

# SEEDS OF PEACE

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*Long Live Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa  
In Celebration of His 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday!*

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Editorial Note **3**

Country Reports **4**

Burma/Myanmar: Myanmar Pastor Booked Under Unlawful  
Association Act / *UCA News* ..... **4**

Japan: Press Release: Mr. Rajagopal P. V.  
to receive the Niwano Peace Prize ..... **5**

Siam/Thailand: Instilling A Respect For Wildlife  
/ *Dorelyn Jose* ..... **6**

INEB **9**

Engaged Buddhism: 20th Biennial INEB Conference Concludes  
in South Korea with a Commitment to Action, Peace,  
and Change / *Craig C Lewis* ..... **9**

Peace, Planet, Pandemic and Engaged Buddhism:  
from a Divided Myanmar to a Divided World  
/ *Sai Sam Kham* ..... **13**

INEB and Jungto Society's Joint DMZ Peace Declaration  
in Korea ..... **21**

The Role of Spirituality and Faith in the Divided World  
/ *Harsha Navaratne* ..... **22**

Buddhism in a Divided World: Peace, Planet, Pandemic .... **25**

The Regional Network for Peacebuilders Project  
(Sangha for Peace) / *Anchalee Kurutach* ..... **29**

“Community Campaigns to Reduce Demand for  
Wildlife Products” / *Wansiri Rongrongmuang* ..... **32**

Toolkit Nurturing the Spiritual Development of Children  
in the Early Years –A Contribution to Protecting  
Children from Violence and Promoting  
Their Holistic Well-Being / *INEB Staff* ..... **35**

Aria Project for Afghanistan Feeding and Assisting Four  
Afghan Families / *Angela Nibler* ..... **37**

Women Peacebuilder's Gathering / *Opor Srisuwan* ..... **40**

SEM **42**

Transformative Education for Social Justice  
/ *Ng Shui Meng* ..... **42**

<b>Articles</b>	<b>46</b>
<hr/>	
A Buddhist Response to Climate Change: What We Must Do / <i>Dr. Maya Joshi</i> .....	<b>46</b>
Uncovering the Hidden World of Tibetan Female Lamas / <i>Sarah Fleming</i> .....	<b>49</b>
<b>Letters</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Obituaries</b>	<b>54</b>
Master Xingyun / <i>Fo Guang Shan</i> .....	<b>54</b>
Don Luce .....	<b>54</b>
Rev. Sato Ryojun .....	<b>55</b>
William Lim / <i>Sulak Sivaraksa</i> .....	<b>55</b>
<b>Book Review</b>	<b>56</b>
<hr/>	
<i>The Dalai Lama's Special Envoy: Memoirs of a Lifetime in Pursuit of a Reunited Tibet / Matteo Pistono</i> .....	<b>56</b>

## Editorial Note

### Dear friends of INEB,

This is the first issue of *Seeds of Peace* for 2023 and along with it we send our best wishes for a healthy and prosperous New Year!

INEB's 20<sup>th</sup> International Conference in Korea was a very joyous and happy occasion. It was a time to renew friendships, enjoy the Jungto Society's peaceful contemplative mountain retreat center in Mungyeong, then stay at their new center in Seoul before returning home.

We are most grateful to Venerable Pomnyun and his staff of the Jungto Society for graciously and generously hosting this conference which provided a variety of diverse and unique experiences, including visiting temples, walking in the mountains and a farm, offering a message and meditating at the Dorasan

Observatory in the DMZ, as well as time in Seoul. Please read the INEB section which highlights INEB's conference presentations and activities.

Plans are underway to celebrate Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on March 27. As part of the birthday activities, a book, titled *Nine Decades of Friendship*, will be ready for distribution in March. Many friends will attend the event honoring his life at the Siam Society in Bangkok.

Please read the interesting updates about INEB's projects including the Sangha for Peace, the community campaigns to reduce the demand for wildlife products, our participation at the international launch of a toolkit for nurturing the spiritual development of children during their early years that contributes to protecting children from violence and supporting their holistic wellbeing, and the first international gathering of women peace builders in Thailand. We also have stories of 4 families in Afghanistan that benefited from receiving food and other assistance.

Our close friend, Ng Shui Meng, gave an inspiring and heartfelt talk called Transformative Education for Social Justice at the 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Sem Pringpaungkeo public lecture on February 4. This issue also has articles on a Buddhist response to climate change, and an interview with the author Elisabeth Benard on her book titled *Uncovering the Hidden World of Tibetan Female Lamas*. Our close friend Matteo Pistono shares insights in his review of the recent book by Lodi Gyaltsen Gyari titled *The Dalai Lama's Special Envoy: Memoirs of a Lifetime in Pursuit of a Reunited Tibet*. We also acknowledge the passing of several friends.

Lastly, we are in the planning stages for INEB's joint meeting of our Advisory and Executive Committees in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, November 21 – 23, and look forward to seeing some of you there.



# Myanmar Pastor Booked Under Unlawful Association Act

The latest case against Pastor Hkalam Samson comes as Christian-majority states witness more airstrikes, artillery attacks

By *UCA News* Reporter

Published: January 03, 2023 11:47 AM GMT

Source: *UCA News*: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/myanmar-pastor-booked-under-unlawful-association-act/99917>



*Reverend Hkalam Samson (center) of the Kachin Baptist Convention leaves Myitkyina Township Court in Myitkyina, capital of northern Myanmar's Kachin state, Sept. 9, 2019. (Photo: Radio Free Asia)*

A prominent pastor detained in Myanmar has been charged under the draconian Unlawful Association Act by the military junta.

A fresh case has been slapped on Pastor Hkalam Samson under the Unlawful Association Act after he was detained by local authorities at Mandalay International Airport on Dec. 4 while on his way to Bangkok for a medical examination.

If found guilty under the colonial act the former leader of the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC) will face

three years in jail and will have to pay a fine.

The junta allegedly arrested the pastor to prevent him from airing his views outside the country as he had done earlier.

The pastor is currently lodged in a

prison in Myitkyina, the capital of Christian-majority Kachin state, where the junta is engaged in heavy fighting with the Kachin Independence Army (KIA).

The standoff between the warring factions has increased after the military's aerial attack on a music festival in A Nang Pa village in Kachin state in October last year, which claimed 63 lives.

The air strike on Oct. 22 is one of the worst attacks in Kachin state since the junta wrested power through a military coup on Feb. 1, 2021, and deposed the elected government led by Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi.

The detained pastor is reported to have supervised the funerals of many victims.

The trial against Pastor Samson is expected to start on Jan. 11, media reports said, citing his family members.

In 2019, the military tried to initiate legal action against Pastor Samson for telling then US president, Donald Trump, that the junta was oppressing ethnic minorities, including Christians, in Myanmar. He was among the select group of 27 people from 17 countries invited by the US administration to meet Trump.

Later, the case against Pastor Samson was dropped at the instruction of military chief Min Aung Hlaing, who is currently at the helm of affairs of the civil war-torn Southeast Asian nation.

Pastor Samson is currently serving as an advisor to the KBC after working as president of the organization for a decade. He has also acted as its general

secretary.

Pastor Samson also acts as chairman of the Kachin National Consultative Assembly, the political arm of the KIA.

The assembly comprises religious leaders, politicians and members from the Kachin Independence Organization, the armed wing of KIA, which has been actively fighting the regime since the coup.

With no sign of easing, the civil unrest in the largest country in Southeast Asia has taken a heavy toll.

The Thailand-based Assistance Association for Political Prisoners says more than 2,600 civilians have perished and more than 1.1 million people have been displaced since the coup.

The junta has managed to erase a decade of economic improvement under civilian rule and the World Bank says nearly 40 percent of the country's 54 million population now make less than \$4 a day.

Christians make up nearly 8 percent of the population of Myanmar.

The KBC and the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) and civil society groups have urged the military junta to immediately release Pastor Samson and drop the fresh case against him.

"At a time when faith leaders can play an indispensable role in building lasting peace, many continue to be targeted and imprisoned," Elijah Brown, general secretary and CEO of the BWA, said.

"I strongly advocate for the immediate release of Dr. Samson and for his free and full movement," Brown demanded.

The detention of a faith leader

who has devoted his life to the cause of humanity can seriously undermine peace in the country, civil society organizations in Kachin state said in a joint statement on Jan 3.

The latest case against the pastor occurred when the Christian-majority states of Kachin, Kayah, Karen and Chin are witnessing air strikes, artillery attacks and the burning of houses allegedly by the junta.

## Japan

PRESS RELEASE

February 16, 2023

# Mr. Rajagopal P. V. to receive the Niwano Peace Prize

*The 40<sup>th</sup> Niwano Peace Prize will be awarded to Mr. Rajagopal P. V. of India in recognition of his extraordinary work in the service of Justice and Peace. Mr. Rajagopal's actions in favor of the poorest and most marginalized of his country, carried out through peaceful and nonviolent methods, and his struggle for the recognition of the equal human dignity and equal rights of every man and woman, irrespective of cast or gender, inspires great admiration. His particular accomplishments that garner the highest esteem include negotiating the surrender and facilitating the rehabilitation of gangs, the education of young people in the service of the poor, and, well aware that the primary needs of the poor are water, land, and forests, his commitment to care for the environment.*

The presentation ceremony will

Churches, convents and church-run institutions are often targeted and priests and pastors are rounded up.

Since the toppling of the civilian government, Christians are paying a heavy price and often face arbitrary arrests, killings, torture and rape at the hands of the military.

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take place in Tokyo, Japan, on Thursday, May 11, 2023. In addition to an award certificate, Mr. Rajagopal P. V. will receive a medal and twenty million yen.

To avoid undue emphasis on any particular religion or region, every year the Peace Foundation solicits nominations from people of recognized intellectual and religious stature around the world. In the nomination process, some 600 people and organizations, representing 125 countries and many religions, are asked to propose candidates. Nominations are rigorously screened by the Niwano Peace Prize Committee, which was set up in May of 2003 on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the Niwano Peace Prize. The Committee presently consists of nine religious leaders from various parts of the world, all of whom

are involved in movements for peace and inter-religious cooperation.

Here are some comments by members of the Committee on the selection of Mr. Rajagopal P. V. for this year's award:

— Rajagopal uses the Gandhian technique of foot-marches for promoting world peace... He has trained many young men and women in nonviolent social practices. His organization is also dedicated to improving the livelihoods of poor people and farmers in India. He is also addressing the problems of climate change and its impact on the lives of the people, especially the marginalized people. A Gandhian like Rajagopal is deserving of the Niwano Peace Prize. (Dr. Ranjana Mukhopadhyaya)

— [His] lifelong commitment and work based on Gandhian principles of 'satyagraha' and nonviolent activism. [He] addresses structural violence through multiple types of people's movements which find unique ways to address their most pressing needs and capacities.

His approach has global vision, yet began in local Indian communities that spread throughout the country. [He] catalyzed and led many foot marches for land and livelihood rights, tribal rights, some of which have led to land being returned and responsive substantial changes in public policy. (Mr. Somboon Chungprampree)

— With this world characterized by different forms of violence, new approaches are needed to deal with teaching people about non-violence. Also, as the future lies with young people, it is important to actively involve them into promoting world

peace and discourage all the wars that are destroying life and the environment. The ideologies such as those based on Gandhi on peace and non-violence could be the pillar or resuscitation of humanity and living together in harmony. People like Mr. Rajagopal, who is the Founder of Ekta Parishad organisation dedicated to Gandhian ideologies of promoting peace and non-violence are key figures that are needed in this world. He believes that peace and non-violence can be addressed successfully through dialogue. His dedication for world peace made him to organize a year - long nonviolent march covering 12,000 kilometres across ten countries. His activism for peace and justice based on spiritual practice and his focus on young people who are the leaders of the future, can change the present

violent nature of this world. His extra strength of not only concentration on his country but spreading his teachings to others globally in the promotion of justice and nonviolence can heal the world. His recognition of the problem of climate change which also affects the lives of people, is also very important as people live in this earth but destroying the environment which results in violent climate changes that kill lots of people, something that could be prevented. He believes that through dialogue the world could work towards the eradication of poverty, encourage social inclusion, act on different ways to deal with climate crisis and halt conflict and violence. (Dr. Nokuzola Mndende)

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### Siam/Thailand

## Instilling A Respect For Wildlife

### How a Buddhist nun in Thailand is protecting tigers and elephants

By **Dorelyn Jose**, July 28, 2022

Source: **USAID** - <https://medium.com/usaaid-2030/instilling-a-respect-for-wildlife-49da26ff20de>

The jungles of Kanchanaburi province in western Thailand are well-known for their wildlife, especially elephants and tigers. Many communities here believe that amulets made of ivory and tiger fangs have the power to bring good luck and prevent harm. However, elephants and tigers are endangered species threatened with extinction.

The Venerable Jutipa Thappasuth,

a local Buddhist nun, has made it her personal mission to teach and remind young people to respect all life. After attending a USAID workshop last year, she learned how spiritual leaders can help reduce the demand for wildlife products among their followers. Through the four-day moral and ethical training camps she organizes, she has engaged more than 100 children,

Venerable Jutipa Thappasuth takes a stroll outside the temple. **USAID**



Venerable Jutipa Thappasuth holding space at the moral and ethical training camps. **Dhammanurak Foundation**

Spiritual Beliefs campaign key visual features popular and high profile influencers

(from right): revered Buddhist monk Venerable Phramedhi-vajirodom (V.Vajiramedhi); well-known actor and volunteer to Thailand's largest rescue organization on emergency response Bhin Banloerit; and prominent television personality "Top" Daraneenute Pasutanavin. **USAID**



Venerable Jutipa (second from left) discusses community campaigns with other nuns during the June 2022 workshop. **USAID**

youth, teachers, and community members on this topic, instilling respect for the life of wild animals like elephants and tigers.

“It is quite challenging to organize activities in communities where people like ivory or tiger talismans or amulets, which they think bring protection or good luck,” she said.

“My strategy is to introduce children and youth early to the law of karma and the consequences of breaking the precepts to discourage killing animals or consuming products made from wildlife products. In turn,

children are very good at reminding their parents about these things.”

Venerable Jutipa also works with community schools located around the Thung Yai Naresuan Wildlife Sanctuary, a protected area, to promote the well-being of wildlife. The sanctuary is part of the largest forest tract remaining in Southeast Asia, which is called the Western Forest Complex and comprises 4.4 million acres in western Thailand near the Burma border. Protected areas and national parks along this border are believed to contain the largest surviving populations of tigers in

Thailand.

### **The High Cost of Wildlife Crime**

Wildlife crime not only endangers biodiversity, but also threatens global and national security while undermining local livelihoods and food security.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted the risk of spillover zoonotic diseases that comes with the illegal wildlife trade, threatening human well-being and the global economy.

Growing regional wealth in



*Venerable Jutipa has engaged over 100 children, youth, and community members in her moral and ethical training camps following the USAID workshop on reducing demand for wildlife products.*

**Dhammanurak Foundation**

Southeast Asia and China has increased the demand for wildlife products, making the region a hotspot for wildlife trafficking.

Thailand is not only a transit point but a significant consumer country for wildlife products. A USAID study revealed that roughly 750,000 respondents in Thailand expressed the intent to buy and use wildlife products. The survey revealed that one key driver of consumption is spiritual beliefs in the power of ivory and tiger amulets.

**USAID’s Spiritual Beliefs Campaign Makes a Difference**

In October 2019, USAID launched the Spiritual Beliefs campaign in

partnership with Thailand’s Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP). The campaign used social and behavior change communication tools to reduce the demand for wildlife products and used data from the USAID study to determine the best way to reach wildlife consumers and potential buyers.

The project produced billboards and posters that were shown in bus shelters, sidewalk ads, printed newspapers, and amulet magazines, as well as videos for Facebook and Instagram, targeted amulet websites, and online news outlets.

USAID has also partnered with the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) and engaged around 100 Thai spiritual leaders in a series of workshops since 2020 to champion the campaign in their communities. Many of the spiritual leaders who attended the workshops have since undertaken community actions, including elephant

conservation projects — building salt licks, wells, and dikes in the forest as food and water sources for wild elephants — and telling children folk tales promoting animal conservation.

In a follow-up workshop in June, Venerable Jutipa and the other spiritual leaders fine-tuned their proposals for more effective and sustainable community actions.

USAID is continuing the Spiritual Beliefs campaign and other joint USAID-DNP wildlife reduction campaigns in Thailand that have significantly reduced the demand for, and the social acceptability of buying or using, wildlife products.

A recent online survey conducted by USAID to assess the impact of the USAID and DNP joint campaigns found that over a two-year period, the proportion of respondents exposed to these campaigns who stated that they will buy ivory products in the future decreased by 42%, while respondents who say they will buy tiger products fell by 26%. The survey also revealed that the respondents had the highest recall for the campaign featuring monks and other social influencers.

The new wave of campaigns by influential Buddhist spiritual leaders will reach and engender more communities to examine these deeply entrenched beliefs that are driving the consumption of wildlife products in Thailand.

About the Author - Dorelyn Jose is the Communication and Outreach Specialist for USAID Reducing Demand for Wildlife project.





# Engaged Buddhism: 20th Biennial INEB Conference Concludes in South Korea with a Commitment to Action, Peace, and Change

By **Craig C Lewis**

November 1, 2022

Source: **BuddhistDoorGlobal** - <https://www.buddhistdoor.net/news/engaged-buddhism-20th-biennial-ineb-conference-concludes-in-south-korea-with-a-commitment-to-action-peace-and-change/>



*The 20th Biennial Conference of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB).*

Image courtesy of INEB

SEOUL, South Korea – The 20th Biennial Conference of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), jointly organized with Jungto Society, concluded in Seoul on Sunday—the first official in-person gathering since INEB’s previous international conference in 2019 due to the pandemic. The gathering, running from 24–30 October, was held under the theme “Buddhism in a Divided World: Peace Planet, Pandemic.”

The week-long forum, divided between the autumnal mountain idyll of Mungyeong in the south

of the Korean Peninsula and the 21st century bustle of Seoul, brought together almost 100 speakers and attendees, members of INEB from around the world. These included distinguished teachers, scholars, and prominent engaged Buddhist activists, who presented, examined, and discussed a wide array of topics that broached the core themes of the roles and obligations of engaged Buddhists in today’s divided and troubled world. The guest of honor for the event was the renowned academic, social activist, and INEB founder, Sulak Sivaraksa.

Papers and presentations for the conference touched upon a wide range of important topics: the ongoing issues of female monastic ordination and empowerment; peace-building in an increasingly polarized and fractious world; climate and environmental protection and sustainability; pandemic management and humanitarian responses; gender identity, equality, and social inclusion; education and empowering young leaders; mental health and Buddhist chaplaincy; child protection in Buddhist institutions; and Buddhist practice and engaged Buddhism in a digital world.

These deep explorations shared through the program workshops were accompanied by a two-day meditation retreat, led by the revered Korean Seon (Zen) master Venerable Pomnyun Sunim, founder of Jungto Society and honorary adviser to INEB. The schedule was also complemented by a range of experiential learning opportunities in Korean cultural and spiritual arts—ranging from activities such as kimchi-making and ritual tea appreciation to making Buddhist prayer beads.

