

SEEDS OF PEACE

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Welcoming H.H. The Dalai Lama to Siam



ARIYA-VINAYA
Exploring A Noble Discipline
Appropriate for The 21st Century



The above is the crest
of H.R.H. the Princess Mother,
whose centennary is on
21st October 2000.

SEEDS OF

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PEACE

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INEB

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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.

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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.



Tan Chin

While many of us are celebrating Mr. Pridi Banomyong's centenary this year, we also recognise his co-workers who dedicated their lives for Siam's independence and democracy as well as for the welfare of the poor. One of them is Prince Subhasavati (known as Tan Chin) whose 100th birth anniversary is on 23rd August 2000.

Tan Chin was a grandson of Rama IV and brother-in-law of Rama VII, who in 1933 had been accused by the military government as a counter revolutionist against the People's Party and he had to accompany Rama VII to England in exile until the king's abdication and death in that country.

When Siam was occupied by the Japanese troops in WW II, Tan Chin helped to organize the Free Thai Movement and entered the kingdom clandestinely using the code name of Arun, and met Ruth, the leader of the movement, who was the Regent; Rama VIII was still a minor studying in Switzerland. Arun and Ruth or Tan Chin and Tan Pridi became good friends, helping to reconcile members of the royal family with those of the People's Party.

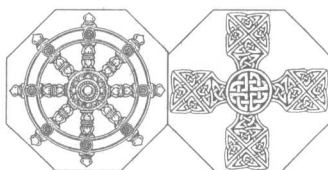
Unfortunately after Rama VIII returned to Siam at the end of the War, he was one day found dead in the royal bed chamber. Many who clung to feudalism and absolute monarchy accused Pridi of plotting the regicide. Ultimately, there was a coup d'etat in 1947, and he had to flee the country for good. Yet Tan Chin was one of the very few who stood by Pridi, openly arguing for his innocence. Hence he suffered a great deal from his royal cousins whereas in 1933 they all admired him for his courage in standing for the Princes by not kowtowing to the powers that be. In fact, Tan Chin always stood for what he felt to be right and had the moral courage to speak the truth to powers and acted accordingly.

Ashram Wongsanit was named after him, as his full name was His Serene Highness Prince Subhasavati Wongsanit. On his centenary, his family produced a wonderful memorial volume which gives a lot of historical evidence—hitherto unknown to the public.

EDITORIAL NOTES

July has been a very eventful and turbulent month. The good news is that the first phase of the Ariyavinaya meeting has been quite a success. It will facilitate the working of second phase of the meeting—no doubt a major event as His Holiness the Dalai Lama will preside over it. This meeting is tentatively scheduled for the end of the year. See the special report on the Ariyavinaya meeting for more detail. The bad news is that the 'democratic' Thai government has once again revealed its ugly, elitist, callous, and undemocratic face when dealing with the Pak Moon dam demonstrators. We are not accusing the government of hypocrisy for it has been consistently hypocritical. For weeks, many Pak Moon villagers have camped out in front of the government house and engaged in non-violent demonstrations. Tired of government indifference for their plight, many attempted to break in the government house in order to meet the prime minister. In so doing, over 200 villagers were detained (and subsequently released) and many were beaten by the police. The prime minister insisted that the demonstrators had been mobilized by a third-hand, side-stepping the fact that the villagers are suffering from real grievances. Several commentators and police officers picked up and expanded this thesis, putting the blame on political opponents, Japanese NGOs, Laotian insurgent groups, and so on. The prime minister argued that he had to consider the national interest before meeting the demands of the Pak Moon villagers who represent special interests. In other words, if you are poor, weak, and marginalized, you are part of special interest. But if you are rich, powerful, and privileged, you represent the national interest. The interests of rich Thai investors and corporations are the national interests; those of the Pak Moon villagers are special interests. The Pak Moon demonstrators stepped up the ante by engaging in a hunger strike. At the time of this writing, matters are still unresolved.

This issue also includes the last article of the Solidarity Forest Walk series. We also have a wrap-up article on the symposium that was held in Ayutthaya and two speeches in honor of Mr. Pridi Banomyong by Sulak Sivaraksa and President Abdurrahman Wahid of Indonesia.



Society for Buddhist - Christian Studies

Whereas the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders meeting on August 28-31, 2000, will be the first meeting of prominent religious leaders from all major traditions at the United Nations

and whereas the purposes are to sign a united resolution for peace and to take steps toward forming an International Advisory Council of Religious and Spiritual Leaders, as well as Regional Councils, to be a resource for the Secretary General and the United Nations in building cultures of peace and a sustainable future,

we, the International Buddhist-Christian Conference on Global Healing of the Society of Buddhist-Christian Studies, urge that the Advisory Council be as inclusive as possible, especially to include His Holiness the Dalai Lama,

and we urge the Executive Committee of the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies to find ways to advance the work of the Advisory Councils in the areas of (1) conflict resolution, (2) the elimination of poverty, (3) ecological preservation and enhancement, and (4) forgiveness.

BURMA:

People's Tribunal on Food Scarcity and Militarization in Burma (The Union of Myanmar)

I am writing on behalf of the People's Tribunal on Food Scarcity and Militarization in Burma. I am sure that you are aware of the report produced by the tribunal on October 15, 1999, with their findings and recommendations.

The secretariat of the tribunal has been following the reports coming from Burma related to food scarcity. All of the information that we have received confirms the findings of the tribunal. What is worse is that the situation regarding food scarcity in the country is much worse than previously believed. The government itself has acknowledged the possibility of a graver crisis in this area. However, other than rhetorical condemnation in which the opposition is blamed for creating the shortage of food, the military regime is making no effort to remedy the situation. In fact, the regime is carrying on with its same policies of dislocation, displacement, and forced labor that were the primary causes for creating a food crisis in Burma in the first place—a country which was once known as the Rice Bowl of Asia. Recent documentaries show a massive exodus, particularly of the ethnic peoples from their native lands. The main purpose of this dislocation is said to be counterinsurgency operations. The people fleeing one area are gathered in places far away from their own lands, and then they try to grow food again while fearing that the

military may further pursue them. The growing of crops, harvesting, and grinding, take place in an extreme hurry as the people have to leave as soon as they receive news of advancing troops. These documentaries show an animal-like existence of insecurity and fear. The fleeing peoples include children, women, and the elderly. As far as the children are concerned, this means a total absence of opportunities for any type of education, whether at school or at home.

Given the continuing food scarcity and the associated grievances of vast numbers of peoples, the tribunal members are of the opinion that the cause of these people must be better brought to the notice of the international community as soon as possible. On July 18, 2000, the tribunal members met and reviewed the progress of the publicity relating to this issue.

One of the recommendations of the tribunal is to seek the help of prominent individuals and groups to intervene in this issue in order to create greater public pressure on behalf of these people in Burma who are suffering from the absence of one of the basic needs of human beings—food. Your name was identified as one who can influence this process of gaining support on behalf of the Burmese people.

Thus, I am writing to request that you, on behalf of the People's Tribunal on Food Scarcity and Militarization, be kind enough

to lend your support to this cause by issuing a statement on the problem of food scarcity in Burma and the need to remedy it as soon as possible. You are welcome to use the tribunal's findings and recommendations as reference material. You may decide on the length of your statement, of course. However, some reference in the statement summarizing the situation and your views on the matter would be very useful.

You may issue the statement and send it to us so that we can send it to the Burmese government, the United Nations, the media, and any other person or group who is concerned about this problem. Your support for this effort is very much appreciated. Please also feel free to ask others to issue their own statement.

If you need any further information, you may refer to our web site (<http://www.hrschool.org/tribunal>) in which a great deal of information is available on the work of the People's Tribunal and the issue of food scarcity in Burma, including the tribunal's full report, which has been published as a book entitled *Vice of the Hungry Nation*. Furthermore, you may contact us if you need any further assistance. Thank you for your kind consideration of our request.

Bruce Van Voorhis
Asian Human Rights Commission
on behalf of the People's Tribunal

INDONESIA: A Personal Evaluation

On May 10, Thammasat University observed the centennial anniversary of its founder, Mr. Pridi Banomyong. President Abdulrahman Wahid of Indonesia was the keynote speaker at the commemorative ceremony held there. Mr. Wahid said that my invitation had greatly influenced him to participate in the ceremony. Later that month, he asked Mr. Habibie, the former president, to invite me to join the first symposium of the newly opened Habibie Center in Jakarta. During my short stay in the Indonesian capital, I had a pleasant dinner with Mr. Wahid, and he invited me to breakfast at the presidential palace. Whenever I drop by Jakarta again, Mr. Wahid insisted, I should not waste money on hotel accommodation and stay at the presidential residence.

In collaboration with Mr. Pracha Hutanuwat, I seek to disseminate and explore the alternative or counter-current political ideas of leading Asian thinkers. For instance, we had dialogued with Chandra Muzaffar of Malaysia and published the book *Alternative Politics for Asia: a Buddhist-Muslim Dialogue*. Similarly, we have published numerous interviews held with, among others, Bishop Labayan of the Philippines, Asish Nandy of India, and Helena Norberg-Hodge, whose great work in Ladakh is world renown. We plan to hold an interview with Aung San Suu Kyi soon.

Therefore, during my next trip to Jakarta, I interviewed Mr. Wahid, who was very cooperative and enthusiastic. As promised, we—I brought along four



Buddhist friends—stayed over in the presidential residence. There we were joined by a number of Indonesian Buddhists. Mr. Wahid warmly and graciously received each and every one of us. Our residential quarter had hosted numerous foreign dignitaries, including King Sihanouk of Cambodia. As a result, we led a kingly existence for a few days.

Moreover, I had an opportunity to accompany Mr. Wahid on an official trip to Surabaya, which is located on the northeastern part of Java. Mr. Wahid had to meet and discuss issues with the members of his movement. Upon his arrival, a crowd of more than one hundred thousand people had already gathered to express their support for him. They received him with a rapturous ovation. And for approximately two hours they stood under the sun's fierce heat to listen to Mr. Wahid's oration. I was told that many of them had traveled from distant cities and towns, using their own expenses.

After delivering the oration, Mr. Wahid presided over the opening of an art exhibition to promote the works of local artists. In other words, Mr. Wahid is an aesthetic person. He appre-

ciates beauty and art like he appreciates and upholds truth and morality. By morality, I do not simply mean Islam, Mr. Wahid's religion. It can be said that Mr. Wahid is receptive and supportive of the ethical standards of all religions. At the very least, he places great emphasis on non-violence and peaceful resolution of conflict like Mahatma Gandhi. He also insists that historically speaking Buddhism and Brahmanism had strongly influenced Indonesia culturally and ethically. In fact, Indonesia had been a Buddhist nation before becoming a Muslim one. Hence, Mr. Wahid contends, Indonesian Muslims must not forget this important fact. Even if Christianity is a relatively new religion in Indonesia, Christians must be equally and compassionately treated in society. The Muslim extremists think otherwise, and what this meant for the Indonesian Christians and Buddhists, who are mostly of Chinese origin, is now all too tragically clear.

Although treading a tight-rope, Mr. Wahid is competently working to defuse the religious time bomb in Indonesia. We must not forget that many of the chronic problems confronting Indonesia

today are the direct consequences of its postwar history. For approximately four decades, Indonesia had been corruptly and often brutally ruled as a private tyranny. As a result, the military has become a state within a state, involving in a wide array of corrupt and illegal activities. Domestic dissent and democratic tendencies had been continuously crushed. And the United States and transnational corporations had dominated the country, particularly during the Suharto regime. It is impossible to solve these problems overnight. It is also impossible to find a better substitute for Mr. Wahid. At present, no one is as capable, competent, just, trustworthy, morally upright, honest, confident yet modest, affable, simple, and often humorous as he is.

Reading the English language newspapers, we get the impression that the Wahid presidency is extremely fragile politically. However, if we seriously consider the views of ordinary Indonesians from the grassroots, we will begin to realize that Mr. Wahid is widely respected for his political acumen and creativity: it begins to dawn on us that Mr. Wahid is in fact very popular. We must remember that as a man who represents the poor—a person who is from and supported by the grassroots—Mr. Wahid is the *bête noire* of transnational corporations, multilateral trade and financial institutions, and other centers of power. They have a stake in discrediting him. Likewise, many western-educated Indonesians are questioning Mr. Wahid's political maneuvers and accomplishments. They have explicitly doubted his ability to cope with, among other things, corruption and separatist movements in the country.

If we discard the western lenses and hold our prejudices at

bay, we will better understand the context of the situation in Indonesia. We may begin to comprehend the Javanese culture, which is a mixture of Wayang and *Inao* peppered with *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. In turn, we will better understand and appreciate the role of Mr. Wahid—even if we are still unable to fathom the impacts that Islam has on him.

I may be a biased observer. For over three decades, Mr. Wahid and I have maintained a close and intimate friendship. We seem to understand each other fairly well. We have been supportive of one another, especially in times of trouble. For instance, Mr. Wahid extended his support and help when I fell prey to the sadistic joy of the reactionary Thai ruling clique, military or otherwise.

Nevertheless, it is impossible to deny that Mr. Wahid relies on good will and compassion to resolve conflicts. He does not treat his domestic and international opponents as enemies. Rather he deals with them sincerely and benignly. Mr. Wahid knows their hidden agendas but tries to channel their energy to help find solutions to the problems ravaging the country. Thus Mr. Wahid has been able to win the allegiance of many Indonesian generals. He even fired one of the most powerful generals in the country: he must have been fairly confident of receiving continued support from the military.

