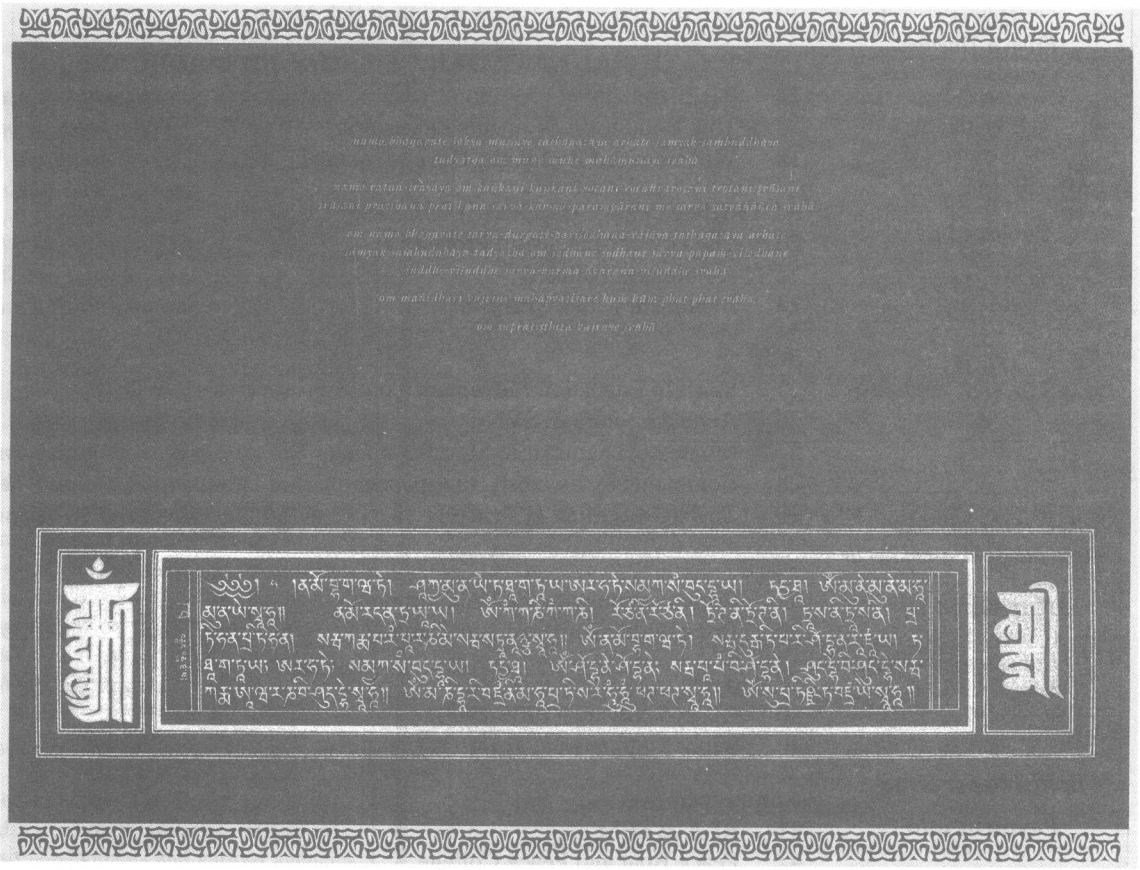
SEEDS OF PEACE

Vol.16 No.1 Jan.-Apr. 2543 (2000)

Spirituality in the Age of Globalisation



WORLD FESTIVAL OF

SACRED MUSIC

A GLOBAL QUEST FOR UNISON

SEEDS OF

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The goals of INEB are to:

1. Promote understanding and co-operation among Buddhist countries, different Buddhist sects, and socially conscious Buddhist groups.
2. Facilitate and carry out solutions to the many problems facing our communities, societies, and world.
3. Articulate the perspective of Engaged Buddhism regarding these problems and train Buddhist activists accordingly.
4. Serve as a clearing house of information on existing Engaged Buddhist groups.
5. Cooperate with activists from other spiritual traditions.

Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development
124 Soi Wat Thongnopakhun
Bangkok 10600
Tel./Fax: [662] 437-9450

The objectives of TICD are to :

1. Coordinate work among individuals, groups of individuals and various agencies dealing with religions and development in the course of working together.
2. Share experience in and knowledge of religions and development as well as exploring ways and means of working together.
3. Offer training and secure resources in terms of man-power and materials to support and enhance the agencies that need help.

TICD
124 Soi Wat Thongnopakhun Bangkok 10600.

THE DALAI LAMA

September 8, 1999

Arjarn Sulak Sivaraksa
Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute
117 Fuangnakhon Rd.,
Opposite Wat Rajabopit
Bangkok 10200
THAILAND

Dear Sulak Sivaraksa,

Please find enclosed here a brief concept of the project called World Festival of Sacred Music. The plan is to organise some satellite festivals to be held in different parts of the world culminating in an event to be held in New Delhi towards the end of 1999. The Tibet House Institution and Foundation for Universal Responsibility are jointly organising this festival. They are keen to set up a global committee for this festival and I would like to invite you to become one of the patrons for this Global Committee. We will be very honoured and would highly appreciate your participation and involvement in this Festival.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

With prayers and good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

H.H. The Dalai Lama's Favorite Prayer

For as long as space endures
And for as long as living beings remain,
Until then may I too abide
To dispel the misery of the world.

Reprinted from Prayers for a Thousand Years, *edited by Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon. Published by Harper San Francisco, 1999*

EDITORIAL NOTES

This is the first *Seeds of Peace* in the new millenium. For 15 years *Seeds of Peace* has been keeping its readers abreast of the activities of social movements with a spiritual base, here in Siam and elsewhere. As the New Year comes with all its attendant excitement-we're struck by the idea that the frenzy over Y2K is saying something about society at large. We are willing to devote a lot of time and energy to the least substantive issues of our culture, especially those who are 'plugged in' to the mass media. This seems to obfuscate and drown out the more pressing concerns of humanity. One more party, this is the big one, then it's time for Bud Bowl V or whatever. Next year who knows? We may spend some time labeling this 'new generation,' which is renamed as if new every five years.

If the mark of our present civilization, I mean mainly Western civilization and its devotees, is pop culture, so be it. But the voice of those asking if there isn't more to life than this is growing louder. Increasingly spirituality is being explored, discussed and raised as a foil to the solely materialistic worldview. In this case I differentiate religion and spirituality. Religion is as strong as ever and usually only too happy to reinterpret itself to accommodate the consumer culture and drape itself in the glory of the new world order which promotes violence to enforce a kind of neo-morality. But then this kind of world order isn't new. Just like the buzz we get from the coming of a new millenium or the naming of a 'new generation' a new world order signifies, by its very preoccupation with newness and with labels, that it isn't new at all.

Spiritually based movements take a view, which is far more deep and profound. In a sense things are always changing, always new. But then in another way they are always the same. The 'big issues' facing humanity, our quest for meaning, truth, justice-these shouldn't need a new face or ad campaign to drum up interest. Trying to live in a way that is beneficial or at least not harmful to others and to have a job that is good for our whole person, body, soul and mind, this is how we perceive the main goal of spiritually based social movements. If you dig deep into what it means to be beneficial or not harmful, the issues run deep. But the basic idea is simple. All beings want to be healthy and happy. Accommodating that wish in a practicable way, for now and for the future, for individuals, communities and societies involves spirituality, however you may define it.

This issue of *Seeds of Peace* presents reports and articles from the International Network of Engaged Buddhists. INEB has been active in training monks and nuns and this will continue to be a central area of activity. The Spirit in Education Movement had its annual workshop on alternative education. Reaching out to the young is probably the most effective long-term method for building healthy societies. *Seeds of Peace* has gathered reports and articles from our extended family of spiritually based social activists, and we offer them to the readers in the hope that they prove interesting and even inspiring. We also welcome a new editor Soyoung Chang. Y2K may have more 'juice' than spiritually based social activism—but spirituality has more staying power. Let us meditate and pray that Y3K sees a world in balance with nature, in harmony among its many and diverse tribes and at peace.

INDONESIA:
Human Rights Agenda for the Government

TAPOL has written to newly elected President Wahid and Vice-President Megawati calling on them to put the observance of human rights at the heart of their Government's policy. Our lengthy agenda is indicative of the perilous human rights situation inherited by the new Government and the drastic need for fundamental institutional and legislative changes. The letter reads as follows:

We congratulate you warmly on your election as Indonesia's President and Vice-President. We welcome this as the beginning of a new era bringing an end to the bleak years of the Suharto military dictatorship. In the spirit of *reformasi* which we believe should dominate the new Government's programme, we call on you to take the following measures in order to ensure that human rights observance is at the heart of your Government's policy:

Release all Political Prisoners

Scores of people are still in prison on political charges. They include dozens of people being held in Aceh and West Papua (Irian Jaya) as well as at least twenty people being held in prisons in Java.

We draw attention in particular to sixteen East Timorese prisoners held in Semarang prison of whom three have been in prison since 1991. They should be released forthwith and returned home to East Timor under the protection of the International Red Cross. We also demand the immediate release of the six prisoners arrested in 1996 as leaders or activists of the Partai Rakyat Demokratik (PRD) or related mass organisations.

Violators Should Not Go Unpunished

Ever since Suharto seized power in 1965, impunity has protected members of the security forces from due process and punishment for crimes against innocent and defenceless people. Your Government will only be able to make a true break with the New Order years if it ends impunity by:

1. Setting up independent commissions of inquiry to investigate grave incidents such as the Tanjung Priok Massacre in September 1984, the Lampung killings in 1987 and the killing of six Trisakti students in May 1998.
2. Revoking Presidential Decree in Lieu of Law enacted in September 1999 to establish a Human Rights Court (which allows exemptions for suspects from the security forces) and replacing it with a law to create a human rights court to try all those responsible for crimes against humanity during the New Order and since.
3. Conducting investigations into the serious human rights abuses in East Timor and bringing those responsible to justice in Indonesian or international courts.
4. Co-operating fully with the UN's international commission of inquiry into human rights abuses in East Timor set up under UN Human Rights Commission Resolution adopted on 27 September 1999 and with any subsequent decision by the UN Security Council to set up an ad hoc international criminal tribunal.
5. Initiating comprehensive investigations into the massacres perpetrated in the months following Suharto's seizure of power in 1965 when at least half a million people were slain, with a view to bringing all those responsible, including former President Suharto, to justice.
6. Conducting a thorough investigation into the disappearance of thirteen pro-democracy activists who were abducted in the months prior to Suharto's downfall. The families of the 'disappeared' should be told without delay whether they are alive or dead, and all those responsible should be brought to justice.
7. Conducting investigations into the thousands of human rights abuses perpetrated in Aceh during the period of DOM (military operations region) and all those responsible brought to justice.
8. Conducting investigations into many thousands of human rights abuses perpetrated in West Papua since the territory became Indonesia's 26th province in 1969 following a fraudulent 'act of free choice', with special emphasis on the abuses during the 1990s, and bringing all those responsible brought to justice.

Repeal Anti-Human Rights Legislation

The Indonesian Criminal Code contains a number of articles which provide for persons to be charged and convicted for political activities. These include the 'hate-sowing' articles and articles which make it an offence to 'insult' the head of state or government officials. They also include six articles which were incorporated into the Criminal Code in April this year when the anti-subversion law was repealed, making it an offence to try to replace the *Pancasila* or to promote Marxist/Leninist teachings, the effect being that the basis for charging people for their political beliefs under the anti-subversion law has now become part of the Criminal Code. All these articles should be repealed so as to safeguard citizens' right to engage in peaceful political activity without fear of arrest and conviction.

The Law on States of Emergency adopted by the previous Parliament but not signed into law by the former President should be scrapped and the 1959 law on states of emergency should be revoked.

Reform of the Judiciary

During the Suharto era and the Habibie transitional administration, a number of organs having no basis in law or in the Constitution were created, such as *Bakorstanas(da)* (the National Stability Coordinating Council) and the *Dewan Pemantapan Keamanan dan Sistem Hukum* (Council to Consolidate Security and the System of Law), both of which are dominated by the military. Such bodies should be dissolved without delay.

The Indonesian Judiciary is notorious for corruption and for its deep penetration by the military, as a result of which trials for political activities or corruption are heavily biased against the accused and the verdicts usually fixed in advance. An overhaul of the Judiciary is essential if Indonesia is to become a state based not on political power or bribery but on the rule of law. The Government should take steps to initiate a comprehensive reform of the Judiciary, in the meanwhile ensuring that all persons occupying key positions are beyond reproach and not susceptible to influence by special interests.



End TNI's Political Control through Territorial Commands

During the 34 years of Suharto's authoritarian rule and the 17 months of the Habibie transitional administration, the Indonesian armed forces (TNI) have maintained a tight grip on the population by means of the army's territorial structure. The TNI now plans to reinforce this structure by increasing the number of regional military commands (*kodam*), the district military commands (*kodim*) and lower-echelon commands. The TNI's military intelligence agency *BAIS* spies on citizens, spreads disinformation, blacklists people from entering or leaving the country on political grounds and exerts a repressive influence on political life through its covert operations. The TNI's territorial structure should be dismantled, *BAIS* dissolved, and the Indonesian army, navy and air force should confine their activities to defending the state against the threat of external aggression, operating strictly under civilian control.

All so-called 'non-organic' troops being deployed in Aceh, West Papua and elsewhere where opposition to central control is intensifying should be withdrawn immediately. The Government should instead embark on a policy of dialogue with representatives of these restive communities.

Although the Indonesian Police (*POLRI*) has been separated from the TNI, it is still under the control of the Defence and Security Minister/Commander-in-chief of the TNI. In order to ensure that POLRI functions to protect citizens and not to restrict legitimate social or political protest, the Government should immediately place the force under a civilian authority. Police training should be overhauled, ending the militarist ideology that now dominates.

VIETNAM:
Religious Freedom

Thich Nhat Hanh Seeking Permission to Return

Respected Buddhist meditation teacher and scholar Thich Nhat Hanh has lived in exile from his native Vietnam for 34 years. An international campaign is now underway to allow his books and tapes on Buddhist teachings, banned by the Vietnamese government, to be published and circulated in Vietnam.

Please support religious freedom by urging influential people in your countries to write to the Vietnamese government, requesting:

- that ten books by Thich Nhat Hanh be allowed to be published;
- that ten monks from the Tu Hieu temple in Hue, Vietnam, be allowed to travel to Thich Nhat Hanh's monastery, called Plum village, in France for religious training;
- that ten monks and nuns from Plum Village be allowed to travel to the same temple in Hue for training in traditional Buddhist chanting;
- that a group of nuns, monks and lay students, led by Thich Nhat Hanh, be allowed to go to Vietnam to offer public lectures and meditation retreats for a period of two months.

Buddhist Monks arrested

Government harassment of Buddhist monks and nuns belonging to independent unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam may be increasing. Buddhist monk and human rights advocate Thich Khong Tanh was arrested and interrogated for five hours by Saigon security police in September. Police also seized fellow monk Thich Tue Sy's computer, telling him, "We know that you are secretly plotting to turn Vietnam in to a kind of Kosovo or East Timor."

Both monks were accused of "seeking to overthrow the government", a crime punishable by the death penalty. Both are former political prisoners. Thich Khong Tanh is under permanent police surveillance, and has spent over 15 years in prison for his outspoken advocacy of human rights. Thich Tue Sy was arrested in 1984 and sentenced to death. His sentence was later commuted to 20 years imprisonment as a result of international pressure.

Urgent Action

Please write to ask for the immediate and unconditional release of both monks to:

- Le Kha Phieu, Secretary General, Communist party of Vietnam, Hanoi, Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Fax: 844 823 4514
- Phan Van Khai, Prime Minister, Hoang Hoa Tham, Hanoi, Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Fax: 844 804 4940

BURMA:
Food Scarcity and Militarization,
The Nexus: Excerpts from "The Voice of a Hungry Nation" A People Tribunal Report

This Tribunal convened to investigate two straightforward questions about human rights in Burma: Is there food scarcity, and if so, is militarization the cause?

In the course of inquiry we reviewed evidence from a variety of first and second hand sources representing all walks of life. The geographic distribution of evidence covered ten states and divisions, from the northeastern-most Shan State to the western border with Bangladesh. This swath of territory includes a range of topographic conditions: fertile river valleys, arid plains and plateaus, tropical forests, remote mountains and coasts. Hunger appeared consistently throughout these diverse regions. The prevalence of food scarcity was also clear in the demographic distribution of evidence. The Tribunal admitted evidence from members of at least eight different ethnic groups. Among the

rural population, we heard from subsistence farmers, landless peasants, hired workers, and land-owners. Townspeople and suburbanites, including educated civil servants and teachers, also testified to hunger and its proximate causes. Muslims, Christians and Buddhists alike struggle daily just to eat. The Tribunal is confident that food scarcity is indeed a nationwide phenomenon.

The causes are also national, linking hunger wherever it occurs to a common source. By all accounts, the source is social rather than natural, rooted in the structure and actions of the state rather than vagaries of land and climate. Our findings show that among state institutions, the people of Burma overwhelmingly accuse the military of denying their right to food. The displaced hilltop farmer hiding in the jungle, the impoverished lowland rice farmer surrendering his crop, and the harried civil servant trying to feed and clothe his family all identify the army as the source of their privation.

The abuse of power, rampant though it may be, would not in itself be sufficient to qualify for militarization. The excessive use of force could be explained as isolated incidents, minor flaws or corruption in a well-meaning and essentially noble institution. Poor judgment, weak discipline and loss of self-control are dangers inherent to army field operations everywhere. However, the army attacks on all



The remains of a refugee encampment following a major Burmese military offensive against ethnic Karen in January, 1997.

fronts: strategic, political, economic and ideological. Influence over all political, economic, legal, social and cultural affairs of the nation is prescribed by the needs and priorities of the state, enforced by the military's potential for violence against citizens, and reinforced by the people's lack of legal recourse. This trend has contributed to state repression of fundamental rights and freedoms, insurgency, communal violence, and particularly to the evolution of a powerful and successful military government. Paddy procurement, agriculture development and rice export are all nationwide policies designed at the highest levels to fulfil military needs first without regard to civilian well-being. The military's role in managing the national economy demonstrates that militarization is centralized, not isolated; systematic, not random; intentional, not accidental.