The 20th Biennial Conference was also aimed at developing INEB's 10-Year Strategic Roadmap, launched in 2017, and expanding outreach to like-minded social movements. This will help INEB to more fully support initiatives in social justice, cultural and gender equality and identity, inclusivity and diversity, transformative learning, and harmonizing initiatives associated with ecology and economics, intra- and inter-faith dialogue.

The conference culminated with a visit by the participants to the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) that divides the two Koreas, where the members of INEB held a solemn and profound ceremony for peace and for the reunification of the Korean Peninsula. This was followed by a public symposium “Roles of Spirituality & Faith in a Divided World,” live-streamed from Seoul and featuring addresses from an interfaith panel of socially engaged luminaries, including:



*INEB founder and renowned social activist Sulak Sivaraksa with Ven. Pomnyun Sunim, founder of Jungto Society and Honorary Adviser to INEB. Photo by Craig Lewis*

Ven. Pomnyun Sunim; Harsha Navaratne, High Commissioner for Sri Lanka in Canada and chair of INEB's Executive Committee; Sulak Sivaraksa, cofounder of INEB and chair of INEB's Advisory Committee; Dr Ahn Jae Woong, chair of the Korea Christian Democracy Foundation; Ven. Kaupahana Piyaratana, abbot-purana of Maha Viharaya Kebiliyapala, Sri Lanka; Pekka Metso, ambassador of Finland to South Korea; Shui-Meng Ng, a socially engaged activist working with development agencies in Laos; and Hua Boonyapisomparn, co-founder of the Thai Transgender Alliance and first coordinator of the Asia Pacific Transgender Network.

“For the last five days at Mungyeong Training



*Prayers for peace at the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Image courtesy of Jungto Society*



*Ven. Pomnyun Sunim during the two-day meditation retreat. Image courtesy of Jungto Society*

Center, we have discussed issues related to peace, the planet, and the pandemic,” Ven. Pomnyun Sunim observed in his opening address for the final symposium. “The conference this year was especially honored by the attendance of Ajahn Sulak [Sivaraksa], the founder of INEB, who reached his 90th birthday during the conference. . . .

“The world is facing multiple crises, and we need to acknowledge and to be very aware that we are in the midst of a crisis. However, we tend to overlook that we are living with crises because we’re so busy with our everyday lives. Yet just because we may not see it doesn’t mean the crises don’t exist. . . . To that end, education is critical. We also have to understand the underlying causes of these crises. And if we look deep into these underlying causes, we can realize that it is only our own greed that is, in fact, the cause. We are addicted to this system of consumerism in which the narrative of a good life means consuming more . . . and the subsequent damage to societal health means damage to the health of the planet as well.

“I believe that the essence of the Buddha’s teaching is all about engaged Buddhism. Buddhism without social engagement, without social activism cannot solve today’s problems.”

INEB executive committee member and representative of the Malaysia Network of Engaged

Buddhists Vidyananda (KV Soon), who compered the symposium, shared his own perspective on the fruits of the week-long conference: “This morning we took a trip to the demilitarized zone, the DMZ. It was the first time for me and I suppose it was the first time for many people. We saw for ourselves how difficult it is to attain peace even in just this one region. It was a clear message that the world is divided—very divided. And this thought has remained in my mind.

“However, reflecting on the conference of the last few days, I, as well as many of you here, agree that we all have been inspired—to make changes, to see that we can work in our own ways for peace and for our planet, to overcome the problems cause by the pandemic, to heal this divided world. We have heard from our teachers, such as Ven. Pomnyun Sunim, Ajahn Sulak [Sivaraksa], and other speakers during the conference . . . a clear reminder for us that action needs to happen.”

The International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) was formed in 1989 by the prominent Thai academic, activist, and social critic Sulak Sivaraksa and a group of Buddhist and non-Buddhist thought leaders. Connecting socially engaged Buddhists around the world, INEB works promote understanding, cooperation, and networking among inter-Buddhist and inter-religious groups, and to



*“Roles of Spirituality & Faith in a Divided World.”*  
Photo by Craig Lewis

actively address urgent global issues such as human rights, conflict resolution, and environmental crises. Headquartered in Bangkok, INEB has established a wide range of social projects and outreach programs aimed at overcoming suffering and empowering vulnerable communities through the practice of the Dharma and engaged Buddhism.

Jungto Society is a volunteer-run community and humanitarian organization that aspires to embody the Buddhist teachings through social engagement, and by promoting a simple lifestyle that is less centered on consumption than mainstream society. Jungto

Society seeks to address the problems and crises of modern society, such as greed, poverty, conflict, and environmental degradation, by applying a Buddhist worldview of interconnectedness and in line with the principal that everyone can find happiness through Buddhist practice and active participation in social movements. Jungto Society connects communities of practitioners across South Korea and the world, each offering online Dharma instruction and other Dharma-based programs.



Recommended Reading

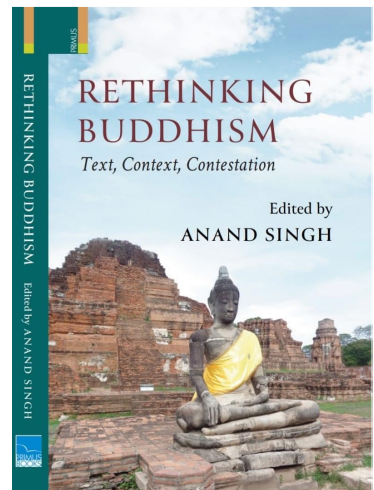


The Buddha Dhamma

A new version of the Buddha Dhamma has been published by Buddhism for Development in Laos, May 2022.

Rethinking Buddhism: Text, Context and Contestation

Editor: Anand Singh  
Publisher: Primus Books, Delhi



## INEB Conference Keynote Speech

Thursday 27 October 2022

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# Peace, Planet, Pandemic and Engaged Buddhism: from a Divided Myanmar to a Divided World

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by **Sai Sam Kham**

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### **V**ahujana hitara, vahujana sukhara!

Dear Ajarn Sulak, Venerable Pomnyun Sunim, Venerables and kalyanamitra from the International Network of Engaged Buddhists - INEB, I am glad to see all of you again. I am very grateful to Venerable Pomnyun Sunim and Jungto for allowing us to be in this beautiful training centre and for providing warm hospitality for all of us. I am very grateful for the generosity of the donors and the volunteers too.

This is the first conference since the last biennial conference at the Deer Park Institute in Bir, India, in 2019. COVID-19 started spreading, around the end of 2019, and it turned into a deadly global pandemic the following year. Sadly, we saw loss of millions of precious lives including our loved ones, as well as the suffering brought to us by the lockdowns and economic breakdowns. I am sure many of us are touched by these tragic experiences. Similarly, within the past three years we saw how climate change affected millions of lives, as well as violent political turmoil and wars. Despite these challenges, all of us are here meeting again. All still alive, and continuing our mission to bring about positive changes in the society and the world. It is indeed a blessing to see each other again and work together again.

It is an honour for me to give a keynote thinking-piece for this conference. Thank you very much for this opportunity! Although I feel underserved, I would

like to offer some of my thoughts related to the key topics of the conference. To be honest, these are more questions from a Puthujjana than the answers to the problems that concerns us. These questions trouble me for months and years. And to some extent, these are also the questions the generations leading the Myanmar Spring Revolution are grappling with. Indeed, they are questions around social justice and Buddhist ethics. Some of us may resonate with me because the questions I have are link to our roles, as engaged Buddhists, either as individuals or institutions, in the quickly developing threats from conflicts, climate change and the current and future pandemics. For the remaining time, I would like to go through some thoughts on the key themes of our conference “peace, planet and pandemic”, weaving between the local and global perspectives, from the divided Myanmar to the divided world.

### **Peace**

Recently, when I re-read the book *Dharmic Socialism* by Phra Dharmakosacarya Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, I noticed that the editors of the English version commented how timely the book was as humanity needed to change its course from destruction and annihilation by the looming nuclear wars. The book was first published in 1986. In three years, this book will be 40 years old. And yet, the concerns for peace seems to be timeless. As if the history repeated again, we are gathering to talk about the

tumultuous politics, conflicts and how we can perhaps prevent them. Myanmar is literally burning while we are talking here. An aerial bombing by the military junta a few days ago instantly killed 60 people, wounded hundreds in the northern Myanmar. One of the victims is an acquaintance. For decades, the constant risk of war in Korean Peninsular is a living nightmare of our brothers and sisters in Korea. The war in Ukraine is escalating every day and there is the highest prospect of nuclear war in 60 years, which President Joe Biden of the United State has warned an approaching “nuclear Armageddon”.

Wars were waged because of different positions in ideologies, territorial claims, desires to access and control resources, sometimes because of the ego of the leaders or their hatred or desire to beat a people into submission. Some wars were waged because of sheer greed to plunder a country, a land or because of the imperialist desire to dominate through brute force and hegemony.

At the same time, violent armed conflicts happened because of an enabling environment and the ecosystem benefiting from it. They are what Hannah Arendt would call ‘Banality of Evil.’ They may be white collar workers like some of us. They may go to their offices 9 to 5, and then return to their family as a loving father or mother. But they may be the same people supporting these wars knowingly or unknowingly. Behind every war, there are businesses and industries directly benefiting from wars or authoritarian regime such as Myanmar. Many of you will remember the US logistic giant Halliburton and its associates link to the war in Iraq. They benefited 39 billion US dollars from their contracts with the US government. In total, contractors including private security, logistics and reconstruction earned 138 billion dollars from the Iraq war alone (Fifield 2013).

Myanmar Brewery, which is owned by Myanmar military has collaborated with Kirin Beer from Japan. One of its most famous products, Myanmar Beer brought 22.7 millions income just from the first 3 months of 2020 (JFM 2020). The investors of Kirin include prestigious investors from all around the world, such as the

Norwegian Sovereign Fund. Norwegian government is one of the biggest donors of the multilateral Joint Peace Fund that supported the failed Myanmar peace process. Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise, a state own business with deep link to Myanmar military, has worked with Total, Shell, Woodside and Posco Daewoo. For 2019, the income from Total is 257 million US dollars (JFM 2021a). With such disposable income at their whim without any concern for accountability, Myanmar military can do whatever please them, including that of the Rohingya genocide, and the current war crimes against Myanmar people. The UN system is utterly useless to stop such brutality, including that of Russian invasion to Ukraine.

My point is for any war in the world, there are business interests as well as businesses bankrolling the war. And we need to hold them accountable. Some international governments are handing out peace funds, peace prizes with the left hand and funding wars or selling weapons with their right hands.

Let us see who has sold, or is selling weapons to Myanmar! From 1990-2016, the biggest weapon suppliers to Myanmar military is China, Russia, Israel, Ukraine and India (Asrar 2017). That is correct! Until before the most recent Russian invasion, Ukraine supplied armoured vehicles and missiles to Myanmar military, that were used during their campaign against Rohingya and other minorities. In 2019, an amphibious LPD warship from South Korea was transferred to Myanmar Navy, with a price tag of 42.3 million US dollars. The warship can carry 3 helicopters, 16 tanks and armoured vehicles, and over 500 soldiers. This type of warship is used to conduct military operations in the river deltas. The contract was negotiated in 2017 while the genocide was ongoing and it was concluded after 2019. The ships is already in use by the Myanmar military. Now, the Korean police is at the advanced stage of investigating Posco International, Daesun Ship Building and Engineering, and Korea’s Ministry of Defense regarding the alleged violations of Korea’s Foreign Trade Act for selling a warship to Myanmar(Myanmar Now 2022).

I apologized for all the details. But these are to highlight how seemingly harmless businesses such as a beer company or an energy company can fuel the war and aggravate suffering of people. You would not be surprised the arm suppliers to Myanmar also include some European countries such as France (JFM 2021b). France, China and Russia, 3 countries out of the permanent 5 from the UN Security Council members are supplying weapons to the genocidal military in Myanmar. How on earth Myanmar people believe these countries want peace for Myanmar? How on earth UN Security Council will fulfill their mandate for the global security?

This is an experience from just one country. I wonder what other countries would say. I think there will be no great difference. My question to all of us is what can we do in such situation? As individual, as institutions, as movements, as engaged Buddhists how can we address the evidently contradictory roles played by UN Security Council and its permanent members? How can we hold them accountable? If the UN systems don't work, what could be other alternatives? At the same time, how can we hold the weapon companies accountable? We are dying by the millions because of wars while they are reaping billions of profits and they don't need to be accountable for a single life killed in wars, beyond their PR campaigns and so called "corporate social responsibility".

Another key concern in terms of peace and stability, is the rise of what people call far rights, right wing nationalism, and I call fascism. Some of these fascist political movements took the form of religious nationalism, such as Mabatha in Myanmar and Hindutva in India. The rise of the far rights are very apparent in Europe and in the US too. Italy has just installed a prime minister who idolized Mussolini. Polarization caused by political, social, and economic inequalities are the main reasons, as we know. These contestations often took violent forms. We do not need to recall our painful memories of the Holocaust or the WWII. How would the inward-looking, delicate, non-violent, meditating Buddhism address these violent forces? Apparently,

liberal electoral democracy alone cannot solve the challenges posed by fascism. I think our commitment and moral responsibility is calling us to take on this issue. What kind of preemptive collective measures can we take to stop fascism from advancing?

Now, please let me move to the issue of planet and climate change!

## Planet

I would not go into details about what is climate change and how it is affecting humanity and the planet. Many of us are familiar with the issue and it is one of the repeated key themes in the INEB conferences.

Here, I would like to highlight a few points for us to consider when addressing the climate change. We all know how our way of conducting economies, our patterns of producing and consumption need fundamental changes. Not the quick fixes, definitely not the capitalist solutions which are being proposed as technological fixes will solve the problems. It is also our attitude and value that needed serious re-examination. Phra Buddhadasa says, (and I quote)

*“Those who hold the, ‘eat well, live well,’ view do not have any limits. They are always expanding until they want to equal the gods (dēvata). . . . Those who hold the ‘Eat and live only sufficiently’ view represent moderation, whatever they do, they do moderately. This results in a state of normal or balanced happiness (prakati-sukha). They will have no problem of scarcity, and there will be no selfishness.”*  
(Buddhadasa 1993)

The master's comment is in stark contrast with the consumption and consumerism which drive the growth economy. His comments disagree with the proponents of free market economy, neoliberal capitalism. As we can also see and learn from Jungto society, mindful consumption is an important practice we all can learn from.

At the same time, we must be cautious that climate change is turning into a politic and an industry in its own rights. It is a billion-dollar business including renewable energy solutions, carbon capturing projects, climate smart seeds/climate smart agriculture, and many other green solutions. Some of these solutions are not wrong in itself but many initiatives are causing harms to communities, especially for those in poor countries or poor agrarian communities. If we are not careful, we will fall into victims of the capitalist solutions for climate change. Some of these good-intended but poorly thought through or implemented projects are called as greenwashing or being named as green-grabbing.

A few years ago, a national park in northern Myanmar was expanded with the support from an international conservation group. It caused so much pain for the ethnic minority people there. There are many literatures highlighting how renewable energy policies in developed countries caused land grab for palm oil, sugarcane and maize productions, especially in poor countries with very little land tenure security for local farmers. Climate smart seeds or climate smart agriculture technologies are controlled by corporates, not the farmers. In Myanmar, controversial hydropower dam constructions were shoved under the renewable energy proposals in the Nationally Determined Contribution - NDC, following the Paris climate agreement. I wonder what other countries in this conference have to say about their experiences.

Many of us are promoting agroecological farming practices, Food Sovereignty and farmer's movements to address the issue of climate change and food security. Many of us know that farmer's agrarian justice, food justice initiatives must go hand in hand with climate justice. In addition to that, I would add land justice is a very important issue. We must be cautious to look at not only the physical land grab but also how land is being defined, and who is controlling the meaning making. This is because if someone can control the meaning of land, they can change it to grab the land. Some did that

through changing law and policies.

During Myanmar's experiment with democracy, we have the 2012 vacant, fallow and virgin land law. But who defines what is vacant, fallow or waste land? In 2016, during NLD's government rule, they changed the law and rejected customary land practices. Within two months after the revised law was enacted, when the improbable deadline to apply land registration was expired, millions of small holder farmers became landless, legally speaking. Over 47 million acres of land which is defined by the state as "vacant, fallow and virgin", which just mean that an undocumented land used by generations of small farmers who practiced customary land tenure, are now ready to hand over to the companies who can pay the price. This is the biggest legal land grab in Myanmar history, and a state's encroachment over the rights of the indigenous people and their self-governance. Changing the land laws, giving land registration and land lease is how land has been taken from the farmers who are using and caring it for generations. Now they have a piece of paper with limited duration for access and limited rights. This land commodification is what is called market-assisted land reform. In the climate change politics, small farmers are being blamed as carbon producers or polluters, while big agribusiness are being promoted for their "efficiency", and therefore given priority to get access to land. That is a widespread global policy which we must be very careful. Land is not just for agriculture or any kind of production. It has many other functions such as social reproduction, culture and spiritual values. Rights to land is right to life itself. I hope INEB can engaged more in the issue of land rights.

Fundamental to agroecological farming to address climate issues, we must remember that the struggle of farmers are not technical or bureaucratic. Rather, it is political and we need a political solution. We are not together in this, when it comes to climate change problems. Poor people suffer more. Therefore, any proposal for climate solution must recognize their voice and their rights to represent themselves.



Now please allow me to move to my comments on Pandemic!

## Pandemic

Rob Wallace, an epidemiologist and an evolutionary biologist combined study of epidemic with political economy and social studies when he investigates how certain virus emerge, how they managed to quickly spread, and what are the social, economic conditions that allow pandemic to happen. His studies find the capitalist mass production of food, especially poultry and pork are key areas of concerns (Papas, Willmeng, and Kwon 2021). When structural adjustment in Africa forced industrial agriculture expansion into deep forest, the sensitive ecological balance has broken and reserves of new pathogens are being exposed. That's how Ebola's emergence has linked with economic policy and capitalizing of agriculture. When big agribusiness and monoculture took the land and the mainstream food production, rural farmers were forced to engaged in marginal food sector such as wild-food. Meat produced by the corporates and big farms are selling next to wild animals and bush meats.

Wallace has written a book with a provocative title "*Big Farms Make Big Flu*" in 2016. Since then, he predicted pandemic, in this mode of capitalist food production, and people's mobility, is inevitable. It is not if but a matter of time. For now, he warned that we are not getting rid of COVID-19 pandemic yet, as many of us wanted to believe. He suggests that we need to do more than vaccination. In terms of controlling the spread of virus, he sees the need to use non-pharmaceutical solution such as test, track and isolate, and most importantly provide support to poor wage workers whom we inappropriately called "essential workers".

Unless we change our way of production, circulation and consumption of our food, there will be pandemic of one kind or another, or worse there can be a combination of one or more pandemic, climate disaster and political instability or war. This point sounds like an alarmist

call, however from Myanmar's COVID-19 experience combined with conflict and violent coup, we know that the possibility is very real.

INEB has been working with various partner across the region on organic agriculture and agroecological farming. To address the agribusiness model that produce pandemics, we must take our food sector seriously. Myanmar with its primitive health sector survives the pandemic, largely because of sharing economy, moral economy and a culture of caring. I am sure many of you have great stories to share with us which come out of our collective struggle against the global pandemic and its broader consequences.

