons; of greed, hatred, and delusion. When we use the word “embrace,” barriers between people disappear. As I

have written elsewhere: to embrace is to encircle. I wrap my arms around you; you put your arms around me. To embrace is to unify, to make one of two. Seen from the perspective of the Buddhas, two beings are one.

The barriers we live behind will not simply disappear. They exist in our minds and in all aspects of society. Each of us must do the work as if the whole world’s suffering is our responsibility. Because it is. The Dhamma provides the tools by which we chip away at barriers—those within our selves and those between us. But remember: we must rely on each other. We are never alone. Nothing stands between us.

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## Recommended Readings



Policing in Colonial Burma

**Author:** Lalita Hingkanonta Hanwong  
**Publisher:** Center for ASEAN Studies, Chiang Mai University



Taishan Think Tank 2015

**Publisher:** Shandong Taishan Tourism Planning & Design Institute



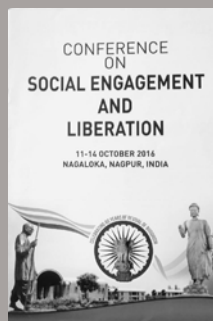
Leaving No Child Behind  
2014-2015 Year Book

**Edited:** Rev. Fred Nyabera, Ms. Nyambura Gichuki, Billington Mwangi Gituto  
**Publisher:** Arigatou International Nairobi



Revival of Buddhism in India

**Publisher:** Nagaloka Foundation, Jambudvīpa



Conference On Social Engagement And Liberation

**Publisher:** Nagaloka Foundation



Tradition & Faith-Oriented Insider Mediators (TFIMs) in Conflict Transformation

**Author:** Mir Mubashir & Luxshi Vimalarajah  
**Publisher:** The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers

# Dhamma as Empowerment

Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo

Firstly, I would like to extend my gratitude to the organising committee for inviting me to participate on this joyful occasion celebrating the 60th anniversary of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar's momentous conversion to Buddhism.

The Buddha showed us clearly that our life in this world is filled with problems. This he called dukkha. There are many outer difficulties which we have to deal with, but there is also inner pain caused by our wild and untamed minds. We suffer not only because of outer circumstances, but particularly because of our own greed and attachment, anger and resentment, jealousy and envy. These negative emotions act like a poison which spread throughout our emotional and intellectual existence and cause us so much suffering and make us act and speak in an uneducated way, and so bring problems to others too.

As Buddhists we know this, but still it is very difficult to tame our minds and cultivate the positive emotions such as loving kindness, compassion and forbearance. Therefore, the real test of our spiritual practice does not happen when we visit the temple, nor when we are sitting on our cushions in formal meditation. The test of our understanding comes in our everyday lives with our family, friends and work colleagues. How do we deal with difficult situations that arise during the day when people say and do things that cause us to be upset? Do we feel angry or humiliated? Do we want to strike back?

It is during such trying times that we can see for ourselves whether or not we have really understood the Buddha's teaching. When everything is going smoothly, it is easy to be complacent but when we face challenges that is when we need to feel empowered to act with wisdom. Many people think that we show that we are strong when we can hit back harder than we were hit. They consider patience

and compassion to be a sign of weakness. But the Buddha said that hatred does not cease by hatred but only by non-hatred or love. We can see the truth of this in the world around us. The more people return anger with anger, the more the fires of hatred and aggression burn fiercely and so many people are harmed. Peace can never be achieved in this way, although humans do not learn this lesson easily.

On the other hand, if we rely on the strength of compassion and forbearance, we feel inwardly empowered to face whatever circumstances arise with dignity and self-respect, because we are in command of ourselves and not the slave to our afflictive emotions such as hate and fear. So the dharma teaches us to cultivate the qualities needed to walk the path, using our everyday life as our place of practice.

One set of techniques is the 6 Paramitas of generosity, ethics, patience, enthusiasm, meditation and wisdom. We can all learn to be generous - not just by giving money or sharing material goods, though this is important for cultivating non-attachment, but also we can give our time when someone else is in need of help, and especially by sharing our understanding of the dharma with them.

Buddhist ethics or shila is not based on what we eat or what we wear, but on living in this world harmlessly - we do not kill or hurt other beings, steal anyone's property, lie or slander, commit adultery or exploit others sexually nor take intoxicants such as alcohol or drugs so that our mind can remain clear. These basic precepts that should be accepted

by all sincere Buddhists, help us to live a good moral life as a support for other practices. It is like a strong fence around the garden of our heart and mind, where we are cultivating the good plants of loving kindness and compassion while pulling out the weeds of greed and anger.

Patience or forbearance make the mind strong and empowered because we do not give way to irritation and anger every time we meet with difficult circumstances. We are able to see the situation clearly and recognise that this is an opportunity to practise this Kshanti Paramita, which is needed for enlightenment. If people are not difficult, then how can we learn to be patient and tolerant? Actually, these difficult people are helping us to practice, so they are like our kalyanamitra. This does not mean that we should always passively allow ourselves and others to be abused, but even when we defend ourselves and stand up for our rights, we should do so from a deep attitude of compassion and self respect and not from anger and a desire for retaliation. This is what gives patience its power.

The next Paramita is viriya or enthusiastic effort which is essential for making any progress whether in a worldly task or in our dharma practice. When we enjoy doing something then we naturally make efforts to accomplish it. This is the opposite of being lazy or putting things off to the next day! So it is important for us to understand that our lives would be so much happier and more peaceful if we tamed our own mind. We can feel deeply grateful to the Buddhadharma for showing such a clear path to accomplish our spiritual aims. However nothing is gained if we do not make any effort.