Normal governance and administration have been subsumed by military authoritarianism. All functions of state which came under our purview—tax-collecting, infrastructure development, economic policy—conform to military priorities and bear the signs of military implementation. Civilians are polarized from the state through continual and excessive demands for food, land and labor. Moreover, the army's obsession with internal security has become so central that it tolerates no form of political dissent. Just as the army treats the people as an Enemy, so too have the people become inimical towards the state.

Nowhere is this polarization more evident than in Burma's continuing armed conflict, in which the state repeatedly destroys and expropriates food, farmland and crops, displaces entire populations and systematically denies people the right to work. Civilians are presumed to be unpatriotic, hostile and seditious and thus in the army's eyes lose all their rights. In non-combat zones, where one might not expect to see similar excesses, again the state levies enormous demands on malnourished farmers, upbraiding them as selfish, lazy and dishonest when they can't comply.

Moreover, the Tribunal has found evidence that the militarization of Burmese society extends beyond the government and its relationship to the people. Insurgent or revolutionary armed groups follow the same pattern of absolute military authority, although with a notable reduction in violence against civilians. Nevertheless, arbitrary taxation and compulsory labor are standard wherever an army takes over. This suggests a transcendent pattern of militarization in which whoever holds a gun rules supreme and may dictate to the people under his control.

While other factors such as natural disaster or mere incompetence may contribute to or exacerbate scarcity, none is as pervasive or consistent, none can explain why food is not available to those who produce it, and none can override the state's role in denying the right to food. The nexus stands established.

The People's Tribunal is aware that Burma is in the throes of a long and difficult democracy struggle, and wishes to emphasize once again the importance of the right to food. Civil rights, political participation, freedom of expression and civilian rule are all important in democratization. So too are the most basic economic and social rights which allow people the physical strength and security to realize and enjoy their political freedoms. Without food, land rights, and a secure natural resource base, the comings and goings of assorted governments and political parties are to the rural poor mere scenes played out on a distant stage.

True democratization means breaking down barriers between political actors and their captive audience. A democracy struggle brings little change if those who lecture, exploit and despise the rural poor simply change from military to civilian costume. Democratization must be a complete change of character. Ultimately, Burma's democratization will depend on widening the stage to accommodate all society, burying the old habit of monologue and building a new culture of dialogue based on mutual interest and respect.

'VOICE OF THE HUNGRY NATION'

The People's Tribunal on Food Scarcity and Militarization in Burma released its findings in a report entitled ***Voice of a Hungry Nation*** *on 15 October 1999. The report can be found in full, along with other information about the tribunal at:* www.hrschool.org/tribunal

Asian Human Rights Commission
Unit D 7th floor Mongkok Comercial Centre
16-16B Argyle street, Kowloon, Hongkong

THAILAND:
The Latest Action at Pak Moon

Chaya Mongkala or "the auspicious victory," is the name of the latest nonviolent activity at Pak Moon.

Traditionally, in any form of struggle, the winner takes all. The winner would be arrogant and would rabidly fear retaliation from the loser. Needless to say, the vanquished would subsequently suffer great exasperation and misery.

In contrast, we, the Assembly of the Poor, have been taught that benignity is the most important aspect of any protest or struggle. This form of struggle leaves open the possibility that the government will 'repent' and yield to our demands.

Our tactics certainly adhere to the provisions of the new constitution. Approximately 5,000 affected villagers initiated this struggle by first petitioning the sheriff of Klongcheum district in Ubonratchathani province on September 13, 1999, and then the Prime Minister.

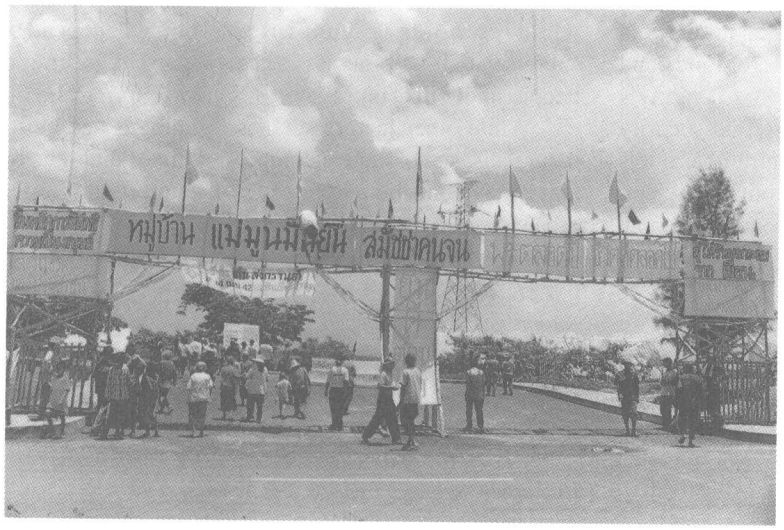
On the September day, the members of the Assembly of the Poor neatly gathered together in groups that were divided according to their respective villages. After Mr. Boonchoo Sawisa, the leader of the communities affected by the Lam Dom Yai dam project, conducted the opening Buddhist ceremony, the monks preached about the meaning of *Chaya Mongkala.*

Later, a group of leaders clarified the Assembly's strategic vision, reaffirming the importance of the truth, love, and patience. Next, all the gathering villagers prayed together and sang the Assembly's march before the "heroes of the poor" monument.

In the afternoon, the villagers rode on more than 80 carriages to demonstrate at Koohasawan Monastery in Khongcheum district. Despite the heavy rain, the protestors, armed with colorful banners, pressed forward.

The district sheriff received the villagers but explained that he could not accept the petition. As one of his justifications, the sheriff lamented that Khongcheum is merely a tiny area, an area that is not high on the government's priority list. However, the sheriff promised to ask the provincial office for accommodation on this issue. The villagers expressed sympathy for the disheartened sheriff and decided to put the petition off until September 15, 1999. They peacefully returned to Mae Moon Man Yuen Village at the dam site.

Back at the Village, the villagers discussed the situation in Narmada (Gujarat, India). They agreed that the inhabitants of Narmada should be granted the rights to influence the government's management of local resources and to protest against destructive development projects. Moreover, they hung up signs in front of the Village that read, "Free Narmada River for Local People" and "Joy to Us, Pray for Peace Everyday at 7:00 PM" (the latter is also for peace in Narmada).



INEB Update

Greetings for year 2000, from the INEB Secretariat. We hope that this year will bring peace and happiness, and success in your endeavor towards a nonviolent world.

First I would like to inform all INEB members, friends, and *Seeds of Peace* readers that due to logistical matters, INEB will remain as a co-publisher of *Seeds of Peace* and will continue to contribute in the INEB section of the journal. We look forward to continue working together with Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute, Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development (TICD), and Spirit in Education Movement.

Second I would like to take this opportunity to present an update on the activities of the INEB Secretariat and INEB's Programs.



February

The INEB Women and Gender Program (WPG) organized the second study tour-cum-seminar on "Breaking the Silence—the Roles of Buddhist Nuns Reconsidered". Ouyporn Khuankaew of WPG, Poolchawee Ruangwichatorn of TICD, and Raja Dharmapala of Dharmavedi Institute in Sri Lanka helped coordinated the activities. The participants were Buddhist nuns from Cambodia, Dharamsala and Ladakh in India, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Thailand. During February 20-28, the nuns visited nunneries and temples throughout Sri Lanka. In addition, a survey of the training needs of the nuns was also done. For more information, please see Ouyporn's article in the last issue of *Seeds of Peace* (Vol. 15, No.3).

March

INEB organized its (biannual) 9th INEB International Conference on "Towards the Culture of Non-violence" at Sarvodaya Sharmadana, Moratuwa, Sri Lanka during March 1-5. A new Executive Committee was selected and the first meeting of the new Executive Committee members was also held there on March 6-7. Martin Petrich, former INEB's Executive Secretary, finished his term.

April

Panadda Kosakarn, new Executive Secretary, started her job at the Secretariat.

May

Martin helped organize a seminar-cum-study tour on "A Holistic Approach to Healthcare for People Living with HIV/AIDS" during May 2-11 for those who are working in NGOs and governmental offices from Burma, Cambodia, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Thailand.

During May 13-16, Panadda was invited to Jakarta, Indonesia as part of a delegation team representing religious and ethnic groups from the Philippines, Burmese Karen, and Thailand. The mission was part of the campaign for peaceful democratization in Indonesia, and was initiated by FORUM ASIA, a local regional NGO on human rights. The delegation team visited with their Indonesian counterparts from various religious and ethnic groups to express solidarity and concern over the rampant violence that had occurred just prior to the first democratic election held in May after years of military dictatorship.

Kallayanee Techapatikul started working as Assistant Executive Secretary in the third week of May. She helped reconstruct our database.

During May 28-30, Panadda participated in the Environmental Peace Walk along the Sonkhla Lake in the south. This was initiated by the Sekhiya Dhamma Group, a group of progressive Thai Buddhist monks and nuns. The aim was to raise awareness of local communities and NGOs in the preservation of the lake environment.

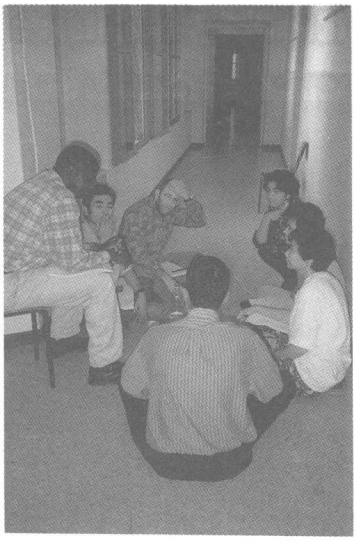
July-August

As a follow-up to the seminars, study tours, and survey of training needs for nuns, Ouyporn and Panadda Kosakarn conducted a total of five workshops in Ladakh and Dharamsala during July 16-August 28. In Ladakh, the training workshops were designed for both nuns and local non-governmental organization (NGO) workers and focused on leadership and community building skills. In addition, a workshop on project management was conducted for the Ladakh Nuns Association. In Dharamsala, one of the trainings addressed leadership and community building skills whereas the other was a basic training of social action trainers. Jill Jameson, an INEB Executive Committee member, also went to Ladakh to further the survey of training needs of the Ladakhi nuns in a few nunneries in August.

September-October

On September 13-14, Panadda participated in a regional meeting on Indonesia and East Timor organized by FORUM-ASIA. The aim of the meeting was to evaluate the results of the earlier mission to Indonesia. The participants, who were representatives from parliamentary, academic, student, labor union, religious and ethnic groups from Southeast Asian countries, also wrote a letter of demands on the East Timor issue. On September 15 we presented it to different embassies including those of Australia, China, European Union, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore as well as to the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

From September 27-October 16, Panadda was sponsored by the International University of



People's Institution for Peace (IUPIP) to attend a three-week training course on "People's diplomacy, nonviolence, economic rights, and ecological struggle" in Rovereto, Italy.

During September 29-October 2, WPG organized a "Basic feminist counseling for the Cambodian women trauma survivors" for nuns and laywomen from the Nuns Association and staff of an NGO called the Cambodian Women Crisis Center with Dr. Kathryn Norsworthy and Ouyporn as facilitators.

Kallayanee Techapatikul left her post as Assistant Executive Secretary due to her financial responsibilities.

November

We are planning the next Executive Committee meeting to be held in late January 2000. We hope to discuss and work out details on the following issues: vision statement; strategic plan for INEB/ direction, e.g. INEB Women and Gender Program, Ariya-Vinaya 2000 meeting, Training of social action trainers for South and Southeast Asia, John Seeds workshop and Dhamma Gaia Trust's interest in Buddhist environmental projects in Thailand, and relevant staff issues; finance and budget for year 2000; INEB operating procedure; ES job description; minimum guidelines or communications/participation standards for EC; affiliation; SOP and INEB's membership; and the next (10th) INEB International Conference 2001 and fund raising.

We are currently in dialogue with a few local NGOs on possibilities to cooperate on training workshops and other work.

At present, Think Sangha (TS) is working on its second issue of Think Sangha Journal. It will be based around the theme of the crisis of identity, culture and tradition in our globalized planet. Much of the issue will look at "engaged Buddhism" as a specific response to modernity and how Buddhism must make itself relevant to the 21st century. The work on this journal reflects efforts to organize meetings among TS members over the next year in various regions (Japan, USA, Europe, etc.) to explore more deeply the meaning and practice of engaged Buddhism. The Ariya Vinaya 2000 meeting scheduled to be held in Thailand next year is one of the meetings that Think Sangha plans to support and participate in. (See the article by Jon Watts in this issue).

Panadda Kosakarn

Errata:

The article titled "Breaking the Silence," *Seeds of Peace*, Vol.15 No.3 was authored by Ouyporn Khuankaew

Thai Buddhism: Women's Ordination or More Prostitution?

There are about 7,000 nuns registered under the Thai Nuns Institute, but the real figures are estimated to be over 10,000. More than 30 years ago the Thai Nuns Institute was established with the aim of helping to provide support for nuns, but because the nuns are not legally registered as ordained persons there was no budget allocated from any governmental agency to help the Thai Nuns Institute to execute its missions. Thus, the main support that the Thai Nuns Institute can offer is to organize a one-day annual meeting for its members. Even on this occasion most of the nuns from rural areas cannot afford to attend because they do not have money to pay for the transportation costs to come to the capital city.

The nuns have been neglected not only by government agencies but, also, by non-governmental organizations (NGO). Among the many hundreds of NGOs working on women's issues, so far only one is working for the nuns. The Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development (TICD) has been collaborating with the Thai Nun Institute to support the nuns for over ten years. Over the past 8 years this nunnery has been offering food, education and shelter to a few hundreds young girls who are mostly from poor rural communities.

The TICD nuns project was at a halt for several years because its only staff member working for the nuns has been terminally ill since 1994. In 1997, TICD found a new staff person whose main task is accounting but is willing to overwork in order to support the nuns. Thus, with the addition of this staff member, TICD has been working closely with the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) by including the nuns in various SEM training courses that were previously only offered to NGO staff and monks. The training courses offered include leadership and community building, conflict resolution, and training for social action trainers. Over the past three years, TICD has helped facilitate the inclusion of two nuns as members of the Sekhiyadhamma committee, a committee that represents a group of monks involved in various social works for many years. TICD has also cooperated with the Women and Gender Program of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) to create opportunities for Buddhist nuns from different traditions in South and Southeast Asia to come and share their life experiences.

As coordinator or the INEB Women and Gender Program, I have had a great deal of direct experience in facilitating the meeting and interactions of the nuns from the region. Initially, our main reason for working with the nuns was to empower them with more skills and encouragement. Additionally, we focus on helping nuns learn about structural violence in Thai society that is causing so much suffering to the environment and to various groups of people, especially women. After the nuns attended the training, we supported them in carrying out the social work in which they were already involved or in initiating new projects of interest to them. Our belief is that as the nuns' works become more visible society will recognize them and eventually their status will be improved. Our strategy also includes trying to work with the leaders of the Institute, knowing that working from the bottom up only is not enough to change the structure. This is very difficult; we managed only once to have a few of the nun leaders attend our team building workshop. At the workshop we helped them build alliances by organizing the workshop so that monks and nuns could learn from each other. In these workshops we created opportunities for the nuns to speak directly to the monks without fear and intimidation. The monks learned to listen to the nuns and were able to see that the nuns have potential and wisdom and strongly need the monks' support and respect. In addition to organizing the workshops for monks and nuns together, we have also attempted to encourage progressive feminist NGOs to include nuns as one of their target groups. This is a continuing challenge because of the obstacles from both TICD and the feminist groups.

After 3 years of learning and sometimes feeling like giving up we realized that working at the institutional level is not enough. The nuns are suppressed by the patriarchal system that pervades all spheres of their lives. The nuns with whom we have worked within the past three years have reported that, once they came out of the invisible zone and exposed themselves to different views and experiences provided by TICD, when they went back to their communities it became more

difficult to turn a blind eye and continue living within that suppressive environment. Because many of them do not receive or want to receive financial support from their families, their only support resides with the temple abbot or the chief nuns who in turn often control their lives and work. Knowledge and skills the nuns have learned from the training courses, such as collective decision making, working as a team, being assertive, and especially the participatory Dhamma teaching methods, tend to be discouraged and may be considered taboo in their local nunneries. One of the nuns said *"that even my fellow nuns said to me that I became a communist after I came to be involved with TICD"*. Therefore some of the chief nuns have not been willing to send their nuns to attend our training courses because they are afraid that the nuns would learn things that are against the rules and regulation set by the Institute. There is a concern that the nuns will bring harm to the organization and the image of the nuns as a whole if they do not submit to the oppressive structures and practices that directly contribute to their low status.

When these nuns decided to leave their temple or nunnery and move to a new community in order to live a different life and do social work, it is very difficult because of the patriarchal system that blocks them from doing their work. If they relocate to a new community just to live and do cooking and cleaning for the monks, the community will most likely welcome them. When a nun enters any community it is common that she will not receive shelter, money, food, respect and moral support as monks do. Also, if the abbot of any community within which a nun may live does not support her, it will be impossible for her to do any social work. Further, when a monk decides to support a nun in the community it means that, in all likelihood, she will be controlled by the monk in return. A nun from Kanchanaburi said, *"At the beginning three of us worked very hard to improve the situation of the kindergarten situated in a village close to the Burma border. The abbot asked us to work there because he said he himself did not know how to handle small kids. He supported us with everything and the school has improved a lot and the villagers were very pleased with our work. In the morning and evening three of us would go with a truck to pick up and send back the kids and by doing that we knew every kids' parents and their community. Later on the abbot was not so happy because the community started to be increasingly connected and they showed their appreciation of our work and dedication. Finally he said that he wanted the school back and will run it the way he used to do and we had to leave"*.

Another nun who just finished three months work with a hill tribe community in the North said, *"I was invited to go there because the monk in that village was impressed with the participatory Dhamma teaching method that I used with the students from Chiang Mai University. When we went there the villagers, especially the temple committee, who are all male, did not like our style of teaching Dhamma. They wanted us to live like the abbot whose main duty was to perform ceremonies in Pali and the rest of his time was spent on watching TV. Although our work went well and was responded to by the kids, who were surprised to know that there were other ways of teaching Dhamma and by the group of housewives, the main supporters of our work, we finally had to leave the community because the power of the temple committee and the abbot was so strong"*.