For the conclusion, I would like to discuss:

## Confronting difficult questions posed to engaged Buddhists

How would engaged Buddhism address the dilemmas, contradictions and paradoxes within Buddhism and its different sects? The issues I am going to raise are nothing new, yet they persistently keep confronting us. What can we learn from these common issues? How can engaged Buddhist address them, which may in turn help us understand the main theme of our conference "peace, planet and pandemic".

The first issue is related to how we understand and apply the Buddhist concept of Karma. The second issue is how Buddhist choose between non-violent and violent means, and how do we understand them. I can tell you that, these are fundamental questions coming out of confronting with the most violent repression in Myanmar's history while being a practicing engaged Buddhist. With the current deadly coup in Myanmar and the subsequent revolution and resistance, many Buddhist monks, as well as Christian priests, or Muslim leaders, are fighting against injustice while risking their own lives. Some monks disrobed and carry weapons to fight.

At the same time, there are senior Theros, including the renown Sitagu Sayadaw, and their followers are

openly supporting the Myanmar military and the coup. They believe that the Myanmar military is the only one capable of protecting Buddhism. How can the Sangha support such unspeakable violence? This irreconcilable moral destitution of towering Buddhist leaders, makes millions of Buddhists feel the earth beneath their feet had shattered. Young Buddhists are started questioning relevance of Buddhism, and the monastics in their lives. Dismayed by corruption and wealth of some monks, young people are contemplating lay people led Buddhist order. Sadly, for them, Sangham are no longer a Saranam to take shelter. Young women are asking why would they follow a religion that consider them as “dirty”, and treated them with contempt. Compare to men, women are the one regularly faithfully donating, supporting Buddhism. *Women’s body are dirty. Bhikkhunis are not welcome.* But their donations are welcome. How long can such contradiction maintain in the long run? What good could the discrimination and exclusion of women among the Sangha bring to Theravada? With the ongoing revolution, established ideologies and values are crumbling down. A new Myanmar is quickly emerging. Is Theravada in Myanmar ready to reform or risk extinction?

Before and after the violent military coup in Myanmar in 2021, we have seen an unholy alliance between Buddhist nationalists and the Myanmar military. Although majority population in Myanmar are Buddhists, we have a long-standing concern about a Muslim take over which is being introduced to us as small kids. Although it is unsubstantiated, the concern is widespread. Being a pariah country under the socialist dictatorship for decades that practiced a closed-door foreign policy may have exacerbated religious conservatism, xenophobia and islamophobia. Whenever something shameful involving Buddhist clergies happened, we would shrug and blamed the “bad apples”, the individuals. That it has nothing to do with Buddhism. Gradually, questions were raised if Buddhism as an institution is potentially responsible in

helping successive military regime in Myanmar to claim political legitimacy. Finally, if the concept of Karma, or at least Myanmar the way Theravada Buddhism interpreted and taught, is being used to justify culture of impunity.

In Myanmar Theravada tradition, or at least the majority Buddhists understood and practice, Karma is a determinism, preset from the good or bad karma one accumulated in the past lives. This position creates two main problems. One is victim blaming. If a person suffers from an injustice or an affliction, say for example, sexual violence, it is because of the bad karma the person committed from the past lives. The second issue is justice and accountability. This way of karmic position sees the wheel of Karma will take care of the wrong doing of a person, so there is no need to seek justice. Punitive justice is seen as an undesirable “revenge” instead of a deterring action. Instead of seeking punishment, the victim is advised to forgive and move on. There are many cases of mismanaging domestic abuse, or sexual violence through traditional arbitration or local justice systems dominated by this Buddhist worldview.

Many military dictators have enriched themselves with the wealth plundered from the country. However, the soldiers who risked their lives at the frontline considered that they deserved it because of their good karma. Why should we be complaining, right? People do go to court or seek other alternative justice, but these are most prevailing attitude of the general public when it comes to seeking justice and accountability. The question now is, in this way, has a teaching of Buddhism unwittingly strengthened culture of impunity in Myanmar?

In the book *Rethinking Karma: the Dharma of Social Justice*, editor Jonathan Watts writes, (and I quote):

*“This lack of engagement with social injustice has created a moral myopia within traditional Buddhist societies towards the fundamental forms of structural and cultural violence underpinning the more visible acts of violence and oppression. The common understanding of*

*karma often serves to perpetuate structural and cultural violence, such as sexism, classism, and political oppression.” (Watts 2014)*

How is your own experience in your own country, society? How do engaged Buddhist approach justice and accountability? How do we address impunity? Shouldn't Karma, which means action, be reconsidered as our own agency to break the structural, cultural violence?

Venerables, Ajarns and klyanamitras . . . Some of you might have visited Myanmar and met my friends and colleagues there. Many of these young Buddhists who are trying their best to foster social change in their community are now joining the revolution. Some of them took non-violent actions but many are now in the armed movement. Some become high ranking revolutionary military officers. It is sad but I can tell you I am very proud of them. My respect to them has never changed. Young people are forced to choose this path, not because they enjoy violence. In these days, I am re-examining my own positions a lot. I thought I would rather die than being forced recruit to fight a war. Growing up in the frontlines, I am no stranger to conflict and I hate war. But now I am asking myself, what I would do if violent knock on my door. If my loved ones are the victims of a brutal military campaign, will I flee, will I pray and meditate or will I take arms to protect them?

Since the time of Buddha, there are apparently wars. How do Buddhists engage in violence? Any killing or harming other beings, not only human beings, is considered as Akusala, unwholesome. And yet, in our daily lives, at least we enjoy eating meat. We let the poor people, the butchers commit the killing. We outsource bad karma to the lower castes or classes. Let the poor people sin and suffer in their later lives! And we get away with that. How does that work? How do Buddhists reconcile such dilemma and contradiction?

In his interview with Insight Myanmar Podcast, Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi raises the following questions related to the gray areas of applied Sila and moral

dilemmas faced by Myanmar in crisis. (I quote:)

*“[In] going against the precept, you're doing so because there's an overriding moral obligation or commitment under that situation, to protect the life of people in danger. This doesn't involve reinterpreting the precept such that it loses its moral force; it's understanding there are different moral obligations in play. . . For example, what does one do if you were to find yourself in a “kill or be killed” scenario? What types of force are permitted if this is might be the only way to stop rape? Or torture? Or death of children? And if one decides to use force in such circumstances, what will the karmic consequences be? And can one commit violence without having ill will?”*  
(Insight Myanmar Podcast 2022)

The revolution in Myanmar has dramatically changed Myanmar society. That's what a revolution should do. It is not all about bad and tragedy only. It is tragic, but many stars shine their lights out of this deep darkness too. In times of great suffering, there are also great compassion, great sacrifices. In such time, many contradictions, difficult questions and taboos in Theravada Buddhism in Myanmar that have been swept under the carpet for too long have come out in the open. Young people are not taking such nonsense anymore. We Buddhists either confront the difficult questions and seek understandings, if not answers, or we risk losing this whole generation. That could well be the end of Buddhism in Myanmar. I know I am being dramatic, but it almost becomes the self-fulfilling prophecy Myanmar Buddhist are afraid of.

We, the older generations, owe the young these answers if we want to see our lineage and teaching continues. For many times, Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa reminds us that Buddhism should be relevant for the modern world. When it comes to difficult questions, reformation and reinterpretation, Phra Buddhadasa

Bhikkhu never shies away. He reimagined a new political system bravely and brilliantly. Same can be said with Dr Ambedkar and the Dalit's movements. There is so much we can learn from the Ambedkarites

Confronting with the key issues raised by this conference, peace, planet and pandemic, there is so much needed to be done. We need mass mobilization, mass movements. We need solidarity beyond our narrow scope of nation states. I lost my words to express how grateful I am for the solidarity, compassion and generosity shown by INEB and Jungto for Myanmar and other members of INEB, who are in need.

Let me conclude this session with this final quote! In his recent interview with the Buddhist door, Venerable Pomnyun Sunim said we must still keep doing the right things we are already doing without expectation or attachment or weather our actions will come to fruition or not. He says (and I quote): “no matter how beautiful

the Buddha's teachings are, they are effectively useless unless they can lead people to lift themselves out of their suffering”. End of quote.

Let us work together to help ourselves, our planet and other beings! Thank you very much for your attention!

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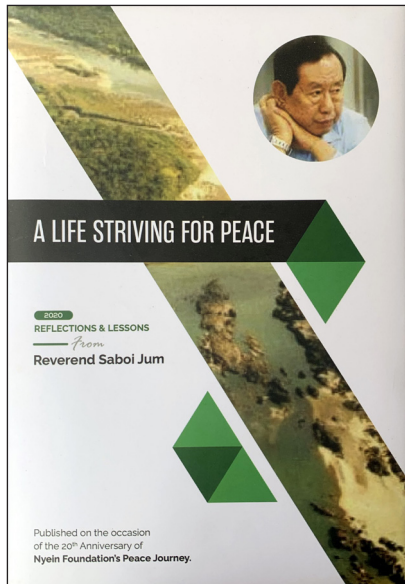
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**Recommended Reading**



A Life Striving for Peace – Reflections & Lessons from Reverend Saboi Jum

Published on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Nyein Foundation's Peace Journey, December 2020

**Sai Sam Kham** is a member of INEB's Executive Committee, and a PhD candidate at International Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, Netherlands.



## INEB and Jungto Society's Joint DMZ Peace Declaration in Korea



*Conference participants at the Dorasan Observatory, October 29, 2022.*

Image courtesy of Jungto Society.

On this fine fall day, as we stand here surrounded by nature's beauty, let us bear witness to a horrific history of suffering. The Korean War began in 1950 and lasted for three years. It pitted fathers against sons, brothers against brothers, mothers against daughters, sisters against sisters. At the end of three years, three million people were killed, properties were destroyed, and the land was devastated. And it remains divided to this day.

This happened because different people had different ideas of what Korea should be and how the people should live. Those differences became hatred and disdain that launched bombs, bullets, and knives against innocent people, and caused untold suffering that continues to resonate today beneath our very feet on this symbolic ground.

Unfortunately, such suffering is not unique. Similar suffering is occurring throughout the world today, and has occurred throughout the history of humankind. Let us recognize that the three poisons of greed, anger, and ignorance continue to create an institutionalized structure of violence that leads to injustice and suffering.

We are all gathered here today as representatives of engaged Buddhism because we recognize that Buddhism deals with the everyday suffering of everyday people.

Engaged also means to connect with one another intentionally and humanely, in a camaraderie of honesty and truth, to lessen suffering by dismantling structural violence wherever we encounter it.

On this day, surrounded by admirable friends and colleagues, we bear witness to one another and to declare that we will always remain engaged to help the vulnerable, embrace the different, and protect the marginalized. Therefore, we declare we will:

Bear witness to the hungry and feed them.

Bear witness to the sick and treat them.

Bear witness to the children without access to schooling and educate them.

Bear witness to discrimination and protect human rights.

Bear witness to refugees and provide shelters for them.

Bear witness to violence and resolve it peacefully.

May all living beings be happy and peaceful.

**Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!**

## Keynote Speech for the Public Symposium at INEB's International Conference, Seoul, Korea

29 October 2022

# The Role of Spirituality and Faith in the Divided World

By Harsha Navaratne

*“Today, we need to address the future. Not with prayers prompted by fear, but by taking realistic action founded on scientific understanding. The inhabitants of our planet are interdependent as never before. Everything we do affects our human companions, as well as innumerable animal and plant species.”*

His Holiness the Dalai Lama's  
COP 26 message, October 31, 2021.

When we look at the world today, we see a crisis that we never imagined or expected. In order to limit the consequences and damage, we all need to work together in great cooperation and solidarity. We need to find a path towards personal awakening in order to come out of the present suffering as a society that leads to a safer, harmonious, happier and greener world. We need to act and recognize the importance of humanity's sense of oneness, our interconnectedness that links every human being as a part of us. Spirituality plays a big role in making that a reality, as well as taking ownership to care for our common future.

The challenges we face today are immense. The World is divided. Internal conflicts among ethnic groups/communities, wars fought between nations, hunger, drought, climate change, ocean pollution, degrading natural resources, exploitation by multilateral companies,

media domination and manipulation, citizens' distrust of democracy, tyrannical regimes taking dominion over nations, etc., are all contributing to this current crisis.

Since we, as human beings, are responsible for creating these issues, it is also our responsibility to confront and address them. It is time we came together at the global level to understand and commit ourselves to address these issues in ways that bring future benefits. First, we must individually be responsible to find solutions to these issues and carry a message to the greater society which creates hope for the future.

I have spent the last forty five years of my life as a development practitioner. My journey began as a volunteer in a rural village in Sri Lanka, bordering a jungle, far away from the city. During my time as a development worker in my country I have witnessed tragedy after tragedy, whether man-made or by natural causes. I have experienced the loss of friends and colleagues, who while seeking to make social change, lost their lives in the process. Some of them were even labeled as terrorists by the ruling regimes, though considered heroes by the common people. Unfortunately, heroism and politics in my country are such that, ironically, a person can be called either a hero or a terrorist depending on how you feel or wish. This may not necessarily be based on facts or justifiable reasoning. Under the guise of democracy, political parties create divisions and destroy the very fabric of social and moral values and

ethics. They are responsible for pushing a country into desperate conditions resulting in an economic crisis and continuous human suffering.

Many people ask me, “How is it possible for Sri Lanka as a predominantly Buddhist country to go through such violent times, one after the other?” I have also often asked myself this difficult question.

During my childhood, our whole village community used to live as one big family. The village temple was the central place, the heart of my community. When the temple bell rang, we would all come together at the temple preaching hall. I had never seen police officers present in the village. The first time I saw a police officer was when I left my village and went to a boarding school in the city. The village was full of life and thrived on values of cooperation, coexistence, shared resources and solidarity. Living around the temple we learned to live this way, and the monks were our gurus. Unfortunately, as time passed, politics entered the temples and the community started to be more dependent on politicians. Some of the Buddhist monks who were spiritual masters also started to follow the political trends rather than their faith and value system.

Lord Buddha’s teachings, that promoted unity and oneness within one’s village, society and country, started to fall apart. When society started to divide itself by ethnicity, religion and political beliefs, disaster after disaster followed. Most of you may understand this, and may have experienced similar historic events and recollections.

Today we live in a society where many of us are contradicting and violating its spiritual teachings and ethical or moral foundation. This has created a huge challenge for civil society activists and true social movements in countries such as ours. People are moving away from moral and ethical values in their search for quick and easy answers to existing socio-political issues.

It is important to seek the best method to practice what we preach and believe will stimulate social

awakening. Do our politicians, leaders, preachers, practitioners and “do-gooders” really practice what they preach? It’s hard to say ‘yes’ to that question. Sometimes those recognized as spiritual gurus, preaching to a large group, are also responsible for breaking down society and contributing towards the ongoing negative trends through their teachings. It is, in fact, a real challenge these days to identify authentic, sincere, and truthful personalities. So what should be the role of a true leader of the people?

A true leader needs to be 100% committed towards the common good, and advance gradually and genuinely towards social and national goals, based on our values. He or she needs to move forward with like-minded people, with understanding, with a clear world view, and with the right set of attitudes. Great importance must be given towards setting long term goals and having the readiness to face challenges, all the while remembering that it will be a long haul. A true leader must also be prepared to ‘practice what he or she preaches’, so as to be an example and role model to others.

As activists too, we need to understand the challenges faced by us, discuss them and continuously shared them with our peers. I come from a country where bad planning, mismanagement, corruption and huge debt issues brought the country’s economy down to the ground. This, along with complicated social issues, has driven the country close to bankruptcy, that has resulted in increased human suffering. Today people are on the roads asking for system change. Policy makers need to plan and implement comprehensive reform programs including democratizing structures.

Many do not understand that the last 74 years of political party-based politics are responsible for the present situation in Sri Lanka. Doing away with the Democratic Parliamentary systems and adopting a Centralized Executive Presidency where the majority leaned towards nationalism while ignoring the needs and voices of the minority, has seriously damaged

and destroyed the country’s vibrant social fabric. As social activists, therefore, we demand de-centralization of executive presidential powers as also essential constitutional changes based on legitimate good governance for the common good.

A community such as ours, that is the International network of engaged Buddhist, needs to look at our respective country’s past, present and future. This includes mainstreaming our Engaged Buddhist values and putting those values into practice to benefit society as a whole. As Thich Naht Hanh said, “even the most painful and violent experience of life demands our full attention. When we are attentive to our own suffering, we will know that of others. That knowledge can help break cycles of suffering and violence in the world around.” In essence, he teaches us to live “in peace and mindfulness.”

Mahatma Gandhi said, “my life is my message,”and Martin Luther King’s example of the great non-violent demonstration of the civil rights movement in USA have influenced Ajhan Sulak to call them his spiritual Kalyanamithra from different parts of the world.

INEB was given birth in his ancestral boat house

among a diverse meeting of Kalyanamithra which is a significant historic event for all of us. He and his co-founders created this network which has expanded immensely today. The solid foundation they built has formed a strong network which is resilient and able to confront challenges and differences such as religion, ethnicity and geographical distances.

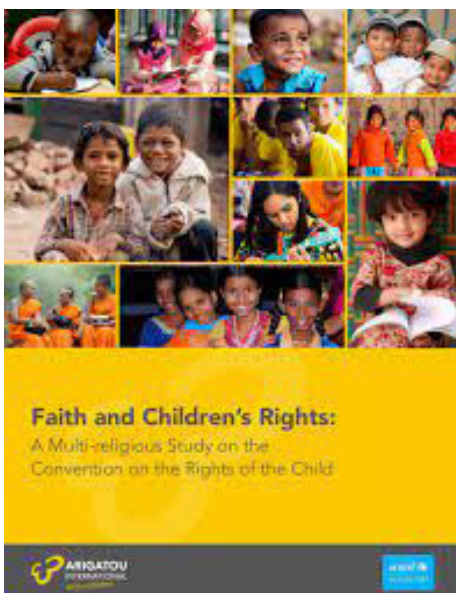
On the 90th birthday of Ajhan Sulak we will all remember him as the greatest “Upasaka” during our times who honored and served Buddhist precepts and practices with utmost devotion. He now looks to our younger generation to follow his path and take INEB towards a prosperous future.

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**Harsha Navaratne** is the Chairperson of INEB’s Executive Committee and Sri Lanka’s High Commissioner to Canada Designate.



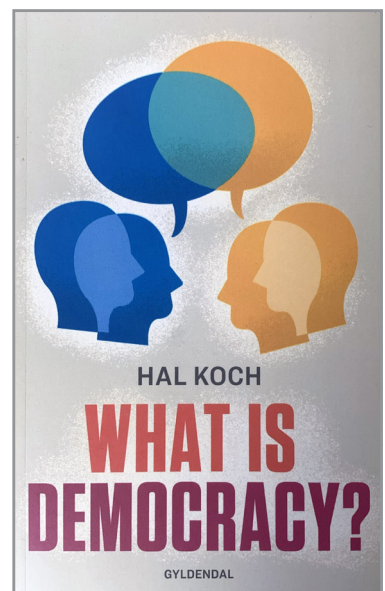
## Recommended Reading




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Faith and Children’s Rights:  
A Multi-religious Study  
on the Convention on  
the Rights of the Child

Editor: Peter Billings  
Publisher: Arigatou International –  
New York, 2019




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What is Democracy?