The source of our problems lies in the mind. We usually blame our problems on others, but if we really look carefully, we can see that it is not so much the outer situation, but our inner response that causes us to feel happy or sad. This understanding of how much depends on ourselves is a source of great empowerment. We do not have to change the whole world, but we can change ourselves and our way of dealing with the world. This will also affect those

who are around us. So meditation and mindfulness - making our mind more peaceful and clear - is important for everyone in Buddhism, and not just for monks and nuns. To learn how to guard and cultivate the mind/heart is the greatest gift of the dharma. As the Buddha said:

Cease to do evil

Cultivate the good

Tame your own mind:

This is the teaching of the Buddhas.

It is so simple to understand but of course not so easy to do. But we must all try the best we can.

Wisdom or Prajna is the crown jewel of Buddhism, it basically means that our conventional reality which seems so solid and enduring is really impermanent and empty of any essential self-existence from its own side. In other words we think that there is an 'I' in charge of our thoughts and feelings, but if we search we can never find one. Then, external phenomena seem so real and solid too, but again if we look for the thing in itself, it will always be subdivided into smaller and smaller aspects - atoms and sub-atoms - but we can never find the thing in itself that we label as a table or a watch. In other words the 'person' who is grasping and the 'thing' grasped at are both non-findable, like a dream or a mirage. They come together due to causes and conditions, but do not exist independently from their own side.

Even if we do not have much understanding of the philosophical side of the Dharma, we can all practise the cultivation of a good heart - to become kinder, more honest and trustworthy, and to really think of the happiness of others as well as for ourselves. If our hearts are truly open, we can accomplish great things. The Buddha advised us to start by making friends with ourselves by meditating on metta and compassion first directed inwardly: we have to feel at peace with ourselves and believe in our own potential for transformation. Then we can spread this kind feeling towards loved ones, neutral people and towards people who we find difficult to love or forgive. This is the test of our ability to generate unconditional love - the goal to

which we aspire. May ALL beings be well and happy!

It seems that nowadays Buddhism is also moving forward into the 21st century, making friends with neuroscience and psychology, since we are all interested in the mind and how it works. Especially, there has been a great movement towards the inclusion and advancement of women who traditionally were rather neglected and overlooked. Usually, women are naturally devoted and focused and often highly intelligent, so there is no reason why they should have been sidelined for so many centuries. As women become educated they gain confidence and can bring a fresh voice into dharma circles which were traditionally dominated by the male voice only. Remember that the books were all written by men (mostly monks) so there is an imbalance which needs to be looked at. Women can supply the correct equilibrium again and also gain confidence in their own wisdom

In addition, modern Buddhism is more and more studied and practised by lay people, unlike in the past where only monks were learned in Dharma. This has the advantage of allowing the dharma to spread widely and for ordinary people to also be able to practice and transform their lives and society. The dharma will increasingly be focused on those aspects that are of benefit to people in their daily lives.

However, the Buddha emphasised the importance of the Fourfold Sangha of monastics

and lay people both male and female. There is the danger that without a well-trained monastic sangha, the depth and breadth of the dharma may be diluted since lay people usually do not have so much time to devote to formal study and practice and they have to deal with many worldly distractions. Therefore, it is important that there should also exist a well-trained monastic sangha of monks and nuns who study the texts and undertake retreats in order to be teachers and guides for their lay communities. Perhaps some of the more educated nuns could also be trained as counsellors, who could be of great help especially to women in the lay community who have problems that they are unable to discuss with the monks. This approach has been quite successful in Sri Lanka. Nowadays, it is important that the monastic sangha has more outreach into society in order not to appear irrelevant. But in order to gain respect, their standard of discipline and learning needs to be well-established.

In addition, we have to ask what kind of Buddhism is best suited to you who are Indian. You are not Tibetan or Chinese or Thai. Both the Buddha and Babasaheb were Indians and they taught the dharma to suit the culture and needs of their audience. So, it is important to develop and cultivate a dharma that feels comfortable and familiar to you, so that you are practising within your own culture and society to become better human beings and ultimately realise your buddha potential.

S



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# Spirituality and Ecology from a Buddhist Perspective: Engaged Buddhism Across Asia

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Somboon Chungprampree  
(with Jane Rasbash and Fletcher Harper)

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Over the past four decades, Sulak Sivaraksa, a Thai social critic, and friends have spearheaded an Engaged Buddhist approach that is actively addressing planetary issues like climate change and environmental devastation, and human ecology concerns like social justice and ecology and inter-religious conflict. Engaged Buddhism refers to the practice of those Buddhists who apply the insights gained from meditation practice and dharma teachings to situations of social, political, environmental, and economic justice.

Sivaraksa is one of the founding leaders of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), which was established in 1989 with support from high-level Buddhist leaders including the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, and the Theravada Bhikkhu Maha Ghosananda. INEB has members in 20 countries around the world, mostly in Asia, but also in the USA, Australia, and Europe. Its members include monks, nuns, activists, and academics. While it is a Buddhist organization, some of its members come from other spiritual traditions, and interfaith activities are part of its program through its Inter-religious Climate and Ecology Network (ICE). Sivaraksa also played a key role in creating the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM), another important panAsian initiative whose members seek to “understand the ways in which prevailing economic, social and political systems contribute to suffering, and to violence and the culture of violence that surrounds us, in order to provide a countervailing force of nonviolence, compassion and understanding.”