During a tour of Melan, I witnessed how Mr. Wahid firmly but sincerely dealt with the military generals. He even peppered his conversation with them with some humor. The generals seem to support him. President Wahid showed no favoritism to the military generals. He told them that Indonesia is still a very poor country. Although he wants to

bolster the military, the plight of the poor also demands immediate attention. The military cannot benefit at the expense of the poor people. He encouraged the military to limit their role to protecting the national security of the country and to disengage from illegal economic activities. The Indonesian military establishment as well as its Thai counterpart have undergone some positive changes, helping to make democracy more meaningful in both countries. In Melan, Mr. Wahid somehow managed to find the time to pray with the poor local people. Surely, he was driven by faith, not by the desire to perform a clever public relations stunt. Mr. Wahid also went to pay homage to and pray at the grave of his mentor and religious teacher.

As a president who represents the poor and challenges the centers of power, Mr. Wahid will inevitably incur the wrath of the rich and powerful. In the past, the rich and powerful could not tolerate President Julius Nyerere, who embarked on socialistic programs and undermined the interests of the capitalist investors. On the other hand, President Vaclav Havel of the Czech Republic has constantly warned against the threat of unregulated capitalism and transnational corporations. However, he has not launched any concrete programs to oppose both of these threats. President Wahid seeks changes and remedies to the grave socioeconomic issues confronting his country and the world. Partly due to his health problem, he chose a non-confrontational approach. Mr. Wahid will probably be able to resist the pressure to conform to the international agenda set by the rich and powerful—though I am told that the American ambassador to Jakarta is increasingly intolerant of Mr. Wahid. My brief

tour with Mr. Wahid further augments my respect for him.

One of President Sukarno's great accomplishments was the Bandung Conference of 1955. It was a notable gathering of non-aligned leaders and countries. Even the Thai government sent Prince Wanwaitayakorn to Bandung to meet Chou Enlai of China. Prime minister Phibunsongkhram ultimately—albeit belatedly—recognized the danger of unequivocally seconding US foreign policy. Subsequently,

the United States backed General Sarit Thanarat, who removed Phibun from power and strengthened the 'special relationship' between Bangkok and Washington.

Within the next 5 years, President Wahid vows to organize a second Bandung Conference. It will be a meeting of non-aligned peoples demanding for freedom from political and economic domination, for social, economic, and cultural diversity. It will be a forum for small and

weak states to coalesce with dignity and equality.

President Wahid's term will expire in 2004. Hopefully, he will be able to complete his term. Needless to say, immense obstacles await for him ahead. However, he seems to be endowed with the right combination of mind and heart, rendering his vision potent enough to confront short-term problems and to lay the bedrock for long term peace and prosperity.

Sulak Sivaraksa

MALAYSIA: Mahathir's Handling of Anwar

Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew said yesterday Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad had suffered dearly from errors of judgment in dealing with his former deputy Anwar Ibrahim.

"He made an error of judgment, several errors of judgment, which I felt were most unfortunate," Mr Lee said in Kuala Lumpur at the end of a four-day visit to Malaysia.

Mr Lee said he felt it was a blunder for police to use the Internal Security Act (ISA), which provides for indefinite detention without trial, to arrest Anwar, who was sacked as deputy prime minister in 1998.

A commission of inquiry should have been established immediately after Anwar was beaten in police custody, Mr Lee said.

Instead, it took months before the police chief admitted to hitting Anwar, who is in jail serving two sentences totalling 15 years.

"As I've said before, it was an unmitigated disaster, and I felt more sorry for Dr Mahathir than

I did for Anwar," Mr Lee said. "I think Dr Mahathir paid a very heavy price and I feel sorry for him."

Anwar testified in his two trials over corruption and sodomy that Dr Mahathir orchestrated a conspiracy to drive him from government and prevent him from ever attaining power. The premier denied the accusation, saying Anwar was morally unfit.

Several foreign governments joined human rights groups in criticising the verdict and sentencing in Anwar's sodomy trial earlier this month.

Dr Mahathir responded, saying Malaysia now knew who its friends and enemies were.

"Singapore is not an enemy. If anything it is a friend," Mr Lee said.

"We must not forget that we have extremely close ties with the leaders in Malaysia, including Datuk Seri Anwar when he was a minister."

Mr Lee said he met Dr Mahathir in early 1999, months after Anwar had been arrested,

in Davos, Switzerland, and asked him why the former minister had been arrested under the ISA.

"How can he be a national security threat when only three weeks, four weeks ago he was your deputy for 12 years?" Mr Lee asked Dr Mahathir.

"And he told me, and I was flabbergasted, that he did not know that Anwar was going to be arrested under the ISA, that it was the prerogative of the police chief.

"And I thought that was the beginning of a series of blunders that cost him dearly."

Mr Lee, who led Singapore from 1959 to 1990, said Anwar should not have been arrested under ISA.

"It should have been a straightforward criminal charge under the penal code for corruption, sodomy, whatever, produced in court the day after his arrest," said Mr Lee.

"But this police chief arrested him under ISA and then the next disaster—the blue eye," he said, referring to injuries Anwar suffered when he was beaten by

former police chief Abdul Rahim Noor on the night of his arrest.

Before Rahim Noor confessed, Dr Mahathir said Anwar might have inflicted the injuries himself. Rahim Noor was in March jailed for two months and fined 2,000-ringgit (20,000 baht). He is on bail and an appeal

is pending.

Mr Lee said he asked Dr Mahathir why a commission of inquiry into Anwar's injuries had not been set up immediately, not months later.

"It would not have absolved him [Mahathir] from blame, but it would have cleared the doubt

that he was a party to it. As he said to me, 'What benefit do I get out of it? I agreed.

"But these are things which have been done, and I'm afraid he has paid very dearly for it."

Bangkok Post,
Friday, August 18, 2000

SIAM: Many Urgent Issues

The Thais still live in the gloomy economy. The increasing fuel prices have compounded many problems resulted from the 1997 financial crash. Yet, the Thai government has so far failed to devise economic measures for the recovery. Worse still, problems derived from their previous negligence and mistake have mounted, especially among the poor.

The Yadana Gas Pipeline: Despite its completion both in Thailand and Burma, the delivery has yet to take place due to the unfinished Ratchaburi power plant. Set to be the biggest combined-cycle units in the world, the plant boasts almost five billion USD for its total investment including the thermal units, altogether with the capacity of 5,000 megawatts. Despite strong protests from the environmental and human rights movements in Thailand, the Thai government gave a nod to the project, which has led to the remittance of advance payments (about 55 million USD) by the Thai authorities to the Yadana consortium without receiving the gas. To shoulder the interests incurred from the payments, the National Commission on Energy Policy, headed by the Prime Minister, has proposed the rise of the electricity tariff. Sulak Sivaraksa, who was solely

arrested on the charge of obstructing the pipeline construction during his solo sit-in in the forest where the pipeline was being laid down, still pursues the court case hoping that more lies of PTT will be exposed.

Last May, Earth Rights International based in both the US and Thailand has launched Total Denial II, an updated account of brutalities in Burma concerning the construction and the investment of the Yadana pipeline project. The cases against the Unocal, part of the Yadana consortium, on ground of human rights violation, are being tried in the US federal court. In the meanwhile, ILO (International Labor Organization) has taken the strongest position in its history calling for international boycott against Rangoon.

The Assembly of the Poor comprising movements of people affected by governmental development projects including the construction of dam, has intensified their mobilization to pressure the Chuan government to address their problems. Its members, many of whom have been chugged out from their lands to pave way for dam construction and plantation schemes (including fast-growing trees such as Eucalyptus), began their occupation of the Pak Moon Dam site in

Ubon Ratchadham since early this year. Seeing that their plea has fallen on deaf ear, they have moved to Bangkok and set up their villages in front of the Governmental House for nearly two months now. On the Vesakha Day, the attempt was made by the suffering villagers to climb into the Governmental House. Most of them including women, children and the elderly were met with batons and harsh treatments from the officers resulting in many injuries. One pregnant woman got a miscarriage afterwards. All of them were initially charged with trespassing and arrested. Amidst strong outcry from the public, the government decided to free them unconditionally.

After the event, a neutral committee was set up to hear the case. Several proposals by the committee included the opening of the dam's spillways of both Pak Moon Dam. Most proposals were initially ignored by the government and concerned authorities including the Electricity Generating Agency of Thailand (EGAT). They finally agreed on most proposals after a wide array of pleas from all leading figures including businessmen and the former Prime Minister, Mr. Anand Panyarachun. However, they still refuse to yield to the demand by the villagers who were evicted

from their land being accused of forest encroachment in the Kang Ka Arm National Park. The government, especially the Royal Forest Department, has attempted to kill the efforts by people's movements and NGOs, which call for the amendment of laws to allow indigenous people to continue inhabiting in their forestlands. The Kang Ka Arm villagers, who have been living there even before the National Park law was declared, are the first victim in this process.

In Kudchum District, Yasothorn Province, Northeast of Thailand, the first ever local

currency system was put in place last April. Being called "Bia Kudchum", the currency was devised to help sustain local economy. Having achieved certain self-sustenance including having their own rice mills to process their non-chemical rice and producing their own traditional medicine, the villagers felt the time was ripe to set their own exchange system. The project has been supported by the Community Currency System in Thailand and the Local Development Institute and other affiliated. However, after two weeks of implementation, the effort was

thwarted by the word of local officers of the Bank of Thailand against the system. The official letter by the BOT's governor was released to the press in August confirming that the system violates Thai monetary laws and has to be scrapped. A plan was laid down to ask for exempt permission from the Minister of Finance, and the villagers are still very keen to pursue the use of the money.

There has been growing pressure for the government to call general election earlier as well.

Pipop Udomittipong

Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa is due to appear in court on 31 August as he was accused of obstructing the Yadana gas pipeline. The judge has also recommended his lawyers to transfer the case to the Constitutional Court as his lawyers have challenged that he had been arrested unconstitutionally.

TIBET: vis-a-vis the UN

Secretary to
HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA

July 31, 2000

Mr. Bawa Jain
Secretary General
The Millennium World Peace Summit
of Religious & Spiritual Leaders
301 East 57th Street, 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10022
U.S.A.

Dear Mr. Bawa Jain,

His Holiness the Dalai Lama directs me to thank you for your letter of July 27, 2000 inviting Him to give the keynote address at the closing plenary session of the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religion and Spiritual Leaders on August 31. His Holiness is honoured by the invitation, but it is with much regret that He is unable to accept the invitation. His Holiness however would like to send a high-level Tibetan delegation to represent Him during the Summit.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has never been comfortable in accepting invitations that are made out of compulsion rather than willingly. He has always avoided embarrassing or causing inconvenience to anyone, whether they are individuals or governments. Moreover, the invitation has come far too late. His Holiness's programs, especially a teaching to which people from several parts of the world including a large group from Taiwan are coming to attend, have been finalized many months in advance.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Tenzin Geyche Tethong

INEB Update

The INEB Women and Gender Program facilitated a four-day "Feminist Counseling Workshop". The workshop was held in Cambodia during May 2000, and twenty-four people participated in it. Our local partner, the Project Against Domestic Violence (PADV), organized the workshop. The participants included six nuns from the Association of Nuns and Lay Women of Cambodia (ANLWC) and eighteen PADV staff. The main focus of the training was looking into the "big picture" of violence against women in Cambodia, with particular emphasis on domestic violence. We helped the participants practice skills and qualities of an empowering-counseling model, which is a combination of Buddhist mindfulness practice and feminist power sharing perspective. Next year, we anticipate the second level for learning about the empowering-counseling

model.

The INEB Women and Gender Program facilitated a four-day (June 2000) "Empowerment and Women Leadership" training for the Karen women leaders. Our local partner is the Karen Women Organization (KWO), the largest group of women refugees living in Thailand. The core contents for this training are: personal and group empowerment, the "big picture" on women's oppression and the issue of power. The participants developed a plan and activities to teach about women's oppression and rights, empowerment and domestic violence. They considered specific groups of women for their activities, such as high school students, teachers, migrant workers and women group members.

The INEB Women and Gender Program facilitated the first social action trainer course

(June 2000) for the multi-ethnic women groups from Burma. The women were Shan, Karen, Karenni, Burman and Mon. The focus of the training was on the concept and skills for experiential learning. The training also emphasized building trust and unity among the multi-ethnic participants. A follow-up course is anticipated next year.

The INEB Executive Committee is in the process to select its Executive Secretary. The process is taking longer than expected, since the committee recognizes the importance to find an experienced person who would effectively contribute to the ongoing challenges and the future direction. Until the office is again functioning, all urgent matters should be sent to two of the Executive Committee members. (Alan Senauke - alan@bpf.org and Ouyporn Khuan-kaew - ouypornk@hotmail.com)

The Dalai Lama: A Simple Monk

His Holiness the Dalai Lama often introduces himself as "a simple monk" despite the fact that he is widely known as the ocean of wisdom—a head of state as well as a special spiritual leader of Vajrayana Buddhism—not to mention his unique position as an emanation of Chenrezi, the Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva of Compassion.

I find the way His Holiness describes himself most meaningful and touching. This reflects not only humility itself but it is also significantly truthful.

A few years ago, leaflets were circulated outside a large public meeting at Diamond Head, Ho-

His Holiness the Dalai Lama is a patron of International Network of Engaged Buddhists, Spirit in Education Movement and Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation, all of which are located in Siam. (If you want to know more about these organizations, please see *A View from Below* which is being reviewed in this issue.) As H.H. is going to visit this country, we wish to welcome him with the following article.