During November 2-6 this year we organized a five-day community-building training course for 20 nuns. More than half of the nuns are living independently from the monks. This is the first time that we have been able to involve the rural nuns, most of whom were not part of the Thai Nuns Institute. The nuns came from various nunneries and temples in the South, North, Northeast and central part of Thailand.

The top priority expressed by the nuns was to learn how to work and live harmoniously in the ordained community. They wanted to know what society thinks of them and expects from them and about approaches and strategies for working with community. Another one of their main goals was to learn and share their life stories with other nuns.

The five-day training course was designed to address the topics of working as a team, knowing oneself and others, self-empowerment, power and leadership, gender, and sharing life stories. The learning was accomplished through various experiential activities such as games, role-play, drawing, asking and listening to each other and sharing stories. Following is a discussion of the important topics and issues covered during the workshop.

Why We Became Nuns?

One chief nun from the North said, *"I realized that worldly life was not my path while I was in the highest peak of business success. After living in the temple for three months as Upasika my partner came to visit. He kneeled*

to beg me to go back home to take care of the children and our business. I decided that day to have my head shaved and become a nun because otherwise he would *have hope that I will one day go back. The most painful experience for me was the rejection I encountered from my children. For many years they refused to see me."* Another chief nun from a village in the northeastern province said, *"I became a nun because I experienced so much suffering from not being able to fulfill the endless desires in worldly life. The day I had my head shaved and wore the white robe I felt a very strong and deep transformation inside of me. The words that came out clearly at that moment was hearing myself saying that I will take the triple gems to give to my mother."*

For most of the workshop participants, young or old, what motivated them to become nuns was the desire to follow the Buddha's path, not the quest to escape from their heart-broken, jobless, or aimless lives. The nuns were shocked when they realized that inside the temple and nunnery there were many problems such as conflict and the abuse of power and control both by their leaders and among the community members themselves. Many of them expressed that they experienced so many difficulties that they became confused about Sila, Samadhi and Panya, the core principles to be practiced within the ordained community. This was especially challenging for many of them because they became nuns in order to take refuge in the triple gems, to be able to cultivate peace and inner strength to cope with their suffering.

The workshop participants reported that they also realized that other nuns come to live in the community for various reasons. Some of the nuns are trauma survivors. Many became nuns because they were old or sick and their families did not want to take care of them. Many young nuns said they entered the nunhood because their parents could not afford to send them to pursue higher education. At the same time, their parents did not want them to get involved with drugs or to get pregnant like their friends. They themselves did not want to end up in a factory or a brothel.

What Prevents Us From Disrobing?

Because Thai society does not have an ordination for women, there has been no training or financial support for the nuns for their Dhamma education and living once their heads were shaved and their clothes changed to white robes. The situation is more difficult for the nuns who live in the temple where there are both monks and nuns live together although they live in separate sections.

The nuns said it was difficult to become a nun, to stay in the nunhood and to leave the nunhood. Most of the nuns who took the path because of their faith in the Buddha's teaching had to go through many challenges because their families often do not support their choice. Some nuns said that their family members, especially the parents, used different strategies to force them to disrobe. These tactics included not talking to them, not giving them financial support, telling them that they bring shame to the family, coming to visit every month or two to ask them to go back home, or saying that that have no gratitude to parents because they do not take care of them like other children. One of the nuns said, *"the general public and government agencies do not support us because we do not belong to any categorized groups of women, either the lay or ordained ones. Being a nun, then, is worse than being a lay woman because we are not even marginalized; our beings are not perceived at all"*. For many of the nuns, these obstacles become the challenge that they used to prove their strength and determination to their families and to society. For them, leaving the nunhood would be their failure. Of course, for many nuns, once they receive support and are able to learn, practice and enjoy the fruits of Dhamma, this becomes a main reason for them to stay on.

One nun who stayed in the robe for 16 years had already decided to leave the nunhood once she finished the training. On the final day she admitted to the group, *"Originally, I just came to accompany my friend and did not intend to participate in the training. After the first day, I realized this was different than other training courses I ever attended before. Those training courses usually had a hundred nuns sitting in a row listening to one monk or two who do the talking. Sometimes there were Buddhist scholars who came to give a long lecture about Dhamma or other secular subjects. After sitting in a circle and sharing our stories like this, I felt very happy and empowered and this experience changed my mind. I will not disrobe. Yesterday evening I called the abbot and told him my feelings, which I had never told him before. I told him how I felt in our work having him sitting on a high alter telling everybody in the community what to do, even though I knew he meant well. I told him that I had changed my mind not to disrobe and he*

asked me what TICD training did to you that made you change your mind. I told him that here we learn how to listen and respect each other's feelings and ideas. He then told me that he realized that he himself has been putting himself far above from everybody. He said from now on he will come down half way and asked me and other community members to come up the other half way so that we can really work together."

But Where Do We Go From Here?

The nuns expressed a strong desire to get to know other nuns and share their struggle using the same learning style they experienced from the workshop. A 75-year-old nun from the South said, *"after being a nun for more than 10 years this was the first time I ever come to the training that was organized mainly for the nuns." (With tears streaming down her eyes she said) "This might be an answer to my pray that I finally was able to meet and share my stories with other fellow nuns. Before coming here I had always been worried about the future of Buddhism seeing the lack of women participation in it. Now having listened to the voices of commitment of the younger nuns I felt very hopeful for Buddhism. I think this should be the way for us nuns to live and practice Dhamma together".* The nuns who are not yet involved in social work said that they wanted to concentrate on both secular and Dhamma education. Because the public already has little or no respect for nuns it is important that they are well equipped with knowledge and confidence before they go out to help other people. An 18-year-old nun said, *"at the moment I could hardly help myself, how can I help other people?"*

Many nuns reported that if they had known about TICD earlier there would be much difference in their lives and especially in the lives of those young nuns in rural areas who had already disrobed as a result of seeing no future in the nunhood. They asked TICD to continue supporting them and extending its work to the nuns in the rural areas who are not reached by the Thai Nuns Institute. They indicated that there is a strong need to keep nurturing the friendship and network among them and to link the group to the existing network of nuns that has already been established through TICD over the past four years. The nuns expressed that, for them, it is important to build trust, friendship and respect for each other among the nuns' group. Many of them said, *"even among the nuns we do not respect each other, we always look up to monks for our spiritual teaching and support. We have to change our attitude because if we look down at ourselves how can we expect society to look up to us?"*

Thai Society: Women Ordination or More Prostitution?

There are about 200,000 monks in Thailand. The number of prostitutes in Thailand may be less or more than the number of monks depending on whose data we want to believe. The relatively equal number of monks and women prostitutes in Thailand suggests that monkhood and female prostitution may be closely related. We know that in every village or rural community temple is one, if not the primary, institution with extensive resources in its hand. We know that most monks are from rural areas and that many enter the monkhood in order to climb the social ladder or for other reasons than to learn and practice the Buddha's teachings or to help ease the suffering of sentient beings. Thus, Thai society has to tolerate endless corruption and scandals created by monks using the robes and the patriarchal system to consume the community's existing resources for their own power and comfort. This leads Thai Buddhism each day into a dark age where a glimpse of hope is almost impossible.

Most women who enter prostitution come from the same background as monks. Because they do not have another free choice like their fellow men they often only have a choice between a factory or a brothel. The feminist movement in Thailand has done an impressive job of helping to improve the status and the rights of rural women. But one of the core causes of violence against women has not yet been touched upon - the beliefs, attitudes, traditions and values that come out of a patriarchal society influenced by Buddhism itself.

Let us examine prostitution alone. For a few years, feminist organizations have not only had to deal with that problem in Thailand, but increasingly with the problem of trafficking women from our neighboring countries such as Burma, Laos, and Cambodia, all Buddhist countries. Why is that? Maybe this has something to do with the way Buddhism functions in this part of the region. Most of the time in the discussion of the local, national and international meetings of women organizations the root causes of prostitution have always been poverty, western mode of development and modernization, or the latest hit, consumerism. Hardly mentioned as a cause of prostitution is the lack

of leading roles for women in Buddhism.

Before the Beijing Women's meeting in 1995, we were contacted to give a talk on women and religion because the feminist groups did not know how to deal with the issue. One reason the feminist movement did not see the role of Buddhism as one of the root causes of violence against women (e.g. prostitution) was because many of us in the movement rejected institutionalized Buddhism as our own spiritual guide. We realized that Buddhism was monopolized by our fellow men and betrayed us by suppressing us instead of liberating us. We could hardly find a monk who could really guide us in our spiritual development. If we did find one it was still difficult to relate to them because of the strict rules of our tradition toward the relationship between women and monk. We had heard of female Buddhist teachers but there are far too few, and thus, they are not really accessible to us. Because most of us have not seen nuns as our spiritual guides we have no one and no where to turn to for our spiritual exploration and liberation.

Why There is a Need for Women's Ordination in Thailand?

For a moment, let us just envision that women can be ordained legally, have their own temple with the support from the public and the government. What would happen? For the poor young rural women this would become another choice in their lives for making their parents happy. They could decide on something other than being a wife and a mother or going to a factory or a brothel to earn money for the family. They could see that living an ordained life is another way to pay gratitude to their families and their community. Women who have experienced traumas such as rapes or domestic violence could have the spiritual support that they do not tend to receive from the monks. If men bowed to women and held them up as spiritual guides, perhaps they would realize that women are not just sexual objects or the only ones to raise the children and do the housework.

How This Vision Can Be Materialized?

Working with nuns, the general public and the feminist groups is not enough to build a movement for women's ordination in Thai society because the group that holds the most power in Buddhism is the monks. To say that the failure of Thai Buddhism resulted from the control of the state and consumerism is not yet a holistic analysis. The big scandal that has been in the headlines of Thai newspapers since January of last year has caused a small movement of NGOs, Buddhist scholars and progressive monks to work on a process for a reform of the Monk Act. Many believe this act is the core of the contemporary problem of abuses within Thai Buddhism. However, it is not enough to fix Thai Buddhism.

We know that monks and temples cannot survive without community support and that the main support has always been from women. If women's ordination is included in the movement half of the effort will be needed to improve the monk sangha alone. The movement to revive the Bhikkuni ordination in Sri Lanka, another Theravadha tradition, was much influenced by the support of the monks. We have to remember that in a monopoly system changing the ones who monopolize the system is not enough. Any social movement needs to look for and create other alternatives in society while looking for ways to repair the flaws within the existing system. Sometimes, it is more worthwhile to focus on creating alternatives than spending limited resources trying to fix the unfixable system. For example, in the successful movement to reduce chemical agricultural practices in the past ten years, the Thai NGOs did not focus their energy on stopping the government or the private sectors from promoting the use of toxic products. Their main work has always been to create and support various alternatives to compete with the mainstream.

It will not be easy for Thai monks to think or even to speak in public about the ordination of women. The main reason has always been that we have never had such a tradition in Thailand. If we look around at our society today there are hundreds of things that did not exist until the recent past. One of the great teachings of Buddhism is impermanence: that things always change according to causes and factors. Since our society has changed a great deal, it is likely that Thai Buddhism cannot survive and manifest the real essence of the Buddha's teachings if there is no movement to make Buddhism relevant to the realities of the present society. This movement will not be materialized if monks and progressive Buddhist male scholars are not aware of their own power, and are not willing to share their power by including women in the Sangha.

Ouyporn Khuankaew

Will Engaged Buddhism Have Meaning for the Modern World?

As our planet goes slamming into the 21st century, the speed and power of globalization is rapidly increasing the number of questions and concerns. There are so many special interests that it seems hopeless to confront them all. Electronic media is now one of the most critical aspects in our lives. It enables multi-national corporations to entrance a global consumer culture through advertising. However, it also enables previously unheard voices to make themselves known through internet homepages. As Johan Galtung has said, we are moving out of the industrial revolution into a symbolic revolution.

As witnessed by the indifference most Japanese have shown to one of largest nuclear accidents in history a mere 100 km from their capital, this symbolic revolution involves the way in which we have come to perceive the world. As the problems, the e-mails, and the choices mount in our global consumer societies, the easiest way to cope with them is to "change the channel", tune out, sound bite, spin it, alter the perception of it until it goes away. We have spin doctors that help to solve problems not by addressing them but by changing our perception of them. More and more, we struggle to know who and what to trust among the myriad different perceptions of what is happening around us. This struggle points to the crisis in world view that we are experiencing heading into the new millennium.

In this explosion of different perspectives, religious world views are finding a resurgence after centuries of silence during the secular modernist project. Modernity has its foundations in mechanistic science, corporate capitalism and the nation-state. It has attempted to replace old corrupt feudal structures based on cronyism and nepotism with a new world view based on rationality and individual rights. Like many a revolution gone bad, however, it too has become riven with corruption, with selfish individualism and an insatiable materialism.

Engaged Buddhism represents Buddhism's attempt to confront both the corruption of its old feudal past and of the desolate secularism of modernity. In the East, engaged Buddhism has moved with the spirit of anti-colonialism and the struggle to absorb and come to terms with the deepening advance of the modernism. In the West, engaged Buddhism has been a way for post-moderns to carry forward the two essential aspects of the social revolution of the sixties, spirituality and social struggle, against the banality of their own consumer cultures. This journey, however, has not been without its potholes. As with much of the world, Buddhism is also confronting its own identity crisis. Archaic premodern institutional structures are increasingly unable to meet modern Asians' needs. Meanwhile, new breeds of "activist" and "market" Buddhism challenge previous conceptions of orthodoxy. Western Buddhists, in general, have been called inauthentic for grafting Buddhist philosophy onto their secular and agnostic morality. Western engaged Buddhists, in particular, have been challenged for warping the worldly renunciating essence of Buddhist practice with their drive for this worldly salvation and social revolution. In Japan, the past fifteen years has marked a critical re-evaluation of Buddhism's role in supporting the violence of the modern nation state during WWII. This has led to a deeper investigation of how Buddhism has been used by the state since its introduction to Japan to promote a moral passivity to social control. In Thailand, the once untouchable orthodoxy of Theravada is being attacked on both sides: modernists claim it is feudal and out of date; radical conservatives, ironically, claim its teachings have been secularized and its structure altered to serve the state.

Many people, especially in the engaged Buddhist movement, see Buddhism as offering a challenging new response to the corruption of the modern nation-state and capitalist materialism. However, it is clear that modernism has offered a number of very legitimate challenges to corruption within the Buddhist tradition itself. In order for Buddhism to be a meaningful social force in the 21st century, it must not only confront the corruption of modernity but also its own long standing excesses. Without addressing how it has been challenged by modernity, Buddhism splinters into an historical artifact for tourists and a marketing tool for conspicuous consumption. Without an in-

depth and rigorous analysis of how the modern world view works, Buddhism will be unable to give a meaningful response to the many people looking to it for a new perspective. This dialogue with modernity is the present focus of the INEB Think Sangha Journal's upcoming issue. It contains a "buddhist" analysis of the history of modernity in the West and a challenge to perceiving the world in a different way. An Asian perspective on this history is also offered in an analysis of Thai Buddhism's attempt to come to terms with the West. Finally, there will be a section addressing the meaning and method of engaged Buddhism itself. Much of the intention for this issue is to stimulate dialogue of the above issues to support a number of regional and international meetings among engaged Buddhists in the coming year.

Jonathan Watts
INEB Think Sangha Coordinator

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Sulak Sivaraksa's Engagements: October-December 1999

5-12 October 1999
International Workshop on "Non Violent Struggles of the 20th Century and their lessons for the 21 st"
Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, India

11 November
World Faiths Development Dialogue Conference "Ways ahead for the Dialogue"
World Bank, Washington DC, USA

19-22 November
Indira Gandhi Conference "New Century: Whose Century? The evolution and interaction of technology, economy, polity and society"
New Delhi, India

22-27 November
World Conference on Religion and Peace's Seventh World Assembly, Amman, Jordan

28 November
Asia-Pacific Youth Forum'99 Public Symposium "Can Youth Make a Difference? — Asian Youth Initiatives and Transnational Civil Society"
Japan Cultural Center, Bangkok

2-4 December
The Retreat on Theological Encounter, Carnegie Center
New York, USA

5-8 December
The 1999 Parliament of the World's Religions
Cape Town, South Africa

9 December
World Festival of Sacred Music, Cape Town

15-16 December
Tree ordination ceremony, Dialogue in support of the Indigenous People of Northern Thailand on "Religions and Ecological Ethics"
Wat Luang, Chiang Mai

18 December
Forest Robes Ceremony
Mae Chaem, Chiang Mai

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15 January 2000
Grand Opening of the Dhamma Park Project; An artistic celebration of Dhamma, directed by Venetia Walkey
Lumphun, Siam

21 February 2000
Hearing in Crimnal Court regarding the Yadana pipeline case.

The Power of Peaceful Protest

Everything seems quiet at the Mae Moon ManYuen protest site. But there's been plenty happening since last March. Even though the authorities say the land near Pak Moon Dam in Ubon Ratchathani is occupied illegally, villagers will stand firm until their demands are met.

One of most important aspects of the villagers' struggle is their determination to adhere to the principle of non-violence, according to Petch Kanchantha, a young leader of people affected by the Huay Laha Dam project. "We'll stay until the government looks into our problems. We fight peacefully. We don't block roads or banks of burn buildings," she said.



Villagers offer alms to monks in Mae Moon Man Yuen village. Behind them is the Monument of the Poor, erected in memory of those who died in past protests.

Compensation isn't the protesters' only goal; they will settle for nothing less than the full revival of the villagers' livelihood. One of the more vocal leaders of the Pak Moon Dam protest, Pranee Nonchan, demanded that the government restore the environment to its former condition. "We want subsequent generations to enjoy natural resources to sustain their lives. And we want state agencies and the private sector to admit us to the decision-making process on any projects which concern us."

However Boontham Pumiviengsri, the Sirindhorn Dam division head who also oversees the Pak Moon dam, is one of those who claim that the protesters have illegally occupied the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand's (EGAT) land. Furthermore, he says, state agencies can't be expected to solve all the problems, many of which don't concern them directly. "For example, some villagers come from Chaiyaphum but provincial officials from Ubon can only look into local problems. It is too time-consuming to solve all the problems," he said.