Buddhism inherently has an ecological approach within its emphasis on the interconnection

of all beings, harmony with nature, reduction of suffering, and contentment as central tenets in teachings. This article looks at some of the influences on and a few of the activities of the Engaged Buddhist movement, illustrating how Buddhist wisdom serves to bring together spirituality and environmentalism while also building strong interfaith relations.

## INEB's Beginnings

INEB draws upon the experience and early mentorship of two key figures who were vital in setting the scene for social and ecological engagement in the early days of the Engaged Buddhism movement. The two key figures were Maha Ghosananda and Buddhadasa Bhikkhu.

Maha Ghosananda (1929-2007), a Cambodian peacemaker and Niwano Peace Laureate (1988), was considered the “Cambodian Gandhi.” Step by Step, his only book, is a wellknown guide for Buddhist practitioners. The chapter entitled “The Present Is Mother of the Future” discusses how we cannot talk about the future without taking care of the present. A new, long-term paradigm for the future must also

focus on changing our societies now to be more peaceful, just, and harmonious with nature. 1 <http://www.sem-edu.org/>

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

Each of them held that we should not regard other religions as inferior to ours but live harmoniously together. Each religion is unique with its own characteristics; we should respect all scriptures, such as the Bible or the Koran, as their purpose is to guide us to be better human beings and serve others more than ourselves. Those of different religions should also work together with those of no religious tradition, for the betterment of humankind.

The wisdom of these renowned Buddhist scholars has great relevance in modern society where the ecology is greatly impacted by consumerism, pollution, climate change, and social disorder. When the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) was founded more than 20 years ago, it provided a space for kalyanamitra (spiritual friends) to share experience and address these kind of contemporary issues drawing on Buddhist teachings. In recent years, INEB has been developing more collaborative programs that bring together members around issues of common concern, like climate change and inter-ethnic conflict.

Another important individual in raising awareness of Buddhist teachings in relation to planetary ecology challenges was Phra Prachak, who created a movement against deforestation in Thailand. He was a Thai Buddhist monk, who, beginning in his 50s, wandered barefoot from forest to forest and jungle to jungle for more than ten years. One day in 1991, he came across a beautiful forest called Dongyai, where villagers were cutting down the trees. Because of his

deep love of forests, he used his cultural influence as a highly respected forest monk to beg from the villagers for Dongyai Forest, in the manner that a monk might beg for food every morning. The villagers agreed to donate that forest as a forest monastery.

Phra Prachak initiated a tree-ordination ceremony, with Buddhist chanting and Buddhist monks tying the saffron monk's robes around the large trees. This creative use of the traditional Buddhist ordination ceremony made the forest a sacred palace in the villager's eyes. The local people greatly respected the orange robes; once they adorned the trees they would not cut them down. Since then, tree ordination ceremonies have been widely used in Thailand by environmental groups to protect forests. Phra Prachak also led forest walks, taking people deep into the jungle to meditate and build relationships with nature, resulting in personal growth as well as deepening care for the environment.

Unfortunately, while effective in raising awareness of the urgency of saving tropical forests, Phra Prachak was politically naïve and his well-meant actions got him into trouble. Various parties had vested economic interests in Dongyai Forest: local organized crime, corrupt police, and greedy forestry officials. Consequently, he was attacked from various levels of the state machinery and by the local "mafia." His temple was dismantled and he was arrested several times, with criminal cases going on for many years. However, the movement he initiated continued, and tree ordinations to protect the forest and forest walks--combining the teachings and practices of traditional Thai tudong (wandering forest monks) and Deep Ecology--are regular, inspirational occurrences in Thailand and beyond.

### **The Inter-religious Climate and Ecology (ICE) Network**

In 2012, INEB organized an interfaith dialogue on religion and climate change. More than 150 people representing Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, Islamic, Baha'i, and animist faith traditions gathered together at the Islander Center in Sri Lanka. An outcome of this event was the formation of the Inter-religious Climate and Ecology (ICE) Network, a pan-Asian, local-to-local,

collaborative network of diverse spiritual communities seeking to share experiences, learning, and wisdom to build resilience and empowerment in the face of climate change.

ICE also works to wisely influence national public policy within Asia, and to stimulate and strengthen diplomatic discussions around climate change at the international level. ICE aims to do this in cooperation with various stakeholders, such as faith-based and civil society organizations, gender and age-based groups, and business networks, always seeking to encourage healing in a world struggling with inequality and vulnerability, both intensified by climate change.

### The Missing Moral Element

ICE members have consistently noticed that international negotiations and forums on climate change tend to focus on legal arrangements and technical considerations. In all of these discussions, an important point is often ignored: The climate crisis is rooted in human behavior. It is driven by ever increasing consumption, the belief that more material possessions will lead to greater happiness, and a lack of mindfulness about the consequences of our actions. Our current systems reflect unarticulated values and beliefs about our relationship with the living world. Climate change is a moral issue, and the climate crisis, which we have created together, requires a shared ethical response. On a practical level, ICE has recognized that religious leaders in its network have been teaching about the causes of climate change, the resulting suffering, and the responsibilities of religious practitioners, but need additional technical information to be able to effectively communicate on this subject. ICE develops curricular and resource materials that integrate religious teachings and available information on climate change drivers, expected impacts, strategies for mitigation, adaptation and response, and current political debates, translating and adapting these materials into local languages and cultural contexts. In this way, ICE seeks to empower religious leaders to conduct effective awareness and climate education programs in their own arenas. ICE