Author: Hal Koch  
Publisher: Gyldendal



## DECLARATION



International Network  
of Engaged Buddhists

### Buddhism in a Divided World: Peace, Planet, Pandemic

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#### 20<sup>th</sup> Biannual Conference of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists

Mungyeong & Seoul, South Korea

October 24-29, 2022

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### Introduction

We, as spiritual friends, *Kalyanamitra*, gathered together for the 20<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists – INEB, consisting of 82 participants from 19 countries. The conference, jointly organized by INEB and the Jungto Society Korea, was intended to more fully realize the potential of Socially Engaged Buddhism that supports peace, social justice, cultural and gender equality, inclusivity and diversity, transformative learning, and harmonizing initiatives associated with ecology and economics (socially responsible right livelihood), intra and inter-faith dialogue and youth.

The challenges confronting the world, as well as the opportunities for personal and social transformation are ever present. The conference presented various approaches using our head, heart, and hands to address these challenges based on meditation and reflection, as well as creating opportunities to learn together from the INEB network and more deeply from the Korean context. This experience involved our entire being through meditation and by renewing relationships that are heart connected, by using our hands to create art, and enjoy food, and our heads through taking in

new ideas, all of which collectively contribute to personal and social change. Our time together had other dimensions such as building solidarity as we visit the Demilitarized Zone, examining more closely the realities of peace and conflict around the world.

The conference theme of “Buddhism in a Divided World” aimed to further inform and develop INEB’s 10 Year Strategic Roadmap, *The Way Forward*, launched in 2017. This will also expand INEB’s outreach to emerging like-minded social movements through engagement with the major themes of Peace, Planet and Pandemic. The concerns raised and the recommendations made during the workshops form the basis of this Declaration and will help to define tangible action that can be taken in the two years before the next international INEB conference.

### DECLARATION

*Recognizing* that in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century peace is increasingly threatened by global, regional, and internal conflicts. INEB will support a peacebuilding culture by:

- promoting principled dialogue among the parties, including interfaith actors;
- further developing and supporting an interdisciplinary Buddhist analytical model to examine the intersection of cultural, economic, social, historical and geopolitical causation;
- continuing to facilitate humanitarian support in conflict zones.

*Recognizing* that a concerted planet-wide response to environmental degradation and climate mitigation is increasingly restricted by failure of political and economic will at the national and global level, INEB will:

- continue investigating the unseen structural and cultural causes of environmental degradation that lead to environmental suffering;
- develop spiritually conscious environmental activists through building capacity of religious leaders and interfaith organizations through its Inter-religious Climate and Ecology Network (ICE);
- continue to grow its integrated community development model through the Eco-temple project using cross training in various sectors such as, clean energy, land rehabilitation, community gardening and ecological architecture.

*Recognizing* that the global COVID-19 pandemic has exposed many systemic failures leading to increased inequality, increased poverty and greater marginalization of vulnerable groups, INEB will:

- support groups/organizations working with socially and economically disadvantaged communities to ensure equitable access to employment, education and health care, including equitable access to vaccines and treatment in future

- pandemic and public health crises;
- support groups/organizations working with children on child rights that include the right to protection, health and education, in order to ensure that there is no “loss of education” during public health crises;
- support groups/organizations working at the grassroots level with women for empowering them to achieve equality, equity and the right to live with dignity and self-esteem, including more robust protective measures during public health crises.

*Recognizing* that cultural and structural alternatives cannot take root and survive without instilling values to ensure Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), and that there is ongoing systemic and systematic injustice against LGBTQAI+, women, youth and members of marginalized communities, INEB will:

- issue a clear public stand on GESI, and take a leadership role in breaking down patterns and unlearning prejudices;
  - engage all network members to examine their programs and activities through the GESI lens;
  - organize and coordinate conversations and educational opportunities on GESI topics.

*Recognizing* that bhikkhuni ordination is still not allowed, acknowledged, or encouraged in Theravada and Vajrayana traditions, and that Bhikkhunis lack educational opportunities equal to Bhikkhus, as well as opportunities to come together for exchange and solidarity, INEB will:

- issue a public statement in support of Bhikkhuni ordination;
- continue to support efforts to revive the Bhikkhuni lineages through ordination;

- collaborate with established Mahayana Bhikkhuni sanghas to provide educational and exchange opportunities to Bhikkunis of the other two traditions, as well as monastic education and training for lay women.

*Recognizing* the need to build a harmonious society where peace and justice can thrive, and the essential role of transformative learning through education for change in fostering personal growth and social engagement, INEB will:

- encourage systems of education that become tools for liberation, not control, are more responsive to the students' diversity, goals and perspectives, foster creativity and are student-centered;
- foster concrete educational pathways for personal transformation and social change, incorporate issues of inequality and environmental crisis into the curriculum and ensure that the educational rights and aspirations of minorities and disadvantaged persons are fulfilled, while respecting their linguistic and cultural identities;
- encourage collaborative educational ecosystems that foster alternative, holistic learning that balances results with student well-being, and ensure space for students to express themselves and are heard.

*Recognizing* that abuse and violence against children are global in scope, and that children are exposed to them within the family, educational institutions including monastic schools, and in society at large, INEB will:

- work with Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis within its network to make them aware of what constitutes child abuse (verbal, mental, physical, sexual), and the legal recourse against it available to them in their respective countries, as well as the United

Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC);

- approach monastic institutions through the Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis of its network, to help raise awareness about abuse within monastic settings, educate residents (adults and children) about abuse, and make them aware of the laws regarding child protection in their respective countries;
- work with the monastic institutions to establish a mechanism for safeguarding children through a process that includes child participation at every stage.

*Recognizing* that technology can build digital capacity for spiritual and social engagement, that digital technology can both empower and disempower depending on access to technology, and that access to it is often determined by political, economic and educational status, INEB will:

- form an internal working group (the eventual think-tank) to understand and contextualise the challenges and opportunities posed by digital technologies in areas that include artificial intelligence and ethics, digital divide strategies, data privacy and protection of individuals, and impact on climate action through the lens of engaged Buddhism;
- organize a series of education and capacity building activities to understand and appreciate the opportunities and challenges;
- encourage and develop specific digital projects to be implemented within the INEB network as forms of social enterprise, aimed at making the whole initiative self-sustaining and financially independence.

*Recognizing* that Buddhist teachings and institutions can contribute to psycho-spiritual

health, that can be applied under diverse conditions within the family, the temple, following natural disasters, in suicide prevention and end of life care, *recognizing* the need to mainstream Buddhist concepts and practices that strengthen or deepen the psycho-spiritual care movement, and that a crisis in mental health has been exacerbated by the global pandemic, INEB will:

- raise awareness and active support for young people who have become especially susceptible to mental illness during the COVID-19 pandemic and the wanton expansion of social media;
- create an INEB-based Asian Buddhist chaplaincy program, especially for South and Southeast Asia, through short term preliminary training courses;
- continue to investigate and articulate new forms

of psycho-spiritual therapy based on the cross fertilization of Western psychiatric science and Buddhist thought and practice.

In conclusion we, the conference participants, rededicate our commitment as described within each section of this Declaration. We affirm our engagement based on the profound and enduring teachings as guided by our teachers on the path of personal and social transformation through reflection and social action.

Furthermore, we unanimously commit to developing an action plan that responds to this Declaration as represented within *The Way Forward: INEB's 10-year Strategic Plan*.



## Nine Decades of Friendship Honoring Sulak Sivaraksa on His 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday

Saturday, 25 March 2023

At the Siam Society, Sukhumvit 21, Bangkok

### Program Schedule

16.00	Registration
16.30	Public Lecture by Ven. Netiwit
17.30	Music, Performances and Speeches
19.00	Drama Theater by "Anatta Group"
19.30	Words of thanks by Sulak Sivaraksa

### YOUR PRESENCE IS THE BEST PRESENT

More details at: [coordinator@inebnetwork.org](mailto:coordinator@inebnetwork.org)

[www.inebnetwork.org](http://www.inebnetwork.org)

## Report from Sangha for Peace Project!

# The Regional Network for Peacebuilders Project (Sangha for Peace)

## Second Country Learning Mission, Sri Lanka

2 – 10 December 2022

By **Anchalee Kurutach**



*The 2nd Country Learning Mission in Sri Lanka  
Sangha for Peace participants and INEB Team*

The Regional Network for Peacebuilders (Sangha for Peace), convened by the International Network of Engaged

Buddhists (INEB) with support from USAID and FHI360, bringing together Peacemakers from the Buddhist communities in Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand successfully completed the meaningful country learning mission to Sri Lanka from the December 2-10, 2022.

This was the second country learning mission following the first one held in Thailand 6 months earlier. Eighteen Sangha for Peace participants and four INEB secretariat team members made up the group, which consisted of male and female monastics, cisgender persons and members of the LGBTQIN+ communities. During the nine day learning mission in Sri Lanka, the

group was privileged to engage with many social, ethnic, religious, and gender groups, all of whom offered warm welcome and hospitality. The experience was further marked by the spirit of *kalayanamitra* and exceptional willingness from all sides to engage in open dialogue on challenging issues, as well as to share relevant experiences and perspectives. One key factor attributing to the learning mission's success is the fact that Sangha for Peace team is a diverse group of people who have already built a trusting relationship and mutual respect. And, the group has solid understanding regarding Gender Equality and Social Inclusion from the workshop offered by International Women for Peace and Justice during the first country learning mission in Thailand. Sangha for Peace members do not shy away from bringing important issues to the table for a critical dialogue to take place.



*Interfaith Leaders from Religions for Responsible Governance at Walopa Rahula Institute*



*Bhikkhuni ordination at Sakyadhita Training Center, Moratuwa, Sri Lanka*

All fourteen main activities during the second learning mission in Sri Lanka touched on all five curriculum modules, i.e., Buddhism, violence, and nationalism; intrafaith and interfaith dialogues; gender equality and social inclusion (GESI); community engagement; and peace in action. These modules often intersected within each activity.

### **Our nine-day learning mission:**

- December 2 - Sangha for Peace members gathered for their second learning mission at Sarvodaya Vishwanikethan. The first day was spent catching up with Sangha for Peace members, who shared with each other what they had done in the past six months since the first country learning mission. Many members were able to connect what they learned in Thailand to the work they did in their communities.
- On the evening of December 3, we visited Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne in his humble home. Many participants were inspired by Dr. Ari's and his wife's warm presence and delighted in the unique opportunity to converse on various topics with them.
- December 4 - We heard a presentation from their son, Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne about the historical analysis of nation building through Sarvodaya civil movement. Following the presentation, participants had an opportunity to offer labor dana at Sarvodaya Shanti Sena as well as engaged in conversation with interfaith youth there.
- December 5 - We spent a day at Walopa Rahula Institute,

where long-term INEB kalayanamitra Ven. Galkande Dhammananda and his team of dedicated volunteer staff graciously welcomed our group. There, our Sangha for Peace members delved into deep discussion about the Institute's exemplarily inclusive policies and later met and had a lively conversation with inter-faith leaders of Religions for Responsible Governance. For the whole day, we all sat in the garden area underneath lush green trees, enthusiastically discussing social justice matters, an experience hard to forget for many.

- The day after, on December 6, we went to the Parliament of Sri Lanka where the Honorable speaker of the house, along with other parliament members, engaged us in conversations about inclusive public policy that protect human rights and human dignity. The discussion found way to focus on Bhikkhunis' challenges such as not having an I.D. card to carry. The parliament also graciously provided luncheon for the group. The afternoon after Parliament, we visited the Easter Bombing site at St. Anthony's Church, with Father Perera leading us on a walking tour. We then had a sit-down talk with human rights activist and Niwano prize winner Ruki Fernando.
- The next day's program (December 7) began with the visit to Center for Peace Building and Reconciliation. At CPBR, each one of us was inspired by how decades of peace work has been sustained in a holistic and healing way. From there, we went to visit Zam Zam Foundation. After enjoying the luncheon Zam Zam generously provided, we engaged with our

Muslim brothers and sisters in open dialogue about discrimination and social inclusion.

- December 8 - Our Sangha for peace members visited the peaceful campus of Buddhist Pali University and engaged in some open dialogue about Buddhist studies with faculty members and students there.
- December 9 - The final big event for the learning mission was the first-ever community hearing meeting on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion, hosted by senior Buddhist religious leaders of Amarapura Nigaya. Understanding the significance and sensitivity of this unprecedented gathering, we invited some of the leaders of marginalized groups to meet with us to get to know each other before the event. These evening meetings with Tamil leaders and with LGBTQIN+ leaders were significantly transformative for a lot of Sangha for Peace members. The discussions were intense and at some points difficult.

On the day of the big event, more than a hundred people showed up. Many spoke about the challenges they face daily as marginalized people. Their strength and courage were undeniable, and their messages clearly heard. At a press conference following the community meeting, our Sangha for Peace team introduced ourselves as a group of Buddhist peace builders who believe in gender equality and social inclusion. Four of our team members each gave a brief statement to the press.

- Lastly, on December 10, all of us went to support the bhikkhuni ordination where a total of nine bhikkunis were ordained, six of them were from Thailand and three from Sri Lanka.

The country learning mission had a packed schedule, but there were a few moments where we experienced some cultural events such as the sunset stroll by the beach in Beruwala or the visit to Bellanwila Temple during the full moon night. During the daily reflection, participants expressed how they valued the opportunity to engage with a local community and highlighted how it invited them to look within themselves and transform their own misconception about others, and consider the big picture of their work in their own communities. Participants look forward to seeing each other again



Sunset stroll by the beach in Beruwala

for the third country learning mission in April 2023. Meanwhile, they plan to share what they learned from the Sri Lankan program with their community members.

Special thanks to our Sri Lanka coordinator Suchith Abeyewickreme for skillfully putting the program together and connecting with every stakeholder with respect and positive attitude. Lastly, the program wouldn't have been a great success without Sangha for Peace members' full presence and genuine commitment to peacebuilding.

Anchalee Kurutach is a member of INEB's Executive Committee and the coordinator of INEB's Regional Network for Peacebuilders Project.

S



## Suksit Siam

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 Tel: 02-225-9536-8, Fax: 02-222-5188  
 email : suksit-siam@gmail.com  
 www.kledthaishopping.com

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

# “Community Campaigns to Reduce Demand for Wildlife Products”

July – September 2022

By **Wansiri Rongrongmuang**  
INEB Project Coordinator



*Participants at the “Community Campaigns to Reduce Demand for Wildlife Products” June 2022 workshop at Wongsanit Ashram*

## Background

USAID Reducing Demand for Wildlife, WildAid, and INEB have been working together on the Reducing Demand for Wildlife Products campaign since 2020. Three workshops with monks and nuns were held in 2020 and 2021, to increase understanding and build momentum to support these campaigns. Afterwards, many participants returned to their temples where they conducted training and other activities related to the wildlife issues. According to the internal survey (April 2022), additional support was needed to continue their ongoing campaign in reducing demand on wildlife products, including legal aspects relating to wildlife, social media training, and funding.

INEB responded by initiating the “Community Campaigns to Reduce Demand for Wildlife Products” project and called for proposals to religious leaders and groups in May 2022. Seven proposals were selected to attend the 2-day workshop in June at Wongsanit Ashram.

After the workshop, each team’s campaign proposal was revised and submitted. The project implementation period was 2 months (July-August 2022). This is a

summary of the six individual reports. The projects were each geographically located all around Thailand and responded the unique needs of local communities.

The six projects’ intensive efforts increased the awareness of local people within a short period of time, however, it is too soon to know whether they reduced the demand for wildlife products. The projects were encouraged by the activities they conducted, yet felt that developing a long-term strategic plan is necessary for reducing use of wildlife products in their communities and in the country. A plan would also sensitively address local practices, especially when some families’ incomes rely on wildlife products.

## Grantee, Project Name, Location and Outcomes

**Grantee:** Dhammanurak Foundation, Ven. Jutipa Tapasuthi (Buddhist Nun)

**Project name:** No Use, No Own, No Support - Wildlife Products



**Location:** Kanchanaburi, Western Thailand near the Thai-Burma country border

**Outcomes:** The project conducted 2 types of activities: one 3-day workshop with 26 youth participants that designed brochures for the outreach activities and created posters. Outreach efforts resulted in 800 persons signing pledges to reduce the demand for wildlife.



Poster for outreach events

**Grantee:** Tippayasathan Bhikkhuni Arama, Bhikkuni Dhammakamala

**Project name:** Reducing Demand for Wildlife Products – Tiger Fang and Ivory

**Location:** Songkhla, southern Thailand

**Outcomes:** Diverse activities to reduce the demand for wildlife products included: one 3-day workshop with 29 monastics and lay people and increasing public awareness through designing and displaying posters at 3 temples; creating and distributing 100 car stickers; creating sound clips and producing videos; plus distributing sanitizer sprays.



Ven Dhammakamala distributing stickers and sanitizer sprays with local official

**Links to the campaign clips:**

- Video clip of the abbot of Wat Laem Phor, Part 1 <https://youtu.be/sUjBw71YxxA>

- Video clip of the abbot of Wat Laem Phor, Part 2 <https://youtu.be/RdGVIMJNle0>
- <https://www.facebook.com/100003405847520/videos/1192936947921862/>

**Grantee:** Maha Chulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya University (MCU), Ven. Dr. Baideekathipphanakorn Chaiyanantho

**Project name:** Communication for Conservation and Reducing Demand for Wildlife Products

**Location:** Chiang Mai / Chiang Rai, northern Thailand

**Outcomes:** 2 activities were conducted which were a workshop and seminar. The workshop reached 53 students in 2 schools who learned about conservation and reducing the demand wildlife products. The seminar reached 88 participants (students and villagers) with similar messages.



Tree ordination activity at Ban Ta Community Forest, Chiang Rai

**Links to the campaign clips:**

- [https://youtu.be/\\_Pi1n0Lix5k](https://youtu.be/_Pi1n0Lix5k)
- Video clip on Google Drive <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yliwq0vH4a3ysrZhVBu4PzLpVeNjvSvt/view?usp=sharing>
- Photos on Google Drive <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/15zIfLfNWpZCcgIFbT54l20QmTApQVp-A?usp=sharing>

**Grantee:** Ubon Loves Earth Group, Ven. Sittichai Tikhapunyo

**Project name:** Refrain, Reduce, Refuse the Use of Tiger Fang and Ivory as Amulet

**Location:** Ubon Ratchathani, eastern Thailand near the Thai/Lao country border

**Outcomes:** 3 types of activities were conducted including: a Buddhist Lent Day Parade that focused on the

project's name to stop the use of tiger fangs and ivory as amulets. Approximately 300 persons participated in the parade with an audience of more than 1,000 persons. Dhamma talks were given to 500 students and 50 village volunteers, in addition to at least 50 persons visiting the temple at that time. A school exhibition was also held that was attended by more than 300 students.