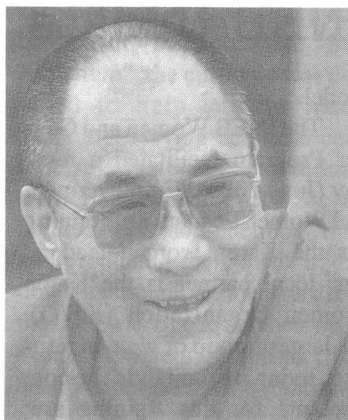
lulu, by Christians stressing the fact that the Dalai Lama refers to himself as only a simple monk. As a result, this begs the following questions: What could he do? Why should people be attracted to—or even respect—him? Instead, the people should turn to Jesus, who was not only the Son of God but also the Savior of the World.

On the other hand, both in public as well as in private, His Holiness has often praised Jesus, Mohammed, and all religious leaders. He encourages the Christians and the Jews to practice their own religions wisely and mindfully. If they want to add Buddhist meditation to their

spiritual traditions, it is all right, provided that they do not belittle their own religions.

This reminds me of another simple monk, my own late teacher, Bhikkhu Buddhadasa, whom His Holiness also greatly admired. He asked all his followers to uphold three crucial points: (1) Try to understand the essential teachings of the Buddha and put them into practice as selflessly as possible; (2) respect and honor our friends' religions, not regarding them as inferior to ours; and (3) unite with those of other faiths and non-believers so that together we could overcome greed, hatred, and delusion. These are increasingly being manifested in consumerism, centralization of power, and modern education, which concentrates only on intellectualism and is devoid of wisdom and compassion.

Bhikkhu Buddhadasa dedicated himself to work as the servant (dasa) of the Buddha. Indeed, the Buddha himself was a simple monk. We may recall that when the Buddha was a prince, he reveled in all worldly pleasures, shielding himself from suffering in the world. Eventually, he managed to witness an old man, a sick man, a dead man, and a monk. Suddenly, it dawned upon him that sickness and death are parts of suffering. He wanted to overcome suffering. Hence he felt that abandoning sensual pleasures and family life to become a simple mendicant might be a way to overcome suffering. In fact, the Buddha-to-be was a wandering monk for six years before he could become truly awakened from greed, hatred, and delusion. His understanding was so thorough that there was no selfishness left behind. As a result, his wisdom was automatically transformed into compassion. That is the reason why we call him the All Enlightened and the Compas-



sionate One.

For us, being a simple monk (or a simple nun) is really essential for a human person to achieve the highest goal in life—overcoming suffering and being in the state of real happiness without depending on sensual or external conditions.

If we do not lead a simple life we depend so heavily on many other factors that we have no time and energy left for deep concentration in order to be mindful, to understand the reality of physical phenomena as well as the mystery of the universe. Scientific knowledge only helps us to understand some aspects of the universe, often compartmentally. On the other hand, deep meditation without selfishness will help one to realize the truth holistically.

Being a simple monk helps one to be less selfish more easily than a lay person attached to family life, because a simple monk is not tied down to sensual pleasure, which is like a double-edged dagger. It is a fact that every gain, honor, sensual happiness, or praise has its negative attribute: loss, dishonor, suffering, and denunciation, respectively. According to the Buddha, these are the eight worldly conditions. Whoever is attached to any of these will not be free from the cycles of birth and death.

Unfortunately, some monks who have left the mundane world to pursue the truth are still caught in one or more of the eight worldly conditions. Losing their simplicity and sometimes even obsessed with fame and wealth, they are monks only in name: they no longer lead a celibate or a noble life. Hence some monks have even become hypocrites—fooling themselves and others. These so-called monks are worse than ordinary lay person.

Morality or ethics is said to be the foundation of the successful development of human potentials. According to the teachings of the Buddha, living within the discipline of the vows of morality—commitments not to harm any living being with one's body or speech by not lying, not killing, not stealing, etc.—is the most effective way to accumulate the positive karmic energy of morality: literally a build-up of positive habits of mind, body and speech.

Vows or commitments are viewed not as moralistic restrictions but as practical guidelines for life. There are sets of vows for lay people, but the vows of monks and nuns, are said to serve as the most potent way to live within the commitments of morality. Fully ordained monks, for example, have 227 vows.

Logically then the more vows one has and keeps—that one uses as the tools they are meant to be—the easier it is to develop our innate potential for love, kindness, patience, wisdom and the rest. And it is common sense that one is more likely to succeed at something by devoting more time to it than less and by living in an environment—internal and external—that totally supports the endeavor.

Put it in another way, the life of a monk (or a nun) deals with integrity, restraint and chastity in matters related to the sexual

instincts of the body. In this day and age of consumerism and materialism, most people do not see the virtue of those who lead completely celibate lives.

An English monk, Bhikkhu Jayasaro, expresses this issue beautifully as follows:

"It's only through taking this impeccable standard that we can begin to understand the whole nature of sexuality. We begin to see its conditioned nature, how it arises and passes away. We begin to see the suffering inherent in any attachment to it, how impersonal it is, what feeds it, what gives power to it, whether it be physical conditions, foods, lack of sense restraint or indulgence in imagination. We begin to see it as a conditioned phenomenon. But we can only have a distance from it, be able to reflect on it and see it for what it is by refraining from its physical and verbal expressions."

"There is an important point about defilements here: that we have to pin them down on the mental level before we can let go of them. And the way we pin something down on the mental plane is that we refrain consciously or endure through the intention to express it physically or verbally. This is where the relationship between sila, samadhi and panna becomes very clear. As long as we're still expressing sexual feelings physically, or indulging in lascivious or careless speech about sexual matters, then we can never isolate it. It's moving, it's still receiving energy. We're still keeping it in motion, we're still feeding the flames. So we seek to counter the stream of craving. And to do that successfully we must aspire to transcend sexuality altogether. It is that aspiration, as much as the actual restraint, that distinguishes the samana from the layperson."



"So as celibate monks we take a whole new stance toward our sexual feelings, towards women-half of the human race. We practice looking on women who are older than us as mothers, if they're just a few years older than us as older sisters, if a few years younger than us as younger sisters. We substitute wholesome perceptions of women for the sensual. This is a beautiful gift that we can give women. An attractive woman comes into the monastery, and we refrain from indulging in sexual perceptions, sexual thoughts about that woman and substitute it with wholesome reflections, whether it is consciously trying to perceive the woman as a sister, or wishing that person freedom from suffering. Practicing metta we reflect, 'may they be well'."

"We offer women the gift of a wholesome response to them as human beings rather than following the instinctive attraction or obsession with their body or some aspect of their physical appear-

ance. Through that intention we experience an immediate elevation from the blind instinctual level of our being to the uniquely human. It is a movement from the coarse to the refined. Indeed, the Pali word brahmachariya, which we translate into English as celibacy, literally means 'the way of the gods'. In other words, within the human realm, a chaste life led voluntarily and with contentment is the most refined, sublime and happy form of existence."

A simple monk endeavors to attain and uphold upekkha, which is tragically lacking in our richly violent world. Upekkha is the fourth stage of the Brahmavihara, the divine sentiments or sublime states of mind, and is generally defined as equanimity, neutrality, or poise. Venerable P. A. Payutto, a leading Thai monk, explains upekkha as follows: "Seeing things as they are with a mind that is even, steady, firm, and fair like a pair of scales; understanding that all beings experience good and evil in

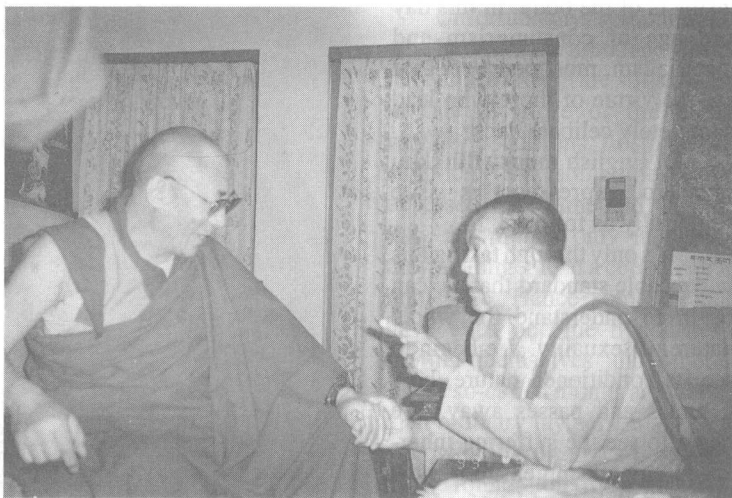
accordance with the causes they have created; [and the readiness] to judge, position oneself, and act in accordance with principle, reason, and equity.”

Raising a good example, the Venerable Bhikku argued that upekkha is performed when seeing that the individuals within one’s charge are safely and effectively performing their own duties, one knows how to simply look on with detachment-without bossing them around or interfering. It is compared to a carriage driver who, when the horses are running smoothly and on course, sits quietly and alertly in his or her seat. In this sense, a more comprehensive definition of upekkha, drawn from Visuddhimagga, may be “passively watching when others are able to take responsibility for themselves, or when they deserve the results of the actions for which they are responsible.”

A point that needs to be emphasized is that upekkha does not mean hermetic isolation, apathy, insensitivity, or criminal negligence-sitting on a fence and doing nothing. Upekkha calls for mindful (temporary) detachment in order to cultivate wisdom; the latter is a prerequisite for helping others with compassion and understanding.

In Theravada tradition there are ten stages of perfection, and the individual is recommended to practice them. Upekkha is the final stage. The first nine stages are:

- 1) *Dana*: giving, charity, generosity, and liberality
- 2) *Sila*: morality, good conducts, i.e., respecting oneself and all sentient beings
- 3) *Nekkhamma*: renunciation or trying to overcome sensual pleasures
- 4) *Panna*: wisdom, insight, and understanding
- 5) *Viriya*: energy, effort, and



endeavor

- 6) *Khanti*: forbearance, tolerance, and endurance
- 7) *Sacca*: truthfulness
- 8) *Adhitthana*: resolution, determination
- 9) *Metta*: loving-kindness, friendliness

In this tradition, the ten stages of perfection are divided into three levels. The first is ordinary perfection or Parami. In the case of upekkha one becomes indifferent to praise and is not stranglehold by blame in the performance of one’s duty. (Again, indifference to blame is not the same as being irresponsible for the negative consequences of one’s action or inaction.) The second is superior perfection or upaparami. Here one is indifferent even when one is being harmed physically. Lastly is supreme perfection or paramathaparami. At this level, one is indifferent even one is being tortured to death. In other words, through the supreme perfection, one would achieve the stage of awakening from selfishness to selflessness-the ‘I’ is completely de-centralized.

As pointed out above, upekkha is always the last, because one needs to cultivate loving-kindness first and foremost. The Mettakaraniyasutta

makes this clear:

“He or she who wants to attain peace should [first] practice being upright, humble, and capable of good speech. He or she should know how to live simply and happily, with the senses calmed, without being covetous and carried away by the emotions of the majority. Let him or her decline from doing anything that will be disapproved of by the wise ones.”

“[This is what he or she must contemplate:] May all people be happy and safe, and may their hearts be filled with joy. May all living beings live in Security and in Peace-whether weak or strong, tall or short, big or small, visible or invisible, near or far away, already born or yet to be born. May all of them dwell in perfect tranquility. Let no one do harm to anyone. Let no one put the life of anyone in danger. Let no one, out of anger or malice, wish anyone any harm.”

“Just as a mother loves and protects her child at the risk of her own life. We should cultivate Boundless Love and offer it to all living beings in the entire cosmos. We should let our boundless love pervade the whole universe, above, below and across. Our love will know no obstacles; our

hearts will be absolutely free from hatred and enmity. Whether standing or walking, sitting or lying down, as long as we are awake, we should maintain this mindfulness of love in our own hearts. This is the noblest way of living."

"Free from the wrong views, greed and sensual desires, living beautifully, and achieving Perfect Understanding, those who practice Boundless Love will certainly transcend Birth and Death."

In sum, a simple monk is someone who is ever humble, chaste, and mindful and practices Boundless Love. He leads a noble and celibate life. He wants so little for himself that all his time and energy are sacrificed for the happiness and welfare of other sentient beings. In a way his happiness depends on his thoughts, his speeches and his actions first and foremost for the well being of others.

His life is so harmonious within himself, physically, mentally and spiritually. And this harmony leads to harmonious relationships with other monks and nuns, as well as to lay persons. His lifestyle would influence the lifestyle of the laity who try to imitate the simple way of living mindfully of the monks. His lifestyle would also influence natural phenomena, making them more harmonious and wholesome. Even beasts and bees would learn to be less harmful and more compassionate.

The simple living of a monk can contribute much to social welfare and environmental balance. Besides a simple monk would have the time for learning various sciences which would be useful to lead humans and other beings to overcome suffering. As these sciences are interrelated and necessary to prevent as well as to cure (not compartmentally

or commercially) contemporary personal or social ills they are advantageous indeed. His Holiness has successfully held dialogues with leading scientists over the last few years. As a result, some of them have become more humble and have seen the value of spiritual dimension in helping scientific knowledge to transcend logic and materialism. Publications on these series of dialogues are most meaningful. Publications by His Holiness himself or by those who have been inspired by him are worthy likewise.