also recognizes that religious leaders and institutions are well-positioned to model climate action and respond to local needs. Consequently, ICE seeks to catalyze religious leaders, institutions, and communities towards collective action and local initiatives for climate change mitigation, adaptation, and response, such as carbon-neutral temples, churches and mosques; home gardening and food security programs; community resilience programs (e.g. disaster plans and savings systems), disaster mitigation (e.g. reforestation, canals, rainwater harvesting); emergency response to climate disaster, documenting indigenous knowledge and local change, and more. On the level of policy advocacy, more and more Asian religious leaders and organizations are becoming more actively engaged in climate responses, and are beginning to work together to influence local and national policies. ICE both provides basic training on local policy and on culturally appropriate advocacy techniques, and seeks to support networks that link policy advocates of different faiths across Asia. Response to Buddhist-Muslim Violence another recent sociopolitical development in Asia to which there has been an Engaged Buddhist response. There has been the emergence of Buddhist-Muslim violence, particularly in Myanmar and Sri Lanka. INEB has worked with other international groups, including the International Movement for a Just World (JUST), to hold a series of discussions on how to address the roots of these violent conflicts. In 2015, INEB and core partners of the International Forum on Buddhist-Muslim Relations (BMF) issued a Jogjakarta Statement on shared values and commitments to overcome extremism and advance peace with justice. This statement drew on common values shared by our respective scriptures and included, as part of its substance, a section of canonical texts from both traditions on Living in Harmony with the Environment. Examples drawn from both traditions follow: As the bee derives honey from the flower without harming its colour or fragrance -- - So should the wise interact with their surroundings. (Dhammapada 49) One day a deity asked the Buddha, "Whose merit grows day and night, who is the righteous, virtuous person that goes to the realm of bliss?" Answered the Buddha, "the

merit of those people who plant groves, parks, build bridges, make ponds, dwelling places, etc. grows day and night, and such religious persons go to heaven” (Discourse on the Merit Gained in Planting Groves, Vanaropa Sutta) For the true servants of the Most Gracious are only those who walk gently on earth. (The Qur’an 25:63) And there are on earth many tracts of land close by one another (and yet widely differing from one another); and (there are on it) vineyards, and fields of grain, and date-palms growing in clusters from one root or standing alone, (all) watered with the same water: and yet, some of them have we favoured above others by way of the food (which they provide for man and beast). Verily, in all this there are messages indeed for people who use their reason. (The Qur’an 13:4)

The statement named a number of core principles that serve as the framework for peaceful interreligious relations: the importance of religious diversity and peaceful coexistence; universal mercy and compassion; universal justice, human dignity, and nonviolence; pluralism, tolerance and religious freedom; rejection of hate, hate speech, and retaliation; and the importance of self-introspection; and living in harmony with the environment. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross National Product (GNP) are the standard, widely accepted measurements of social well being and development for nations. However, the shortcomings of these metrics are both evident and dangerous, as they only measure certain kinds of economic activity and fail to reflect aspects of human and ecological well-being that are fundamental to life. In response, Bhutan held its first international conference on Gross National Happiness (GNH) in 2004. The key concept comes from Bhutanese Buddhist wisdom, and implies that sustainable development should take a holistic approach towards notions of progress, give equal importance to non-economic aspects of wellbeing, and balance human development with the conservation and protection of the natural world. INEB, SEM, and Suan Nguen Mee Ma (an Asian social enterprise initiative that has created a Green Market Network across Asia) actively joined the “GNH Movement” in 2005 and continued to search for a

holistic development paradigm. After some initial follow-up activities, a small-scale but permanent organization was created: the School for Wellbeing Studies and Research. The three founding partners of the School for Wellbeing are Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok; the Centre for Bhutan Studies based in Thimphu; and the Sathirakoses Nagapradipa Foundation, a Siamese umbrella for independent civil society initiatives, founded by Sulak Sivaraksa in 1968. Apart from research on “the well-being of society” and organizing a public debate on happiness, “limits to growth,” and sustainable development (with experts including Nobel laureate Joseph E. Stiglitz, Vandana Shiva, Helena Norberg-Hodge, Matthieu Ricard, David Loy, and Arthur Zajonc), the School for Wellbeing (inspired by Shiva) started the Towards Organic Asia program, together with partners in the Mekong region. Its major achievement is the start of a Young Organic Farmers’ (YOF) network. Initiatives like ordaining trees, Gross National Happiness, and the Interreligious Climate and Ecology network have all drawn deeply from Buddhist wisdom. Interconnection, respect for all beings, and acknowledging and addressing suffering are integral to their ability to inspire as well as their effectiveness. Through SEM and INEB, Buddhist leaders have reached out to share with, influence, and learn from other spiritual traditions across Asia and beyond. Engaged Buddhism offers a vision of thinking about social, ecological, cultural, and spiritual issues in conjunction with economic activity, which is surely a way forward to both a more harmonious and a more balanced planet.



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Published in *Interreligious Studies Journal*, Issue 19, Summer 2016



# Are They Singing In Tune?

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Marcus Tristan

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As I am known to be a music composer, I am often unable to wriggle out of invitations to events which include karaoke performances by people who seem happy to parade their inability to sing in front of an audience. Now, wherever this sort of event takes place in the world, the relationship between what is actually sung and the correct notes is a tenuous one, but here in Thailand there is a different and quite complex reason for this problem. Here, when attending such an event, some Western person, knowing I am a musician, will ask me about some hapless, but usually happy, Thai person, who is up there on stage, 'They aren't singing in tune, are they?' Well, to an attuned Western ear the answer is clearly 'No', but to the Thai ear the answer is much less clear.