But the villagers are ready to accept the consequences of their actions, according to Mrs Pranee. "We will accept whatever happens to us," she said, "But we hope they (the authorities) will not use violence to crack down on us."

Protesters also aim to stop projects such as the Pong Khun Phet Dam and demand that the government revise the development policy, including recognizing the people's right to participate in any project which concerns them. Protesters also hope that civil disobedience will help the public at large to understand about their hardships, according to Phra Pichet, a monk at the village. "We're not using violence to attract public attention. Rather, we're using the civil disobedience principle to underline how our hardships are caused by government projects and we want the government to look into the problems."

Dr Chaiwat Sata-Anand, director of the Peace Information Centre, Thammasart University, says that the non-violence method based on the theories of Gandhi and Gene Sharp is not always legal. Nevertheless, he accepts that it may sometimes be necessary in cases where the law fails to provide justice for the people. "If the law fails to provide people with justice, people have to disobey it even if their actions can be seen as undermining the state," he said.

The method adopted by the Forum of the Poor is in effect the refusal to cooperate with the state. Their stance is clearly manifested in the way they help repair roads in nearby villages. They did not resort to violence to get their point across.

According to Dr Chaiwat, non-violence theory is conceptualized as a program to undermine power, especially state power. A history of non-violence action is one of mistrust of the state, resulting in challenges to its authority. The major inspiration comes from historic figures such as Gandhi, Tolstoy, and Thoreau, in short, all individuals with strong anarchistic inclinations.

Some examples of successful non-violent protests include the cases of Badsha Khan; the civil rights campaign of Martin Luther King in the United States; the anti-Vietnam war movement; the Plaza de Mayo mothers against the military in Argentina; and the display of people's power in the Philippines.

From Dr Chaiwat's point of view, the non-violence concept applied by the Forum of the Poor is an attempt to organize an alternative community which has parallel structures to those of the state. It is a way of relating to the public that the law has no justice for them. "But if they want to use civil disobedience, villagers must accept the consequences, because they are under the structures of the state," he says, "The power of the state lies in its abstract quality and artificiality as much as its concrete attributes and functions. Among other things, it is charged with the task of maintaining the existing social order. This task usually clashes directly with non-violent protagonists who undertake peaceful protests or sit-ins to call attention to their grievances, which in turn delegitimises the existing political order so that social change can eventually take place."

However, he warned that those who carry out non-violent actions are usually viewed by state agencies as disruptive and needing to be disciplined and even punished. "Moreover, the state can maintain social order because it holds a monopoly on authoritatively binding rule-making, backed by a monopoly on the means of physical enforcement."

But state agencies can also learn about non-violence as a way to handle the non-violent actions of the people says the peace advocator. "All human beings have the potential to learn and despite structural conditions, people can be transformed."

Supara Janchitfah

Demands of the people whose livelihoods have been affected by dams and other government projects:

1. **Pak Moon Dam - 15 rai for each affected family and strict government measures to prevent the spread of disease carrying parasites in the river.**
2. **Sirindhorn Dam - compensation for inundated land and properties.**
3. **Lam Khan Choo Dam - land compensation and irrigation services.**
4. **Huay Phai Dam - compensation for inundated properties.**
5. **Lam Dom Yai Dam - cancellation of the project.**
6. **Huay Laha Dam - compensation for inundated land.**
7. **Pong Khun Phet Dam - cancellation of the project.**
8. **Four forest encroachment areas in Ubon Ratchathani - clearer boundary definitions and issuance of official land title deeds.**
9. **Commercial development project at the Chong Mek border point - vendors and local residents want to remain on original plots.**

A Pureland Polluted:
Buddhist Reflections on the Global Eco-crisis

Thirty years ago, the earth was photographed from afar. The image of a lone blue-green orb suspended in a black abyss of space has become a reminder to humanity that life is very vulnerable. Since this image of our earth entered our consciousness, we have been able to reflect upon the relationship of actions to our environment. Now that we have a distanced perspective of our home, we are able to recognize the severity of our actions and investigate their causes.

As we turn towards a solution to our present ecological crisis, Buddhism is revealing itself to the western world as an inner science of mind with the capacity to examine causality and a willingness to experiment. The Buddha was a seeker, he was a spiritual scientist who at the age of twenty-nine dedicated his life to examining the world within his self. After six years of self-experimentation and inner-investigation, he sat beneath a tree in northern India and discovered the nature of suffering and a path that leads to it's cessation.

One predicament that the Buddha's discovery can help us understand and transform is our neurotic perception of selfhood. Since the dawning of modernity, the western emphasis on the individual self, the ego-centered worldview, has supported the development of a culture of consumers. This attitude and structure based on it have contributed tremendously to the destruction of our environment. As a consequence, the modern ideal of a free individual with an absolute right to consume in a world of putatively infinite resources must be challenged.

If we peek behind the curtains of our selves, we may see that we are ingeniously devious. Our idea or our selves as isolated individuals has engineered an entire socio-economic system to exploit and reinforce the delusion that we can satisfy ourselves from something else for example, that shopping is a way to happiness. We have created a society where self-fulfillment is a right, where greed is celebrated as a noble motivation, and where exploitation and over-consumption are irresistible. In our search for unlimited pleasure and affluence in a world of limited resources, we have become delusional - if not - suicidal.

Before we consume ourselves with our desires, perhaps we can search for alternative solutions to self-fulfillment. In our search for a new sense of self, we find that Buddhism offers a revolutionary vision of self-fulfillment that may prove valuable to our selves and world. Since the enlightenment of the Buddha two thousand five hundred years ago, the Buddhist tradition has recognized the significance of the individual's pursuit for happiness. If we examine the social dynamics of Buddhist civilizations, we find that those societies were developed and sustained by the cultivation of individuals. By experimenting with Buddha's teachings, we can learn how self-transformation is a catalyst for social and ecological transformation.

Buddha's teachings begin with awareness. We must observe. By observing our thoughts and feelings as they arise and fade, we will begin to recognize the conflicts and aggravations as well as the epiphanies within. Once we become aware of the movements of our mind, we begin to search for the source of thoughts and emotions. The Buddha taught that there are causes for peace and dissatisfaction and that these causes are found within our minds. He encouraged his disciples to investigate and analyze the origin and destination of thoughts. Where do they come from? Where do they go? By observing the mind, it becomes apparent that thoughts are motivated by previous thoughts. As we investigate the effects of our thoughts and actions, we motive that unwholesome actions cause unwholesome feelings. The logical solution to cease inner unrest and dissatisfaction is to cease unwholesome action.

The Buddhist solution to our current global ecological crisis is simple: observe your mind. Buddha proposed that the mind is the forerunner of all actions and if we wish to change the effects of our actions on our environment, we must change our minds. By becoming conscious of ourselves, we begin to recognize that peace and happiness depend more on the mind than matter, we begin to recognize that humanity's pursuit of an external solution to internal dissatisfaction has only lead to ecological destruction and ecological confusion. If we want to purify the pollution in our environment, we must purify the

pollution within our selves.

Now, more than any other time in human history, we are confronted with the effects of our previous actions and are faced with the decision to continue along a path of violence and destruction or to alter our course. The realization that we as individuals have the power to create or destroy our world is an empowering vision that provides us with a critical choice. Our present ecological crisis depends on the self-transformation of individuals and social institutions. At this pivotal period of human evolution we are given the opportunity to pursue our habits of consumption or to become more self-critical and insightful in order preserve life on earth.

Michael Sheehy

Buddhism with a small 'b'

***Sixty-six-year old** Arjan Sulak Sivaraksa is recognized world over for fusing the metaphysics of Buddhism with hands-on social activism. The prominent Thai social critic and activist who has been exiled for his bold writing and imprisoned for criticizing the king is trying to gather the disillusioned poor of Thailand and help them access their once rich heritage, culturally as well as materially through a non-violent and "mindful" process. He spoke to* **Sudhamahi Regunathan**.

In what way are you using Buddhism as the tool to bring about social change?

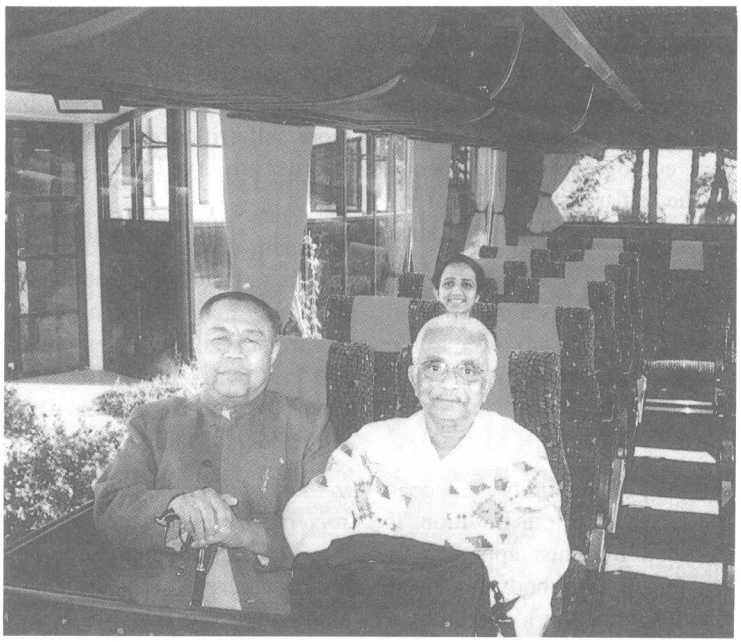
I would not use the term Buddhist religion. I would rather say the teachings of the Buddha or socially engaged Buddhism. Buddhism, as practiced in most Asian countries today serves mainly to legitimize dictatorial regimes and multinational corporations. If we Buddhists want to redirect our energies towards enlightenment and universal love, we should begin by spelling Buddhism with a small 'b'. Buddhism with a small 'b' means concentrating on the message of the Buddha and paying less attention to myth, culture and ceremony. We must refrain from focusing on the limiting egocentric elements of our tradition. It is not a Buddhist approach to say that if everybody practiced Buddhism the world would be a better place. Our efforts to preserve Buddhism or a Buddhist society may fail, or they may succeed. The outcome is irrelevant. Our goal is to develop human beings with inner strength and moral courage to begin restructuring the collective consciousness of society. This is socially engaged Buddhism: earlier Buddhism operated in small communities or sangha, they did not even know of the outside world. Today we have to extend the teachings and precepts of Buddhism to relate to the world. According to the Buddha's teachings, whatever we do we must have the seeds of peace within. Today our leaders and policy makers, in fact all of us have seeds of greed, hatred and illusions, and so our acts are not in the right direction. You have to learn to love yourself properly, not in the egoistic manner. Then there will be no enemy. The only enemy is within: of greed, hatred and illusion and consumerism personifies these feelings.

You seem to identify consumerism as the main ill. Is it realistic to think of disentangling modern society from consumerism?

The new demonic religion is consumerism. Eat, drink and enjoy life. We live by, 'I buy therefore I am'. One is conditioned to think that without consumer goods, one is nobody. But the Buddha said I breathe therefore I am. The basis of the Buddhist view of life is expressed in the first of the four noble truths-that all life includes suffering. Consumerism hopes to avoid suffering, but Buddhism would say that is turning away from the truth. We might think: Maybe a car is better than our legs, a bigger house is better than simpler living. In this way we become attracted to buying. The consequence of ignorance: the rich do not realize that their lifestyle depends on depriving the poor. So, we must confront suffering.

Do you really think anybody will volunteer to suffer, even if it is for a better society tomorrow?

Eighty per cent of the people in Asia are suffering anyway. Do you know that the America which most people think is the model country, in that country 60 per cent of the blacks are having a lifestyle worse than the people of Bangladesh. I am quoting the BBC when I say that the children



in England are worse off today than they were in the days of Charles Dickens. We have so many poor people. I think there is no greater form of violence than poverty. Though people do not indulge in open violence, I want to make everybody aware that their lifestyle itself is a form of stealing. It is structural violence for the rich to live lavish and wasteful lifestyle that destroys the natural resources which makes the gap between the rich and the poor wider.

What do you mean by structural violence?

Many people are slowly starving, while others eat too much. Most people in Thailand follow the Buddhist precepts only a general way and do not realize how they are implicated in an unethical system. The first precept of the Buddha's teaching is that I vow to abstain from taking life. We have to use this to shape a politically just and merciful world. The second precept is I vow to abstain from stealing. Stealing underlies all the collective drives for economic resources and political power. The third precept is the I refrain from sexual misconduct. All the discrimination against women should be corrected by extending this precept. I vow to abstain from false speech refers to the media, particularly advertising and the politicians. I vow to refrain from intoxicants raises questions on why the Third World farmers grow heroin, coca and so on.

Do you not think you are more idealistic than realistic?

No. When Gandhi could free a nation, did anybody think it was possible. Did anybody think the USSR would ever break up? Similarly I think we can bring about a change in the people. We may not be able to do away with consumerism but we can definitely develop Alternatives to Consumerism. In my country I am very hopeful. Our people have lost everything including having sold their daughters to prostitution. Today these very people are realizing that they have nothing. They are eager to get back a normal happy life. They have formed a Forum of the Poor with half a million membership. They come to us for guidance. We have taught them to protest against injustice from the government, albeit peacefully. We run a Spirit in Education Movement wherein we just bring about a link between the heart and the head. We teach them to breathe properly as the beginning. The poor have to be empowered while the middle class who only care about their and their families' comforts have to be educated. We teach them about the dangers of chemical fertilizers, the manner in which advertisements are made and the lies they tell and also the value of traditional medicines. There is no need to wait for English medicines, our traditional ones work just as well.

Many spiritual persons have got together and we have two co-operatives in our country, a rice bank and a buffalo bank. All extra rice is deposited at the temple and distributed to the poor to overcome rice shortage. The temple also keeps the extra buffaloes and gives their offspring to those who could not afford to buy one. The only condition is that the buffalo should be treated kindly and that 50 per cent of its offspring should come back to the temple. Along with all this, meditation is also practiced, so it is a holistic approach to development.

Sudhamahi Regunathan

The Times of India
16 September 1999

Spirit in Education Movement Course Prospectus 1999-2000

666 Chareon Nakorn Road, Klongsan, Bangkok, Siam (Thailand)
Tel. 438-9331-2 Fax. 860-1277
email sem_edu@ksc.th.com

Date/time	Trainers	Title/Place	Fee
22-24 November 1999	Phra Santikaro Benjamin C. Bagodion	Workshop **"Strategic Planning for NGO Workers"** Sathien Dhamma Sathan, Bangkok	2,600 Bt.
28 November 1999 (13.30-18.30)	Elizabeth Robert Elias Amidon	**The Fifth Annual Public Lecture** **The Dhamma of Diversity:** **Empowering Local and Tribal** **Cultures in the 21st Century** Suan Ngeun Mee Ma, Klong San, Bangkok	Donation
7-17 December 1999	Elias Amidon Pracha Hutanuwatr	Workshop **"Interfaith Solidarity Forest Walk"** Chiang Mai	3,900 Bt.
24-26 December 1999	Team	Workshop **"Simplicity Living"**	2,000 Bt.
10-12 January 2000	John McConnell	Workshop **"Buddhist Approach** **to Conflict Resolution"** **For Belligerent Parties** at Ashram Wong Sanit, Nakorn Nayok	2,000 Bt.
13-14 January 2000	John McConnell	Workshop **"Buddhist Approach** **to Conflict Resolution"** **: For Mediators** at Ashram Wong Sanit, Nakorn Nayok	1,300 Bt.
15-17 January 2000	John McConnell Supaporn Pongpruk	Workshop **"Dhamma and Healing"** at Ashram Wong Sanit, Nakorn Nayok	2,000 Bt.
16 January 2000	Sulak Sivaraksa Sirichai Narumitrekhakarn	Study Trip **Old Paths of Bangkok**	500 Bt.
24-28 March 2000	Team	Cultural Workshop **"Weaving and Natural Dying :** **Study with Indigenous People"** Samearng, Chiang Mai	Will inform
6-8 April 2000	Team	Lecture on **"Art of Comprehending"** at Ashram Wong Sanit, Nakorn Nayok	Will inform
17-18 June 2000	John Seed	Workshop **"Council of All Beings"** at Ashram Wong Sanit, Nakorn Nayok	1,300 Bt.
15-25 July 2000	Team	International Conference **Ariya-Vinaya** Buddha Mandalasala, Nakorn Pathom	Invitation only

The Sem Pringpuangkeow Annual Lecture 1999

November 28, Suan Nguen Mee Ma, Klong San, Bangkok

THE DHARMA OF DIVERSITY: Empowering Local and Tribal Cultures in the 21st Century

Diversity is evolution's greatest legacy. We are born into a world of millions of distinct species, just as we are born into a world of thousands of diverse cultures. As intelligent members of the community of life we have a responsibility to recognize and learn from this great web of diversity and to see that it continues to flourish.

Yet why do so many of us have difficulty getting along with people who are different from us? Why is there so much prejudice throughout the world? What gives prejudice such power that we so often go to war over it?

Among those often targeted by prejudice are the world's indigenous and tribal peoples. During the past five centuries thousands of tribal groups around the world have been systematically destroyed by those eager to control their land's treasures. To justify these actions the indigenous inhabitants are looked upon as primitive, even sub-human.

In this lecture Elias Amidon and Dr. Elizabeth Roberts will explore the importance of maintaining cultural diversity in our time. They will look specifically at the struggles of tribal peoples in Thailand for land rights and cultural survival. Drawing on their varied experiences from around the world they will describe an interfaith, spiritual practice that helps promote cultural and personal tolerance.

Elias Amidon and Dr. Elizabeth Roberts are teachers, activists and writers. They teach in the graduate program of Environmental Leadership at Naropa University, a Buddhist-inspired university in the United States. Their activist work has taken them to Africa, Europe, throughout the U.S., and Southeast Asia. They have been teaching with SEM for the past five years. They are editors of the best-selling books: *Earth Prayers and Prayers for a Thousand Years.* (Harper Collins, San Francisco).

Social Venture Network Awards in 1999

Social Venture Network have elected four persons to receive the 1999 SVN Awards.