Some social ills are so damaging and horrendous such as the Chinese invasion of Tibet and all the dreadful events in that country. Yet to have a simple monk like His Holiness and his followers insisting that we all learn to love and empathize the Chinese people and to forgive the Chinese government which has committed acts of aggression out of ignorance or delusion, not to mention out of greed and hatred, is profoundly illuminating.

Even when a simple monk is tortured physically or mentally he practices his mindfulness of loving kindness and compassion. Although His Holiness has not been tortured physically he is mutilated mentally every time he learns the hard fact that his subjects, monks, and nuns are being tortured mercilessly. Yet he bears this pain magnanimously. And he reminds us all that the only way to overcome suffering is to cultivate seeds of peace within and to work nonviolently and patiently.

Being a simple monk in exile for over four decades, His Holiness has shown to the world that truth, beauty and goodness are not only possible but also practical; one only has to witness the deeds of His Holiness and his followers. Even lay persons who

follow his footsteps also lead a simple lifestyle based on compassion and nonviolence.

Although His Holiness is obliged to travel all over the world to meet people of all walks of life, as a simple monk, he still manages to find the time to hold spiritual retreat, perform meaningful religious ceremonies, and teach young monks to walk the noble eight-fold path of the Buddha.

I believe that the influence of His Holiness in the world is not due to his being a Bodhisattva, a head of state in exile or a spiritual leader of a large Buddhist community. Neither is it because he possesses supernatural powers. Rather it is because he is a simple monk who wants so little for himself and is devoting most of his time and energy to help the peoples of the world, who are being trammled by greed, hatred, and delusion. Yet such a simple monk with good humor and humility like His Holiness, despite bearing so much social ills of his people and his country, is showing to the world that truth, forgiveness, love and compassion really have powers beyond the present worldly values.

Even religious leaders of other faiths, not to mention other heads of states and leading peoples in almost all walks of life, mostly admire him, because a simple monk does not want to take away converts from other religions. He only desires happiness and well being for all and he shows to them that the best happiness depends on simplicity, truthfulness and compassion. With seeds of peace within, a simple monk like His Holiness is in an excellent position to guide others who are aspiring for world peace, social justice, and environmental sustainability.

Sulak Sivaraksa

Struggles for Peace, Justice, Unity and Freedom: Stories of the women of Burma

In mid-1997, the INEB Women and Gender Program began developing partnerships with the women of Burma who live in refugee camps or other areas within Thailand and along the border of Thailand and Burma. The work began after two of our former volunteers, Sarah Walker and Marissa Maurer, went to visit the Karenni camp in Mae Hong Son after the 1997 INEB Conference. There they learned from the leaders of the Karenni National Women's Organization (KNWO) that there was a strong need for leadership training among the women.

A few months before we began working with the KNWO we talked with the international aid organizations in charge of the welfare of the women in the camps about the empowerment and leadership training courses that we wanted to offer in collaboration with their existing programs. We learned that the position of these organizations is that refugees are viewed as temporary residents of the host country. Therefore, providing this kind of training might influence others to leave their home country and seek refuge in the camps or encourage refugees already in Thailand to be reluctant to return home when possible. This philosophy has been in place since the first camps were formed in Thailand in the late 1980's. Thus, we decided to work directly with the women leaders of KNWO and offer empowerment workshops and women's leadership training through other venues.

During the first three-day workshop we did various experiential activities aimed at facilitating personal and group empowerment, developing leadership skills, and team building. What we learned from the three day training was that many women had become the main caretakers of their families as a result of the civil war. Some left their homes more than ten years ago, living as refugees in their own country for a few years before coming to Thailand. Most of them do not want to live in the camps or seek employment in Thailand. They want to go back to their homes as soon as safety, security, and peace are ensured in their homelands. Although living in the camps provides a certain level of safety, there are few or no facilities and services that support and promote their human growth. They feel that they are capable, but being in a camp has led them to lose control of their own lives, their families, and their communities. Most women expressed concern about the future of their children, the uncertainty of their own futures, and the fear of losing their cultures and identities.

After working with the Karenni group, we offered similar training to the Mon Women's Organization (MWO), the Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) and, recently, the Karen Women's Organization (KWO). For the MWO, we also offered a "Training of Social Action Trainers" program because one of their main projects is providing

women's development training to the women in Mon state. What we learned from doing leadership trainings with women leaders from the different ethnic groups of Burma was that, whether living inside Burma (as a result of cease-fire agreements with the SPDC), in the camps, or in other areas inside Thailand, women are primarily responsible for the various community development projects. These projects include education from kindergarten to high school, health care, mother and childcare, women and children's development, women's rights, human rights, and environmental education. They implement these projects through their own national or local women's organizations. Many of the projects existed even before the outside international or local NGO's went to assist them. Further, the women run these projects with little or no support or acknowledgement from their own governments.

What impressed us most was the sacrifice and commitment of the women in working for peace, justice, and preservation of their cultural identities. Among the women leaders, only a few of them are fortunate to live with their families of origin or their own families. Many of them are single or widowed. The married ones, whose husbands may be in the resistance or dead, often choose to leave their children with their parents so they can effectively do their social change work. Other than a few who have families living in the same camps,

most women are able to see their families only once or twice a year or every few years. Many women have not seen their families since they left Burma.

As of mid-1999, the INEB Women and Gender Program began to offer feminist counseling training to the women of Burma. Our local partner was the Burmese Women's Union. The BWU organized trainings, inviting participants from different ethnic groups, including the Shan, the Karen, the Karenni, and the Burman. From the first training we learned about different forms of violence against women from different ethnic groups of Burma. In addition to the commonly occurring forms of violence found in communities, such as partner abuse, sexual assault, or sexual harassment, women of Burma reported that SPDC military operations regularly targeted women for the purposes of ethnic cleansing and other reasons. Additionally, the Thai police and male civilians, especially landlords and employers, perpetrate violence against the women of Burma; these women are especially vulnerable because they do not enjoy legal protection in Thai society.

During this workshop, we also learned that few, if any, services or facilities are available in the camps or in Thai communities to help women trauma survivors. Some of these women leaders had already attended women's rights or human rights trainings organized by the UN or international NGO's. However, they said they did not know how to implement the knowledge they received in the trainings, especially in developing helping services, education and capacity building programs, in their communities.

They were very interested in learning how to conduct workshops and to organize to address the issue of violence against women in their respective contexts.

Three months later we offered a follow-up counseling workshop for the same group of participants. The focus was to expand the counseling skills of participants, help them develop methods of designing and implementing community based helping systems for women survivors of violence, and provide a structure in which they could identify existing and needed resources to address the needs of women trauma survivors. During the workshop, participants reported that they had used their counseling skills to help women in their own communities. They told us that there are still more training needs on the topics of empowerment and leadership, women's rights, and counseling within every ethnic community from Burma. We were very excited to hear that the Shan women were beginning the process of developing a crisis center to help women trauma survivors in their area.

One of the important things we realized after the first two years of working with the women from each ethnic group of Burma was the importance of helping to build unity and trust among the groups. We realized that the history, the SPDC government, and the other current challenges pressing the different ethnic peoples of Burma interfere with trust building and cooperation among the groups. Thus, we also began to facilitate team building among the women from four ethnic groups during the feminist counseling training. Although the counseling course was designed

to help the participants learn about the big picture of structural violence against women and practice skills and qualities of an empowering counselor, every day we did experiential activities that helped the participants learn about the benefits of trust and unity and experience those feelings within the context of the group. One example of such an experiential activity was called "Crossing the Electric Fence". In this exercise, a plastic rope ties between two trees represented the electric fence. The job of the group was to cross over the fence while staying connected and avoiding having anyone's body part touch the fence (which would lead to a loss of that body part). The group had to think together about different strategies to ensure that everyone could cross the fence successfully and safely and without disconnecting from the person on either side of the. In reflecting on their successful crossing of the fence, many participants reported that they felt the unity, trust, and cooperation within the group, and realized the importance of working together. One of the participants said that after crossing the fence she felt that the group could do anything successfully if they worked together as they did to meet this challenge.

Last month, we conducted the first "Training of Social Action Trainers" for the women of Burma from 5 ethnic groups: Karen, Karenni, Shan, Mon, and Burman. This event was organized cooperatively through the newly formed All Women's League of Burma, Burma Relief Center, and Shan Women's Action Network. This was the first time that the Mon women had been able to come to a multi-ethnic training. One of the cri-

teria for attending the workshop was that the participant had completed one of our former training courses so that they were familiar with and committed to the experiential, student centered, power sharing model of working with groups. This training style combines the "Head, Heart, and Hands" in helping participants go beyond the information and skill level to the transformation level.

From the first day of the workshop we noticed that every participant was very excited to be with the women from other communities. Those who knew one another from previous trainings deepened their connections. Each participant seemed to be open to participating and learn-

ing as well as to making new friends. During this five-day training, we helped the participants develop an understanding of the conceptual basis for an experiential training model. Further, each group member practiced the qualities and skills of an effective trainer using the model. Most participants demonstrated a strong commitment to this power-sharing way of working with groups, and began to develop and use the new concepts and skills very quickly. Throughout the five days, we were also weaving in various activities devoted to trust building and working cooperatively as a group

During the closing session, everyone sat in a circle holding

one another's hand and listened to each group member share what we would remember from this event. Within the silence and upon hearing each person talk about important moments, we felt a strong sense of community and connection. We knew that the circle would continue even after we bid each other farewell. As facilitators, we were touched deeply and felt empowered by the commitment, strength, and power-sharing energy among the participants. That experience confirmed our belief that peace, justice, unity, and freedom for Burma depends on the participation of women in the process.

*Ouyporn Khuankaew
Kathryn Norsworthy*

Poem

I refuse to believe that in the next century the reality of war will simply be an integral part of what it means to be human.

I believe that it will be possible to overcome the institution of war just as the institutions of slavery and the death penalty can be overcome.

I refuse to believe that human beings are not capable of learning from the history of this past century.

I believe that God will show us ways to prevent genocide and mass expulsion without needing to resort to military destruction.

I do not believe that there will no longer be any armies in the near future, but

I do believe that in the near future there will be ever-increasing numbers of civilian peacemaking forces which will make a contribution to resolving conflict in crisis areas.

This I believe

Because people who are captivated by this hope and this faith

Will not tire in seeking out those

Who are afraid of one another,

Who deny each other's humanity,

Who are tormented by profound hate and horrific experiences,

Tormented even in their dreams.

Even to the endangerment of their own emotional health, these people of hope will not tire

In accompanying and listening to those who have been traumatized

And nor will they tire

In seeking together new ways of living and relating that make healing, reconciliation, living together,

Trust and a common future conceivable possibilities.

Brother Jarlath D'Souza sent in the poem, which was taken from 'Church and Peace' quarterly magazine, Germany, December 30, 1999

Proud to be Humble

Ariya-Vinaya Preparatory Meeting

17-21 July 2000, Ashram Wongsanit

(near Bangkok, Siam)

Monastics and lay people explore
a Noble discipline for the 21st century

Buddhism always has been ahead of its time. The Buddha and his disciples showed the way by innovating new rules and practices. They often broke away from social conventions. During the last 200 years and in Asia especially the last 50 years the world has changed drastically and with enormous speed. Is there a proper balance between the preservation of tradition on the one hand, and revolutionary radicalism on the other hand in the various streams of Buddhism facing the suppressive forces of globalization, modernity and consumerism? Is Buddhism lagging behind or is it forward looking?

Monks, nuns and lay people from a great diversity of Mahayana, Theravada and Vajrayana schools, and many countries, met at Ashram Wongsanit to prepare a major gathering on Ariya-Vinaya by the end of 2000. They engaged in open and sincere consultations and exchange of experiences concerning a range of pressing questions challenging Buddhism today.

Definition of Ariya-Vinaya; Role of Monks and Nuns

The perspective of Ariya-Vinaya was introduced by Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa. He referred to Bhikkhu Payutto, well known Thai monk and scholar, who after having completed his book

Buddha Dhamma ~ a corner stone in Theravada literature ~ aired the intention to write a similar comprehensive book on Ariya-Vinaya or Noble discipline. The Buddhist Tipitaka or scriptures are subdivided in the Suttas (the stories, the canon), the Abhidhamma (metaphysics, philosophy) and the Vinaya (rules, discipline for monks and nuns). In Ariya-Vinaya, or Noble discipline, indications from the scriptures as a whole intend to accumulate towards a synthesis of wisdom to be realized in concrete circumstances of space and time. Dr. Vira Somboon (layman, Siam) in his opening lecture submitted the following definition:

‘Ariya-Vinaya implies the re-interpretation, re-formulation, and creation of ideas, guidelines and practices relevant to various places and times that lead people to the Four Noble Truths. This may include the (re-)creation of (new) communities and institutions.’

The role of monks and nuns, and devoted lay people alike, in the age of modernity is extremely difficult. Ajarn Sulak previously consulted His Holiness the Dalai Lama and together they decided that monks and nuns need more encouragement and empathic empowerment in their vocations. In many cases they also need critical appraisal. There are rea-

sons for pride and humility. The Vinaya prescribes in great detail the lifestyle and code of conduct for the monks and nuns (e.g. 227 precepts for Theravada monks); and in more general terms for the lay people (5 and up to 8 precepts). However, the rules were unmistakably formulated in cultural contexts fundamentally different from those of our times. Buddhism has spread over the world and circumstances of civilization, society, culture and climate are often totally different from those of the Buddha’s lifetime in that specific Asian area. To be able to perform the typical symbiosis and mutual support among Buddhist monastics and lay people ~ within the wider context of taking refuge to the Three Jewels ‘Buddha’, ‘Dhamma’ and ‘Sangha’ ~ an overall view is needed: a system of guidelines for daily living with direct reference to the essential principles and qualities enshrined in the Buddhist teachings. While corresponding with an in-depth analysis and contemplation of the dominant forces patterning modern life.