*Buddhist Lent Day Parade*



*Campaign activity at a temple*

**Links to the campaign activities:**

- Ban Phai Yai School Facebook Page  
[https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid02bu3CLMG25kkoTyRqaJEGAJrETckWeWPzPH9EqvQa44tQ9wKsGF5keqsxKVASK8Wl&id=1853079025018774](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid02bu3CLMG25kkoTyRqaJEGAJrETckWeWPzPH9EqvQa44tQ9wKsGF5keqsxKVASK8Wl&id=1853079025018774)
  - Ven. Sitthichai Tikhapunyo's Facebook  
[https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid02PtJzY7StXVEuDAyWQwZ4E5cpHPmdWjxR2Mu9BKFZYejJSCj1WfvGo5XG58neMSa1kl&id=100015493727366&sfnsn=mo](https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid02PtJzY7StXVEuDAyWQwZ4E5cpHPmdWjxR2Mu9BKFZYejJSCj1WfvGo5XG58neMSa1kl&id=100015493727366&sfnsn=mo)
- [https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid024ddwMqHKwwMkq98mmYNvSGwa1Y5RoYuF92aNCNPDypqHPSxnhQCjGz3817xYsvG2l&id=100015493727366&sfnsn=mo](https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid024ddwMqHKwwMkq98mmYNvSGwa1Y5RoYuF92aNCNPDypqHPSxnhQCjGz3817xYsvG2l&id=100015493727366&sfnsn=mo)

**Grantee:** Wat That, Ven. Phra Khru Sutachaytiyaphibal

**Project name:** Communication and Awareness Campaign: Don't Buy, Don't Use Tiger Fang, Ivory, and Wildlife Products

**Location:** Roi-et, central eastern Thailand near the Thai-Lao country border

**Outcomes:** Activities were designed to build awareness that would change attitudes, norms and behaviors to reduce use of wildlife products through a stakeholders meeting attended by 190 persons including monks and novices, monastic and lay

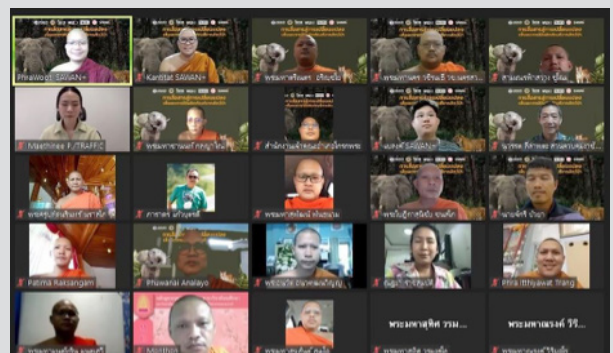
teachers, students and community members. It also conducted a campaign at a dhamma school with 30 participants including monks, novices, teachers, students and community members. The project's long-term approach including drafting a section in the school curriculum about reducing the demand for wildlife. The drafting process for the curriculum began after several meetings with teachers and monks at Buddhist schools.

**Grantee:** SAWAN+, Ven Phra Woot Sumetho

**Project name:** Workshop on Reducing Demand for Wildlife Products in Nakhon Sawan

**Location:** Nakhon Sawan, north of Bangkok

**Outcomes:** A media campaign was designed to achieve their objectives. The activities included: a Zoom workshop on the laws relating to the consequences for using wildlife products attended by 32 monks and the public. They designed communication materials to reduce the demand for wildlife products after the workshop. Another part of the media campaign built on the Zoom online workshop and focused on social media where the participants posted campaign messages on their social media channels. This campaign produced 50 pieces by 32 direct beneficiaries and reached 3,000 indirect beneficiaries.



# Toolkit Nurturing the Spiritual Development of Children in the Early Years - A Contribution to Protecting Children from Violence And Promoting Their Holistic Well-Being

International Launch and Consortium Meeting  
Rome, Italy, 18 – 19 November 2022

By INEB Staff



*International Launch of the Toolkit - Rome, Italy, November 2022*

During November 2022, the International Consortium on Nurturing Values and Spirituality in Early Childhood for the Prevention of Violence for the Protection of Violence Against Children publicly launched its Toolkit – Nurturing the Spiritual Development of Children in the Early Years in Rome. This precedent setting event brought together 21 organizations ranging from faith-based and civil society grassroots and international organizations, regional networks, UN agencies, foundations, academia and five individual experts. The Consortium fostered a collaboration that developed innovative, evidence-based approaches to integrate ethical values and strengthen the spiritual development of children in the early years to build peaceful societies and support children’s holistic development.

The Toolkit aims to equip faith actors to actively engage in protecting children from violence in early childhood and promoting children’s holistic well-being. It recognizes and supports the efforts of parents, caregivers, educators and communities to nurture children’s spiritual development, and take an active role in reducing violence in children’s lives.

The specific objectives of the Toolkit are to:





*Opor Srisuwan, INEB staff, (center) with Arigatou International partners displaying the Toolkit, Rome, Italy November 2022*

- Create spaces and opportunities for faith actors, parents, caregivers, and educators to reflect on the importance of children’s spiritual development in the early years and identify the benefits for children’s holistic development and well-being.
- Encourage self-examination of religious and spiritual principles, teachings and practices that affirm the

dignity of the child and challenge those that can be used to condone violence against children.

- Provide tools for building caregiving practices and skills for the nurturing spiritual development of children, as one key avenue for contributing to the protection of children from violence.

The International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) is a member of this international Consortium which developed the Toolkit. Opor Srisuwan, INEB project coordinator of the Child Protection initiative, attended the launch and gave presentations on INEB’s activities in Southeast Asia. Being part of the Consortium increases INEB’s opportunities to work with international and regional partners, and this Toolkit complements INEB’s efforts to reduce violence against and exploitation of children. INEB recommends the Toolkit to its partners working in the areas of child protection and child rights.



International  
Network of  
Engaged  
Buddhists



Save the dates

**Borobudur**

World Famous Landmark Series



## INEB Joint Annual Advisory and Executive Committees Meeting 21 - 23 November 2023 Yogyakarta, Indonesia

### Tentative Schedule

- 20 Nov. Arrival Day
- 21 Nov. Past-Present-Future of Indonesia  
Visit Mendut Buddhist Monastery  
“Future of Buddhism in Indonesia”  
Visit Borobudur
- 22 Nov. Sharing Session between INEB members  
and HIKMAHBUDHI members  
Buddhist-Muslim Forum
- 23 Nov. Joint INEB AC/EC Meeting
- 24 Nov. Departure Day

# Aria Project for Afghanistan Feeding and Assisting Four Afghan Families

By **Angela Nibler**  
Aria Project Director

## Summary

Aria Project has been sending money to multiple families for much needed financial support through 2021 and 2022, generously supported by numerous donors on the GlobalGiving pages of the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation/International Network of Engaged Buddhists. As the Taliban took over Afghanistan and has continued to place more and more restrictions on the people of Afghanistan, the needs have increased. Recently, girls and women have been completely banned from attending school, universities and all forms of work. This is a devastating blow to a family's ability to earn a living in a country that was already struggling to sufficiently employ its men, let alone its women. As women are now imprisoned to their homes, families have been forced with unbearable choices as they struggle to keep each other fed, clothed, in good health, and in their homes.

The Aria Project intended to support 4 families. They have been given different names to protect their identities.

## The Smiths

This family lives in the Nari District of Kunar Province. They belong to the Kohistani tribe and speak Kohistani as their primary language. Two of the brothers in this family had been enlisted in the Afghan Army and their father used to have a small shop on a U.S. military base where he sold CD's, games, bags and other Afghan items to the American soldiers. Once the U.S. military left, and the Afghan Army was disbanded, there was no way for them to make a living anymore. One of the brothers was my English student when he was 17 years old and he is baby Aria's father. This family is made up of 12

people who all live together and range from 56 years old to 15 months old. However, I have been informed that the money sent to this family has extended to many of their neighbors as well. I am told regularly that if it were not for the Aria Project funds, they would have lost family members due to starvation and medical issues that would have otherwise, gone untreated. Aria Project intends to support this family, and village, as much as possible while the men of the family look for new ways of making a living.



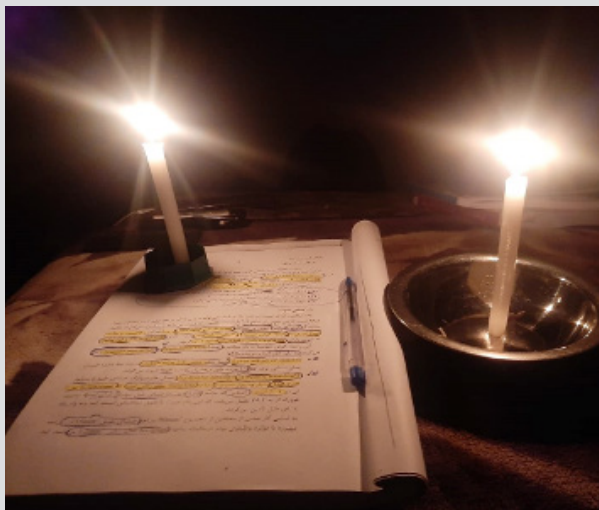
*Aria, A happy,  
healthy baby &  
the joy of her family*

## The Johnsons

This is a family of 9 people who live in Herat province. This family's son and daughter were both my students. I taught the son English and I taught the daughter typing and some basic computer skills. The son went on to attend medical school and his education was interrupted, when the Taliban closed his school. He was forced to flee

to Pakistan where he hid for 8 months while the Taliban sent letters to his family asking where he was threatening to “punish him for being persuaded by Western beliefs.” When the situation cooled down, he decided to return to Afghanistan to apply for a passport and attempt to continue his medical school classes. The boredom was getting to him and he could no longer deal with his education being wasted on empty days and nights that ran together, as days and nights do when one has no purpose.

After much consideration, he returned to Afghanistan and was immediately caught by the Taliban and taken to prison for 3 days where they interrogated him. He later told me that he was terrified as he was not sure they would release him. They did release him and have allowed him to return to medical school. He and his friend have completed their exams for this semester often having to study by candlelight due to limited electricity through the winter months. They have 4 semesters remaining to graduation. He explained that the medical profession is the only vocation the Taliban cannot prohibit (men) from working. Doctors in Afghanistan make about \$300-\$400 per month which with enable him to help support his mother, younger siblings, older sister and her sister’s 2 very small children. Aria Project intends to support this young man as he completes his medical schooling so that he can be given the chance to eventually support his family.



*Studying for medical school exams by candlelight*

## The Knights

This is a family of 4 people. I was introduced to the father of this family at one of the orphanages in Kabul. He was the guardian of the children living there, though he was only 17 years old at the time. He is now married and he and his wife have 2 small children, both boys. He has a degree in engineering and she is a dentist. They fled Afghanistan and hid out in Pakistan for 7 months before getting visas to go to Italy.

While this is much, much better than the dangers of the Taliban finding them and retaliating against them for their many years of dedicated humanitarian work with orphanages and women’s shelters, they are unable to work in Italy until they are granted 5-year residency permits. So far, they have only been able to attain 6-month residency permits.

They have been able to move into a one-bedroom apartment and their oldest child has been able to start pre-school. They are learning Italian and hoping to be granted the opportunity to build a life there. In the meantime, the father is struggling due to an intense toothache. His wife believes he is in need of a root canal. He has been losing weight because it is painful to chew food. He has asked for extra assistance so that he can go to the dentist to get the dental care he needs. Aria Project will make small donations to him for this purpose, as funds allow.



*The Knight’s older son enjoys art display in Italy*

## The Randalls

This is a family of 11 people who are from the Kapisa province. Their primary language is Pashayi. Two of the young men, who are cousins from this family, made their way to Iran to work construction as do many Afghan men, if they can make the journey. One of the young men was my English student. He went on to get a degree in economics. He studies English every day and has started writing his life story which he eventually wants to send to me for a potential English lesson and editing.

When the two Randall men left Afghanistan to travel to Iran, they crammed into a van that carried 13 other men. They had to ride to Pakistan and then travel to Iran. They were in a car accident along the way and were forced to walk part of the way. There were injuries in the other vehicle involved. I am unclear on how severe the injuries anyone sustained. They were able to find a farm house where they rested for a day before making their way into Iran. They found construction jobs and are paid \$2.00/hr to live on and send back whatever is left to their family. Aria Project helps supplement the needs

*Through the desert to Iran for work and safety*



*Aria Project supplied an EID meal for Randall cousins*

of these young men as they do what they can to support their family. They needed money for their work visas, winter coats and new socks which Aria Project funded. Aria Project intends to continue to assist them as they travel back and forth between seasons to find work and see their family.

## Appeal for fundraising:

The winter months are harsh in Afghanistan. As with food and other supplies, the price of oil and wood to heat stoves for cooking and warmth can be double the price of rent.

- Aria Project's goal is to contribute \$300 per month, to the Smiths and the Johnsons until each family finds a way to make a living in this now very restrictive regime.
- Aria Project's goal is to fundraise for the Knights immediately so that the father can go to the dentist and get the necessary dental treatment.
- Aria Project's goal is to contribute \$200 per month to the Randalls.

## Thank you!

I would like to convey a sincere thank you to every single donor. These families have asked me to pass on their gratitude to everyone who is involved in helping them. They are often overwhelmed with emotion when they receive the money transfers or if they have to explain that they need to take someone to the doctor or get their car repaired. They want to be able to provide for themselves but, the Taliban has made life unreasonably difficult. Because of your time and generosity, these families are hopeful and able to see options and make plans. Aria Project aims to empower these 4 families to help themselves and to help others. This goal is indefinite, however as goals are achieved and their needs evolve, so will Aria Project's purpose.

Please visit the GlobalGiving link to Aria Project for Afghanistan - <https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/aria-project-for-afghanistan/>



# Women Peacebuilder's Gathering

4 – 10 December 2022

Chiang Mai, Thailand

By Opor Srisuwan



Women Peacebuilder's Gathering,  
Chiang Mai, Thailand, December 2022

The Women Peacebuilders Gathering was uniquely designed to become a regional platform for women building peace in the South and Southeast Asia region. The gathering is an initiative under the Regional Network for Peacebuilders project funded by USAID. The International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) collaborated with its partner the International Women Partnership for Peace and Justice (IWP) based in Chiang Mai, Thailand, on the gathering. IWP both hosted and facilitated the gathering. FHI360 partner staff also supported it.

Twenty-five participants came from 5 countries: Myanmar (8), Thailand (7), Sri Lanka (4), Laos (3), and Cambodia (3) and were from 30 – 70 years of age with diverse backgrounds and experiences. The participants identified as mostly Buddhist (13), with a few Muslims, Christians, one atheist, and six persons who preferred not to say. These included women with disabilities, representatives from queer communities, indigenous women, and women working in conflict zones.

The seven-day gathering was uniquely designed to enable participants to deeply explore and apply the feminist leadership principles in their day-to-day peacebuilding and development practices. The event successfully created a safe and empowering space for peace practitioners. For example, one participant from Myanmar mentioned that *“I haven't made friends for two years, I didn't trust anyone, and you have brought me back.”*

INEB's commitment to creating a safe space and deepening work with women is aligned with and furthers Network for Peace's Amplifying Women's Moderate Voices Activity, the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017, USAID's WPS Strategy, and the U.S. Strategy to Support Women and Girls at Risk of Violent Extremism and Conflict.

The gathering was designed to nurture the participants as a learning community which could transition into a regional network for women peacebuilders.





#### The outcomes are summarized as follows:

- Creating a safe space through emphatic and non-judgmental listening, and building trust. Participants' mindfulness practices were strengthened through deep listening and reflection.
- Enhancing participants' understanding of marginalization, structural barriers, and oppression to build solidarity for peace and justice in the region. They formed country groups where they shared strategies, challenges, and successes for empowering marginalized groups and building peace. The women peacebuilders shared interventions to promote peace and social justice by using bottom-up inclusive nonviolent approaches and more. They also learned more about gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) in a session dedicated to this.
- The value of reflective practice during the gathering as a means of understanding more deeply about social movements; how religious institutions and leaders contribute to structural violence; and the need to develop allies and strategies to connect with diverse marginalized groups that catalyze movements for social change.
- Power-sharing practices are the most effective empowerment model. Viewing the documentary film *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* about a Liberian peace movement

called Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace inspired the participants that positive societal change is possible in their home countries.

- Redefine and value self-care as a key strategy to build and sustain peace during which participants explored their suffering feeling and its implication on their health and wellbeing. Most participants agreed that political, socio-economic factors and gender socialization rooted in patriarchal systems put pressure on them that impacts their wellbeing.
- Shared knowledge of many diverse locally led strategies to build peace, resilience, and resistance in an open space. An 'Empowering Self Defense' was also offered which interested all the participants including a participant with disabilities and a Bhikkhuni. Then during Solidarity Night' Iranian female advocates and Burmese women activists were invited to share their experiences when in advocating for peace and justice in their own countries. This uniquely demonstrated why solidarity is needed to achieve peace and justice.
- Mapping allies and powering peacebuilding and social movements with creativity. Momentum from the empowering self-defense and solidarity night helped energize the participants through identifying local, regional, and global civil society organizations that share common value and goals, and later to map their allies and partnerships in promoting social justice and peace.
- Developing an action plan for the women peacebuilders network which included the following activities:
  - ▶ Conduct empowering self-defense workshop for women peacebuilders in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees along the Thailand and Myanmar border.
  - ▶ Conduct knowledge sharing activities and form a women peacebuilders network in Sri Lanka in January 2023.
  - ▶ Develop a five-year strategy as a learning and exchange platform for women peacebuilders in the South and Southeast Asia region

The next phase of the Women Peacebuilders project is to develop a documentary film of participants in their home countries and learn about their peacebuilding activities.

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# Transformative Education for Social Justice

## The 28th Annual Sem Pringpuangkeo Public Lecture

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Ng Shui Meng  
04 February 2023

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*Ng Shui Meng*

### Good afternoon...

I am so honoured to be invited today to speak at this 28th SEM Lecture.

The topic of “Transformative Education for Social Justice” is really a challenging one in today’s ever more complex world where many societies are deeply fractured and experiencing divisions in all spheres: politically, socially, economically, spiritually, and environmentally. When we look around us, we cannot but help ask ourselves “What has gone wrong”?

We are today richer and technologically more advanced than ever before, yet we seemed to be mired in even greater levels of inequality, greed, hatred, social breakdown, environmental collapse, rampant violation of rights, injustice, and pandemics of global proportions. Governments around the world, especially in our ASEAN region, have reacted to these problems not by being more inclusive and more consultative, but they have become even more authoritarian, and militaristic.

So the fundamental issue is how do we get out of this kind of toxic environment, and how do we ordinary citizens overcome such challenges. I assume that many of us here today are here because we have been involved in the Spirit in Education Movement’s (SEM’s) work, philosophy and values of social justice and social

engagement. And that’s why we are here to explore how do we use transformative principles of education to address many of the growing political and social divisions we see around us, and seek ways towards greater social justice and harmony in our communities and societies.

### Failure of Formal Education Systems

I have spent most of my working life in UNICEF to support the improvement of basic education systems in various countries, in the belief that basic education is a fundamental right of all children and a fundamental responsibility of any government. Indeed that is true. But, what I eventually realized is most governments are only interested in using education to equip their citizens with knowledge and skills in literacy, numeracy, and technical competencies to enter the workforce. A small minority drawn mostly from families of the urban elite will be schooled to become leaders, thinkers, and innovators to lead politics, industries and the economy. The most important role of the education system is to produce loyal and compliant citizens of the state. The role of organizations and development agencies like UNICEF and development NGOs is to provide enough money and funds to the state education system to become more efficient to reach this objective by helping to build more schools, print more books and train more teachers.

This is why of all the government ministries, the Ministry of Education is one of the most difficult ministries to convince to embark on any kind of reform, whether it is curriculum reform, revision of textbooks, testing systems, and to embrace more open and inclusive systems of thinking and learning. The more authoritarian the governance system, the more difficult it is to engage the education officials in debates of positive change in the interest of the learners, the disadvantaged, and the ethnic minorities. And I have firsthand experience in

what it is like to work with such systems, having worked in both Laos and China.