Ms. Vanida Tantthiwitayapitak has been working to improve the wellbeing of the poor and disenfranchised and to make their voices and participation count in mainstream politics. And also she is an important advocate of environmental conservation and sustainable development. She is a leading member of the Assembly of the Poor.

Mr.Charan Distha-apichai has been at the forefront of grassroots empowerment movements for the past 30 years. Applying a holistic approach, he seeks to empower individuals and communities, especially the poor, socially, politically, and economically. He once joined the Socialist Party of Thailand, working closely with many non-governmental organizations dealing with democracy and human rights. He is an educator, disseminating knowledge and progressive ideas to the public. He was arrested in Burma last year.

Mr. Kamron Gunatilaka, as a playwright and director, has been creatively and responsibly representing important social, economic, and political issues in Thai society for over 20 years. He wrote and produced *The 1932 Revolutionist*, a play about the formative years of Thai democracy, a period of twists and turns. And he directed a documentary on child labor in Thailand. This documentary eventually won the Danube Awards from UNESCO.

Mr. Sampas Pungpradist has been staunchly and courageously promoting democracy, justice, human rights and liberty despite the tremendous personal risks and costs it entailed for more than four decades. During the military dictatorship, he was arrested many times. He empowers and encourages the poor to reclaim their legitimate rights and privileges.

Montessori Seminar at Moo Baan Dek

On the 26th October to the 3rd November in 1999 a seminar on Montessori educational methods was held at Moo Baan Dek school in Kanchanaburi, Thailand. Moo Baan Dek holds a unique position in Thailand as an alternative school. It is a place where children from very difficult backgrounds can receive not only academic tuition, but also learn traditional crafts in an atmosphere of security and love. Principal Rajani Dhongchai became interested in the Montessori method after talking to an English teacher who stayed at Moo Baan Dek early in 1999. She offered to sponsor the seminar and thus provided the resources and contacts, in particular a Mrs. Beth Alcorn, a Montessori trainer of some renown. What appealed deeply to Rajani's sense of purpose was the idea of children learning via their innate desire to discover their world, and the emphasis on respect that the teacher student relationship has within the Montessori curriculum.

From her opening statement of "I have worked for many years in the state educational system in Australia, but have seen nothing that compares with the Montessori method," to her notable classroom presence and skills, it was obvious Mrs. Beth Alcorn knew what she was talking about as an educator of young minds. A native of Australia, Beth gained her Montessori diploma in 1977, and subsequently worked as a teacher and founded a Montessori association dedicated to the furthering of Montessori principles. She eventually founded her own school in Australia in order to continue bringing a good education to children. Beth was insistent that Dr. Maria Montessori had made her observations from children before formulating any theories. The theories work on the basis of the natural learning inclination of a young child, that the child should produce the theory and not vice versa. This is difficult to argue against, certainly in the short time since she has left I have seen the children in the kindergarten here playing the finger manipulation activities with the utmost enthusiasm. Bringing rowdy dysfunctional 5 year olds to a picture in concentration, is an impressive feat.

Over the 8 days the teachers at Moo Baan Dek became deeply engrossed in the ideas and practices, playing like grown up children with the toys, puzzles and materials, there was a good atmosphere that was at times serious and others humorous. The seminar followed the patterns of a child's emotional and physical development, and the points at which a child can be said to have a "sensitive period" of development. These are basically the growth stages when a child has the most aptitude to learn various intellectual and physical skills. Starting with physical development, the necessity of a healthy body is underlined. This is something that the teachers of Moo Baan Dek know about for they frequently come into contact with malnourished, physically and mentally abused children that need the most basic of human requirements before they can proceed to develop any further. Secondly the emotional development of children is considered. In relation to the normalization of a child at Moo Baan Dek, it is useful to know techniques that can promote acceptable social norms when children have been exposed to the worst excesses of human nature. The 'language of encouragement' is a language all too lacking in many aspects of the world today, one feels it is too easily overlooked both in the home and at places of learning. When I asked Moo Baan Dek Principal Rajani if she could express her philosophy in a sentence she told me that she tried to "Focus on a child's happiness." It is a statement that speaks for itself and one that belongs in the 'language of encouragement' of Montessori schooling methods. It remains to be seen how well the Montessori integrates into the culture of Moo Baan Dek, but as is written above the signs are promising. What is personally exciting for me is that the ironic situation whereby Maria Montessori developed her system from the poor disadvantaged kids of Rome, yet it has become almost exclusively the domain of rich middle class children. The Montessori method is now finally coming home to the poor disadvantaged kids of a country like Thailand.

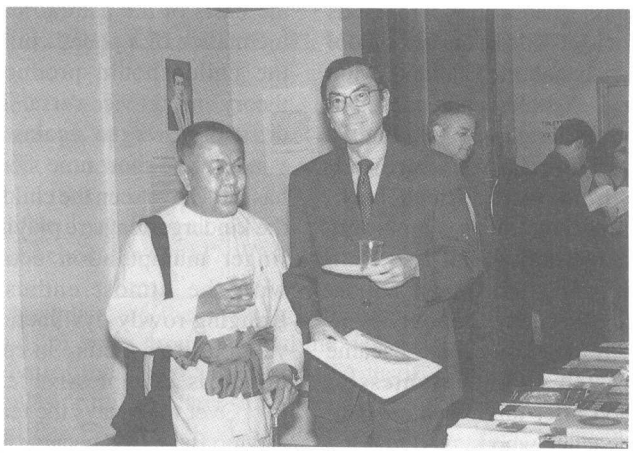
After 8 days that covered the entire psyche of the developing child, a sphere that included sense, environment, practical applications and philosophy, the seminar came to a halt. On the last evening there was the ceremony familiar to and most impressive of Thai friendliness, the tying of string around the wrists of visitors to soothe their spirits, accompanied by dancing and music. Moo Baan Dek moves on, as does Mrs. Beth Alcorn, but what is sure is they have touched each other and hopefully provided spiritual nourishment for each other in the often very difficult work of encouraging young people to become happily adjusted adults.

Danny Campbell.

Comments by Swedish Newspapers on the Performance of *The 1932 Revolutionist*

The Spirit in Education Movement coordinated the Crescent Moon theater group of Bangkok to travel to Europe and present the play about Pridi Banomyong.

From *Expressen*, 10 July 1999



The scene is totally black except for six women and five men, all dressed in gray cotton stretch. The shirt of the sixth man is white. He acts the part of Pridi Banomyong, the father of democracy in Thailand.

The Thai group, The Crescent Moon Theater, is giving a guest performance in Stockholm with the play, *The 1932 Revolutionist* written by Kamron Gunatilaka. This play is about the 20th century history of Thailand, and about the forefather of Thai democracy Pridi Banomyong (1900-1983). The play is given in the Thai language, and the script is also available in the English language.

Pridi Banomyong was influenced by the democratic theories and discussions, which abounded during his time studying law in Paris. Back in Siam he led the revolution i.e. the coup d'etat against the absolute monarchy on 24 June 1932. Since then Thailand has undergone more than fifteen coup d'etats many of those being reviewed in the play. Pridi Banomyong laid the groundstone for the democratic constitution of Thailand and became premier in 1946. He was however soon pushed out of power and went into exile. It was in exile in Paris that he died in 1983. That the play is a bit glorifying and has a character of national romanticism is inevitable.

The revolution, the coups d'etat, evil, hasty death, suddenly flaring hostility-all acted with a precise and beautiful choreography. The actors move almost 'graphically' over the scene. Sometimes they seem to be united in just one body. Since my knowledge of Thai is limited I was very grateful for the precise and explanatory movements.

A large part of the play is interpreted through the choir, and not much exchange of words is used. The narrative method as well as the artistic style is very much different from contemporary western theater. My feeling is that the play is out of date, strange and unfamiliar. Maybe that is why I found the play so extraordinarily interesting and enjoyable.

Clara Block Hane,

From the Swedish evening newspaper 'AFTONBLADET'/

'Social Class Battle in the Thai Way'

A short guest performance on the Boulevardteatern in Stockholm by the Thai group, the Crescent Moon Theatre, 'reminds us about the difficulty or even impossibility of interpreting other culture' especially their forms of art. The play *The Revolutionist 1932* is given, a kind of herosaga about Pridi Banomyong, the foremost 'fighter' for Thai democracy. During the thirties, he led a successful coup d'etat.

The Crescent Moon Theatre has been active since the beginning of the 1970s. The group represents a non-traditional form of theatre; for example influence and inspiration have been taken from Brecht. The black scene lacks all kind of stage properties except for three ling 'wedges', and the actors movements render a strong suggestive force, and I imagine that spectators well versed in traditional Thai theatre will be stunned by the seriousness and asceticism in this performance.

Claes Wallin

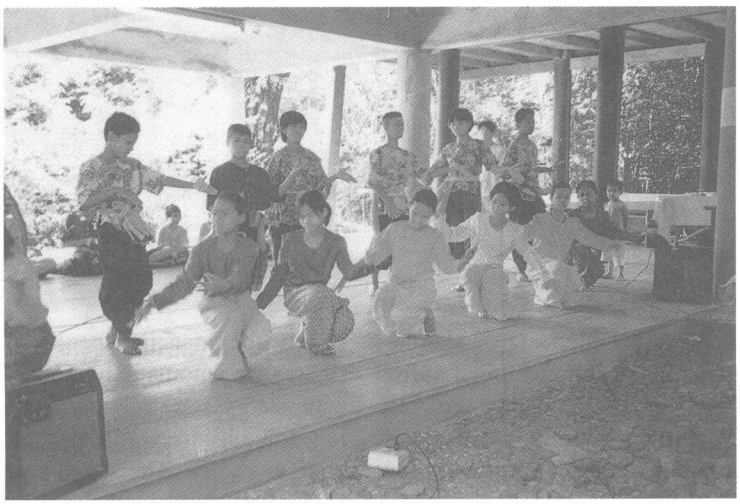
Unauthorized translation
by Jan Wihlborg

Toward a Culture of Peace

and the Growing Alternative Education Movement:

International Seminar at Moo Ban Dek, Kanchanaburi, Thailand

A hilarious atmosphere surrounded traditional Thai musician, storyteller, and former Buddhist monk Pairoj during Saturday's cultural evening at Moo Ban Dek, Children's Village near Kanchanaburi even as a sudden thunder storm and heavy rains caused a complete electricity breakdown. Improvised candle light revealed the spiritual 'electricity' of the some 74 people gathered for the international seminar "Curriculum Development in Alternative Education", 10-14 November 1999. Electricity was certainly in the air. It was created by the diverse and energetic performances and people: Pairoj playing the flute and reciting ancient Buddhist 'Jataka' stories; Thai group dances from many regions of the country as well as from neighboring Cambodia; John and Sheba performing African dances and songs from Kenya; and the group of American participants performing turbulent dances from Virginia, USA. One of the most moving performances was the flower offering dance in Orissa style by Sangeeta Mukerji from India.

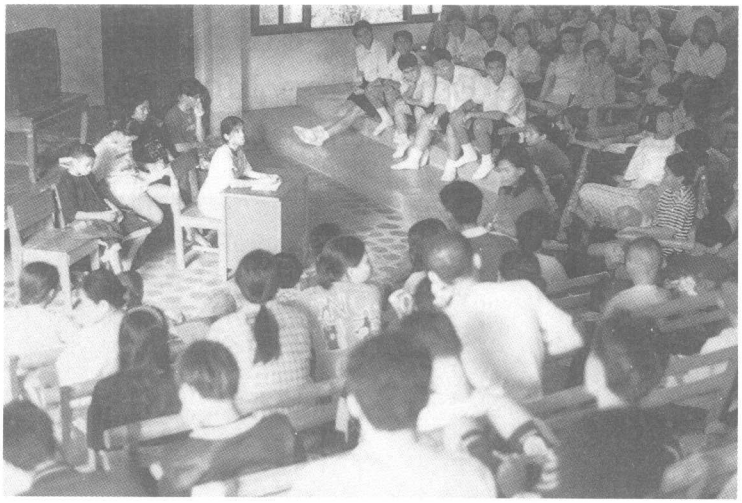


The 5-day seminar as a whole was permeated with joy, artistic expression, meditation, yoga and inter-change of exciting experiences in education. The children and teachers of Moo Ban Dek played a central role, representing Thai hospitality and culture: both traditional and contemporary. The most advanced event of the international seminar was a public session of the Moo Ban Dek *'School Parliament'* where children practice democracy and responsibility for community culture.

What is "Alternative Education" and why is it important? Governments dominate mainstream public education while private education is often geared for commercial interest. Both consolidate the *status quo* of our over-economicized cultures. Alternative education is built around the centrality of the child as an evolving, unique person, in the framework of community culture. There are an increasing number of schools and small scale initiatives experimenting with alternative, human centered, independent approaches to education as alternatives to the mainstream. These ventures not only encompass childhood but also adult education and the role of the elderly. Together this world-wide cluster of alternative education initiatives grows into a social movement. The Alternative Education movement is based on diversity and a common impetus to support children and adults in meeting their inner 'challenge' to be free and transform our world.

The international seminar in Moo Ban Dek consisted of presentations, workshops and a range of free exchanges. The key presentation was given by John B. Thomson, former head of the Waldorf/Steiner Teachers Training at Emerson College (U.K.) and author of 'Natural Childhood'. John pointed at the waves of educational reform both in Asia (e.g. Tagore, Vivekananda, Gandhi) and Europe (e.g. Montessori, Rudolf Steiner, Freinet, A.S. Neill) in the first half of the 20th century. They all have in common the centrality of this 'challenge' to be free, and responsible for the way we manage our world. It appeared to be very difficult to find the right word for this intrinsic quality, destination, Karma or 'human potential' *to be free and responsible*. Maybe it is better not to try to pin down this mysterious driving force, but rather to nurture it.

In the second half of the 20th



century the pioneers of alternatives in education formed a distinctive pattern, while a growing variety of contemporary and individual local initiatives add to the 'critical mass' needed to become a broader movement.

Nevertheless, as Phipob Dhongchai pointed out in his presentation, Alternative Education is not mentioned as such in the new Education Act of B.E. 2542 which emerged in Thailand from the recent reform of the Constitution. Thanks to the National Education Commission, the full text of the Education Act was available for all seminar participants and Phipob illustrated his comments to the Act with great clarity. The Act of B.E. 2542 provides many venues for educational reform and maybe it is a blessing in disguise that Alternative Education is not defined as a restricted area. Formal, non-formal and informal education; each contains areas where alternative approaches can be developed and realized. Whether the government of Thailand will be genuinely impartial and finance mainstream and alternatives alike will only become clear after further negotiations. An Alliance for Alternative Education was formed in Thailand for that reason. A key issue is the financing "per head" rather than automatic funding of compulsory state schools, leaving the children and parents without choice. The actual case of Thailand can become of great importance for other Asian countries. Researches done in Korea, Japan and Thailand as reported by prominent seminar participants from these countries reveal an omnipresent and deep "crisis in the classroom". Together with the economic crisis in Asia and its causes, this points at a fundamental need for cultural transformation. This is equally true for over-industrialized and protected Europe and the USA.

Educational innovators within the mainstream and those who are active in alternative streams should work hand in hand. This appeared to be a strong consensus among the seminar participants. Of course it is necessary to clarify differences and sometimes sharply distinguish principles and practices of alternative education from the mainstream. However, this should not lead to counter-productive dualism. Mainstream and alternatives can learn from each other. The task of the government to guarantee 'education for all' is beyond dispute. However, discriminatory legislation and preferential financial instrumentation in favor of state education impose serious threats against the potential creativity and international solidarity among initiators of educational reform. In order to be able to respond to the educational crisis in Asia in the global context effectively, creativity and solidarity are to be released at a significant scale.

The vision to work together with fresh vigor on a *"Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World"* has been successfully proposed to the United Nations in a common effort of all Nobel Peace Laureates. Thus has been declared a UN Decade for 2001-2011, the first ten years of the new millennium. Dr. Mark Tamthai, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University presented his view on the envisaged "Culture of Peace" from his vast experiences as conflict mediator, scientist as well sportsman and trainer. His straightforward approach to non-violence gave an optimistic background for a possible transformation from competition as a motivating force to a more cooperative sense of 'striving for perfection' in education. A "Culture of Peace" however cannot be brought about by the present generation. The children of the world should be carefully educated today as free and responsible persons in order to be able to realize the vision of a non-violent world in the future. The development of Peace Education is only in its very initial stages, but at the same time has become central in the educational policies of many government bodies and agencies in Thailand. This poses an enormous actual challenge to educational innovators and the Alternative Education movement.

John B. Thomson stressed in his second presentation how important it is to understand the development of the child as an organic process. In the first seven years the child is driven by will, located in the guts and limbs. From 7 to 14 it develops heart quality by exploring relationships and community culture. From 14 to 21 the young person tests the world with its thinking capacity, located in the head. In order to become a complete, integrated, free and responsible person, the child needs to be educated by properly addressing the faculties of its age-quality. Only then will the adult person be able to meet the challenges of the future creatively and confidently. These challenges may be quite different from those in present times. Imposing a one-sided and fragmented intellectual learning process, and forcing a career perspective on children causes much of the "crisis in education." These same children by 'natural learning' are inclined to develop essentially different qualities in subsequent stages. Spiritual and psychological malnourishment by mismatching the intrinsic qualities of the child deeply affects the capability to respond to future challenges in a responsible and creative way.

It is even more difficult to meet the needs of underprivileged children. The first of six



workshops during the seminar was devoted to this area. Representatives of schools in Calcutta (India), Nairobi (Kenya) and Moo Ban Dek (Thailand) explored common grounds in this workshop, guided by Rajani Dhongchai. Other workshops concentrated on Environmental Education; Waldorf/Steiner Education; Peace Education; and Holistic 'world views'. The themes of the workshops had been determined in the first international seminar on Alternative Education at Moo Ban Dek, December 1997. By remarkable coincidence the participants in the Peace Education workshop, guided by Soyang from Korea, were all women.

A sixth workshop was added to the program spontaneously. During this workshop we explored the need for a Teachers' Training and Resource Center. The workshop was guided by William van Benthum of Pukhet Montessori School and Wallapa Kuntiranont of Spirit in Education Movement [SEM]. Alternative Education initiatives, even of very diverse nature, need a permanent resource center for information, documentation, training and development facilitation. SEM is trying to address this need.