Analysis of Structural Violence

In order to facilitate this analysis of ‘structural violence’ ~ a connotation introduced by Johan Galtung in the 70’s ~ Dr. Vira Somboon distinguished 6



major trends

1. Modern science limits its scope to sensory perception; it assumes the separation of mind and matter and it claims to be value-free. If understanding is not scientific, it is not important. Modern science has created unprecedented moral dilemmas e.g. regarding possible artificial changes in the course of life.
2. Industry, technology and the transformation of Nature. There is a strong illusionary belief that the problems caused by industry effecting the whole global eco-system will also be solved by industry.
3. Capitalism and the market system. Money nowadays plays the dominant role. The consumer society is based on the cult of

growth, and wealth as the ultimate goal. Multi-national corporations have acquired more power than nations. Ariya-Vinaya should aim, along the lines of E.F. Schumacher, at the re-formulation of Right Livelihood in the modern world.

4. The remaining power of nation-states inclines to destroy the diversity of cultures and local communities, hand in hand with the multi-nationals. The re-formulation of Ariya-Vinaya should define its relation to the Declaration of Human Rights as well as contemporary manifestos like the Earth Charter.
5. Military establishment and its power to annihilate all sentient beings. Conflict has been industrialized and often is en-

forced by the marketing of technology.

6. The influence of mass media, owned by multi-national corporations. Mass media promote one global monoculture as well as infantilization (Brezenski: "kidi-tainment" ~ people want to get fed continuously like babies by entertainment).

Three points were added to this list. The first (no. 7) was introduced by the the Most Venerable Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche from the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies in Sarnath, Varanasi, India. He argued that education has evolved into a system of brainwashing which makes citizens adhere belief to the omnipotent and unchangeable nature of the first 6 points. A contemporary approach to Ariya-Vinaya should include a vision on Buddhist education. In Ajarn Sulak's opinion most Buddhist

education in all schools of Buddhism is very traditional. We should explore alternatives.

Science; Gender

Samdhong Rinpoche referred to Mahatma Gandhi who as far back as 1909 characterized modernity as the Civilization of the era of delusion and nemesis (Kaliyuga). Even though His Holiness the Dalai Lama has engendered in the past 5 - 6 years a dialogue with leading scientists in Dharamsala, the Rinpoche is not convinced that genuine common ground can be found between true spirituality and mainstream science. The claims of science for exclusive knowledge of reality and Truth are based on false assumptions.

A second point (no. 8) was added by Ms Ouyporn Khuankaew (Chiang Mai, Siam), Co-ordinator of the Womens' Project of INEB (International Network of Engaged Buddhists). If we wish to re-formulate the ideas, guidelines and practices leading people to pro-active understanding of the Four Noble Truths, this should include proper recognition of gender issues. In many cases Buddhist practices reflect mainstream male-dominated culture and follow, lead to and even enforce discriminatory patterns against women.

Youth

The third point (no. 9) was added by Mr Virayudh who reminded the group that we need to take youth and young people seriously if we want to secure the future of socially engaged Buddhism.

Discussion

All points were vividly discussed. Lay people emphasized that we should preserve tradi-

tions and observe rules, but we should not become reactionary. Our common challenge is to find for today's problems solutions which work. This implies in depth critical (self-) analysis. The Ven. Zen Master Dr. Jinwol from Korea pointed out that dualistic thinking may not be appropriate. Ven. Pisal Visalo (Siam) emphasized that we have to challenge the hegemony of science, but also recognize diversity within scientific thinking. We have to tame science but we cannot ignore it. John McConnell, a Quaker from the U.K. submitted his understanding that the Buddha in the first place confronted problems and formulated rules as they arose from the process.

Guidance for Change

Dr. Vira Somboon continued his introductory lecture by stating that *Ariya-Vinaya* is about innovation, dynamizing traditional rules and regulations, about creativity. If we want to engage in this venture of reformulation of traditional discipline we need guidance. Ariya understood as 'Noble' refers to maturity.

How to acquire this 'maturity' ~ which is not incompatible with youth? What are the qualities we should contemplate in order to know which is the right direction. In Pali, there are five guidelines for noble growth and development in righteousness, called Ariyavaddhi:

1. *Saddha* or right confidence. Confidence in the Buddha, in ourselves and in fellow beings.
2. *Sila* or morality.
3. *Sutta* or right information, communication.
4. *Caga* or charity, distribution of wealth; also tolerance and sharing with other people especially

ideas and practices from other beliefs.

5. *Panna* or spiritual wisdom; understanding of meaning, purpose. The meaning and purpose of actions, of the future and of the absolute (*Nirvana*).

Social Development

Ven. Pisal Visalo (Wat Pama-hawan, Siam) indicated that one of the directions for making Buddhism more relevant in the modern world is to better include social development. The Vinaya is appropriate for individual behavior. Monks adapt to the rules but neglect to adapt to the social surroundings. There is little guidance for critical social advancement. How to manage the affairs of the community? The little knowledge of guidelines in this field is one of the reasons that Buddhism is behind the times. The primary function of Vinaya is to create a surrounding and a lifestyle conducive for meditation. Ven. Pomnyun (Secr.-General of Korean Buddhist Sharing Movement & Join Together Society) adhered to the opinion of Ven. Visalo. Some reforms of the teachings are needed, but we should seek the Middle Way. Ven. Dr Bhikshuni Juo-hsueh Shih from Taiwan who has recently completed her doctoral thesis on Vinaya in Oxford illustrated how difficult it is to apply some of the rules. For example: not to touch money is meaningless in this time when monasteries and individual monastics can accumulate savings on bank accounts without touching money. In many situations it is also necessary to handle money as it is very difficult ~ though not impossible as demonstrated by the disciples of Ajarn Chah ~ to have a lay person beside you to manage such details

as a bus fare. The quintessence is that money should be properly used and not be corrupted by power. Ven. Ananda Bhante (Maha Bodhi Society, Bangalore, India) stated that if traditions had been neglected, Buddhism would be no more. However, when new approaches are free from greed, hatred and delusion, why not adopt them? The group of nuns from several organizations in Ladakh and Dharamsala expressed as their opinion that changing the Vinaya is less important than practising it in the proper way, even in times of confusion.

Theravada Buddhism in Siam

The daily rhythm of the meeting in Ashram Wongsanit included early morning meditations and taking alms. The group of monastics crossed the canal each morning to meet the villagers who were excited by the apparent diversified dress codes of the monks and nuns. Besides the usual prayers and blessings, there was traditional music during lunch time. Also recitations in classical style were presented by Ven. Sanghavichaya of Wat Bodhi (the Monastery of the Reclining Buddha in Bangkok) and classical poetry was recited by famous poet, Angkarn Kalyanapong.

One of the evenings was devoted to a presentation by Ven. Pisal Visalo (Bhikkhu Visalo) abbot of a monastery in the North-East of Siam. He gave a very critical assessment of Theravada Buddhism in Siam. Like the name of the country which was westernized into 'Thailand', Buddhism has been under the strong influence of the state. Nowadays many monasteries have lost the function of providing surround-



ings conducive to meditation. Monasteries should create communities of kalyana mitta ~ spiritual friends ~ supporting each other in mental cultivation. The influence of consumerism sees many monks engaged in commercial activities and even gambling. Some activities related to Right Livelihood like growing vegetables, natural farming, raising cattle and lending money to farmers are meaningful although not in accordance with the Vinaya. They can provide models for community development as a service out of compassion. That is different from mere commercial activity. Celibacy often is not strictly observed. Young people in general find celibacy and a simple lifestyle meaningless. Monkhood is more and more a temporary conferring status to improve career opportunities once disrobed. Monks lose the capacity for rendering spiritual and mental advice and Buddhism tends to be reduced to ritualism.

There are several initiatives for Sangha renewal, like Ajarn Chah's group and the Santi Asoke. These groups tend to serve relatively small, closed groups. Some concentrate on meditation practice only and not on social responsibility. The Ariya-Vinaya initiative could gradually have impact among the diverse groups

and streams. In the first place by renewing guidelines for personal lifestyle conducive to meditation. This re-newed dedication could expand to the social surroundings (the Wat ~ temple ~ and the community); to the Sangha; to society and culture; and ultimately to the world as a whole. Phra Paisan will start with a Forest College as a small-scale model for training in this perspective. A good example of a ~ still small ~ renewal movement in Siam is the Sekiyadhamma group which publishes an interesting magazine edited by Ven. Kittisak Kittisobhano. An inspiring movement arising from the Mahayana tradition (Vietnam) is based on the communities inspired by the Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh.

Vajrayana Buddhism from Tibet

Ven. Samdhong Rinpoche considered Thailand as the country where Buddhism was central and where the Vinaya was minutely observed by tradition. He first visited Thailand around 1966. He was shocked by the reports of its decline under the pressure of consumerism since then. The analysis prompts the urgency for positive action along the lines of Ariya-Vinaya.

In Tibet Buddhism waned but was revived by Dharmapala

from India. Until today this lineage is uninterrupted. The Vinaya Pitaka was very precisely translated into Tibetan and largely observed. An average of 10% of the population were ordained monks and nuns until the Chinese invasion.

At present from the ca. 9.000 Tibetan permanent resident monks in India and other countries 3.-4.000 are at intermediate stages and 600-700 are abiding to the Vinaya rules. They refrain from being involved in monastery affairs. The rest are running monastery management and are hardly aware of Vinaya.

During the Chinese Cultural Revolution 6.000 monasteries were destroyed in Tibet. Monasteries in India had to start from scratch. There was no wealth nor property. Nowadays monasteries tend to become wealthy and are run by managing monks. Much effort is put into erecting huge structures.

Unlike Thai monasteries, Tibetan monasteries don't depend on the support of upasakas and upasikas (devoted lay people) and monks don't go out to take alms. Monasteries are often isolated from communities and maintain themselves.

The Bhikkhuni lineage was broken long ago. His Holiness the Dalai Lama is in favor of re-establishing the Bhikkhuni Sangha, if possible.

Samdhong Rinpoche advises to support and encourage (by training) promising individual monks and nuns rather than to try to reform institutions. Lay persons and monastics alike are largely corrupted by modern civilization. It is more effective to dissociate sincere persons from corrupted institutions and support their independent efforts. The Gandhian concept of Sa-

tayagraha also starts from individual effort, gradually evolving into collective action. It is important that these individual monks and good teachers work for society and the Sangha and do not withdraw into the jungle and live for themselves. Individual monks and nuns can associate with each other in loose organizations. Every individual, lay and monastic, can 'step out'. They don't have to wait for membership and acceptance based on seniority. Non-cooperation with evil forces is the common strategy. By developing alternatives (including new monasteries) a positive and strong message can be sent to the 'evil forces'. Reform work should always start now and here.

Bhikkuni Vinaya

Ven. Juo-hsueh Shih (Taiwan) did her research on Bhikkhuni Vinaya. Although it is a very complicated, not always attractive, subject the Ven. Juo-hsueh decided to devote to it because much research groundwork is needed in order to overcome resistance against gender equity within Buddhism. One of the core problems is that lineages required for Bhikkhuni ordination have been interrupted allowing no equal status for women to ordain. However, in Taiwan the majority of the monastic community consists of women. They are ordained within a lineage that stems from India and reached Taiwan through China. The equal female participation in the Sangha proves to be of benefit to Buddhism and society. Taiwan does not face the same problems as described in other presentations. Some isolated scandals do occur, but only caused by monks.

The scriptures and translations regarding the position of

Bhikkunis, according to Ven. Juo-hsueh Shih, show more discrepancies than usual. For example temporary disrobement which is allowed for monks but not for nuns. It is very important to agree on a definition of 'lineage' in the contemporary perspective. Is it possible to authorize cross-traditional ordination?

People nowadays in Taiwan (and in the West) are inclined to join the Sangha out of a spiritual quest, and less so for secular reasons (social convention, age, healing, martial status, career, education).

Ven. Santikaro (USA/Thailand) adds some sharp points of view for discussion. Ordination of monks and compliance to Vinaya should be measured according to the same high standards as commonly applied to considerations regarding re-establishment of Bhikkhuni ordination. Monks could voluntarily give up their privileges. Attributing women the right to ordination is a significant contribution to the alleviation of suffering, both for the ordained women and the lay people they serve. Sexism creates suffering. His future project in the USA will act upon these problems without political interference and textual debates.