However, it is not just authoritarian states that resist education change, even in so-called democratic or more liberal societies, the formal education system is, to varying degree, the state's tool to brainwash their citizens to conform to the state's dominant ideology and value system – hence, the stress on nationalism, loyalty, national stability, and mainstream economic development.

Obviously people like you and I do not regard such formal education systems as adequate, appropriate or even desirable to nurture and bring out the innate potential and varied intelligences of our children and young people. Nor is this kind of education adequate to make us better human beings capable of building better families and communities.

As Sombath Somphone, my husband, who worked for many years with rural Lao communities, and had seen the failures of the Lao education system often said, “the formal education system is not about education, it can only be called schooling and in fact even bad schooling because it not only does not bring out the potential of every child, it often “dumbs down” their intelligence. It makes them “cogs” in a societal machinery serving the needs of those in power”. Sombath sees the formal education system as a way for those in power to manipulate the public, and deny most citizens the right to critically think for themselves, asks questions or take actions to address the inequalities, exploitation, and injustice they see around them. By not being able to question, to speak out and act, many ordinary people have become both the victims and perpetrators of the social problems and injustices in their communities and society.

Of course Sombath did not come to these conclusions on his own. He learned from other great educators, thinkers, social activists, and spiritual leaders such as Paulo Freire, EF Schumacher, and of course Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa, and many others.

## Transformative Education

*“At present, there can be little doubt that the whole of mankind is in mortal danger, not because we are short of scientific and technological know-how, but because we*

*tend to use it destructively, without wisdom. More education can help us only if it produces more wisdom”.*

Helena Norberg-Hodge in  
*Small is Beautiful: Economics as if  
People Mattered: 25 Years Later*

It is clear that increasingly, concerned citizens are looking for education systems that are not just content dominant, but alternative education that is more holistic, humanistic, and can develop wisdom in people to make positive change. Many are turning towards transformative education as a way to combat the social fragmentation, ethnic tensions, inequalities, and toxic political divides they experience in their own community and society.

The literature on Transformative Education talks about transformative education as a process that provides people with the understanding, skills and values they need to take action in resolving the interconnected challenges they face in their community or society. Transformative education equips individuals with skills to critically reflect upon the underlying reasons behind issues of equality, justice and sustainability. For transformative education to have impact it needs to lead to structural shifts in basic assumptions and support action-oriented strategies for learners and participants to anticipate and manage uncertainty. It requires learners and participants to exercise critical thinking, practice deep reflection on their own value systems, embrace diversity, and develop empathy.

Simply put, it requires learners and participants to confront challenges and uncomfortable truths within their own families, work place, and community. These include issues on human rights, gender equality, ethnic and religious discrimination, peace education and education of the heart. Rather than focusing on differences, it encourages addressing commonalities and areas of convergence and synergies. The end goal is towards a more just, inclusive and sustainable future and greater fairness in use and distribution of resources at all levels.

Understanding the theories of transformative education may sound easy, but putting such theories into practice is a life-long endeavor. It needs personal convictions to do what's right and fair.

For those, especially young people, who sincerely want to embark on transformative education for social

change, the most effective way is first to examine your own values systems, including your own social and cultural beliefs, such as gender, ethnic and class biases that are learned from your upbringing, social background, education, and from your peer groups. You will need to confront and examine these biases, and deal with them honestly before you can accept diversities and differences, and cultivate respect, tolerance and acceptance. Changing oneself and one's own biases is the first step towards engaging in real social change.

Another area to embark on transformative education is to engage in open dialogue, discussions and study sessions on issues of human rights, conflict resolutions, peace education and practice of non-violence and compassion. These are the fundamental building blocks for bridging differences, scaling back discriminations, and developing social harmony and social justice. Such a learning journey takes time and needs to be guided by experienced mentors, and spiritual leaders.

### Some Concrete Examples

There are already many examples we can find in our region, especially here in Thailand and Myanmar, where individuals, groups, and progressive organizations have adapted and applied transformative education principles and practices to bring about positive change and social justice to their own areas of work and their own communities with good results.

To illustrate, I will give the example of the work of Sombath Somphone who adapted the principles of transformative education in his 30-year long work on youth education and community development in Laos. More importantly, Sombath also drew heavily upon the training of SEM, and the teachings of Arjan Sulak Sivaraksa on Engaged Buddhism in his work. Sombath believes that the principles of engaged Buddhism are most relevant to addressing social issues for the predominantly Buddhist society of Laos.

One of the most successful example of Sombath's work is in the area of youth education for community development which he started in the early 1990s. Through this programme Sombath and his team trained young people in high schools and universities using many of the transformative education and engaged buddhism principles. After the training the youth volunteers must go immerse themselves in rural

communities all over Laos to work and live with these communities to find out their problems. Using consultative approaches and working with local leaders, the youth volunteers then work with the communities to develop simple plans to resolve some of their most challenging problems. The actions the young people with the community were able to take included:

- constructing simple water systems for irrigation,
- making household water filters for safe drinking water,
- making of energy-saving stoves to reduce firewood consumption and deforestation,
- gender empowerment through establishing women handcrafts enterprises for employment and income generation, and so on

To address social issues, like drug addiction, HIV-AIDS, etc., Sombath was able to draw on the support of the more progressive monks from the Sangha to be trained with the support of SEM. After their training, the monks would go into schools to teach children about self-respect and how to avoid destructive behaviors like drug use. Working with the temples and schools, the Sangha in their various temples also organized meditation courses for children and young people during the school holidays as a means to learn about Buddhist practices and mindfulness.

On more sensitive issues of deforestation, encroachment of community land and water resources by investors, Sombath was able to involve the monks to protect some forest and water resources by encouraging local temples and monks to conduct annual ordination ceremonies to protect the forests and water resources with participation of the local communities and local government officials. Once ordained, these resources are considered sacred and protected from indiscriminate exploitation.

Another example was providing training to villagers on the law on land rights, and to guide villagers on how to register their land and obtain official land titles. Once the villagers have proper land titles, the land will be theirs and cannot be misappropriated for other use.

These are some examples that Sombath and his team used to educate the communities, protect their rights and achieve social change for the disadvantaged.

As I said, in the region, and especially here in

Thailand there are already many committed individuals and organizations that are using transformative education for social change. Many are taking actions to combat food injustice, restoring organic and safe agriculture, improving rights of migrant workers, supporting relief work for refugees, addressing issues of climate change, and advocating change of unjust laws to protect the victims of exploitation and so on.

### Transformative Education for Social Change Requires Conviction and Courage

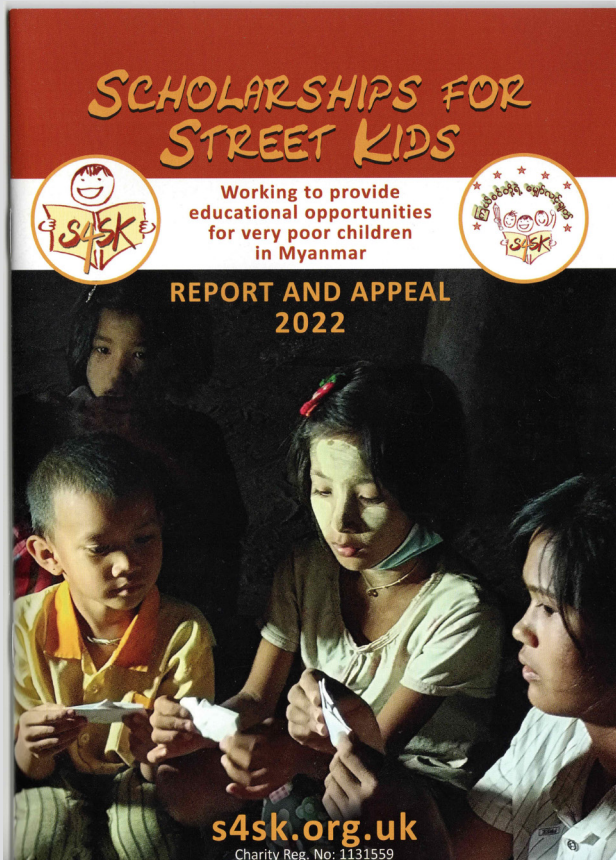
However, taking supportive actions to bring about greater social justice for the disadvantaged often brings about personal risks, and hence requires personal conviction and courage to continue in such work. Such risks may involve offending those in power and expose the individuals to risks of social isolation and economic insecurity. The risks and price paid for standing up for truth and justice may even be higher. These may be in the form of risking political oppression, and enduring physical violence from local authorities, imprisonment, extra-judicial killings, and enforced disappearances.

Unfortunately we have have seen such violations occurring much too often and to too many of our loved ones. The enforced disappearance of Sombath is a case in point.

To many of you, and especially to those who have been engaged in the SEM and INEB's programs and training, the engagement of transformative education for social change is not new. Many of you are already in your own way working and taking actions to address the issues of inequalities, discrimination, prejudices arising from gender, religion, and ethnic differences. You are already engaged in such transformative change. Many of you have also face risks and violence, but you have chosen not be stand down. You have chosen to live by your values and principles and never give up. For this I congratulate you and I wish you greater success in all you endeavors to bring positive change in your own community and society

Thank you.

Ng Shui Meng is a member of INEB's Executive Committee.



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Working to provide educational opportunities for very poor children in Myanmar

**REPORT AND APPEAL 2022**

**s4sk.org.uk**  
Charity Reg. No: 1131559

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Donations can be made by bank transfer to our business current account:

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Sort code: **30-91-12** Account number: **00376613**

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Please confirm your donation by email: **s4skfinance@gmail.com**

Or by cheque or charity voucher payable to: **Scholarships for Street Kids** and send to **Erica Cadbury, Treasurer for S4SK, 72 Sun Street, Haworth, Keighley, BD22 8AH**

To donate by standing order, please email us for a form: **s4skfinance@gmail.com**

*giftaid it* Boost your donation by 25p for every £1 you donate by allowing us to reclaim the tax through Gift Aid, if you are eligible. Please read the declaration, tick the box, complete this form and then return it to us at the address above.

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Please contact me via email: .....

We will process your personal data in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018. Our Privacy Policy is available from the treasurer.

S4SK is a UK registered charity number 1131559.

# A Buddhist Response to Climate Change: What We Must Do

By **Dr. Maya Joshi**

## Part 1 Breath as Burden

I would like to examine how the central and primary Buddhist concept of *dukkha* or Suffering plays itself out in these times of change of all kinds, including Climate Change. While understanding *dukkha* is essential for a Buddhist, we are also enjoined to work actively towards its amelioration. While the ultimate goal of the Buddhist life is Nirvana, we are also urged via the ethical elements that are stressed in the traditions, to devote our time and energy to the making of a better life in this world, for all living beings. The question then arises: Might we be able to work towards a climate of change that would stall this imminent disaster? And would we not have to work with, make common cause with, those who may have a different philosophical understanding of life, who may speak in a language that we might have to learn?

Delhi, the national capital, has for the past several years seen a drastic deterioration of its air quality—100-200% times more polluted than what the WHO guidelines deem safe for human consumption—is simply a marker of deeper crises that assail us. This crisis is global. Winter after winter, friends sitting in Bangkok have been posting daily about the alarming air quality. Even distant, pristine California, with its spate of wildfires, produced dangerous levels of air pollution.

Meanwhile, extreme temperatures continue to alarm the world over. The earth as we know is poised at the edge of a dangerous precipice. The times are out of joint, as the Bard said. Nothing seems safe. Air. Water. Food. All consumables are contaminated, and the world is consuming them, and itself, to death.

In enlightened corners everywhere, organisations, individuals, and even governments are saying “No”. Mindfully, they are trying to develop alternative and appropriate technologies, changing lifestyles, embracing public transport, sharing resources, going organic, recycling.

What might the Buddhist underpinnings of these interventions be? How might self-declared Buddhists turn more towards praxis and translate these Buddhist concepts— The Eightfold Path, The Four Noble Truths, Sunyata (Emptiness) and Pratityasamutpada (Dependent Origination)—into crucial and urgent action to help save the planet and its delicate balance? How might the Buddhist insight into human psychology help us here? What aspects of the diverse Buddhist heritage would we need to highlight and emphasize in order to meet this urgent, immediate crisis? Or, should we as Buddhists, recognizing suffering’s inevitability, even care?

## Two Voices for Mother Earth

Even as I write, a very young woman from Sweden, Greta Thunberg, has made headlines with her powerful and hard-hitting address to a group of very powerful adults, at the UN Climate Change COP24 Conference,

chiding them on their collective inaction. It is a ringing indictment of criminal neglect and wilful blindness, a robbery of the future. Her words, prophetic and powerful, are worth quoting:

*“Our civilization is being sacrificed for the opportunity of a very small number of people to continue making enormous amounts of money. Our biosphere is being sacrificed so that rich people in countries like mine can live in luxury. It is the sufferings of the many which pay for the luxuries of the few... Until you start focusing on what needs to be done rather than what is politically possible, there is no hope. We cannot solve a crisis without treating it as a crisis. We need to keep fossil fuels in the ground, and we need to focus on equity. And if solutions within the system are so impossible to find, maybe we should change the system itself. We have not come here to beg world leaders to care. You have ignored us in the past and you will ignore us again. We have run out of excuses and we are running out of time. We have come here to let you know that change is coming, whether you like it or not. The real power belongs to the people.”*

Mighty Greta Thunberg, who is not a Buddhist, is an example of what a good Buddhist education achieves, leading its recipients to engage fearlessly in Right Speech and Right Effort, components of the Eight-fold Path that Buddhists boast of? Are not the ideals of balance and harmony central to Buddhism? Is not *abhaya* (the gift of fearlessness) one of the cardinal Buddhist virtues? Shall we not gift our children the right to exercise that virtue? Is she not, in this speech, an example of mindfulness, compassion, and of wisdom, all values held dear by Buddhists everywhere, despite stark and sometimes divisive differences in doctrinal focus and social practices?

To turn to what Buddhists have already contributed

to this discourse, an inspiring example is the contemporary Buddhist teacher engaged earnestly with earthly problems, Thich Nhat Hanh, who recently passed on. He turns to lyrical prose to inspire an eco-friendly perspective based on profound Buddhist principles. Mindful walking in the Zen meditative tradition provides a template for living in a sustainable way. I quote his poignant words, from ‘Walking Tenderly on Mother Earth’:

### “Dear Mother Earth,

Every time I step upon the Earth, I will train myself to see that I am walking on you, my Mother. Every time I place my feet on the Earth I have a chance to be in touch with you and with all your wonders.

With every step, I can touch the fact that you aren’t just beneath me, dear Mother, but you are also within me. Each mindful and gentle step can nourish me, heal me, and bring me into contact with myself and with you in the present moment.

Walking in mindfulness I can express my love, respect, and care for you, our precious Earth. I will touch on the truth that the mind and body are not two separate entities. I will train myself to look deeply to see your true nature: you are my loving mother, a living being, a great being—an immense, beautiful, and precious wonder.

You are not only matter, you are also mind, you are also consciousness. Just as the beautiful pine or tender grain of corn possesses an innate sense of knowing, so, too, do you. Within you, dear Mother Earth, there are the elements of earth, water, air, and fire; and there is also time, space, and consciousness. Our nature is your nature, which is also the nature of the cosmos.

I want to walk gently, with steps of love, and with great respect. I shall walk with my own body and mind united in oneness. I know I can walk in such a way that every step is a pleasure, every step is nourishing, and every step is healing—not only for my body and mind but also for you, dear Mother Earth.

You are the most beautiful planet in our entire solar

system. I do not want to run away from you, dear Mother, nor to hurry. I know I can find happiness right here with you. I do not need to rush to find more conditions for happiness in the future. At every step, I can take refuge in you. At every step, I can enjoy your beauties, your delicate veil of atmosphere, and the miracle of gravity. I can stop my thinking.

I can walk relaxingly and effortlessly. Walking in this spirit I can experience awakening. I can awaken to the fact that I am alive, and that life is a precious miracle. I can awaken to the fact that I am never alone and can never die. You are always there within me and around me at every step, nourishing me, embracing me, and carrying me far into the future.

Dear Mother, you wish that we live with more awareness and gratitude, and we can do this by generating the energies of mindfulness, peace, stability, and compassion in our daily lives. Therefore, I make the promise today to return your love and fulfil this wish by investing every step I take on you with love and tenderness. I am walking not merely on matter, but on spirit.”



**Father Joe Maier** and the Mercy Center were honored for 50 years of service to the poor in the Klong Toey slum community [Bangkok] and throughout Thailand. The event was held at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand in Bangkok. **Credit:** Jeanne Marie Hallacy's Facebook post.

There are obvious differences between the two speech acts quoted above. Thunberg speaks with measured anger, and a worldly cynicism about her audience, representing a generation losing its patience with one that has squandered its future. She speaks truth to the very powerful. She is clearly “doing politics”: public, confrontational, compelling. She commands, and demands attention.

Unlike Greta Thunberg, the Zen master Thich Nhat Hahn is speaking in a different register. He speaks from a space of a quieter, personal practice, which calls out to the individual, and to a community. But the first addressee of his speech is himself, the practitioner, who must internalize the message of the love of all earth, and embody it in daily practice. His voice is gentle, even poetic. It animates that which appears inanimate. It waxes eloquent in ways that seem transcendental. But he does not escape reality, despite the poetic and the mystical registers. For he also engages; he, to literalize the metaphor, walks the talk.

There is a different power at work here: a directness of perception, a bare honesty. He is, of course, speaking as a life-long practitioner and teacher, speaking from within a tradition well-recognized as Buddhist, taking inspiration from such fundamental Buddhist truisms as the fact that Siddhartha Gautama, upon attaining enlightenment, made his first significant gesture the touching of the earth, a gesture of gratitude, an acknowledgment of his grounded-ness. The Earth-Touching Pose (*bhumisparsha mudra*) of the newly-enlightened Buddha thus carries tremendous symbolic significance. Thich Nhat Hahn actualizes one meaning of that gesture, glosses it, as it were, that speaks to us with particular urgency today.

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(First published in *The Maha Bodhi*, May 2022. Slightly edited.)





## Uncovering the Hidden World of Tibetan Female Lamas

In her new book, scholar Elisabeth Benard presents the first scholarly account of the Sakya Khon family's jetsunmas

Interview with Elisabeth Benard by **Sarah Fleming**

June 05, 2022

For over a thousand years, the Sakya Khon family has trained both its sons and daughters as great spiritual teachers. Though many of the men within the Khon family are well known, the stories of female adepts are rarely shared. Known as *jetsunmas* (venerable women), these women begin studying Tibetan at the age of six and train with the highest lamas of their time. They have played a pivotal role in the development of the Sakya tradition within Tibetan Buddhism, and yet they often remain nameless in historical accounts of the Khon family lineage.

In the new book *The Sakya Jetsunmas: The Hidden World of Tibetan Female Lamas*, scholar Elisabeth Benard brings the stories of these women to light. This multigenerational collection of biographies is the first book written in English about the Sakya jetsunmas, and it draws extensively from archival research, oral histories, and interviews with living members of the Khon family.

Tricycle sat down with Benard to discuss the extraordinary lives of these women, including two contemporary jetsunmas who are still practicing today; how the jetsunmas have grappled with histories of persecution and exile; and how they're shaping the future of the tradition.