In the Western world, the ancient Greek philosopher and mathematician Pythagoras showed that there were certain musical intervals that are constant and appear in nature, such as the octave and the fifth. For example, if you touch a vibrating string at the halfway point, the note you obtain is exactly an octave higher, and if you continue to divide mathematically you also get smaller and smaller intervals, such as fourths, thirds and seconds. We assume that the idea of seven note scales, or modes, originated in ancient Greece, but my friend and colleague, Dr Richard Dumbrell, who has been studying the archaeomusicology of the Sumerians and other ancient Mesopotamian civilizations for many years, seems to have demonstrated the existence of seven-note scales many centuries before Pythagoras was born. This suggests that the 7-note scale lies deeper in the Western consciousness than we ever believed previously. But, dividing an octave into heptatonic scales or modes is actually an artificial one, since even in the Western musical tradition there is also the 12-note chromatic, or dodecaphonic, scale that

encompasses all the 'semitones' that lie within the octave. Other traditions have different scales with more or less notes in the octave, from the many microtones of Indian scales to the famous pentatonic scales of Japan, China and Thailand.

So, at the start, the Western people would tune their instruments to the perfect octaves and fifths within an octave, but they soon found that if you wanted to play music in a mode or key very distant to the key in which the instrument was tuned, it would sound dreadful, even though it sounded wonderful in the key in which the instrument was originally tuned. So eventually, they started tuning instruments with intervals that were close enough to the perfect intervals, so that music sounded good in whatever key they were playing. This is known as the well-tempered system, and its invention was immortalized by Johann Sebastian Bach in his 48 Preludes and Fugues, also known as the Well-Tempered Klavier. However the gorgeous sound of the perfect tuning was lost at this moment, and it was from that moment onwards, that the

Western concept of well-tempered tuning, basically an approximation of the proper notes, started conquering the musics of all other cultures.

Similarly to the situation in the Western world, the pentatonic scales of the Far East were also based on the perfect intervals in the scale, but instead they divided the octave into five roughly equal intervals. These intervals have a great strength and aural power. Now, if you think about it logically, in a scale divided roughly equally into 5 notes, the intervals will not correspond to the same notes in a scale divided roughly equally into 7 notes. So, the Eastern scales had different tones to the Western heptatonic (or even dodecaphonic) scales. With this in mind, we need to skip forward to the time when Western composers came into contact with Eastern music, particularly the 18th and 19th centuries, when so-called 'chinoiserie' became very popular in high society - faux Eastern fashions in art, design and also music were very much in demand, particularly in France. Having understood that the five notes of the Eastern pentatonic scales do not exist in the Western scale system, it is now easy to see that the only thing that Western composers could do was approximate the Eastern pentatonic scales within the Western musical scale system. Under this system, five roughly equidistant tones within an octave just wasn't feasible, mostly because no instruments were tuned that way, thus the lopsided nature of the Western version of the Eastern pentatonic scale - C, D, E, G, A on a modern piano.

And, with the hubris so typical of Western 'civilization', the Western version of the Eastern musical language was then spread around the world, and started diluting the power and fecundity of the traditional music of the East. More people will know the fake Japaneserie of Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, for example, than the real Japanese music by native musicians. If you look at modern music in Thailand, almost none of the performers use Thai traditional instruments tuned to the original scales - instead you are confronted with the sad picture of Thai traditional instruments tuned to the Western

pentatonic scale playing a kind of fake Thai music, in which the instruments appear to be just elaborate theatrical props to advertise the 'Thai-ness' of the whole farrago. The singers also conform to the Western tunings, as they would sound bad if they sang Thai traditional melodies against 'foreign-sounding' accompaniments. The potency has thus been drained away - the corporatization of Thai music seems all but complete.

But there is a way forward. Back in the late 1980's, I was fortunate enough to have several meetings and discussions with the Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu, a fellow student of the great French composer Olivier Messiaen, but he at a much earlier date than I. Takemitsu, as a Japanese composer, spent much of his creative life trying to marry Japanese musical traditions with Western ones, but without either of them being subservient to the other. They lived side by side, as it were. In the process, he created unforgettable musical landscapes, such as *A Flock Descends into the Pentagonal Garden*, that blend the sounds of authentic Japanese instruments into an assonant soundscape created by traditional Western orchestral instruments. This was taken up by a new generation of Eastern composers, such as the Chinese composer Tan Dun, as a way to celebrate their native musics without giving in to the hegemony of the Western musical system, but without rejecting it either. Such a composer is long awaited in Thailand, I think.

So, the answer to the question as to whether Thai people are singing in tune when they are trying to copy the Western melodies in Western popular music is, on the one hand, 'No', but on a more innate, maybe even chthonic, level, the answer probably veers away from such a clear-cut negative - their ancestral voices are calling out to them.

# Walking on the path of Sacredscapes: Towards Destination

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## Sacred Landscapes, Cosmos and Shared Wisdom: The Asian Vision

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Prof. Dr. Rana P.B. Singh

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**R**elph (1976: 30) states that 'the spirit of place lies in its landscape'. Yet at the same time in spite of changes in space and time, the subtle power of a place is retained and can be experienced too. This constitutes the very uniqueness and distinctiveness of place character. Lawrence (1964: 6) wrote: "Different places on the face of the earth have different vital effluence, different vibration, different chemical exhalation, different polarity with different stars; call it what you like. But the spirit of place is a great reality". If one understands and experiences and tries to be part of it, I hope one would be a great practitioner of landscape architecture (cf. Singh 1997).