The Ven. Sripariyattimoli (Ven. Somchai Kusalacitto, Vice Rector for Foreign Affairs of Maha Chulalongkorn Buddhist University, Bangkok) recommends the setting up of a research committee with representatives from Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana schools in order to prepare the re-establishment of Bhikkhuni ordination based on consensus. His experience is that not so many women are prepared yet to be ordained and reform should not be rushed, creating resistance. For the future

Bhikkunis in Thailand social acceptance is essential. Ven. Pomnyun insists that social resistance can be overcome. He will give full support from Korea for Bhikkuni ordination from Thailand. The Ven. Samaneri Tenzin Lhadron (Tibet/India) stresses that nuns have had to work very hard for the monks. But His Holiness the Dalai Lama supports nuns in Tibet, Ladakh and India fully and their role is also appreciated in society. Time is running out very fast and we should urgently come together on this issue. Ajarn Sulak has created an auspicious opportunity for this process by introducing the Ariya-Vinaya project. Mae Chee Sansanee spoke for a group of Thai nuns who had arrived. She illustrated how difficult the situation in Thailand is. Full support from the monks is needed to educate society in this respect. A Theravada monk from Lao pointed to the often difficult interaction between monks and women. We can learn from the Mahayana tradition and also from Christianity. Ven. Phuwadon added that the forest tradition better recognized the position of women. The right to perform rituals should not be our primary concern, although very important for the villagers. Nuns who can become spiritual teachers and new approaches to social work have priority. Ven. Ananda, who manages a city monastery himself, mentioned that nuns are not an unusual phenomenon in Hindu ashrams. His question is whether monks and nuns should involve themselves directly in social activities? Or should they confine their social commitment to teaching and rendering advice?

Arts & Media

Under the guidance of Venetia Walkey (Dhamma Park and Gallery near Chiang Mai) experiences were exchanged among persons active in the Arts. Ven. Kittisak reported on the importance of art in the *Sekiyadhamma* magazine, that voices the alternative movement among the Sangha in Thailand. Several lay people illustrated their involvement in media-activism, alternative education and healing through the arts. The World Festival of Sacred Music in Chiang Mai 8 - 10 December will provide a platform for further exchanges on 'culture, spirituality and alternative development'.

Conclusions

During conditions of 'structural violence' or Kali Yuga, monks, nuns and lay people should associate in constituting an alternative movement. They should work hand in hand with fellow-beings from the diversity of beliefs and philosophies and form flexible associations. From individual efforts, diversity and dedication further institutional reform will emerge. Efforts by independent individuals deserve support from teachers, the Sangha and the society. Care for the surroundings should provide conditions for genuine meditation and mental training in small communities. This can generate outreach to the Sangha, to society and the world as a whole. Buddhism will strengthen and regain its relevance.

Rather than putting much effort in deliberations on changing the Vinaya, a new 'Charter' can be conceived inspiring day to day life of monks, nuns and lay people with a perspective of con-

temporary conditions. Teaching should include guidance for de-conditioning and its social implications. Monastics should be 'proud to be humble' and receive strong encouragement from lay communities. Experiments with monastic attitudes in family life should be met positively, while celibacy for monks and nuns should be fully honored.

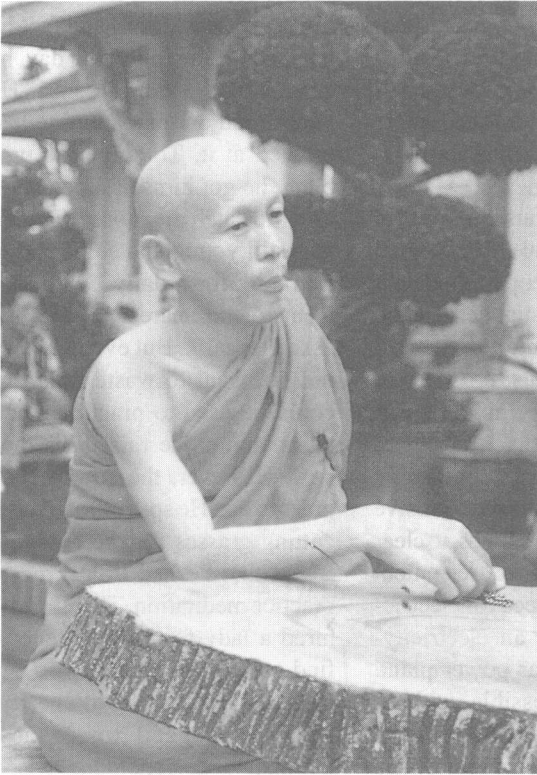
The re-establishment of the Bhikkhuni Sangha in countries and traditions where lineages were broken is essential for the holistic process of social and cultural transformation.

Commitments

The Ariya-Vinaya preparatory meeting ended with an audience with His Holiness the Sangharaja. The audience was preceded with a visit to the protest village of the 'Assembly of the Poor' near Government House. An inter-denominational service and meditation with the villagers affected by the construction of Pak Moon dam did much to bolster their spirits. Simultaneously it was an essential learning momentum for the Ariya-Vinaya core group. In Wat Thongnoppakun Monastery the Agenda for the next Ariya-Vinaya gathering was drafted, while all individual participants made their commitments for research and preparatory work to be undertaken. Please contact the Ariya-Vinaya Team for a full report and let us know the areas in which you would like to contribute to the Ariya-Vinaya process.

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The Value of Celibacy in Contemporary Society



The first and rather narrow definition of celibacy is abstaining from abusing/exploiting oneself and others. In this view, celibacy, which leads to a noble life, means remaining single, refusing to engage in any marital or sexual relationship. To do so, one must be free from the domination of sensual pleasures, especially sexual ones. A manifestation of upholding celibacy is voluntarily leading a simple lifestyle based on self-reliance and self-sufficiency. The second and broader meaning of celibacy focuses on the social dimension. It refers to the absence of social exploitation and freedom from consumerism. Both views on celibacy contribute to the realization of a noble life and to living nobly. Living

of celibacy is less noticeable when we define it narrowly as simply the abstinence from sexual relationship or partnership. In this light, the argument goes, celibacy is suitable only for particular groups of people: monks and nuns. Misinterpreting celibacy, the lay people thus see it as inapplicable to them, thus cannot perceive its value. To reiterate, the foundation of celibacy is the freedom from desires and attachments relating to the five senses. Once we have learned to free ourselves from these shackles by leading a simple lifestyle voluntarily, we will ultimately experience freedom in our lives.

In contemporary society, many people are increasingly under the spell of consumerism,

nobly means pursuing or travelling down the Noble Eightfold Path, which reflects the substance and importance of celibacy, namely the freedom from the enslavement by sensual desires and material attachments. In fact, this is the basis of celibacy. The value of celibacy is readily apparent when we define it broadly. The value

increasingly enslaved by sensual desires and material attachments. They are blind to the value or importance of celibacy. The economic crisis that hit the Thai kingdom might have had its roots in the failure to uphold celibacy. Here the loss of celibacy means falling prey to consumerism and greed—to the acquisition of money and wealth at all costs, which eventually means discarding honesty. Against this backdrop, leading a noble life is no longer feasible: one can no longer perform the appropriate and rightful duty in life. Anyone who cannot perform his or her duty in life and thus causing grave consequences can be said to have lost celibacy. This is the broad meaning of celibacy.

In other words, if we recognize the essence of celibacy we will appreciate its importance and value. Also, we will realize that the concept of celibacy is applicable to everyone, not only monks and nuns. Celibacy is often associated with monks because they were the ones who laid down its guidelines; for example remaining single, abstinence from sexual intercourse, desire, and relationship, etc. However, when we merely associate the concept of celibacy with monks, a problem arises. If celibacy is depreciated in contemporary society will not monks (eventually) suffer from the same fate too? Traditionally, monks play two vital roles: one, as propagators of Buddhism; and two, as models of celibacy. These two roles are being rapidly undermined in present society. Many lay persons are as knowledgeable

in Buddhism and they are also effective teachers. The Tipitaka is also widely accessible, now also available in CD-ROMs. Additionally, there are many journals and books on Buddhism. Simply put, the lay people no longer have to rely solely on monks for knowledge on Buddhism. In fact, there is a lay-version of Buddhism. In many countries worldwide, this version of Buddhism has become dominant, undermining the role of monks.

However, and the importance of this point must be emphasized, the second role of monks is irreplaceable. Monks remain important living models of celibacy. I do not think that the lay people can really duplicate this role. This role is very essential to global societies. Here what I refer to celibacy means contentment, simplicity, self-reliance, freedom from sensual desires, and non-involvement in marital or sexual relationship. Monks can show the world, which is being overwhelmed by consumerism, that a life free from sensual desires and material attachments is not only possible but also fulfilling and rewarding. In many respects, consumerism is being rationalized, is becoming scientific. For example, several sciences and disciplines subtly emphasize the importance of materials at the expense of moral or mental development. Happiness—and the only happiness available—is measured by “more having.” A good life is one richly endowed with material possessions. Monks are in a position to challenge these beliefs and to represent a different kind of happiness, which is more profound than the happiness derived from materialism. This happiness rests on tranquility,

mindfulness, and wisdom. This happiness is necessarily related to celibacy. To sum up, the celibate lives of monks serve as antidotes to the poison of consumerism. Without monks, many people may be struggling against consumerism grudgingly: there is no readily apparent and viable alternative form of happiness and way of living.

Celibacy is thus important at both the individual and the social levels. If most people in society are free from sensual desires and material attachments, it will become prosperous; prosperous, that is, in tranquility, mindfulness, and simplicity. This means there will not be the need to build a lot of dams, to construct extensive networks of gas pipelines, to clear the jungles, etc. If we are content we may have no need for electricity, and thus for an electricity-generating nuclear power plant. Happiness is possible without these attachments and materials. But it seems that Thai society has failed to uphold celibacy.

To restore or observe celibacy, we need to discipline our lives, especially in terms of consumption such as of technology. Technology seems neutral and is very appealing. By technology, I am also referring to the means of indoctrination and thought control e.g., the radio, television, computer, etc. If we are not careful with technology, we can become addicted to them, estranging us from our lives. At the very least, when we are addicted to them we must struggle to find money to sustain them.

This brings to mind a short parable that may be relevant to monks like us. There was a young man who went to study meditation with a wise one. Eventually, he was able to master the discipline, and the wise one allowed

him to leave. The man built a little hut at the edge of a jungle, which was rather far away from the villages. He was poor and led a simple life. One day he found that his shirt was torn, and so he patched it. The following day, he again found a hole in shirt. He later found out, that a mouse had nibbled at it. To solve the problem, he got himself a pet cat in order to catch the mouse. The cat was still young and so he had to find milk for it daily. At first he went to the nearest village and asked for milk. But eventually he did not want to waste time that could be used to practice meditation and so he raised his own cow. However, the cow needed grass to eat. He spent a lot of time cutting grasses for the cow and found that he had little time to practice meditation. Therefore he hired a lady from the village to find grasses for the cow. To pay her, he went to the village and asked or begged for money. Ultimately, he concluded that he could save some money by marrying the lady. When married, his life entailed other expenses and so the man had to open a small retail store. The moral of the story is that instead of using his shirt to serve celibacy, the man actually discarded celibacy and served or was dominated by the shirt. Here the shirt is a metaphor for technology and other consumer products. We have to apprehend the lay people, especially poor villagers, about the dangers of mindless consumption. We should also apply the logic of the Sangha to community development. This is essential for creating solidarity and promoting compassion in the community.

Bhikkhu Visalo

The Fifth Dhamma Walk for Songkhla Lake: Looking Back and Ahead



The Songkhla Lake Dhamma Walk is one of the many forms of socially engaged Buddhist action that have emerged around the world in the last 30 to 40 years. After five years of walking—for a revival of the lake and its communities as well as a renewal of Buddhism in the lake region—what have we learned?

Two strengths are clear. First, the Dhamma Walk in the lake region has developed a very positive public image in its five years of existence. Secondly, most walkers are changed by the experience of walking. For some people it is clearly a moving or life changing experience. In spite of these strengths, however,

concrete results of the Songkhla Lake walks fall far below the expectations of five years ago.

The walks have become a social resource

The walkers' readiness to bear the heat, receive villages' hospitality at local temples, listen openly to many groups of people, and think about the lake region as a whole, has inspired support. The walk contingent is often met warmly by local communities, especially when the walk organizers have had repeated contact with a given community. The Department of Environmental Management at Prince of Songkhla University has supported the walk financially for

several years, and considers it a model project. Though few local monks help with organizing, the provincial governor of the Songkhla sangha has come out each year in stronger public support of the walk. Leaders of the walk often work closely with NGOs, and this has helped create a feeling of mutual friendship and trust.

Relationship among many groups—academics, NGOs, Buddhist activists, and traditional fisherfolk—were deepened in the last year by the crisis over anchovy fishing in southern Thailand. Night-time anchovy fishing using electric lights and fine nets was legalized in Thai waters a few years ago. Since

that time commercial operators have rapidly depleted already low stocks of fish. The lights attract all manner of sea creatures, including the fish fry that would have been caught by traditional fisherfolk had they been given a chance to grow to size. Desperate to protect their livelihood, traditional coastal fisherfolk last year closed off the deep-sea port of Songkhla by tying 200 of their small boats together with heavy rope. They were supported on the ground by their families, fishermen from other regions, and many academics and NGOs. Together they lobbied for the survival of traditional fishing communities as well as an end to destructive fishing methods. The blockade ended inconclusively, with promises from the government and threats of violence from the police. Many months later, the anchovy boats continue to go out at night.

Core members of the Dhamma Walk group played important roles in supporting traditional fisherfolk, negotiating with state authorities, and getting information out to the public during and after the blockade in May of last year. As a result of commitments and relationships formed during that time, the Dhamma Walk this year spent two days in a coastal fishing village that was active in the anchovy controversy. Our aim was to learn about their life and circumstances first-hand, and to encourage them in an often discouraging struggle. For a dozen of us who had the chance to go out to sea with the fishermen early one morning, the stay in Bau Daeng was clearly a highpoint of the walk.