Central in the action plans resulting from the seminar workshops as reported on the last day was the need to meet regularly and strengthen the Asian Alternative Education network, in the global context. The permanent Alternative Education Resource Center to be established could care for this common need to co-operate for educational reform in Asia.

Hans van Willenswaard

In the week after the international seminar on Alternative Education an international delegation of the Social Venture Network Asia [businesspeople committed to social justice and environmental balance] paid a visit to Rung Arun School, an admirable new experiment. The visit indicated a genuine interest in educational reform from the 'alternative business' sector. The government, the business sector and NGOs together could form a well balanced platform to support free and independent education, one that does not serve vested interests but the future of children worldwide.

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Spirituality in the Age of Globalisation

a Conversation with H.H. The Dalai Lama

Assembled are Sulak Sivaraksa and H.H. the Dalai Lama, also various guests, the place is Dharamsala, India, and the date is September 13, 1999.

SS. It is a great privilege to visit you your Holiness, as I am getting old. It was wonderful to see you yesterday and today. Today if your Holiness would give me some time, I would like to ask for your blessing. I have been thinking, as you know the Christians are moving into their new millennium next year and have been reminiscing. I feel we Buddhists can make a contribution to the world. As your Holiness is a leader, there are one or two issues I would like to discuss with you.

DL. Shall we chant before or afterwards?

SS. Yes, we would love to hear it. Issue number one in my mind is that our Buddhism has so many schools and traditions but we don't work together to help each other and the world at large. Thai Buddhism is very much linked to agriculture and simple society, but now it has become urbanized and more complex. Thai Buddhism has no meaning for young people. I feel it is likewise in Sri Lanka, in Burma. We have many great meditation masters, many scholars, but how can we bring the message of the Buddha to the contemporary world. Not only for Theravada but also for all schools. How can we come together? Number two is monastics, how we can bring monks, nuns and lay people together in the modern world?. Thirdly, everything in the world today now comes from the west, good and bad. In politics, democracy and dictatorship are from the west. Economics are western, either Marxist or neoclassical; education is also very much western. So I feel we Buddhists can offer some Buddhist economics, Buddhist politics and Buddhist education. Your Holiness is very much concerned with ways to teach the young to have compassion, and ways the young can use that compassion to tackle the structural violence in the world. Structural violence is very prominent now, controlled by a few transnational corporations who use the media to advertise. Our young worship MacDonalds, jeans, Coca-Cola. Even here in Dharamsala they have a sign with your Holiness holding a bottle of Coca-Cola, this is very dangerous. They use it to say, "Ah, His Holiness supports Coca-Cola!" (HH asks his translator if he has seen this sign, nodding heads, he says that it is unauthorized). I ask for your advice and your wisdom. What do you feel we Thai and non Thai can do to serve the teachings of the Buddha, to make them relevant to the modern world, and ways in which we can serve you and the Tibetan people.

DL. Very important, very important points are raised. This is a very important matter. I think there could be two ways to tackle these problems, one, mainly on the basis of Buddhist teachings, and on an international level. Each country has its own traditions and own way of life, and to each according to its own circumstances there should be a method of approach to tackle these problems mainly on the basis of Buddhist teachings. Then on another level, more international, I think international here means humanity as a whole, on that level I think we share a tradition, Humanity. I often say spiritual humanity. On that level then no particular Buddhist idea or particular Buddhist philosophy is needed to make a contribution. From each nation according its own tradition, if it is a Buddhist nation then of course Buddhist teachings can address the Buddhist community. Take Thailand, which is a Buddhist country, then as Buddhists in the context of a Buddhist society you can contribute through tradition, you can involve the idea of *karma*, or the concept of rebirth and *moksha*. Those points can also be involved. On the second level, as humanity, we can't use these philosophies or concepts in order to improve daily life, or in order to improve a person. I feel yes that we can do something, we can at least make some contribution, but then how? My knowledge is very limited, we need some thorough discussion or a seminar with participants who have genuine concern about this and at the same time some kind of optimistic attitude, optimism and discussion. Then we shall find methods and techniques.

SS. Very good point. May I inform your Holiness a little about Thai Buddhism. I know you have been to our country briefly. Thai Buddhism has been



developing at least 900 to 1,000 years. It worked very well at the village level — similar to Tibet; Buddhism and Thai culture are one. The royal court and feudalism may also be similar to Tibet, the teachings of the Buddha influenced the king to be a good king, those who were bad were not too bad, this influence was wonderful. Although we were not colonized by the west, in 1855 the British came with their gunboats, just as the Americans did with Japan. Like other Asian countries we opened the country to the British which meant we had to accept that we were inferior to them, they had special privileges over us. We lost judicial autonomy although we were in charge of internal politics. They were superior to us technologically and scientifically so we adapted our country to the west. Unfortunately we adapted far too much, so that now Buddhism has become more form and less substance. The worst thing in my opinion is that we adapted Buddhism to western science so we no longer believe by and large in the *bodhisattva* in *deva,* in the *mara*, not even in past and future lives. This is true of the majority of so called educated people; for me that is very bad. Worse still are our Sangha and monks who used to be leaders at every level. In the last hundred years only the poor have become ordained, the rich were sent to be educated abroad, myself included. I realized later on we were alienated from our culture and we looked down on our poor.

DL. Tibet is also similar.

SS. Yes, I think this is the dilemma, the monkhood believes only in intellectual knowledge. Worse still most of us believe in the new religion of 'consumerism'; we worship money, worship technical progress, I think this is dangerous. In my country during the past two years the economy collapsed, and my country was not colonized in 1855, but now by the IMF (International Monetary Fund) they have come in to control everything. After our economy, the Korean and Indonesian economies also collapsed. I met Mr. Wolfenssohn, the president of the World Bank last year and he asked me what I felt about the economic collapse. I said as a Buddhist, I felt it was a heavenly message, but my government is not Buddhist and they went to the IMF for an answer and for financial rescue. Buddhists teach that when our founder met an old man, a sick man, a dead man and a monk, he left his palace to find the truth, and became the enlightened one. If we follow our masters then we must be mindful.

DL. What if your economy suffers so much that people starve, then what do you do?

SS. This is precisely my point: in the last 30 years since you first visited our country, we have believed in development and development of course means American-style development, it means neo colonialism. We have

followed this development and the rich have become very rich and the poor have become very poor. A hundred years ago there was not much difference between the rich and the poor, not even the king had much. Now the rich become so rich that they all want a western lifestyle, the latest technology, many cars, helicopters, but 85% are so poor. This is where Buddhism becomes very important; these poor who have been alienated from their land and their culture have sold everything thinking they would become rich, but they haven't, instead they've become drug addicts and superstitious gamblers. Through Buddhist meditation, some of our local masters have empowered themselves spiritually. They've started cultivating land without tractors and chemicals, they look for alternative medicines, this is a great hope. I told Mr. Wolfenssohn that if the government were clever, it would look to the poor, but they regard the poor as the enemy; only pay lip service to the poor, they don't learn from them. In Buddhism we confront suffering, the first of the noble truths, the cause of suffering being greed, hatred and delusion. Greed is now personified by the World Bank, IMF and transnational corporations, hatred through transnational corporations who are selling arms. The poor in my country are gradually becoming empowered; we have half a million, not many, that we call the assembly for the poor. We teach them Buddhist education, to meditate not only for the next world, for *nirvana*, but in order to confront the government, to talk to the government. Now they have their own school and own farming. I feel that if they want to learn about Thai Buddhism then that is the way. The Sangharaja is very nice, but he is 85 now, and after him we don't see anybody as good. Many abbots have become corrupted; they are interested in money. Of all the 300,000 monks in Siam we have 300 with whom I've been working with for the poor.

DL. Out of 300,000 you have 300?

SS. Yes, which is very good, small is beautiful your Holiness. I have hope in my country.

DL. With the sudden economic collapse this new Buddhist movement must be very uplifting for the poor. What kind of attitude does the younger generation have to this kind of a situation? In our Tibetan community in the 60's and early 70's it seems the younger generation lacked interest or lacked respect towards Buddhism although it is our tradition. Later in the 80's and 90's there was a change, and now irrespective of whether they know the Buddhist philosophy or the Buddhist teachings they seem to recognize the importance of Buddhism. Is this similar to Thailand? What is the situation now?

SS. The middle classes in my country have become rich, and because of their prosperity they've become more selfish. They want economic servility, to climb a ladder, have more cars etc. Two or three years ago this young man here his mother, a small middle class woman owning a small shop in a province discovered that a gas pipeline was being built from Burma. This pipeline was being manipulated by two transnational corporations namely Unocal of America and Total of France. They manipulated the Thai and Burmese governments saying that it would help development, be generous etc. We thought differently as the pipeline destroyed one of our best forests and helped to destroy minority groups in Burma. His mother stood against the pipeline. I got involved too, which is why I was arrested again last year. A lot of the the middle classes are now aware. These are two positive things, the poor becoming empowered and middle classes becoming aware. In Buddhism we teach not to hate the oppressor but to have compassion, we must learn to destructure the violent structures.

DL. So you already have some bases around, very good.

SS. Yes, your Holiness. I am happy to publish that in my country. I think we ought to prepare something alternative to the present predicament, and Tibet is one of my concerns, not only to serve the Tibetans, but also to learn from your suffering in order to be more compassionate and thus serve suffering people. It is the same for Burma and East Timor. In fact I was on a peace mission to East Timor two weeks ago. I am a small man and I do what I can, but if I have your spiritual guidance I feel it will help.

DL. What about organizing some kind of a seminar?

SS. Yes, for this I need your blessing. I have plans that I will send to your secretary, would you like to hear briefly some plans that Chris (Chris Walker, a Buddhist scholar) has here? Not only in the monastic sense but also to tackle economics and politics.

DL. Yes.

Chris. We feel it seems clear from the conference held yesterday (Synthesis dialogues) that the world is in crisis, politically, economically yes, but most of all an inner crisis, a moral crisis. With cultural relativism many people feel that morals are out dated or not useful. When the Buddha taught that the Dharma was neither wholly intellectual nor wholly moral, but rather a balanced approach and this balanced approach may be useful for addressing the inner and outer crisis at the same time. We humbly seek your advice especially about bringing the idea of morals back into society, neither judging nor preaching. Our project intends to draw on the expertise of everyone involved in these areas to make this idea more concrete and finally lead to some tangible actions.

DL. A very good idea. Now obviously in order to make some contribution to humanity from the Buddhist teaching, first there must be some thorough discussion amongst us. Discussion based on the basis of our own experiences and on the basis of our own Buddhist societies. Where are you planning to hold the conference?

SS. Why not in my country (Thailand), because this year the king will be 72, or in our calendar he will have lived six cycles. We thought we would plan it in honor of our king, because he is the only Buddhist king left in the world excepting Bhutan and Cambodia.

DL. We will send some monks and scholars of non-violence.

SS. So we have your blessing.
DL. Wonderful, certainly.

SS. You have inspired me so much your Holiness, whatever I have done you have done so much more. So many people wish to serve you, and I wish to serve you. These people here (indicating guests) are all small people, but they will do all they can for you.

DL. What do you think about developing the industries in your country through Buddhist ideas?

SS. That is a very good idea, we have been relating to the Intermediate Technological Society founded by Schumacher. Barbara Schumacher, his daughter in law, works with us; we try to develop appropriate technology. Also we try to work with big companies, we call it the Social Venture Network, the companies involved learn not to exploit themselves and not to exploit labor and natural resources.

DL. What do you mean exploit themselves?

SS. If you are greedy you exploit yourself, when you become so powerful it is impossible to lead a spiritual life.

DL. That's right.

There is now a question from a Thai guest

1st guest. I see that you are compassionate, very calm and peaceful, in spite of your hardships, living in a foreign country etc. How do you manage this through your Buddhism?

DL. I don't believe in Buddhism, I believe in Buddhist practice, of that there is no doubt. It is difficult to pinpoint which part of the philosophy or teaching has helped me to be calm. Mainly I think it is through the understanding of meditation and understanding the nature of impermanence, the nature of suffering. Our very existence is dominated by or under the influence of ignorance. This suffering nature or *dukkha* nature is very powerful when we face problems or when we face pain. It is a natural thing that is sometimes severe and sometimes less so, it is basically a suffering nature. It is very helpful to keep our minds peaceful. Then there is altruism, *karuna*. When we confront people who are uncomfortable, like governments or the Chinese, it is very helpful to practice compassion, practice tolerance, altruism. They are very helpful to reduce negative feelings towards others.

There follows a blessing.

SS. Lastly your Holiness, I have asked your secretary when it would be possible for you to come to Siam. I have asked my government who have said after President Jiang Zemin's visit we have a green light. So any time you feel it is appropriate we would love to welcome you.

DL. Is that clear?

SS. Yes, I have talked to my government.

DL. I am happy to come and would like a discussion with leading Buddhists and monks at a seminar, and one part of the program can be how to make a Buddhist contribution to social problems.

Does Buddhism Have Any Future? : Some Thoughts on the Possibilities of Buddhist Responses to the 21st Century

Introduction: A Buddhist Puzzle

There is a Buddhist story about a rider on a horse rushing very fast along a road. At first a bystander sees a cloud of dust approaching, then eventually it becomes apparent that it is a horse with a rider. As they approach, the bystander yells out to the rider, where are you going in such a great hurry? (Story from Thich Naht Hanh 1987:65). In some ways this story parallels humanity's ride into the 21st century. It is hard to know where we are heading.

I. Enduring Wisdom of Increasing Relevance

There have been tremendous changes within the 20th century. For example, even just within our own lifetimes, we have witnessed the computer revolution and the rise of the information age. (Now 1 in 5 human is on the Internet. Perhaps humanity will eventually become united in cyberspace!) Given such tremendous changes in the 20th century? Actually, it is quite easy in principle, at least from a Buddhist perspective. We just look to the fundamental principles in the teachings of the Buddha which have endured for the last 25 centuries, and apply those to the 21st century and Asia in particular.

People have found Buddhism meaningful in very different historical periods, cultures, and environments over the last 2,500 years. For example, in the U.S.A. there has been an explosion of interest in Buddhism during the 1980s and 1990s. Now in the U.S.A. there are more than a thousand Buddhist centers. Clearly many Americans find Buddhism quite relevant, even though they live in a context far different in most respects from that in which Buddhism originated or in which it is currently practiced in Asia.

If Buddhism has been so relevant to many millions of people for such a long time and in such diverse contexts in many parts of the world, then it seems most likely that it will continue to be so in the 21st century in Asia and elsewhere. Indeed, it is probable that Buddhism will become even more relevant in the future, considering its basic teaching together with the challenges humanity faces in the 21st century.

II. The Three Kinds of Separation as Delusions

What are the ultimate causes of our problems today and into the next century? From a Buddhist perspective, the ultimate cause is, in a word, separation. The cause is separation from nature, from other people, and from ourselves. Primarily ignorance and greed feed this separation. The main result is suffering in its diverse manifestations.

Separation, however, in any respect is a delusion. Let us briefly consider, for example, the human body in relation to the environment. That is, each human organism is constantly exchanging energy and matter with its environment simply by breathing, eating, and so on. Furthermore, the human body is host to a multitude of other organism: bacteria, fungi, viruses, mites and the occasional flies, mosquitoes, lice, fleas, bedbugs, ticks, and leeches. Indeed, it is not so clear where the human organism ends and the environment begins!

Separation from other people is also a delusion. To the extent that everything is interconnected and interdependent, whatever an individual does inevitably has some impacts on other individuals, at least indirectly to a certain degree. For example, if an individual drives in a car or flies in an airplane, the waste products from the engine contribute, even if in a minute way, to air pollution and global warming. Those problems arise from the collectivity of such minute individual human interactions, which are additive and synergetic in effect. One conservative estimate is that by the year 2070, global warming will increase temperatures by 2-4 degrees resulting in the melting of glaciers and rise in sea level by 20-40 centimeters. In turn, sea level rise will threaten the half of humanity that is concentrated in coastal zones, and have repercussion on the rest as well.

Humans are also, ironically, separated from themselves, but this is another delusion. Many individuals are rarely if ever really alone for any substantial length of time, unless under special circumstances such as solitary confinement in prison,

or in deep meditation in the case of a Buddhist monk alone in a forest or cave. Instead, even if alone, most humans are separated from themselves by television, music, or other material diversions. Accordingly, most individuals do not really know silence or peace, let alone themselves as individuals. Until individuals know themselves through cultivating meditation, they cannot deeply appreciate the delusions of separation, or for that matter, the delusion of self. As long as individuals are not at peace with themselves, so will genuine peace allude society. Indeed, most societies even discourage such individuality as somehow abnormal or anti-social, ironically.

Consider Sumano Bhikkhu's Wise Thoughts

Skillful meditation is practice in letting go. In letting go of the things we constantly cling to, we find a freedom we only tasted as children, or stepped into by sheer accident as a teenager walking along an isolated beach, or got a glimpse of while hiking alone in a national park. The miracle that can happen to us, the miracle awaiting us, is recognizing the workings of the prison that binds our life, and then walking the path out of this prison and into freedom. Freedom is the essence of spiritual quest. For one who practices diligently, more and more openings appear through which freedom can be known, until finally all that unfolds in one's life is timeless freedom. We realise this as the ultimate happiness and peace or enlightenment.

III. Ideals and Priorities

What about the ideals we supposedly hold on to so dearly? All religions include a system of morality or values. The great scholar of comparative religion, Huston Smith refers to religions as the wisdom of humanity. Whether Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, or another religion, all have noble ideals. However, the underlying problem here is the frequent discrepancy between ideals and actions. Thus, one of the greatest challenges facing humanity in the 21st century is hypocrisy!

For example, in principle Buddhism would seem to be environmentally friendly, but in practice many Buddhists in Asian countries, like Thailand, are not very friendly toward the environment to say the least. The rampant deforestation throughout Thailand, mainly in this century and mostly since World War II, should be viewed from a Buddhist perspective as sacrilegious, given the relationship between the Buddha and forests as well as the long history of Buddhism in relation to forests.