The ongoing debate and wide application of the concept of 'multifunctionality' of cultural landscapes (more empathetically rural) can help to promote landscapes that cross urbanrural divides, are more sustainable, and are planned and implemented in an integrated way - characterised by wholeness and cosmic ecology (cf. Selman 2009). In fact, landscape multifunctionality in Asian vision addresses a broader social-ecological system and entails an understanding of landscape as something that goes 'beyond the Eurocentric purview'. The Oriental Asia also illustrated the famous Davisian, after William Morris Davis (1850-1934), dictum that 'landscape is a product of structure, function, and stage' (ibid. 1899), which in addition with values and traditions make more applicable in Asia.

In Indian tradition, heritage is called 'dharohara', which is a combination of two words, i.e. dhara- ('the mother earth, Prithvi/ Lord Vishnu who holds'), and -ihara ('endeavour of identity through time'). The word also carries the meaning of 'bearing' and 'preserving' the surface of the earth. Prithvi is also called dhara, dhri, dharti, dhrithri, meaning that which holds everything (see the Sathapatha Brahmana, a Vedic text: 10.56.6; 10.59.25; 10.68.48). That is how it

should also be explained in terms of the 'root' ('shrota') and 'identity' ('asmita') of a framework of continuity of interconnectedness and a personality of culture, thus in terms of space it combines the microspace, site (sthan), the extended space, habitat (paryavasa, extended as 'dwellingness') and the regional projection, territory (parikshetra), and ultimately linking to terrestrial, cosmos (brahmada). Additionally, it also connotes the tangible, intangible and visual attributes. In other context the word 'dharohara' also refers to spatialfunctional symbol that links 'locality' and 'universality', consisting of four hierarchically covering layers; viz. sthan (site), parikshetra (defined territory), simanta (border transition), and brahmada (cosmos).

The rethinking should be based on the foundational value, the reasoning that underlies the ethical sense of deeper understanding of Man-Nature Interrelatedness, which is the basic philosophy of coexistence referred in different cultures in their own ways, like harmonious coexistence (tabunka kyosei) in Japan, harmonious society (xiaokang) in China, multicultural co-living ('Old-comer') in Korea, wahi tapu (sacred places) in Maori's New Zealand, African

humanism (ubuntu) in South Africa, and global family (vasudhaiva kutumbakam) in Indian thought. The ethical domain is based essentially on foundation value, which for Gandhi was ahimsa (non violence), for Schweitzer reverence for life, and for Aldo Leopold the sacredness of land (cf. Skolimowski 1990: 98). Another vision from New Zealand, i.e. Mātauranga Māori refers to 'the knowledge, comprehension, or understanding of everything visible and invisible existing in the universe', and is often used synonymously with wisdom.

Moreover, in the contemporary world, the definition is usually extended to include present-day, historic, local, and traditional knowledge; systems of knowledge transfer and storage; and the goals, aspirations and issues from an indigenous perspective. This altogether makes the holistic frame like cosmic integrity. Nobel laureate humanist philosopher Albert Schweitzer (1949: 158-159), rightly said: "A man is ethical only when life, as such, is sacred to him, that of plants and animals as that of his fellow men, and when he devotes himself helpfully to all life that is in need of help." On this line of thought, the habitat unit of Satoyama may be taken as a model to represent Asian vision of cultural landscape, as it represents a good integration of the complexity of nature, and the adaptability and continuity by human beings. Think universally, see globally, behave regionally, act locally but insightfully; this is an appeal for cosmic vision, global humanism, and Self realization in making and maintaining of rural cultural landscapes as mosaics of happy, peaceful and sustainable places (cf. Singh 2011: 130). This may be comparable to a deeply rooted indigenous society of Māori (New Zealand). Māori core cultural values and principles include Kotahitanga (unity, consensus, participation), Urunga-Tu (participation), Kaitiakitanga (environmental guardianship), Tau utu utu (reciprocity, giving back what you take), Wairuatanga (spiritual wellbeing, taking into consideration the spiritual dimension) (for details cf. Harmsworth 2007).

Healing the Earth is the message of sacred ecology that envisions the interconnectedness between Man and Nature, and further makes a way to environmental and cultural guardianship through making bridge linking realisation and revelation. This

process of healing requires a specific mode of conduct or cultural consciousness, a religion, in fact a dharma, a moral duty (or to say like sacred duty, virtue that as human beingness one holds). "To hold" means giving the sense of that which holds everything together. The dharma of water is wetness. The dharma of honey is sweetness. The dharma of wind is blowing. The dharma of fire is heat. The dharma of landscape is to sustain the sacred power manifested therein. The dharma of our culture is to save its sacred ecology, promoting deeper moral values that will open the gateways of knowing the cosmic identity of human beings. Practicing sacred ecology is the "yoga of landscape" and the sacred journey to the symbol of the earth spirit, i.e. heritage (Singh 1995: 196). The pioneer of land-ethic, Leopold's (1945: 224-225) call is noteworthy in this context: "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community (human beings). It is wrong when it tends otherwise".

The challenge for many indigenous organisations and agencies is how to balance aspirations for cultural enrichment (e.g., retaining strong elements of traditional culture such as values, language and knowledge) with more modern elements of advancement, growth, commerce and threatening forces of modern economic development. Of course, in New Zealand, these challenges are being addressed by a large number of Māori groups and similar organisations that emphasise good governance is required in order to carry out strategies for capacity building, planning, leadership, and accountability in an integrated and harmonious way. Māori values are often reflected in the organisation's goals and objectives, custom and protocols, collective inter-relationships, economic direction and strategic planning that promote common sharing, understanding and practice of spirit of place and associated values. The values are apparent in behaviour, transparency, accountability, participation, ethics, marketing, social and cultural responsibility and performance, and environmental standards that lead to harmonious and happy life through making "happy places" (cf. Harmsworth 2007).