The walks make abstract relations tangible

The Songkhla Lake walks build on the age-old strengths of pilgrimage as a spiritual practice. Foremost among these strengths is a pilgrimage's ability to make abstract concepts tangible and deeply felt. The actual path a pilgrim walks nearly always maps out a much larger reality. In some cases, the path as a whole may symbolize one's life journey. In others, stations along the way represent the graces of Krishna, the battle between good and evil, or the healing power of renunciation.

What larger reality do the Songkhla Lake walks map out and make real for walkers? Most vividly it is the natural and social landscapes of the lake region itself. These overlapping landscapes challenge each walker to relate his or her journey to the realities encountered. Often experiences made memorable at the personal level become makers of these larger realities.

So, for example, feeling the swells of a glassy sea at Bau Daeng from inside a traditional fishing boat, seeing the calm, weathered faces of the fishermen, and watching the walk's two women coordinators learning to pull in nets, have all become vivid markers for me of the entire anchovy controversy. I think of walkers who sometimes spent nights at Songkhla harbor instead of at home. I think of Santikaro Bhikkhu's reflections on greed, consumerism, and the rape of the sea. My thoughts then move instinctively to the numerous incidents we have learned about during the walks of powerful groups manipulating information, events, and people to the detriment of the lake and local communities. I cannot help

but reflect then on my role in relationship to these realities.

Similarly, a young boy singing cheerily from the top of a sugar palm as we walked silently below has become a symbol for me of the freshness of the human spirit, and the possibility of doing things because they are good and fun in themselves. Shortly after we heard his song we had the delight of walking through one of the few remaining marshlands in the lake area. Tall, bright green grasses stretched away on both sides of the two-lane highway, bordered in the direction of the lake by a mangrove forest rising out of the water. Those images and the clear, transparent air of that place are the most intense markers I have of the earlier condition of the lake, and of nature in one of its most generous moods.

Failings and possibilities

Everyone who has walked has some such image or two that can tell a complex story of the joys and travails of nature in the lake region, of challenged power structures, changes in local temples and communities, or the comedy and drama of 50 to 80 people living, walking, and meditating together for many days. It is stunning, in fact, how much certain individuals know about these things. This knowledge usually comes with more time spent on the walks, and that creates a challenge: how to relay that mountain of information to newcomers, so they understand something of the depth of the issues.

This challenge is compounded by the fact that the Songkhla Lake Dhamma Walks have no single owner or leader. From the beginning the walks were to depend on many indi-



vidual gifts of time and energy. It is true that the walks were initiated by socially concerned monks of the Sekhiyatham network in 1996. But within a few years monk and lay leaders expressly defined the walks as not a monk's project. Rather, the walks were to be an opportunity for monks and many other groups to learn to work together on common social project—projects based on Dhammic principles. This may be one of the most hopeful aspects of the walk, as it offers an alternative to hierarchical leadership and questions the subtle isolation of monks and mae chi.

Yet it also engenders confusion as people try to work out their roles. When coordinators were given a stipend to work full-time on organize the walks, it seemed that the voluntary work of others fell off sharply. It often takes newcomers a while to realize that they themselves are creating the walk as they participate in planning and daily decisions. While those who come for a kind of spiritual entertainment are easily disappointed, many young adults in particular are buoyed by the chance to speak out in sessions

with monks and authorities listening.

The walks originally aimed to create a network of socially concerned monks around the lake as part of a revival of the role of temples in the life of local communities. For the most part, the participation of local monks has in fact been very low, outside of their role as hosts to the Dhamma walkers. At the five-year point, this has naturally prompted serious reassessment. Should the walk group, for example, focus on cultivating the promising relationships it has already formed with a few of the monks and temples around the lake, or should it continue to seek broad coverage of the region? How can local walk leaders maintain strong ties with monks and mae chi who do have a clear social vision, such as the members of Sekhiyatham, so as to keep the walk true to its visionary goals?

Two factors are likely to play an important role in the future direction of the walk. The first is that the Dhamma Walk group has provided the core of the recently formed Songkhla Network of Buddhists. This network has tied walk leaders

into a larger local group of Buddhists and to a national group whose long-term aim is to reform the Thai sangha. Supporting the growth of such networks may be a more feasible goal at present than building a network of environmentally concerned monks in the south.

The second factor is that the lake region faces very large-scale plans for industrialization. These plans include a gas pipeline and gas-separating plant, associated petrochemical and other industries, and a possible canal connecting the Andaman Sea with the Gulf of Thailand. Academics, NGOs, and others are extremely concerned for many reasons, among them the poor environmental record of currently existing industries in the region. Local disagreements about the proposed gas-separating plant in Chana district have already prompted violence. How should the Songkhla Lake Dhamma Walk address these issues? Does it have the resources to do so? Does it have the option of avoiding them? How can the walk apply non-violent principles creatively?

It is through the step-by-step encounter with such questions that those committed to the Dhamma Walk keep charting a path to effective social and spiritual action.

Ted Mayer



The 7 year cycle

My return to the hilly forests of Chiang Mai province in north western Thailand felt like a spiritual homecoming. It had been two years since I had stayed at the village of Soblan, which is part of the Mae Lam Kham forest community of 5 villages that dot a rich, lush watershed forest. I was able to return when participating in the Dec. 7 - 17 1990 Dhammayatra, or interfaith solidarity walk organised by a coalition of NGO's trying to support the communities' right to a holistic approach to life on their own land. The memory of my first visit had long lingered with me, and also had a profound effect on my outlook on life. People from all over the world, and many different cultures and faiths were represented, and were invited to learn about the communities lifestyles. My return was all the richer as I had learned enough Thai language to communicate my gratitude and empathy with my host and friend Pati Tae Ye, the headman of Soblan village. We were guided on this odyssey by the knowledge and commitment of Elias Amidon and Elizabeth Roberts, and Pracha Hutuanuwat and Jane Rasbash, who, along with Pawluang Jomi, the chief spokesman for the Karen people in Thailand, provided the spiritual insight and background information. The walks are a process that allows those of us from urban environments to bear witness to those who live as nature intended, that is, an organic and sustainable existence as sentient beings.

The Karen people are known to the outside world for their 50 year struggle against the Burmese junta, a regime that has ruthlessly persecuted its myriad



racess of peoples. This war has taken a desperate direction with the recent Burmese embassy siege in Bangkok, and the siege of the Ratchaburi hospital, a sign of the ferocity of the Burmese campaign to subjugate them. The tribes we walked with had long lived on the Thai side of the border, but they were not immune from prejudice and persecution in the past, and are not now. The Karen have their own name for themselves, it is called the Pgakengaw, which means 'the people', and their traditional homelands are on both sides of the border. This was highlighted when a fellow walker, a Burmese Karen friend, conversed and translated stories from our Thai Karen hosts, this was something I found very poignant. As a group, many had never experienced the kind of lifestyle in which we found ourselves, and carried rucksacks full of stuff that our Karen hosts ended up carrying for us. I think it was humbling, and by bearing witness to the generous nature of an alien culture we connected with our humility, something which I feel holds the one of the secrets of a happy existence.

Unfortunately, the ever encroaching globalisation of money based economies threatens to destroy their way of life forever, and so, destroy the specific local wisdom that comes from knowing and living off the land.

The community of Mae Lam Kham live according to the laws of their ancestors and folklore tradition that are integral to their land, of which they are the rightful and respectful guardians. The approach to agriculture is holistic and every action upon the earth is purposeful and productive. They preserve the watershed forest because it provides water for drinking and crops. They use a 7 year cycle of rotating paddy rice cultivation because 7 years are needed for the soil to recuperate without the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides that are harmful. They preserve the forest because it is their home, where they are born and the umbilical cords of their children are placed. It is where they die, and are burned and buried in accordance with traditional belief. I believe they are wise to shun the outside world with its gadgets and overconsuming appetites, but it seems

that the same world is belligerently boxing them in, and by attrition eroding their independence and nobility. I cannot help thinking of the indigenous American tribes and making comparisons with the Karen, the concern being that the same fate of relegation in a society in which they can never succeed awaits them.

The Alliance for Sustainable Forests and Communities worked for a year with the Karen to create maps of their land, some of which are maps with the names of rivers and streams named in the Karen language and have no other name in any other language. This is a powerful testament to the ownership of that land, and ownership is a concept that has been rudely forced upon those whose nature is to share. The culmination of this year's walks was a dialogue between Karen leaders, the governor of Chiang Mai forestry department and several prominent individuals concerned about human rights and forest degradation. It seems that for many, the only way to preserve the forest is to keep people out of it, no matter that they have lived in it and preserved it for hundreds of years. That is the current policy of the Thai forestry dept. and it has forced the hands of gentle forest people tired of being harassed and arrested for clearing secondary forest growth on their padi fields. The panel of speakers included Sulak Sivaraksa, the famed social critic who said "People like Pawluang Jorni know more about the forest and how to preserve it than anyone here. We should humbly be asking him how to prevent forest degradation." To be fair, the governor of Chiang Mai forestry department said, "You will not be evicted, you can continue to use the rotational framing

method, you will not be arrested." Though his words are encouraging, and his presence lends hope that the government is at last listening to the marginalized members of the nation, many of whom do not even have citizenship, whilst corruption is a way of life for unscrupulous members of the forestry dept., one fears his words will come to nothing.

The dialogue became a celebration of Karen culture, glimpses of which were seen in the exciting sword dance. In this feat of hand eye coordination, the dancer spins rhythmically, while swinging a sword in each hand perilously close to his body, the silver of the blades flashing in the sun. A poet with a traditional stringed guitar like instrument performed something that Elias aptly described as Karen blues to the delight and approval of the audience. The spiritual nature of the walks and festival was apparent in the participants. Many faiths were present, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, at the outset of the walks, the meditation master Maha Sington led a lesson in meditation. Others advised on how to spend the period of contemplation alone in the forest that was part of the bearing witness process. The Karen practised their own blend of Buddhism and animism, when camped in the forest at night. Pati Tae Ye and Pati Eli (headman of Mae Lam Kham village) burned candles and chanted as everyone either meditated or sat in silence, one felt that to be closer to nature is to be closer to the deepest meaning of spirituality.

At the end of the odyssey, a tree ordination ceremony was held and a gift of 4,000 acres of watershed forest that included the grounds of Wat Luang a 700 year old monastery was donated to The King of Thailand to

celebrate his 72nd birthday. A huge tree was wrapped in a saffron robe bearing his crest representing a gift from the Karen to the King, and a hope that he will recognise that they are a unique and gentle culture whose traditional knowledge is invaluable to the kingdom.

Spending 24 hours fasting in the forest alone is not an easy thing to do. It is more than the physical discomfort of hunger and exposure to the elements, it is a spiritual and psychological test of self scrutiny. It was the second time I had done such a thing, and there is a point at which one feels they are part of the forest. The fear of snakes or ghosts becomes less and the feeling of privilege at witnessing the non human world on its own terms, within its own rhythms, dispels fear or feelings of loneliness. I have come to believe that the Mae Lam Kham community would be best left alone, but that isn't happening. Tourists, increasingly under the guise of 'eco tourism' roam through villages taking pictures of people in their homes as if they were animals in a zoo. The forestry dept. does not prevent deforestation, and the corrupt elements within it actively engage in it, leaving their colleagues to plant eucalyptus, teak, or other cash crops. Lowland plantation farmers ever seeking more land, developers wanting to build hotels, scientists who want to come and study people and plants, patent the essence and millions of dollars. They and others like them are not going to be left alone, so if by bearing witness we can advocate their cause, and perhaps, as those who have lost touch with their mother Earth, begin to unlearn some of the conditioning 'civilization' has imposed upon us.

Danny Campbell

Thai Sangha Crisis: The Wat Phra Dhammakaya case

Following are excerpts of Santikaro Bhikkhu's recent
talk at Cornell University's Kahin Centre
for Southeast Asian Studies, given March 7, 2000

The criticisms of Wat Phra Dhammakaya come from many sources and many angles. Here I list most of the significant ones, in a somewhat chronological order, without much personal commentary or debate.

Wat Phra Dhammakaya is big money and big business; huge cash flow, expensive advertising and media; even some 'fascist' trappings. Nonetheless, many in Thailand are impressed by all that.

Wat Phra Dhammakaya distorts certain central teachings of the Lord Buddha as recorded in the Pali Tripitaka and its commentaries.

Wat Phra Dhammakaya staged an aggressive takeover of the Buddhist clubs at most Thai universities and institutions of higher education. This involved lots of money and the support of the Ministry of Education's Religious Affairs Department. Once their followers controlled the officer position of each club, it became an exclusive tool for organising Wat Phra Dhammakaya activities, fund raising, and teachings.

Wat Phra Dhammakaya has been actively involved with at least one faction in the military and various government agencies, such as the Royal Forestry Department.

Wat Phra Dhammakaya recruited school principals, hospital directors, and other such civil servants, then had them pressure their staff to attend Wat Phra

Dhammakaya activities and make donations.

At the time of the financial crisis, Wat Phra Dhammakaya pushed ahead with the construction of their mahadhammakaya Chedi, insisting on building it with expensive imported materials at a time when Thailand's balance of payments was in very bad shape, and absorbing huge sums of money at a time when small businesses were desperate for working capital. Their blatant fund-raising at a time of national crisis angered journalists and some academics who finally acted on suspicions that had built up over the years. This what brought the 'crisis' out into the open

Once the police began to investigate Wat Phra Dhammakaya and the abbot, allegations of land speculation and embezzlement came out. Details of these were in the papers for months last year and finally led to the arrests of the abbot and three other followers. Eyebrows also were raised by the elaborate system of moving this money around bank accounts, mostly in the name of female disciples. How did so much money donated to the temple and the Dhammakaya Foundation end up in the private accounts of the abbot under his lay name?