As another example, in Sri Lanka, since 1956, there have been sporadic episodes of violence and civil war between Sinhalese Buddhists and Tamil Hindus. The result has been more than 50,000 deaths and half a million refugees. Even some Buddhist monks have been involved in the violence. Once Ghandi was asked what he thought about civilization; he replied, " I think it would be a good idea." The same applies to the practice of Buddhism in Sri Lanka!

Also recently the U.S.A. and Europe have been concerned about gross violations of human rights in Kosovo, but in the past they largely ignored genocide in other places like Rwanda, East Timor, Irian Jaya, Cambodia, and the like. What hypocrisy for the U.S.A. and Europe! But not only them. About 95% of the people in Cambodia are supposed to be Buddhists, and that includes the Khmer Rouge perpetrators of the mass genocide of some three million people in the mid-1970s.

Indeed, instead of calling our species *homo sapiens*, meaning humans the wise animal, it would seem more appropriate to call our species *homo hipocriticus*, the hypocritical animal. So often we believe or say one thing, but do another. This discrepancy between ideals and actions is also at the heart of our problems.

One means of dealing with the discrepancy between ideals and actions is through education; that is, to demonstrate the negative consequences of some kinds of behavior. Consider, for example, the epidemic of school shootings in the U.S.A. in recent years. Certainly there are many causal factors. However, we can't ignore the fact that in the U.S.A., the average teenager has watched more than 100,000 acts of violence and 8,000 murders in television, movies, and video games. Can it really be possible that violence in the media has consequence for anyone's action? In contrast, how often in the media are we exposed to prosocial acts such as nonviolence and compassion? Who are the heroes and role models of the youth? They probably aren't people like mahatma Gandhi or Mother Teresa of India, Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma, Thich Nhat Hahn of Vietnam, or the Dalai Lama of Tibet, to mention a few from Asia. Assuming most people will not completely abandon television, how might Buddhism critique and improve programming?

Where are our priorities?

What will be our priorities in the 21st century in Asia and elsewhere? Today our priorities are quite clear. For example, what are the three largest industries in the world? The answer is the military at 800 billion dollars annually, the illicit drug trade at 500 billion and oil at 450 billion. At the same time, every year some seven million children die of hunger and 800 million are severely undernourished, to mention just one example of human suffering. Furthermore, severe malnutrition during childhood can lead to mental retardation and limit the individual's future potential for personal development and for contributing to society.

As another example of hypocrisy and misplaced priorities, consider India. *Ahimsa* (nonviolence) is a pivotal principle of the great religious philosophies of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism, which originated in India. However, the recurrent conflicts over Kashmir between India and Pakistan since the first war in 1948, have fed and arms buildup, including nuclear weapons in recent years. This militarization is certainly diverting the relatively limited government money from positive human and social investments to promote human well being to death and destruction instead. Since 1990 alone, up to 25,000 have died in Kashmir, up to 20,000 Kashmiris have been detained in jails in subhuman conditions by the Indian government, more than 150,000 Kashmiri Hindus are in refugee camps in the plains, etc. Where are the priorities of the Indian and Pakistani governments? Similar situations of grossly misplaced priorities in immoral political policies of governments can be found elsewhere in Asia and beyond.

The U.S.A. fought a war with Iraq primarily over oil. But how much did the Gulf War cost? Among many other things, it cost the lives of 56,000 Iraqi soldiers and 3,000 civilians, and some estimates are much higher. Another cost is a 100% increase in the infant mortality rate in Iraq from 1990-92. Sanctions continue to contribute to this and other suffering in Iraq for nearly a decade now. Up to 1.8 million pieces of unexploded ammunition remain in Iraq as time bombs for innocent victims.

IV. Suffering and Compassion

What are some of the pivotal points of Buddhist wisdom? Suffering and the individual are central concerns in Buddhism. The Four Nobel Truths, in brief, are that:

1) life is suffering;
2) the cause is ignorance and craving
3) the cure is reduction of ignorance and craving; and,
4) the prescription is for individuals to follow the Noble Eightfold Path, the precepts, and other teachings of the Buddha

Among the precepts are nonviolence, compassion and a good vocation (e.g., not making or selling weapons). What if that 800 billion dollars spent annually on the military of the world, or at least a portion of it, were channeled instead to such things as nutrition, health are, education, and fulfilling other genuine basic needs? Maybe eventually there would be no need for the military and war!

V. Ahead, Challenges and More Challenges

What will be the challenges for Asians and others in the 21st century? There is no doubt that suffering, including conflict and violence, will continue, and probably even escalate. The reasons are mostly those envisioned in previous centuries by Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834) — population growth, famine, disease, and war. For example, world population will increase from the current six billion to ten billion just within the next 50 years, and 95% of this will be in the poorest regions of the world. However, to Malthusian concerns we must add growth in materialism, consumerism, and so on - the very factors that contribute to suffering.

The growing disparity between the rich and poor within countries, as well as between countries, is increasingly becoming simply morally intolerable. As a result of these population and economic pressures, the basic needs recognized by Buddha — including food, clothing, shelter, and medicine — will continue to be a problem for much of humanity in the 21st century. Consider these current statistics: among the 4.4 billion people in the so-called developing countries of the world — 3 in 5 live in communities lacking basic sanitation; 1in 3 goes without safe drinking water; 1 in 4 lives on less than $1 a day. This situation is bound to get worse with growing population, increasing pressure on resources as a result of this growth plus increasing consumerism, and probably continuing decline in the economies of most countries. Also consider that AIDS will continue to be a growing health and economic problem in Asia and elsewhere, this worldwide epidemic is still not even close to peaking. Indeed, AIDS now

causes more deaths than any other infectious disease.

How can humanity deal with such challenges in the 21st century in Asia and elsewhere? Again, from a Buddhist perspective the answer is easy at least in principle, although not so easy in practice. Meeting such challenges of the 21st century in Asia and elsewhere will require Buddhists to:

1) practice the Buddha's wisdom, voluntary simplicity, loving kindness, and compassion;
2) reduce their ignorance and craving;
3) reduce their separation from nature, other people, and their own self;
4) reduce the discrepancy between their ideals and actions; and
5) be more mindful of the negative consequences of some of their individual behavior.

Collectively the net result of such efforts would help reduce suffering significantly.

From this perspective, in the 21st century Buddhism may become more relevant than ever before! For Buddhists in Asia and elsewhere, their greatest resource is not their bank accounts and financial investments, or at the national level their Gross National Product (GNP), but the fundamental principles which have endured from the Buddha's teachings 25 centuries ago. Fortunately, any individual can strive to cultivate and realize the fundamental principles of Buddhism, and in so doing, change as an individual, thereby contributing to change in society. Even the poorest of people can pursue the fundamental principles of Buddhism, monks are supposed to do so even with a vow of poverty. Accordingly, Buddhism can contribute significantly to meeting the challenges of the 21st century in Asia and elsewhere.

VI. Non-Buddhists

Finally, another challenge in the 21st century for Buddhists and non-Buddhists will be how to deal with each other, given sometimes their very different views. It should be recognized that Asia covers an enormous area, and many Asians are Muslims, such as in Indonesia and Malaysia. Also there are many Christians, such as in the Philippines. Also there are many decades where we have witnessed inter-faith dialogues and cooperation at unprecedented levels. Also potentially of great significance is the growing convergence in thinking on a number of points such as the need for spiritual ecology, including dentifying viable environmental ethics in each religion for its adherents. So all of this leads us to be somewhat hopeful for the 21st century which is likely to be the century of ecology, peace, and rights.

Leslie E. Sponsel
Poranee Natadecha

Recommended Reading

Trying to walk the way: Hopes, Memories and Fantasies by Ian Mayor Smith (Kumarian Press) West Hartford Conn. U.S.A.

Ecology and Spirituality, India Peace Center

The Political Philosophy of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama: Selected Speeches and Writings edited by A.A Shiromany (Tibetan Parliamentary Publishing Research Center), New Delhi

The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation by R. Scott Appleby, Carnegie Comission on Preventing Deadly Conflict: NY, 1999

Buddhist Peacework: Creating Cultures of Peace edited by David Chappell, Wisdom Books: Boston, 1999

Awakening: In Pursuit of the Divine Paradox by Gregory R. Huth. Alyssum: Whiteville CN, 2000

A Walk Through Time: From Stardust to Us: The Evolution of Life on Earth by S. Liebes, E. Santouris & B. Swimme. Wiley: NY, 1999

Awakening Earth: Exploring the Evolution of Human Culture and Consciousness by Daniel Elgin (author of *Voluntary Simplicity*). Morrow: NY, 1999

Threshold 2000, Critical Issues and Spiritual Values for a Global Age by Gerald O. Barney with contributors. Millennium Institute and Conexus press, 1999

The Wheel of Engaged Buddhism : A New Map of the Path by Kenneth Kraft. Weatherhill, NY, 1999.

Nikkyo Niwano (1906-1999)

Nikkyo Niwano, a founder of Rissho Kosei-kai, was born in 1906 to a farming family in Niigata prefecture in northern Japan. As a child he was deeply impressed by his grandfather's and his parent's kindness to others. Their good examples instilled in him a love of peace, harmony and service to others.

Several years after leaving school, he went to Tokyo to work and began studying and practicing various spiritual disciplines. Eventually while studying in one of the new religious organizations, he heard a series of lectures on the Lotus Sutra given by Mr. Sukenobu Arai. In 1938 together with Mrs. Myoko Naganuma, Nikkyo Niwano founded a lay Buddhist organization, Rissho Kosei-kai, to help free people from suffering and to assist in establishing a peaceful world through the teachings of the Lotus Sutra.

Believing that all religions spring from the same source, Niwano met with people of religion the world over in order to further the cause of world peace through inter-religious cooperation. He dedicated himself to the establishment of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) and the Asian conference on Religion and Peace (ACRP). In 1994 he attended the sixth assembly of the WCRP in Italy and presided at its opening session with Pope John Paul II in the Vatican Synod hall. Further, in the past three UN special sessions for disarmament, he called for the world's political leaders to take steps for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

In 1979 he was awarded the Templeton Foundation Prize for Progress in Religion. In 1992 the Vatican made him a Knight Commander with the Silver Star of the order of St. Gregory the Great. In 1993 he received the Interfaith Medallion from the international council of Christians and Jews. His published writings in English include: *Buddhism for Today: A Modern Interpretation of the Three-fold Lotus Sutra; A Buddhist Approach to Peace; Lifetime Beginner; Shakyamuni Buddha; An Narrative Biography and Invisible Eyelashes.*

Snoh Tanbunyen (1915-1999)

In a period of less than three months this year, Thailand has lost two of its faithful citizens who had committed their lives to save the country during the Second World War. They were members of the Free Thai Movement in Britain and both spent the last part of, and ended, their lives in that country. While everybody here seems to know the first one, Puey Ungphakorn, little was mentioned in the media about Snoh Tanbunyuen who passed away peacefully on October 21 at the age of 84.

Snoh went to study at Trinity College, Cambridge in the late 1930s. In early 1941, when tension was rising in the Far East, he was one of the few Thais to be found in Britain and was approached by the BBC to help found the Thai Section, which originally broadcast a 15-minute weekly programme. He liked to tell the story of how each programme was recorded beforehand on a Gramophone record in the basement of the broadcasting house, the BBC Headquarters, in central London, sometimes when the city was under heavy bombardment by the Nazi Germans.

When the Pibul government collaborated with the invading Japanese in December 1941 and later declared war on Britain and the United States, Thai students in Britain who were concerned about the sovereignty of their motherland knew that if the Japanese lost the war, which was likely, Siam would be in a disastrous position. Despite the threat to revoke their nationality if they refused to return home as the government had ordered, they decided to continue staying there and struggle for the future of their country.

According to Puey in his *Temporary Soldier*, Snoh was the most active among them. His room in Cambridge became the centre point of their endeavour. He was the one who gathered information and the disseminated them to other Thais. He tried to find someone to head the British Free Thai, but could find none. Therefore, he asked MR Seni Pramoj in the US to accept the Thais in Britain as part of the Free Thai Movement formed over there. Together with Puey,

he was chosen to contact Manee Sanasen, Seni's representative who was sent to negotiate with the British government. Then the two rallied the small Thai community in Britain to oppose the Japanese and their Thai collaborators. Without a recognizable leader, he recalled, it was very tough, much tougher than in the US, to get this small group accepted by the British government. And they were only partially successful in this endeavour.

Judged not physically fit enough to join the 'Pioneer Corps' to penetrate into Siam alongside his compatriots in the Free Thai Movement, he continued to broadcast their messages through the BBC where the output of the Thai Section also increased until the war ended in 1945. He then returned to Bangkok as a hero of the anti-Japanese movement and went on to become Professor of Mathematics at Chulalongkorn University. He continued to devote himself to the Thai Section of the BBC and returned frequently to broadcast until the early 1970s when he settled in London permanently with his wife, Irene. They have no children.

Achaan Snoh, as every Thai called him, had remained in contact with Achaan Puey throughout their latter years but their age and poor health kept them apart. Apart from being a senior member of the Thai community in Britain and of *Samakki Samagom* society in the country set up by King Vajiravudh, he was-and still is—considered the father of the BBC's Thai Section. Although his broadcasts became increasingly rare, he continued to produce at least a programme on the New Year's Eve for the BBC until the final year of his life.

His body was brought back to Thailand. After cremation on December 16, 1999, his final resting place will be in his beloved homeland as he had always wished.

Gawin Chutima

Announcement of Right Livelihood Awards 1999

1999 Right Livelihood Awards go to Dr. Hermann Scheer for solar energy; Dr. Juan Grace for bringing the dictator Pinochet to justice; the Grupo De Agricultura Oranica (GAO) for the development of organic agriculture in Cuba; and the Program for the Consolidation of the Amazon Region(COAMA) for indigenous rights. The Right Livelihood Award is presented annually in the Swedish Parliament on the day before the Nobel Award, December 8th, and it is often referred to as the "Alternative Nobel Prizes".

Announcement

The Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) gave special recognition for social service to Mr. Surasi Kosolnawin at the Sem Pringpuangkeow annual public lecture on 28 November 1999. We mentioned Mr. Surasi's name in our last issue and on 22nd February 2000, Mr. Surasi will deliver the 24th Komol Keemthong annual lecture, which is very prestigious—the first lecturer being the late Dr. Puey Ungphakorn.

Peace Boat and Peace College

'Peace Boat' was launched in 1982. At that time most Asian people strongly protested against the Japanese government, which had deviously revised the words 'Military invasion in Asia' into 'Advance in Asia' in their textbooks. This became an international issue. We call it "distortion in Japanese history textbooks".

Since then, some socially conscious students organized a small group to excavate the 'real history' of the invasion by their own country, making a journey by boat to the countries which had the painful experiences of being a Japanese colony. It was the beginning of the present 'Peace Boat'.

They realized their dream after a year. 'Peace Boat' became an NGO, and recruited active youths with the slogan "Yours and My Fresh Ideas, Co-making a Cruise!" They rented a huge passenger ship to cruise not only to Asia but also to other regions of the world. The total participants came to 10,000 including 700 lecturers from over 50 countries.

'Peace Boat' projected the second 'Global College' this time and gathered scholarship students from several countries such as Korea, Singapore, Vietnam and Hong Kong. As for Korea, four scholarship students and two lecturers participated from Oct. 18 to 27. They are mainly activists in peace and human rights field.

The year 2000 has been proclaimed the 'International Year for the Culture of Peace' by the United Nations General Assembly. And the first decade has been proclaimed the 'Decade of Peace Education'. Members of 'Peace Boat' have decided to dedicate themselves to this idea. They participated in the Hague Appeal for Peace, which was held in the Netherlands. They strongly believe that peace education is necessary for making the world really peaceful. And that it has to be launched not only in general educational institutions but also in all social organizations such as the mass media and NGOs.

'Peace Boat' recently initiated a new program called "Global College for Peace" during its 1999-2000 Northern Hemisphere-Global Voyage. The program aims to promote intellectual as well as experiential exchanges between scholars and grassroots leaders. The Global College provides courses on, for example, culture of peace, peace education human security, human rights, global environment, regional problems, and sustainable societies.

Korean activists have participated in the Peace Boat since last year. Mr. Kim Yonghan held discussions on "US military bases in Korea" and on "Building a nuclear free zone in Northeast Asia." And I lectured on "Comfort women and the Japanese Army," "The development and challenges of democratic movements in Korea," and "The Korean Army's conduct in the Vietnam War." Additionally, the other Korean participants helped introduce the activities of Korean NGOs, offered Korean language courses every morning, and periodically performed traditional dance and songs.

In all, 579 people from 23 countries participated in the Peace Boat program. The program was well structured and balanced. The participants were allowed to hold their own projects on board. Furthermore, the exposure trips to numerous Asian countries were very impressive and beneficial. The Global College for Peace lectures were also valuable.

In sum, Peace Boat has played a wonderful role in encouraging peace education and international collaboration. I really appreciate the project's intention to help resolve many sensitive and urgent global and regional issues peacefully.

I think the educational activities of the Japanese Peace Boat greatly contribute to peace building in Asia. Korean activists are also sowing the seeds of peace education to transform our divided peninsula into a 'supporting pillar for the peace of Asia and the global village.' I believe that some day all Asian NGO activists will be able to gather in peace and shake hands of solidarity.

Kang Jae-suk
Kangmulchorum (Korean) means 'like a stream of River'



Statement to UNESCO about Pridi Banomyong

11 October 1999
Thailand (Wichian Watanakun)
Item 9.6

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Members of the Executive Board,

I would like first of all to thank you, Sir, in giving me the floor to address this august body.

In fact, Thailand has proposed to UNESCO the nomination of the two eminent personages to the list of Anniversaries of Great Personalities and Historic Events 2000-2001. The first name is the most revered Somdet Phra Srinagarindhra the Princess Mother, the second is Professor Dr. Pridi Banomyong, the educator and humanist. We are gratified to note that our first proposal, the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Somdet Phra Srinagarindhra was included in the list of requests considered admissible by the Director-General as appeared in Document 157 Ex/34. However, it is at the same time deplorable that our second proposal i.e. the nomination for Professor Dr. Pridi Banomyong was not included in the list.