Since all the life-forms are interwoven and interconnected, the land and its living creatures can be viewed as symbols reciprocally and interactionally



responsive to each other, popularly represented as a spiral frame of mandala that begins at the centre and expands into infinity. Spirits permeate matter and animate it, so to say there generates the inherent force of terrestrial unity, what we call ecological cosmology. That is how the rich symbolic association brings the sacred as a life-force into everyday life. Each cultural landscape in the visual form of habitat and cosmos, such as a forest, cave, mountain, or even island, is like a chapel for a higher life where lies the deeper human quest to get connected with the spirit of their ancestors through various symbolic natural attributes, including varieties of landscapes, as well as the sun, clouds, moon, or sea. This permeates and encourages human sensitivity to march from realisation (anubhava in

Sanskrit) to revelation (anubhuti in Sanskrit).

Through the practice and use of sacred ecology, a strategy for sustainable development in light of heritage conservation and preservation, and reverential development, should be accepted in service of human civilisation and its symbolic identity. Let us come to an end at least at this stage with, the words of the African ecologist Babu Diou (as cited in Singh 1995: 213): In the end

We will conserve only what we love.

We will love only what we understand.

We will understand only what we learn.

S

## Letters

Dear Suluk,

Thanks for your seasonal greetings and good wishes for the year to come. What a wonderful historical foto showing you together with Pope Franciscus in Rome. From other documentations I had already realized that You had been at the Vatican. Was there any importance press-release about your meeting his holiness?

Thanks also for allowing a view of family. What are the three behind you telling us with finger-language? You and your wife are looking very healthy and strong!

To our festive greetings we add a reflection from alternative think-tank sources. You may have heard that the German "Word of the year" 2016 is "post-factual". It describes the feeling expressed by the US-election, in a German political move to the right, and the french Le Pen-Party, that is, that people feel left behind, neglected, excluded from the fruits of globalization etc. So, I guess, in divided societies and antagonistic communities it is importance to start reflect the "And" again.

We wish you and your family a happy New Year,  
Inge and Wolfgang

Dear Sulak

Thank you for your email.

A Dutchman, Giles Scott-Smith, at the University of Leiden, would like to talk with Ivan's colleagues about his professional life.

Would you be willing to talk with him? May I give him your name?

I'm working on contacting others - Frankie Sionil Jose, Arief Budiman and Goenawan Mohamed.

Are there other names you can suggest? Any names with Mashal, Pakistan?

Saw that the lese majeste issue continues with the new King of Thailand.

My best regards,  
Nicolas Kats

For your many contributions to the latest Seeds of Peace – I especially liked What it means to be a Buddhist article. You're great writer.

All well here, #1 daughter visiting last week and #1 son this week – am I lucky? All 3 of my kids are doing well – Blythe runs her farm, Perri her sex education program and Kyle works for a non profit who provides national and international nonprofits free computer software programs. Here's his contact info if you're interested: [kreis@techsoupglobal.org](mailto:kreis@techsoupglobal.org).

Wish you would come for another visit; you can always stay with me. Hope you and the family are well.

Love,  
Nancy Kenyon



# Ayutthaya has never disappeared, Old roots were never lost

## Events Schedule

### January-February 2017

Airing of 1st episode of 250-part documentary; 2 minutes/episode, Mon-Fri after prime time news for 1 year on Thai PBS television channel

Re-runs posted on YouTube

Kick-off of year-long lecture series, held once a month on Saturday afternoon; specialists will provide detailed supplements to the documentary

### March 2017

“Ayutthaya has never disappeared, old roots were never lost” main exhibition

Focus is on Ayutthaya’s culture and body of knowledge handed down to the present, such as music, art, architecture, city planning, etc., 17-23 March at BACC

Recital of Thai music and orchestra performance by TPO at Prince Mahidol Hall (2 shows) and display of main exhibition, 24-25 March

### April 2017

Trial of routes for 1-, 2- and 3-day trips

New program (1) on Thai PBS

Special documentary, 50-min, first 3 episodes:

--The loss of Ayutthaya

--Thai commoners (a 3-part series)

--Ayutthaya today

### May 2017

Beginning of trip: ‘Leisure travel, walking, and bicycling with knowledge in Ayutthaya and Thonburi’ (first trip kicks off with train ride to Ayutthaya)

Trip information is based on the documentary and lectures at The Siam Society

Trips take place till November 2017

Beginning of trip: ‘Following the footsteps of King Taksin in Thonburi’

Trips take place till November 2017

Beginning of workshop: ‘Applying cultural heritage to the present’

Workshops take place till October 2017

Release of infographic video: ‘History in a nutshell’ (Part 1)

### June - August 2017

- Release of infographic video: ‘History in a nutshell’ (Part 2)

- Release of infographic video: ‘History in a nutshell’ (Part 3)

- Release of infographic video: ‘History in a nutshell’ (Part 4)

### October 2017

Flood season: Performance of “boat song” in the canals of Ayutthaya Island in order to carry on the work of Dr. Royon Jitdon and the Fine Arts Department to restore the canal networks in the island to mitigate flooding.