What is a jetsunma, and how does someone receive the title?

*Jetsunma* is the feminine form of the word *jetsun*, and it means "one worthy of worship" or "venerable woman." There are very few women who have this title, and there are two ways to receive it: either someone is born into a particular family and is given the title at birth,



*Jetsun Kushok at nineteen years old,  
Dolma Palace, Sakya, Tibet, 1957*

or a community or a lama recognizes them as a great practitioner and confers the title. The second case is more common, as there are only a couple families that pass on the title at birth, the Sakya Khon family and the Nyingma Mindroling Trichen family.

Can you share a little about the Sakya Khon family and what's unique about the Sakya jetsunmas?

The Sakyas are a spiritual family that began in the 11th century in a place in Tibet that is now known as Sakya. Sakya literally means “pale earth,” as the earth in the area is noted for its pale gray color. The founder of the Sakya school, Khon Konchok Gyalpo (1034–1102), had a vision that he had to build a temple on Sakya’s pale earth, so he decided to build Sakya Monastery. When the great Indian pandita Atisha first saw the land of Sakya, he prophesied that there would be emanations of the different bodhisattvas of compassion, wisdom, and power born there. This all coalesced in the Sakya Khon family. Indeed, many of the male members of the Khon family are considered to be bodhisattvas, either of compassion, wisdom, power, or a combination of all three. The jetsunmas, on the other hand, are usually considered to be emanations of the goddesses Tara and Vajrayogini. What is unique about the Sakya family is that they’re committed to train both their sons and their daughters to become great religious practitioners and, if they have the abilities and the interest, to become great lamas.

What does that training process look like?

Since the Khon family has existed for 1,000 years, they’ve developed a detailed process of training. Jetsunmas begin studying as children, learning to read Tibetan texts at the age of five or six. They are given empowerments (in Tibetan, *wang*), and these empowerments serve as an introduction to a specific deity. Each deity is usually considered to have one particular quality. The child is then instructed to do a daily practice where they concentrate on developing and nurturing the deity’s quality in themselves. A lama will watch the child to see how his or her practice is going, and when the lama feels that the child is ready, they’ll start to receive much more extensive teachings and commentary. Some of these teachings can take days. The lama will also pass on the more experiential parts of the teachings, which are only shared in private settings. After a child receives these teachings, then they go on a retreat to know the deity more fully. The lengths of these retreats can vary. One of the most important deities in the Sakya tradition is Hevajra, and becoming familiar with Hevajra takes seven to eight months of solitary retreat. Not everybody receives every empowerment—it all depends on each

person and what they’re interested in or what the lama thinks is good for them.

What is unique about the Sakya family is that they’re committed to train both their sons and their daughters to become great religious practitioners.

In writing this book, you had the chance to interview Jetsun Kushok, a jetsunma who is still teaching today. Can you share more about her training process in particular?

Jetsun Kushok was born in 1938 on the holy day of Lhabab Duchen, the date when the Buddha descended from Tushita Heaven after visiting his mother to share the Abhidharma teachings. To be born on such a day was considered a sign that Jetsun Kushok would most likely be a very good teacher. As a child, Jetsun Kushok dealt with a lot of tragedy. Her mother was in frail health, so Jetsun Kushok was raised by her aunt, Dagmo Trinlei Paljor, who was a great practitioner. In the next few years, her mother gave birth to a son and a daughter, both of whom passed away in childhood. In 1945, her mother gave birth to another son, who would become the 41st Sakya Trizin, or throne holder of the Sakya school. Shortly thereafter, she passed away. But despite losing her mother and two siblings, Jetsun Kushok was not alone—she had very strong role models to follow, including her maternal aunts, who were all practitioners. She trained intensively with her aunts and was given many responsibilities at a young age.

In 1949, when Jetsun Kushok was 11 years old, the great temple in Sakya was hit by lightning. Her father was asked for money to fund the repair. The Dolma Palace didn’t have enough money on hand, so Jetsun Kushok’s father sent her to the nomadic regions north of Lhasa to collect donations. She embarked on the trip with her aunt, her teacher, a cook, three horsemen, and six monks. As an 11-year-old, she was in charge of performing all the rituals. She traveled for six months giving long-life empowerments and collecting donations, and she ended up gathering over 1,000 dotse (the highest denomination of the currency at that time), in addition to a number of animals and other gifts that she had to sell before returning to Sakya. She didn’t waste any money whatsoever, as she felt that it was her responsibility and

duty to serve her father and the Sakya community.

One night during that trip, she was staying at a small monastery, and there was a knock on her door. Some monks had arrived and were determined to get a divination from her. Among Tibetan lamas, divinations are quite common. The most common method is through throwing and interpreting dice, which requires a lot of training since you have to be able to rely on specific deities to guide you through the process.

The monks asked her to do a divination about their abbot. Their abbot had supported the former regent, who had died mysteriously after being arrested for plotting to assassinate the current regent. They were very worried about what would happen to their abbot and feared the worst. And so in the middle of the night, Jetsun Kushok got up to throw the dice for them. Based on her interpretation, she recommended that they recite the Praises to the Twenty-One Taras 100,000 times. The monks left early in the morning, and Jetsun Kushok forgot all about the experience. But two years later, in 1951, while she was in Lhasa with her family, the same group of monks requested an audience with her. They thanked her profusely and shared that their abbot was released the day after they had completed the 100,000th recitation of the Praises to the Twenty-One Taras. The monks attributed their abbot's freedom to the divination she had done as an 11-year-old.

Shortly after that, the Chinese government invaded Tibet. How did persecution and exile impact Jetsun Kushok and the Sakya family?

In 1959, when the Communist Chinese Army invaded Tibet and the Dalai Lama fled the country, many other Tibetans followed suit, including the Sakya family. In order not to draw the attention of the Chinese government, they had to be very secretive, and only a very small group could escape. Jetsun Kushok was able to leave with Sakya Trizin and their aunt, first to Sikkim and then to India. They were living as refugees, and they didn't have very much money. Since Sakya Trizin was the throne holder of the Sakyas, he received a lot of attention, and everybody wanted to help him develop and train properly. But Jetsun Kushok was not given that kind of attention.

In the beginning, she still dressed in her nun robes



*Jetsun Kushok praying to Tara at the Mahabodhi Temple, Bodhgaya, India, 2002. Photo by April Dolkar*

and kept her head shaved. But in India, the only women who had shaved heads at the time were widows, and widows were considered highly inauspicious. When Indian people saw her, they treated her like a widow. Eventually, she decided to disrobe because it was just too difficult. After she disrobed, sometimes Tibetans would still recognize her and try to make prostrations to her. But she was conflicted because she felt she wasn't dressed properly for such signs of respect. It was no longer clear who she was or what was expected of her.

How did she navigate life in India after disrobing?

While her brother was receiving many teachings from eminent lamas, Jetsun Kushok's future in India was less clear. She briefly served as a nurse, caring for sick children, before the unclean conditions made her sick. Eventually, Jetsun Kushok's aunt, Dagmo Trinlei Paljor, decided that she should marry. This was unusual because jetsunmas are nuns and take vows never to marry. At first, Jetsun Kushok protested and wanted to remain a nun, but eventually she acquiesced. Her aunt found her a suitable partner from a prestigious family, Sey Kushok Rinchen Luding, and they married. They're still together to this day, and it has turned out to be a fantastic relationship. They soon had their first son, and over time their family grew to include five children. After training and teaching as a jetsunma for so long, Jetsun Kushok now had to learn how to manage a household, balancing children on her hips while doing laundry and chores.

After a few years, a friend suggested that the family

immigrate to Canada. But when they arrived in Canada, they had no support at all. In India, she had been with her immediate family in the birthplace of the Buddha. But in Canada, nobody knew about Tibet or the Khon family. They were simply new immigrants. Both Jetsun Kushok and her husband had to find jobs, and they ended up working on a mushroom farm, filling and transporting 20-pound boxes of mushrooms. It was back-breaking work. They had never really done physical labor before, and they would come home each day exhausted.

Still, she always found time for her practice, waking up at 4am and reciting mantras while doing her house duties.

Eventually, Jetsun Kushok returned to teaching. How did that happen?

In the 1970s, Sakya Trizin came to the United States to teach. Some of the female students asked him, “Why is it that in Tibetan Buddhism all the teachers are men? Where are the female lamas?” Sakya Trizin told them that there were women teachers too, including his elder sister, who was living in Canada. The women were very interested to know that there was a female lama so nearby, so Sakya Trizin asked Jetsun Kushok to teach. She began giving empowerments and instructions at Sakya Trizin’s centers in the US and became well known in many parts of the world. To this day, I think she’s probably one of the most important living female lamas that we have. But she likes to keep a very low profile, which is why not many know too much about her—or about the Sakya family in general. When I received the Sakya family’s support to write this book, I found it quite extraordinary because this is the first time that Jetsun Kushok’s biography will be shared with a larger audience.

In the epilogue of the book, you share the story of another contemporary jetsunma, Jetsunma Kunga Trinley Palter, born in 2007. Can you share more about her life and how the jetsunma training process has changed in the 21st century?

Jetsunma Kunga Trinley is the granddaughter of Jetsun Kushok’s brother, the 41st Sakya Trizin. She is the first jetsunma who is also a recognized reincarnation, or *tulku*—she was recognized by the Dalai Lama as the

reincarnation of Khandro Tare Lhamo. She is also the first jetsunma to be brought up in India and educated both in the traditional Sakya manner and through a modern education. She has received empowerments from her grandfather, her father, and other lamas, and in many ways, she is being trained just as if she were a jetsunma in Sakya. At the same time, she’s also attending a small private school in Dehradun, in Northern India, where she is learning the standard subjects that most children learn today. She seems to have a proficiency for languages: she already knows Tibetan, Hindi, Chinese, and English. Because she is growing up in the 21st century, we have greater access to what her training process has looked like: her parents documented her early life online through a photographic journal, and important moments in her life continue to be shared on Facebook and YouTube.

Jetsunma Kunga Trinley is a path blazer in many ways. Besides being the first jetsunma to be recognized as a tulku, she is also the first vegan jetsunma, as she ate only vegetarian foods from birth and cut out animal products altogether at a very young age to minimize harm and show compassion toward sentient beings. In addition, she is the first jetsunma to have learned the Vajrakilaya sacred dance. For all the sons in the Sakya family, learning this dance is a rite of passage, and other people interpret their connection to the deity of Vajrakilaya based on the way they perform the dance. Before Jetsunma Kunga Trinley, no woman had ever performed this dance. She committed to training herself, and she performed the dance just last year. I believe that she has opened the doors for her sisters and other Sakya nuns to be able to perform the dance in the future. Just in her first 15 years, she has set so many “firsts” and has shown herself to be deeply involved in the dharma. She is well on her way to becoming an esteemed lama—and paving the way for other jetsunmas to follow. After over 1,000 years, the Khon family is thriving.

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Sarah Fleming is *Tricycle’s* audio editor.

**Elisabeth Benard** previously worked as a professor of religion at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington. Since her retirement, she has continued to pursue her interest in goddesses and spiritual women, compiling biographies of hidden yoginis in Tibetan Buddhism.

Mr. Somboon Chungprampee  
Executive Secretary  
International Network of Engaged Buddhists

Geneva, 19 December 2022

Dear Somboon,

As the holiday season is upon us, we would like to express our deepest gratitude for your trust, support, and partnership in 2022.

This year we celebrated the result of our four-year joint collaboration for the development and launch of the Toolkit on Nurturing the Spiritual Development of Children in the Early Years – A Contribution to the Protection of Children from Violence and the Promotion of Their Holistic Well-Being. This process has not only been enriching in bringing us together but also intensively purposeful and inspiring personally and institutionally.

The implementation and dissemination of the Toolkit will be yet another opportunity to join hands in action to support parents, caregivers and educators to nurture the holistic development and well-being of young children. It is our hope that this important initiative will make a difference in the lives of many children around the world, contributing to build a violence-free and more peaceful world.

May 2023 be filled with gratitude and joy and bring you renewed hope, health and peace.

Sincerely,



Executive Director  
Maria Lucia Uribe

Esteemed Ajarn Sulak:

The profound historical background of Buddhism in Taiwan has enjoyed influences from various religious traditions and therefore has proven to be adaptable to different cultural environments when being propagated worldwide. Under the modern globalization movement, utilizing skillful means derived from the wisdom of the Buddha dharma, Taiwanese Buddhist organizations have fully realized Buddha's spirit of helping the world. With Taiwanese Buddhism's thriving focus on proactive engagement with worldly matters, it has attracted the attention of international Buddhist communities and academia.

As an university founded by Buddhists, Hsuan-Chuang has established a center for the study of Buddhism in Taiwan and will conduct in-depth research on the following topics: globalization and Taiwanese Buddhism, Buddhist ethics studies, the oral history of Buddhism in Taiwan, dialogues between different Buddhist lineages in Taiwan, Buddhist culture and art, mapping Buddhism in Taiwan with the Metaverse, Taiwanese folk Buddhist traditions, the study of Master Yin-Shun's philosophy and humanistic Buddhism. Our center also plans to organize academic lectures and seminars and cooperate with Buddhist research and teaching institutes throughout Asia, including China, Hong Kong, and Macau as well as Europe and the Americas. We aspire to become a noteworthy international academic research center, which expands the understanding and practice of Buddhism globally.

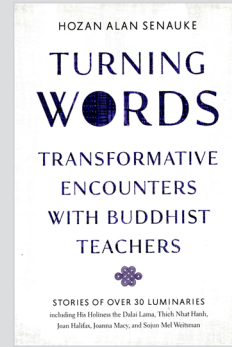
In gratitude for your great support of our center's establishment, we would like to invite you to be our center's chief consultant. A comprehensive introduction to the Center for the Study of Buddhism in Taiwan is included in this mail. If you are willing to accept our invitation, please fill in the attached form and return it to us at your earliest convenience.

Best Wishes



Shao-Chi Chien, President of Hsuan Chuang University

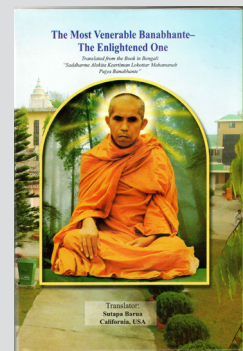
October 17, 2022



## Turning Words - Transformative Encounters with Buddhist Teachers

**Author:** Hozan Alan Senauke

**Publisher:** Shambhala Publications, Boulder, Colorado, 2023

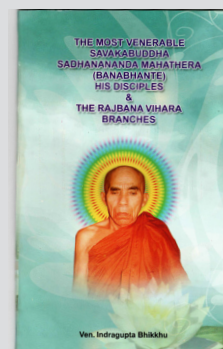


## The Most Venerable Banabhante - The Enlightened One

**Author:** Ven. Shobhita Bhikkhu

**English translation:** Sutapa Barua

**Publisher:** Rajban Offset Press, Bangladesh, 2012



## The Most Venerable Savakabuddha Sadhanananda Mahathera (Banabhante) His Disciples & The Rajabana Vihara Branches.

**Author:** Ven. Indragupta Bhikkhu

**English translation:** P.B. Karbari and S.P. Chakma

**Publisher:** Banabhante Prakashani Publication,

Chittigong Hill Tracks, Bangladesh, 2010

Master Xingyun, the founder of Fo Guang Shan, passed away at the age of 97

2023.02.06

Text/Provided by **Fo Guang Shan**

Source: **The Merit Times** - <https://www.merit-times.com/>

[NewsPage.aspx?unid=829184](https://www.merit-times.com/NewsPage.aspx?unid=829184)



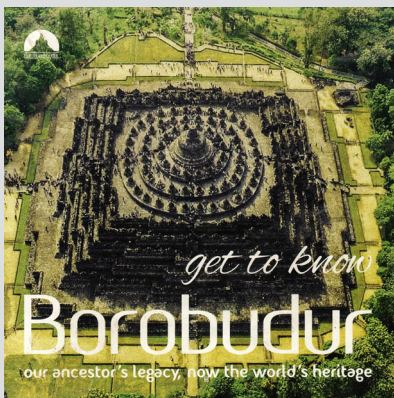
Master Xingyun 1927 - 2023

At 5:00 am on February 6, 2023, before dawn, two thousand monks and believers from the main mountain of Fo Guang Shan knelt in the Mahavira Hall and listened to Venerable Xinbao, the chief patriarch, announce with great sorrow: Master Hsing Yun, the founder of

Fo Guang Shan, was incarnated into the world Consumption, at 5:00 pm on February 5th, ... at the age of 97.

Master Hsing Yun has promoted humanistic Buddhism and built a pure land of Buddha's light all his life. Over the past 56 years since his founding, he has established more than 300 monasteries around the world, established 5 universities in Taiwan, the United States, Australia and the Philippines, and has millions of members of Buddha's light, benefiting countless people.

Master Xingyun was born in Jiangdu, Jiangsu Province in 1927. ... At the age of 15, he was granted full precepts by the old monk Ruo Shun in Qixiashan Temple in Nanjing. His ancestral home is Dajue Temple in Yixing, Jiangsu Province.



Visit Borobudur during INEB's joint meeting of the Advisory Council and Executive Committees in November 2023.

Borobudur - [bumiborobudur.com](http://bumiborobudur.com)

## Don Luce

September 21, 1934 - November 17, 2022

Source: For the full obituary please refer to MJ Colucci and Son - <https://www.mjcoluccifuneralchapel.com/obituary/don-luce>



Don Luce, 88, of Niagara Falls, NY, passed away unexpectedly on Thursday, November 17, 2022. Born in East Calais, VT, he was the son of the late Collins and Margaret (Sanders) Luce.

In 1958, during the Vietnam War, Don traveled to Vietnam and served as an agriculture expert and aid worker for the International Voluntary Services, a precursor for the Peace Corps. During his time in Vietnam, he was widely known as an activist who was a true threat to the South Vietnamese military predominantly for uncovering the mistreatment and torture of many war prisoners. After being expelled from the country in 1971, he continued to battle corruption, poverty and oppression around the World. In the 1980's, he directed humanitarian work throughout Asia, raising awareness and money for HIV.

Following his efforts in Asia, Don relocated to Washington, DC, and served as the Director of International Voluntary Services until 1997. He then taught Sociology at Niagara County Community College for two years, before becoming the Public Relations Director of Community Missions of Niagara Frontier for two decades prior to his retirement.

Don was a proud author, most notably for his book, *Vietnam: The Unheard Voices*, which was coauthored by John Sommer and included an introduction written by former Senator Edward Kennedy.

He married his beloved husband, Dr. Mark Bonacci, and together they lived throughout Manhattan, NY, Washington, DC, Buffalo, NY, and currently in Niagara Falls, NY during their 43 years together.

Rev. Sato Ryojun (1932-2022)



It is with great regret that we mark the passing of Rev. Ryojun Sato on October 30, 2022. Rev. Sato was an Honorary Advisor to INEB. After many years of being active in the World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB), Rev. Sato became active in INEB and a regular participant in INEB general conferences due

to INEB's emphasis on practical grassroots activism. Rev. Sato's concern for India's Dalit Buddhist communities drew him towards INEB and its strong solidarity with those communities. Even before his direct involvement in INEB, he would regularly make anonymous donations to support the airfares of Dalit Buddhists to attend the INEB Conference.