It is understandable that it is the first time new criteria and procedure initiated by the Executive Board has been put into effect. Our people at home could hardly follow and realise how important is the new submission form to be filled by the National Commission for UNESCO. The criteria for the selection of anniversaries and the procedure by which the role of the Intersectoral Committee is so dominant have not been given proper attention. Moreover, the procedure was not totally followed as the document containing the list of requests which has been judged by the Director General to meet the criteria was not sent to Member States and to the Members of the Executive Board in good time before the opening of this session of the Executive Board as laid down in the procedure. You might notice also that document 157 EX/34 was dated 4 October 1999, one day only before the opening of this session. Therefore, Thailand would like to request the Secretariat to prepare a list of requests by the Member States whose requests have not been included in the list with the reasons thereof, in time for distribution to the Member States at the General Conference.

With your permission, Mr. Chairman, may I present to this board our appeal that the name of Professor Banomyong should be added to the list.

First, I would like to present Pridi Panomyong as an able and farsighted educator. He founded in Bangkok in 1934 the University of Moral and Political Sciences as an Open University giving higher education to the large part of population both in the cities and up-country and consequently became its first rector. The University later changed its name to Thammasat University and has been a leading institution in helping to promote and protect democracy, social justice, and human rights in Thailand. There have been exchanges of professors and students with foreign universities. Students form neighbouring countries also attend courses at Thammasat which has become one of the two most prestigious universities in the country. I might add however that the Thai representative in this competent body, Professor Dr. Adul Wichiencharoen was a former student and a graduate from this University. He later became Professor and one of the top administrators of the University. In presenting an appeal this Board on the case of the founder and former rector of this University, Professor Wichiencharoen for this reason chose to leave it to his alternate instead.

Secondly, as a humanist, Pridi Banomyong advocated peace and non-violence. At the same time, he did not succumb to power from outside. He led national resistance and rallied the nation to oppose invasion and occupation during World War II. That is why he was respected internationally and was the first Thai to be honoured by the Smithsonian Institution by naming a species of bird founded in Thailand in 1945 after him as a symbol for peace. The combination of Pridi's relentless efforts to strive for social justice and to establish a meaningful democracy in Thailand was reflected in the constitution he was the architect. Universal suffrage to both men and women was thereby guaranteed as well as human rights were firmly recognised and upheld.

The third and final point I would like to mention is Pridi Panomyong was a man whose ideals were well taken and appreciated throughout the region. He furthermore supported self-determination and independence for all peoples. He even contemplated creating a South East Asian league among neighbouring nations. But a military coup forced Pridi to go into exile in 1947. His vision of a league of South East Asian nations lives on and has become a reality in what is now ASEAN. Pridi spent his later years in Paris and died here at 83. He would be 100 years old in the year 2000. His centenary celebration, already prepared on the national level, will take place next year.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Members of the Executive Board,

The ideals and achievements of Pridi Banomyong could largely be linked to UNESCO's ideals and missions in the field of education, social and human sciences. It would be regrettable that a centenary celebration of a personage so eminent as Pridi Banomyong is to be ignored by UNESCO. In the lights of what I have just said, the Intersectoral Committee might see that it is appropriate to reconvene and reconsider its decision. May I humbly submit to the Executive Board that the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Pridi Banomyong be added to the list of celebrations of anniversaries as proposed to the Executive Board in Document 157 EX/34.

On 30th October 1999, UNESCO General Assembly unanimously declared Mr. Pridi Banomyong to be a Great Personality of the century.

Moon River Villagers Get Global Support

Date: 11/4/99 The Nation Mailbag

An open letter to Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai.

We write to express our support for the 1,850 people currently facing submergence at the Rasi Salai dam on the Moon River in the Northeast. These people intend to stay in their village, Mae Moon Man Yuen Village 2, and face the rising waters, until their demands are met.

The Department of Energy Development and Promotion is currently filling the reservoir and the water level is at 117.5 metres above sea level. Already four houses and 100 per cent of the village's rice fields and vegetable gardens have been flooded. If the level reaches 117.7 metres, the village will be entirely submerged and people will drown.

We are writing to urge you to direct the DEPD to immediately stop filling the reservoir, and to give due consideration to the people's demands. The villagers are demanding that the government re-examine the impacts of the project, drain the reservoir, determine the exact number of people affected by the dam, pay compensation to all affected people, and correct the environmental problems caused by the dam. If the government refuses to pay compensation, the villagers demand that the dam be removed.

These people have been demonstrating for more than six years, yet the government has refused to listen. On April 20 of this year, more than 1,000 villagers affected by Rasi Salai dam occupied the dam site. Still the government did not listen. Now 1,850 people are prepared to die in order to get the attention of your government. They have lost everything and they feel they have nothing more to lose.

Rasi Salai has been plagued by problems and deceit ever since it was first conceived. DEPD failed to release any information to the public prior to construction, and stated that they would only build a small rubber weir 4.5 metres high, not a concrete dam 9 metres high.

More than 100 square kilometres were inundated, yet no Environmental Impact Assessment was conducted, contrary to the Environment Act. Even though the dam was completed in 1994, and DEPD is currently filling the reservoir, the irrigation system is not operational, so the dam is effectively useless.

The dam destroyed the fresh water swamp forest along the banks of the Moon River and blocked the migration of fish. The reservoir has been plagued by salination problems because it is located on top of a big salt dome. More than 3,000 families have lost their farmland to the reservoir, and compensation was paid for private property only, not for lost customary land rights. After a long struggle Gen Chavalit's government paid compensation to 1,154 families, yet more than 1,800 families remain uncompensated.

Please act now to protect the lives of these people and respect their demands. Thank you for your consideration of these important matters.

Aviva Imhof
South-East Asia Campaigner
International Rivers Network
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

Three New Books by Pridi Banomyong

Three books were published by The Committee on the Project for the National Celebration on the Occasion of the Centennial Anniversary of Pridi Banomyong, Senior Statesman (private sector), to celebrate the centennial anniversary of Pridi Banomyong (11th May 1900-11th May 2000).

The three books published in English language in 1999 were:

1. *National Economic Policy of Luang Pradist Manudharm*
2. *The King of the White Elephant, by Pridi Banomyong*
3. *The 1932 Revolutionist, by Kamron Gunatilaka*

National Economic Policy of Luang Pradist Manudharm, was published in 1939 as part of a larger volume titled *Siam in Transition: a Brief Survey of Cultural Trends in the 5 years Since the Revolution of 1932*, by Kenneth Perry Landon, University of Chicago Press 1939. The volume is still regarded as the best coverage for the immediate post revolution period.

National Economic Policy of Luang Pradist Manudharm details Pridi's economic plan for Siam. It represents Siam's first exercise in comprehensive economic planning. The plan was very controversial and was condemned, both by the Royalist Prime Minister Phya Manopakorn as well as by conservatives in the 1932 coup group, as "communistic". The plan which was apparently inspired by both the French and the Russian Revolution, called for the creation of state socialism through the nationalization of all farm lands, elimination of middlemen and placing all economic activity under centralized control by the state. Pridi envisioned all farmers working for the government as paid employees and receiving pension. Interestingly, some ideas, which were central to Marxist theory, like the concept of class struggle and the dictatorship of the proletariat were curiously absent from Pridi's notion of socialism.

Pridi's economic ideas have been ridiculed by subsequent generations of post war economists. But it would be extremely smug, with the benefit of 60 years' hindsight, to accuse Pridi of simple mindedness. In 1987 the world watched the Soviet Union's socialist experiment crumble in the full glare of television coverage. But who could have predicted, when the Soviet Union launched Sputnik that Communism could collapse within three decades?

If it seemed incredible in 1960, wouldn't it have been more so in 1932 in the midst of the Great Depression? Probably, the Best and the Brightest, among the intelligentsia of that time were betting on the inevitable collapse of Capitalism more than anything else was. Pridi was among the many rather than among the few. They saw that world capitalism was imploding and tried to develop new economic paradigms to replace it. And they were right. Capitalism would probably not have recovered from the Great Depression but for the advent of the Second World War.

The next book titled *The King of the White Elephant*, completed in 1940 took us to the eve of the Second World War. War drums were already sounding in Europe. The capitalist states in Europe and America, weakened by the prolonged world economic depression were being challenged by the ascendant states espousing rival ideologies and economic systems namely, Communism, Fascism and Totalitarianism.

Unlike Pridi's earlier economic plan, which called for overthrowing the capitalist system and replacing it with state socialism, his novel *The King of the White Elephant* expressed his fears that the growing challenge to the hegemony of capitalism would lead to another World War. The message of *the King of the White Elephant* was that the real evil facing the world was the specter of military aggression. Thus, if Pridi spoke strongly in favor of socialism he also spoke strongly against militarism. Unfortunately, his critics who accuse him of being a Communist chose to ignore his stand for freedom and against militarism. Pridi's socialist beliefs were tempered by his passion for peace.

The King of the White Elephant was more known for its political and pacifist message than for its focus on the aesthetics of language, imagery, characterization or depiction of complex social reality reflected in most modern novels in the Western tradition. The novel and the film based on it were distributed in Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries just before the Pacific War broke out.

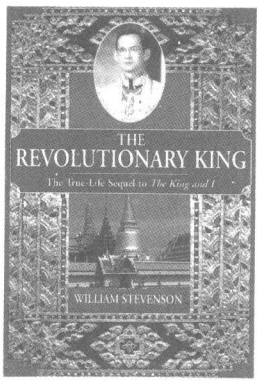
At the end of the war Pridi promulgated the Peace Declaration, on August 16th 1945, in the name of his Majesty King Ananda Mahidol to nullify Thailand's involvement in the Second

World War. Later, the Thammasart Association of Los Angeles published the novel again in its original English language form and its Thai translation for the 45th Anniversary Celebrations of the Peace Declaration Day.

The final book titled *The 1932 Revolutionist* was a play based on the life of Pridi Banomyong. The playwright Kamron Gunatilaka avails himself of the full range of dramatic techniques, including language, imagery and characterization to portray Pridi's complex personality and the moral dilemmas and choices facing him as a statesman. The play was staged in Thailand and also in Paris during the Centennial Anniversary Celebrations earlier this year.

Jeffery Sng

The Revolutionary King: The True-Life Sequel of The King and I
by William Stevenson
(Constable, London) 1999



The King and I came into being from Magaret Landon's *Anna and the King of Siam*, which was based on Anna Leonowens' *Siam and the Siamese: Six Years' Recollections of an English Governess at The Siamese Court* which was first published in 1897

Mrs. Leonowens's book is known to be a mixture of facts and her own distortion of them, plus her own imagination of the Siamese Court which employed her as a teacher (not governess) for six years. One of her former pupils, Prince Devawongse, asked her why she wrote such fantastic tales, full of fabrication of the truth. She confessed that poverty made her write such a story. If she wrote it plainly and factually, no western publishers would consider her manuscript.

This is partly true. W.A.R. Wood complained as late as the 1930s that no publishers in London would publish his memoirs because it was factual and ordinary. He had it printed locally in Siam. Even his *History of Siam* was only published in Bangkok. Not until the late 1960s were his memoirs picked up by a London publisher, with a startling title of *Consul in Paradise*.

Although *The Revolutionary King* came out over one hundred years after Mrs. Leonowens's first book on Siam, it seems to be the same kind of book. Despite the fact that the author was invited to write an objective biography of His Majesty, whose photographs appear prominently on the front and back covers of the book above the photos of the royal temple of the emerald Buddha!

The author is well known to the Thai who read the King's own translation of his *A Man Called Interpid: The Secret War*. Yet Stevenson carried his style of secret war into the volume under review. His facts were mostly wrong—not to mention those that he intended to distort. Although quite a lot of unknown information was given to us, we do not know whether they are trustworthy and some of which one wonders whether any author with a clear conscience or with a professional ethic should write, prior to receiving the consent of the Thai Court, especially on the rivalry of the royal children. His praise for Princess Sirinthorn is in fact harmful to her and his appraisal of the Princess Mother is so laudable that it is difficult to believe that she was a human being. Did not she have any misbehaviour at all and was her father really Chinese? Furthermore he did not even spell her name correctly.

Stevenson claims to understand Thai culture but he certainly does not know anything about Thai etiquette. Is he so intimate with the royal family as to call the King Lek, his late Majesty Nan and Queen Sawang Old Grand Ma.

Further he tries to prove the King's innocence in the regicide case of his late brother. In fact there is no warrant for his testimony. By blaming King George VI and dragging King Leopold of the Belgians to down grade the last King-Emperor is unnecessary and tasteless. I believe the King never bore any ill will against any member of the British royal family, with the possible exception of the Earl of Burma.

If we can trust Stevenson's report from the King's conversations, it is clear that he did not think Pridi Banomyong was involved in the murder of his late Majesty. In fact the King was even concerned about the execution of the three convicts in the trumped-up charge of that case. However, Pibul's biography written by his son gives a contradictory evidence.

In fact in this book the author has some farfetched portrayals of people. Pibul was a really bad guy, together with Phao. He even plotted the demise of the Prince of Chainat. Although Stevenson criticised Sarit a little bit, on the whole he depicts Sarit as a hero. This may partly report the King's position on that dictator.

Stevenson's narrative on Thai politics vis-a-vis the King's role in it is not only unbelievable, but distorted and even full of lies. It is unwise if true, to link the King's name with blaming the American involvement in Thai politics. Stevenson meant well when he reported the King's conversation with President Johnson. But was it correct for His Majesty to beg for 3 helicopters from the American president to carry out a nonviolent revolution within the Kingdom? Although the President telephoned McNamara to fulfil the King's wish, the three helicopters never arrived here. This reminds me of the story told in Pravit Rojanaphruk's *Wishes and Lies* (pp.131-137) that a Thai petitioned the King ten times that his grief caused by the Crown Property Bureau and H.M.'s Personal Property Bureau be properly compensated. Each time H.M. said that the man would receive justice, yet he received none. And Stevenson should know that even to present a petition to the King was not an easy matter. This man had to use skillful means each time he could be any where near to the King. The same man also petitioned the Princess Mother—Mama as Stevenson called her. Although with her upbringing in the poor area of Bangkok and ultimately in her high position, she was so concerned with social welfare and royal charity. Yet like her son, she never understood the suffering of the poor caused by social structure which was unjust and H.M. is at the top of this structure with wealth from the Crown Property Bureau given to him unconstitutionally by the Dictator Sarit to claim his legitimacy. This is despite the fact that the Crown Property should really belong to the government or even to the people.

In 1964 *The Devils Discus: An inquiry into the death of Ananda, King of Siam*, appeared in print, to prove that Pridi was innocent in the regicide case. In fact Kruger tried to argue unconvincingly that the King committed suicide. But between the lines, on could guess how the late King was accidentally killed. Now in 1999 Stevenson went as far as to know the culprit with the name of Tsuji Masanoba who master minded all the bad events in Siam and Asia since before World War II until now.

I believe Kruger's book was banned from entering the Kingdom, yet the Thai translation appeared clandestinely. I was told that the book under review is also not allowed to be sold openly in Siam, for a different reason.

Of the two, I find Kruger's book more reliable, with thorough research on the subject and well written. But *The Revolutionary King* is worse than Mrs. Leonowens's book. Even the title is in fact an error. No King could be revolutionary. King could be very good or even goody if he adheres strictly under the country's constitution like those in Japan and Scandinavia. Some Kings could even do many very good royal projects for the welfare of their people if these projects could be properly evaluated. However some Kings who claim to do good for the citizens, who even helped the poor in many ways, yet most of the poor in his Kingdom shall always remain poor or may even get poorer. Yet often these Kings are mixed up with politics, always quietly. And they always ended up on the side of the victors who are on the whole dishonest and corrupt. People have to be careful of such Kings. Besides all over the world most people are now aware that big dams cause more harm than good yet the government want to celebrate the King's 72nd birthday with the latest gigantic dam. Whatever Kings do, by virtue of their office, they cannot be revolutionary, that is they cannot change things upside down, nor can they challenge the social structure which is both violent and unjust because Kings are at the top of the structure—if not politically, then economically and always culturally.

Still I am a monarchist in the country where monarchy has been established with its roots in our tradition. At worst, it is better than any new republic despite the fact that my good friend is now President of Indonesia. This is because presidency has no root in that country. The last two leaders have been really awful, like most of them in Southeast Asia. However hard a President tries to do good in his country, he has no aura to meaningfully change social structures. Of course no King can do this either, if he is so concerned about his own safety. Besides if he has no friends who are trustworthy enough to tell him the truth which may be unpleasant for him to hear. To rely on the so-called King's men is in fact harmful. If he really trusts people, he can open his heart and learn to be with the poor. Although he is not a revolutionary King he could pave the way for a non-violent revolution to take place within his Kingdom.

Sulak Sivaraksa

WORLD FESTIVAL OF SACRED MUSIC
A GLOBAL QUEST FOR UNISON

PATRONS

- SWAMI CHIDANANDA SARASWATI
- ARCHBISHOP DESMOND TUTU
- PANDIT RAVI SHANKAR
- PRESIDENT VACLAV HAVEL
- MADAME DANIELLE MITTERRAND
- PRINCE SADRUDDIN AGA KHAN
- ARJARN SULAK SIVARAKSA
- The Late Lord Yehudi Menuhin was also a Patron of the Festival

Inspired and guided by the vision of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Tibet House and Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness, have initiated the *World Festival of Sacred Music*, a series of Festivals to be held in many parts of the world starting in autumn 1999 and continuing throughout the year 2000. With the central message of peace, understanding and universal responsibility, this festival is a global celebration of the human spirit as we usher in the new millennium.

The *World Festival of Sacred Music* has already taken place in Los Angeles, Chicago, Vancouver and Cape Town on December 9, 1999. In addition to these sites, more Festivals are scheduled to be held at other places in USA, Canada, Europe, South East Asia and the Far East.

The main event, the **Global Festival** is being organised in **Bangalore**, India *from April 9 to 16, 2000.* It will feature a series of performances over a period of eight days, representing the world heritage of sacred music. It will include the world's major religious traditions as well as the indigenous cultures of the different continents.

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"There is something in music that transcends and unites. This is evident in the sacred music of every community. The World Festival of Sacred Music is being initiated as a coming together of people of diverse backgrounds and traditions to share and nurture the profoundest expression of the human spirit that is part of each one of us"

The Dalai Lama