Photography and art exhibition on “Ayutthaya has never disappeared, old roots were never lost” and old photographs of Ayutthaya and Thonburi at BACC (week-long)

### November 2017

Supplemental Exhibition at BACC (week-long)

- Collection from 8 brands that use fabric designs from the Ayutthaya period

- Cooking display of Ayutthaya cuisine

- Selections from ‘Applying cultural heritage to the present’ workshop

- Market of Thai products, food items and beverages

### December 2017

New program (1) on Thai PBS

Special documentary, 50-min, final 3 episodes: ‘The founding of Thonburi kingdom’

After displaying at TPO concert (24-25 March), the main exhibition will move to:

- Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre

- Chulalongkorn University

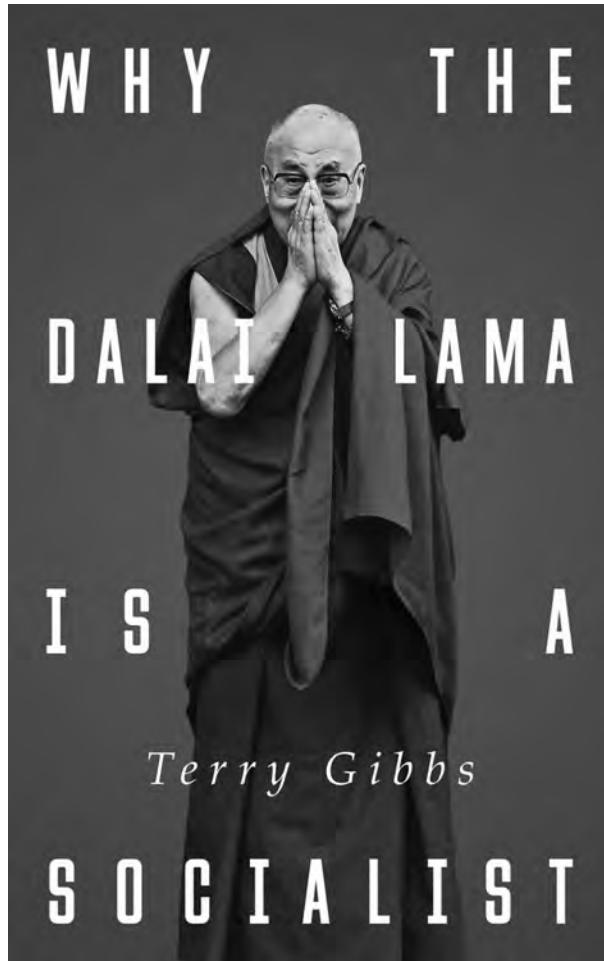
- The Siam Society under Royal Patronage (actual exhibition dates to be confirmed)

The main exhibition is held year-long.

For more information, please contact  
phat.chantachot@gmail.com

# Why the Dalai Lama is a Socialist

By Jane Rasbash



The book covers topics close to my heart, with a thorough and strong critique of the negative impacts of modernization, consumerism and globalization. Gibbs explores Marxist and Buddhist principles, warning against the structural oppression of capitalism, referencing points of alliance between the two philosophies. She explores how the Marxist analysis of structural violence in institutions relates to the Buddhist teachings of interdependence of all living things.

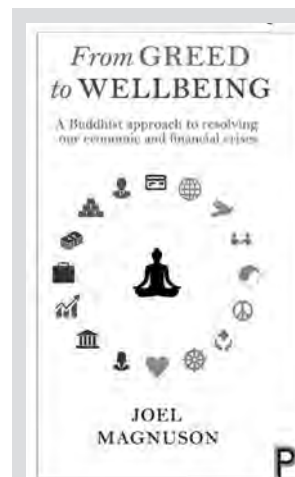
The book is thorough in naming individual and societal suffering and understanding the interconnected root causes of this suffering. It also starts to explore a vision for a future without suffering, and steps towards it. In Buddhism this is the Four Noble Truths. Gibbs also

mentions how Marxists consider a 'dialectical relationship between institutional reinforcement and individual change'.

Gibbs advocates moving towards a more compassionate world through exploration of 'the interlinked oppressions evident in the exploitation of humans, other animals and nature' and the need for 'a structural perspective that makes visible lines of accountability'.

These are familiar topics in our International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), of which the Dalai Lama is a Patron. INEB has roots in Dhammic Socialism as espoused by Bhikku Buddhadasa in the 1960s. He believed a pathway to reduce suffering required thorough analysis of structural violence, leading to transformation of individual consciousness and societal change, drawing on socialist qualities of putting society first and Buddhist principles of non violence and being peaceful e.g. not oppressing self or others. Similar to Buddhadasa Bhikku, the Dalai Lama has long voiced a need for Buddhists to be involved in societal and political change, as well as inner transformation, in line with Gibb's hypothesis linking Buddha Dhamma and Socialism towards a more compassionate society.

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# The Roar of a Buddhist Lion

Sulak Sivaraksa's 84<sup>th</sup> birthday -

on his path as a Socially Engaged Buddhist

# 84

**17<sup>th</sup> March 2017**

at Siam Society, Bangkok

This event will start at 3 pm. The events program consists of religious discourses, a book launch of Ajarn Sulak's biography, music and dance, and an exhibition. Food and drinks will be provided to all attendees, and a reunion gathering will be organized.

**For more information**, please contact:  
[coordinator@inebnetwork.org](mailto:coordinator@inebnetwork.org)

**26<sup>th</sup> March 2017**

at Wat Thong Noppa Khun, Thonburi

This Buddhist event will start at 9 am. The events program consists of a Buddhist ceremony, religious discourses, opening of a library and archive building, exhibition of an extraordinary sculpture that has within its form the complete life story of the Buddha, and an exhibit of ancient Buddhist palm leaves that have inscriptions of the canon (Buddhist scriptures).

**For more information**, please contact:  
[spd@semsikkha.org](mailto:spd@semsikkha.org)