Rev. Sato was born in 1932 at Koen-ji Temple in Tokyo, belonging to Jodo Pure Land sect. He completed his master's degree at Taisho University in 1959 and went to India to study at the graduate school of the University of Delhi, where he completed his doctorate in 1962. From this point, Rev. Sato spent his life dedicated to learning about Indian Buddhism and communicating his ideas to not only the Japanese community but also the international community with his fluent command of English and Hindi. In 2014, he published in English an authoritative study of the origins of the Mahabodhi temple entitled *The Mahabodhi Temple at Bodhi Gaya*, which is prominently sold at the many bookstores outside the temple's gate.

His presence and always joyful manner will be especially missed by the numerous JNEB members who also sit on INEB executive boards. He was an elder statesman in the Jodo Pure Land community; sat on the board of directors of the International Buddhist Exchange Center (IBEC) that hosts the JNEB office; and acted as a *kalyanamitra* to many Indians and foreign Buddhists in Japan.

William Lim (1932-2023)



William Lim is a famous architect from Singapore. He just passed away recently. Thai people may not know him, except for Khun Sumet Jumsai na Ayudhya who is a leading architect in Siam.

William and I were friends for a longtime and struggled together. He is an atheist, and he really can't stand Christianity, especially those who call themselves Born Again Christians, and feel that they are the true believers. Anybody who becomes Born Again is never allowed to have other pictures or images of something superstitious, for example dragons, lions and so on. And the followers are not allowed to go to Buddhist temples. William had a senior relative who joined this group, and he didn't want his children to contact his relative.

William has a lovely wife, she opened a book shop which is similar to my book shop 'Suksit Siam'. Both of them are familiar with me. I used to be the chairperson of the 'Culture for the Future' in Southeast Asia. I asked William to be the chair after me. He was satisfied with this position, even though he didn't earn anything from it. This group brought friendship to the people that think similarly together in Southeast Asia. William didn't want to leave this position, I had to beg him to allow others to take the position too. From Siam to Singapore, and then the Philippines, I proposed Randy David to be the next chairperson, but Randy was too busy with other works and neglected focusing on this important work.

When William celebrated his 80th Birthday, I joined him in Singapore where he took care of me very well. The celebration was quite big, people come from all over. He had so many friends from around the world. I think this is the last time I met him.

I have lost another close friend, which is too bad. And I hope he will rest in peace.

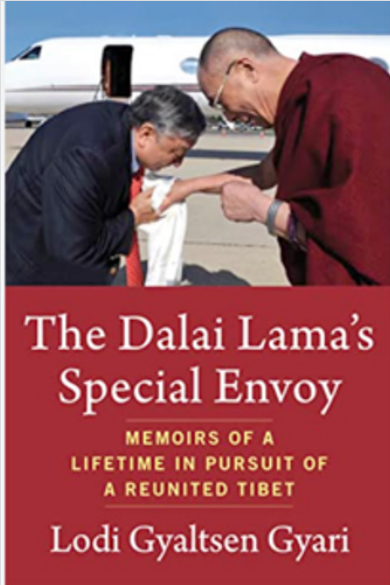
**Sulak Sivaraksa**

07-01-2023

Photo : Singapore Institute of Architects

## *The Dalai Lama's Special Envoy: Memoirs of a Lifetime in Pursuit of a Reunited Tibet*

Review by **Matteo Pistono**



THE DALAI LAMA fled Tibet sixty-three years ago, after China's invasion of his country. He's been trying to return ever since. During that more than half a century of exile, the Dalai Lama entrusted one individual to speak officially to the People's Republic of China. *The Dalai Lama's Special Envoy: Memoirs of a Lifetime in Pursuit of a Reunited Tibet* is a newly published book by that individual, Lodi Gyaltsen Gyari.

I first met Gyari in the late 1990s in Washington, D.C., when I collaborated with the Smithsonian Institution on Tibetan cultural programs. Later, when I lived in Kathmandu and traveled frequently to

Tibet to document human rights abuses for the International Campaign for Tibet, I was in close contact with him. While we discussed political matters in our frequent meetings, he was most concerned about the state of Buddhist practice in his homeland, inquiring about little-known temples, asking if an aging hermit was still practicing there. Or he would ask if the collected writings of a nineteenth-century lama, which he had directed to be published, were being distributed to small monasteries in a remote corner of eastern Tibet. He sent messages and monetary offerings with me for yogis in far-flung hermitages, monks in larger monasteries, and remote nunneries. I always returned with handwritten or videotaped messages for him, including one from a senior rinpoche who identified where Gyari's father had been reborn. While Gyari continually strategized and consolidated political support for Tibet, I saw how committed he was in sustaining esoteric endeavors among Buddhist practitioners in Tibet.

Gyari was an unlikely character to enter the global political stage. Born in a nomad's tent in eastern Tibet in 1949, he was recognized, just as the Chinese were establishing their control in

eastern Tibet, as the reincarnation of the scholar-yogi Jamphel Dewa Nyima from Lumorab Monastery. While undertaking his childhood monastic studies, Gyari heard accounts of his family members engaging in guerilla warfare against the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in the mountainside—about how his chieftain father had been imprisoned by the Chinese, and how his mother had become the most prominent Tibetan female resistance leader, leading battalions on horseback against the invading Chinese army. To this day, patriotic songs in Tibet still invoke her name.

By 1957, the PLA took control of eastern Tibet, and Gyari's extended family fled their home on foot and horseback for Lhasa. Gyari witnessed hundreds in his group, including childhood friends, massacred when ambushed by the Chinese. The young Gyari was asked to guide the group by divination during perilous moments on the two-month escape. While the young reincarnate lama used Buddhist mantras to encircle his family with protection, his mother carried hand grenades in the fold of her robes. Eventually, they made it over the Himalayas into exile in India.

Arriving in the refugee community in Darjeeling, Gyari eventually left the monkhood and became part of a group of young Tibetans selected for English language training, a preparatory step to work with the US Central Intelligence Agency-funded Tibetan guerilla



AP Photo/Ashwini Bhatia



resistance. His training led him not to the frontline of the armed struggle against China, but to become the editor of Tibetan and English language journals. During this period, Gyari married Dawa Chokyi, and they raised six children.

Gyari's public service in the 1970s spanned from activist to Tibetan parliamentarian. He served in the most senior position in parliament and became widely recognized as one of the most effective political leaders of his generation. Beginning in the mid 1980s, he led the improbable quest to advance the Tibetan cause throughout the corridors of power around the world. In the US, as both the Dalai Lama's Special Envoy and head of the International Campaign for Tibet in Washington, D. C., took the Tibet issue from a side conversation in D.C. coffee shop meetings to the Department of State and the White House. Gyari accompanied the Dalai Lama at every meeting with US Presidents Carter, both Bushes, Clinton, and Obama.

*The Dalai Lama's Special Envoy*

*traces the arc of how the Tibet issue became a global social justice movement. When Gyari assisted the Dalai Lama on his first visit to the West in 1973, as they visited eleven countries, he realized that the Tibetan leader had greater name recognition in Europe and the West than did his own country, Tibet. Gyari's pragmatism foresaw the enormous potential of the Dalai Lama that went beyond the Tibetan struggle and Buddhism. Gyari led a small group of Tibetans and Western supporters—including a handful of Western dharma groups—who first actively pushed for the Dalai Lama to meet with world leaders, worked to raise his profile as an international moral leader, and then developed a multidecade campaign to "internationalize" the issue of Tibet around the world. The worldwide stature of the Dalai Lama and his nonviolent struggle culminated in the Nobel Peace Prize being awarded to him in 1989.*

But it was through his central role in the Sino-Tibetan negotiations, which Gyari meticulously details in *The Dalai Lama's Special Envoy*, that he left an indelible mark on Tibetan history. The Dalai Lama appointed Gyari on May 16, 1998, as his chief negotiator with the People's Republic of China. Gyari carried the mantle for the Dalai Lama's Middle Way Approach during nine rounds of negotiations with Beijing between 2002 and 2012.

Gyari told me that his commitment to the Dalai Lama's vision

and to his Buddhist practice was one and the same. For Gyari, like his leader, the Dalai Lama, politics and spirituality emerge from the bodhisattva commitment to benefit others. There is no separation between social activism and the dharma, so long as the commitment to benefit all beings never wavers. Gyari's skillful means manifested as a persuasiveness and determination born from authenticity, which you can hear in his distinctive voice on every page of *The Dalai Lama's Special Envoy*.

I was always struck by how seamlessly Gyari wove his Buddhist practice into his politics. Not only did he maintain his daily meditation practice diligently, but he literally practiced Vajrayana during his political encounters. Once, during the last rounds of negotiations with the Chinese, the Nechung Oracle had recommended Gyari recite a particular Vajrayana practice, *Removing Flaws in Interdependence*, prior to and during the meeting with the Chinese officials. Gyari did not have time to memorize the mantras and prayers so he had me FedEx him an iPod loaded with recordings he could listen to during the car ride and in between negotiations in Beijing and Hunan.

While this book illuminates Gyari's diplomatic role, as well as how the Tibet issue became a global phenomenon, Gyari goes to great lengths in the book to discuss the need for Tibetans to overcome divisions within their own exile community.

This may surprise some readers, who assume that Tibetans have always been a united front behind the Dalai Lama.

The need for Tibetans to release their divisive collective past, including intra-Buddhist sectarianism, and foster unity was recognized by leaders in the exile community as soon as they arrived in India in the late 1950s. Buddhist lamas, regional and tribal heads, clan superiors, and aristocrats—almost all of whom had arrived destitute as refugees—gathered in Bodhgaya to meet with the twenty-six-year-old Dalai Lama and declare their political loyalty to him. This extraordinary historic event unified leaders of all Tibetan regions behind a single leader—a first in the history of Tibet. Pledging allegiance to a reunited Tibet with the Dalai Lama as leader, according to Gyari, defined what it meant to be Tibetan. What we now consider “Tibet” was born politically at this time, though scholars and historians, Gyari laments in *The Dalai Lama’s Special Envoy*, have never written much about this historic moment.

Gyari asserts that without understanding this oath of allegiance, one cannot fully grasp the profundity of the Dalai Lama’s Middle Way Approach, which, in effect, gave up the struggle for an independent Tibet in favor of genuine autonomy for all Tibetans living in a unified Tibet within the framework of the People’s Republic of China.

At times, the narrative turns

deeply personal. One can feel Gyari’s anguish when he writes about how the Chinese executed his grandmother by firing squad for her resistance to their invasion. Or when, during the official negotiations with Chinese officials in 2004, Gyari returned to his home monastery, still in ruins, after forty-six years in exile, a moment he describes as “more than anything, heartbreaking.”

The most personal aspect of this book, however, is the glimpse into what it is like to be a close disciple of the Dalai Lama. Gyari acknowledged that being the political representative of the Dalai Lama may provide situations where his role as a student of the Tibetan leader would be tested. “As a disciple, I have been able to maintain my pure *samaya* [heart connection] with His Holiness,” Gyari writes. “Several years back, I gathered all my courage to inform him that if there were ever a situation in the future when I had to make a choice between him in his capacity as my leader or as my teacher, without any hesitation, I would choose the latter.” Gyari’s devotion to the Dalai Lama and the dharma was his guiding light while navigating dark political episodes—externally with the Chinese, and internally with the exile community.

Early in the book, Gyari writes how, in 2010, he became a “victim of a malicious and well-orchestrated attempt at character assassination.” The rumors did not stem from China, he states, but rather from well-placed Tibetans in exile. A close reading of the

book evinces the involvement of politicians who eventually rose to the senior-most positions in the Tibetan exile government. Instead of standing on the shoulders of Gyari, the group who pressed the defamation against him wanted to tear him down. They believed they could maintain the fruitful relationships Gyari had cultivated for forty years in the West and in China. This did not transpire. Following Gyari’s exit, international political and financial support for Tibet has waned. And without him as the principal negotiator with the Chinese, no further talks have occurred.

Gyari was cleared of any wrongdoing after exhaustive audits in 2014, by which time he had retired and moved to Thailand to be closer to his family and write this memoir. Gyari’s writing about the defamation in *The Dalai Lama’s Special Envoy* is the first time he addresses the incident publicly.

Though Gyari was exonerated, the rumors that were levied against him had reached the ears of the Dalai Lama and caused an uncharacteristic distance between the Tibetan teacher and his disciple. This was extremely painful for Gyari. He remained stoic for four years. He finally requested a meeting with the Dalai Lama to clear up any misunderstanding. A private audience was scheduled at the Dalai Lama’s residence in India, but the meeting never took place. When Gyari went for a medical check in San Francisco before heading to India, his

health turned for the worse, and he died during treatment for liver cancer.

In Gyari's final hours of consciousness, the Dalai Lama telephoned to assure him that their spiritual connection was pure. The significance of this call for Gyari cannot be overstated. Gyari had told me on numerous occasions that on his deathbed he wanted to hear the Dalai Lama recite *Entering the City of Omniscience*, a prayer composed by Jigme Lingpa. One verse from that prayer had special significance for Gyari:

*Whatever my situation or circumstance, may I never feel the slightest wish to follow worldly ways, which run contrary to the Dharma!*

*Even if, whilst under the sway of karma and habitual patterns, a mistaken thought occurs to me, may it never be successful!*

དུས་དང་རྣམས་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་དུ་དམ་པའི་ཚེས་  
མ་ཡིན་པའི་འཇིག་རྟེན་མཐུན་འཇུག་གི་བསམ་པ་  
སྐད་ཅིག་མ་ཅོམ་ཡང་སེམས་ལ་མི་སྣོ་བར་ཤོག་  
ཅིག

གལ་ཏེ་ལས་དང་བག་ཚུགས་དབང་བཅོན་  
པར་གྱུར་ནས་བྱིན་ཅི་ལོག་གི་སྣོ་སྣོས་ནའང་དེ་ཉིད་  
མི་འགྲུབ་པར་ཤོག་ཅིག

Gyari died on October 29, 2018,  
at the age of sixty-nine.

Gyari's insights culminate in recommendations to future Tibetan and Chinese leaders. He warns that time is not on the side of the Chinese

government. For a durable solution to China's Tibet problem—in essence, a complete lack of legitimacy for their rule—the Dalai Lama must be an active participant in crafting the solution.

Without the Tibetan leader's blessing, legitimacy will forever evade China. As the Dalai Lama is now eighty-seven years old, time is of the essence.

At nearly eight hundred pages, *The Dalai Lama's Special Envoy* is astonishing in its thoroughness and geopolitical sweep, offering an exhaustive, firsthand account of the Tibetan political engagement with the Chinese. Historians and scholars of Tibet and China, and socially engaged Buddhists, will find the greatest value in the book. As the Dalai Lama's chief political strategist and diplomat-at-large, Gyari provides an unprecedented glimpse into key moments and political and Buddhist personalities in an era of dynamic diplomacy, much of which was conducted in secrecy. Gyari's complex role as a leading advocate, diplomat, strategist, negotiator, reincarnate lama, and bridge-builder for the Tibetan people resulted in unprecedented awareness and support for the Dalai Lama and Tibet worldwide.

And, as a committed Vajrayana practitioner, Gyari's life paints a portrait of a socially engaged Buddhist. His warrior heritage and Buddhist training propelled him to work ceaselessly against seemingly insur-

mountable internal and external obstacles. He infused the Tibet movement with a global outlook anchored with moral gravitas. In the span of a few decades, from what was once a disoriented refugee cause struggling to find its political way in India, Tibet emerged as an iconic movement for social justice on a global scale.

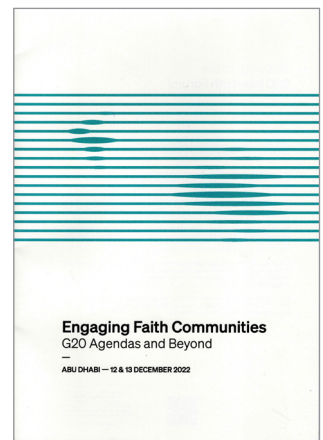
MATTEO PISTONO is a meditation and breathwork guide and author of multiple books, including *In the Shadow of the Buddha and Roar: Sulak Sivaraksa and the Path of Socially Engaged Buddhism*.

[www.matteopistono.com](http://www.matteopistono.com).

Matteo is a member of INEB's Executive Committee.



## Recommended Reading



Engaging Faith Communities  
G20 Agendas and Beyond

Abu Dhabi - 12 & 13 December 2022

# TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

THE 28<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL SEM PRINGPUANGKEO PUBLIC LECTURE

Sat 4<sup>th</sup> February 2023, 15.00-17.30 hrs.  
Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation,  
20-22 Charoen Nakorn Rd., Bangkok, Siam

ปาฐกถาเสม พริ้งพวงแก้ว ครั้งที่ 28

เสาร์ที่ 4 กุมภาพันธ์ 2566 เวลา 15.00 – 17.30 น.  
มูลนิธิเสฐียรโกเศศ-นาคะประทีป (สวนเงินมีมา)  
ด.เจริญนคร ระหว่างซอย 20-22 คลองสาน กรุงเทพฯ

ปาฐกถา

จุดยืนทางการศึกษา  
เพื่อความเป็นธรรม

By  
SHUI-MENG NG



SOCIAL JUSTICE

for

โดย  
อึ้ง ฉ่วยหมิง  
นักพัฒนาอาวุโส  
ในภูมิภาคเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้

## PROGRAM

14.30-15.00	Registration
15.00-15.30	Music
15.30-15.40	Welcome by Mr. Surasee Kosolnawin (President, Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation)
15.40-15.50	Opening remarks by Mr. Chutchawal Pringpuangkeo
15.50-16.00	Thai Flute by Assawongrat Assarangchai
16.00-16.10	Documentary Film "Where is Sombath?"
16.10-16.20	Introduction of the lecturer by Hans van Willenswaard
16.20-17.00	PUBLIC LECTURE: Transformative Education for Social Justice By Shui-meng Ng, Senior Development Worker and Civil Rights in Southeast Asia Translated by Anchalee Kurutach
17.00-17.20	Q & A
17.20-17.30	Closing Remarks by Sulak Sivaraksa

## กำหนดการ

14.00-15.00	ลงทะเบียน
15.00-15.30	ดนตรี
15.30-15.40	กล่าวต้อนรับ โดย คุณสุรสีห์ โกศลนาวิน (ประธานมูลนิธิเสฐียรโกเศศ-นาคะประทีป)
15.40-15.50	กล่าวเปิดงาน โดย คุณชัชวาลย์ พริ้งพวงแก้ว
15.50-16.00	การแสดงขลุ่ยไทย โดย อัครวงศ์รัตน์ อัสรางชัย
16.00-16.10	ภาพยนตร์สารคดี "สมบัติ ที่หายไป"
16.10-16.20	แนะนำปาฐก โดย ฮันส์ แวนวิลเลินสวาร์ด
16.20-17.00	ปาฐกถา: จุดยืนทางการศึกษาเพื่อความเป็นธรรม โดย อึ้ง ฉ่วยหมิง นักพัฒนาอาวุโส ในภูมิภาคเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ ร่วมแปลภาษาอังกฤษและไทย โดย อัญชลี คุรุชัย แลกเปลี่ยนและซักถาม
17.00-17.20	ถาม-ตอบ
17.20-17.30	กล่าวปิดงาน โดย สุลักษณ์ สิวรักษ์

More details, visit



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