It is widely believed that Wat Phra Dhammakaya has given lavish 'gifts' to senior monks. Thus, many people assume that the unwillingness of senior monks to confront the mess is

motivated by these gifts.

There are rumours that the inner core of Wat Phra Dhammakaya, monk and lay alike, consider themselves to be Buddhas. This and other rituals, such as making the vow to die for the abbot, appear to be cultish behaviour to some commentators.

Finally, the duplicity, dishonesty, threats of violence, and smear campaigns that came out of Wat Phra Dhammakaya in response to criticisms did not win them respect or frineds.

Significance of the crisis

Wat Phra Dhammakaya is the premier example of capitalist Buddhism in Thailand (and thus can be compared with the *Soka Gakkai* in Japan and *Fu Kwang Shan* in Taiwan). Unlike more traditional temples that do their moneygrubbing like Chinese business families or mom and pop stores, Wat Phra Dhammakaya is organised like a modern corporation with marketing plans, cash flows, contributions to leading politicians, and so on.

Wat Phra Dhammakaya has infiltrated the main power centres of Thai society : banking, finance, and stock market; the business world, e.g., land development and speculation; segments of military; bureaucracy; political parties; universities; and their own media. This is a deeper entangling of Thai Buddhism with the power structure than what is healthy for civil society, justice, and human rights. One should

note that Wat Phra Dhammakaya has paid no attention to the poor, except influence and image burnishing gifts to rural monks.

This crisis is caught up in the historical mahanikaya-Thammayut split within the Thai Sangha. While many younger monks no longer take this split seriously, many older monks do. Some top mahanikaya monks are still bitter about thammayut privileges, wealth, and domination of the Sangharaja or Supreme Patriarch position. It is not clear whether Wat Phra Dhammakaya is exploiting this split or merely that the split makes it even harder for the Supreme Sangha Council to deal with the mess.

A faction in the Mahanikaya leadership is committed to acquiring the Sangharaja position, and may see Wat Phra Dhammakaya as a modernising force to help them achieve the goal. It is difficult to determine who is using who more.

This mess has ripped the bandages and scabs off the festering wounds in the institutional Thai Sangha. Symptoms of the deep festering 'cancer' are the Mahanikaya Thammayut split just mentioned; toadyism towards the government bureaucracy that dominate the Sangha; authoritarian, top heavy administration; dependence on government agencies; money-grubbing; social irrelevance and increasing isolation; backwardness; low standards for monks and poor education; class and regional (rural, Isan) discrimination; ritualism; and so on. Seeing senior monks behave like politicians and businessmen has lowered the Sangha in the public's esteem.

The responses of the various players highlights the tensions in Thai society between traditional-

ists (feudal, hierarchical, obedient, silent) and modernisers (educated, secular, democratic, critical), between statist and anti-statist approaches, between politics of personalities and the rule of law.

Overall, the situation highlights the weakness of civil society by showing its inability to deal with dilemmas of cultural and traditional importance. Intellectuals and elites are largely unconcerned with the mess because it doesn't fit well with their modern, largely secular and imported notions of civil society and their goals for Thailand's future.

Responses

There has been a great deal of confused argument about how to respond to Wat Phra Dhammakaya and problems in the Sangha. The main reason for this confusion, I think, is that many commentators fail to distinguish between three main groups of problems.

The Three main problems with Wat Phra Dhammakaya, as I understand them, are:

1) They have some strange interpretations of Buddha-Dhamma.

2) They misrepresent the facts of the Tripitaka, the actual words of the texts.

3) They throw money around to grease wheels, bribe, dissemble and deceive, lie, defame and slander, use threats, embezzle, and otherwise break the law.

Distinguishing the main groups of problems is important because each requires a different response from different social actors:

1) The strange interpretations of Buddha-Dhamma can only be countered by education work, publications, public debate,

and so on. The government has no expertise here and should stay out of it. I don't see how any authority can be set up to preserve doctrinal orthodoxy in "modern" Siam (and personally don't want one).

2) The Sangha must exercise some authority here, but is probably too weak to do so. It is not a job for the government or the politicians. The complicating factor is that government interference is a major reason for the Sangha's incompetence. The government's role should only be to return autonomy to the Sangha so that it can learn to manage its own affairs. The government should support Sangha reform without directing it.

3) The allegations of illegal acts and socially reprehensible behaviour are areas for the relevant civil authorities to do something, especially when laws are being broken. Civil society, including Wat Phra Dhammakaya's critics, should ensure that there is due process both in terms of Wat Phra Dhammakaya and their victims.

The media and academics can play a positive role in supporting each of these responses and ensuring fairness, intelligence, and public scrutiny. Much work needs to be done to strengthen civil society, and the Sangha within it, for any of them to happen effectively.

Failing to distinguish these areas and the appropriate responses confuses the discussion and leads to being stuck in the mud of sloppy thinking.

Misguided academic commentary can end up protecting the rich and oppressive players at the expense of ordinary people."

Bangkok Post,
Wednesday, March 22, 2000

The World Festival of Sacred Music: A Global Quest for Unison

Chiang Mai, Siam 8-10 December 2000

Concept and Evolution

Inspired by the vision of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and with his blessing, Tibet House, the Cultural Center of His Holiness and H.H.'s Foundation for Universal Responsibility are organizing the "World Festival of Sacred Music" to usher in the new millennium. Ven. Lama Daboom Tulku, Director of both these institutions, has been functioning as the Global Chairperson of the Festival.

"The World Festival of Sacred Music, A Global Quest for Unison" will be held on five continents in countries such as Brazil, Japan, South Africa, England, Korea and the U.S. The Festival will consist of a series of independently-produced events worldwide. It will be a celebration of the deepest reflections of humankind as expressed through the world's heritage of sacred music—not only major religious traditions but indigenous forms as well. The Festival will be neither political nor commercial in nature, nor is it intended to promote or reflect the virtue of any one religion or spiritual practice over another. Rather, it will reflect the vision of a more humane and compassionate world in the new millennium.

Each global event will feature predominantly the music of that region, although there will be a smaller representation from other countries as well. And while the various events are linked by the vision of H.H. the Dalai Lama and the spirit in which Tibet House conceived of the project, each is being produced as a separate individual project, dependent upon local initiative and local organi-

zations to find resources.

After meeting with H.H. the Dalai Lama and Ven. Lama Daboom Tulku in India, Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa and the committee has agreed to organize the event in Siam.

The World Festival of Sacred Music in Chiang Mai, Siam

The Siam event will be organized by Spirit in Education Movement (SEM), Payap University Maha Chulalongkorn Buddhist University and Chiang Mai University Center for the Promotion of Arts and Culture and will consist of an outdoor concert held over three consecutive evenings, 8-10 December, 2000. It will feature the sacred music of indigenous peoples from different countries and Siam. The festival will be held at Chiang Mai University Center for the Promotion of Arts and Culture, Payap University and Wat Suan Dok Temple.

The opening ceremony will be held at Wat Suan Dok by Maha Chulalongkorn Buddhist University on December 8. The program includes a discussion on "Music and Religions" by the representatives from different religions, traditional parade and concert. The Sacred Music Concert at night include Korean flutist, Burmese classical dance, Bhutanese folk music, Tibetan dance and music, the traditional songs from various parts of Siam and the chants and mantra recitations of Tibetan Buddhist monks, Thai monks and others.

On December 9 at Payap University, the program will consist of sacred music from

Canada, Indonesia, and Israel. Dusadee Banomyong from Bangkok as well as a German pianist who has composed a new piece of western music inspired by Mr. Pridi Banomyong's idealism will also be performing.

Chiang Mai University Center for the Promotion of Arts and Culture will host the closing ceremony on December 10. The outdoor concert will focus on the indigenous music. In addition the presentation of traditional Thai massage, acupuncture and medicine coupled with art exhibitions and painting demonstrations will reinforce the central idea of the festival: healing on the personal, social, and global levels. Other ways in which the local community will be encouraged to informally participate in the event will be through street performances, including an artisans marketplace and traditional food vendors.

Objectives

- To honor humankind's deepest reflections of peace and harmony as inspiration for creating a world based on healing, for the new millennium.
- To celebrate the beauty of sacred music from around the world and foster respect for cultural differences within an overall vision of human unity.
- To encourage and enable the Thai people to participate in an act of bringing peace and harmony to the world community through art.

Participating Organizations:

- Tibet House
- His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Foundation for Universal Responsibility
- Sathirakoses Nakaprateepa Foundation
- Spirit in Education Movement (SEM)
- Chiang Mai University Center for the Promotion of Arts and Culture
- Payap University
- Midnight University
- The International WOW Company
- Tourism Authority of Thailand
- YMCA Chiang Mai
- Dharma Park Project
- Lan Na Wisdom School of Continuing Education
- MahaChulalongkorn Buddhist University
- Asian Cultural Forum On Development
- International Network of Engaged Buddhists

Welcome Address

This symposium is being organised by the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), the German partner. Dr. Erfied Adams has already outlined the purpose and meaning of this seminar. I was introduced to speak by the franchise made possible by Mr. Pridi Banomyong when he was a student from this school. This building here was constructed from the money donated by King Rama the Eighth. At that time Mr. Pridi was the Regent and personally asked the King to donate money for this building. This is why this inaugural meeting and his Centenary Celebrations have been scheduled to begin from here. A memorial building is being constructed at his birthplace not very far from here. Many of you know that his centenary will actually take place on the 11th of May. Today is the beginning of the centenary celebrations of his birth anniversary. On the 2nd of May there was a memorial service at the temple, named after his surname, the Banomyong temple. His birthplace is just opposite the temple. I hope we will have a chant in the temple. The Interior Minister and his successor, agree with me that they will make a memorial park around the temple. I was told by the present minister that the wish will be carried out and indeed that the minister may start a park not in the name of Mr. Pridi Banomyong but after democracy in every province in the country. A monument should be erected not of Mr. Pridi but the leader of the province who stood for democracy, social justice and liberation.

Pridi Banomyong was not

only the founder of Thai democracy but also the liberator of this country after the Japanese occupation during the Second World War. Mr. Adams mentioned those who support and struggle for democracy sometimes have to pay heavily and Mr. Pridi's life itself is an example of this observation. He lived in exile for 36 years abroad after the dictatorship took over in 1947 and he died in 1982. The parliament, of which he was the founder, did not observe silence even for one minute as homage to the great leader at his passing. The then Prime Minister only said 'sorry' and did not even care to send a wreath to his coffin in Paris. In spite of the fact that French Prime Minister had sent a wreath to his coffin. This is the irony of history.

I must speak openly that as late as last October there was a movement in this country to keep his name out of UNESCO. His name was in fact endorsed by the Mr. Chavalit Yongchaiyut who had the courage to propose Mr. Pridi's name to UNESCO as one of the great personalities of this century. Mr. Pridi was also born in the same year as the mother of the King. There were some people who said that there should be only one name. Fortunately the King himself felt there is no justification in the view of only one name. That is why we managed to have two names recognised by UNESCO. I am quite happy at this development because Mr. Pridi was not only the first social democrat of this country but in fact of this region and the rest of Asia. He was the first minister who had introduced planning in 1932 and then he was

sent out of this country at that time being accused as a communist. What he had proposed for Siam was implemented by the Labour government in Britain after the Second World War. I had already mentioned that he was the liberator of this country. He worked with the Allies during the Second World War. The British and the Americans had sent troops and weapons for him to use against the Japanese but he adopted mostly nonviolent means. After the war he passed on the weapons that he received from the Allies to the neighbouring countries aspiring for freedom, particularly Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Indonesia. I am very happy that we have friends from all these countries here now. As Dr. Adams said that this seminar was planned in Indonesia a year ago and in fact, we had planned to have Mr. Abdulrahman Wahid as a keynote speaker but God had other plans. He has become the President of Indonesia. But he has not forgotten his earlier pledge to us. He will be the keynote speaker on the occasion of the centenary celebrations at Thammasat University at the invitation of the President of Thammasat University on the 10th of May.

One of the things I wanted to mention, as you know after the Second World War Mr. Pridi saw the need and importance for alternative politics. In 1946 he perhaps saw the need for social justice and hence he founded the League of Southeast Asian Nations consisting of those countries about to become free and independent including Burma, Indonesia, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and the Philippines.

This could have been a league of nonaligned, democratic and free socialist countries. Unfortunately in 1947 there was a coup backed by the Americans who were his great ally during the Second World War. The Americans aligned with the war criminal and ultimately the same war criminal became the Prime Minister and ever since this country has been under dictatorship in one form or the other. That is why Mr. Pridi's name has been under eclipse for so long.

I am very happy that his centenary means that the Thais have now come to their senses to regard him as their national leader and hero of the people. We

want to honour not only him but every one who has fought for democracy, social justice and those who have moral courage to fight nonviolently for democracy, peace and justice. I am very happy that in this symposium friends from both Europe and Asia are working together. I am sure that something worthy and good will emerge from this conference. I am very happy that the people of Ayudhaya, the Governor and the Deputy Governor are working very hard for us. I am also happy that Thammasat University is represented by the President himself. I myself speak in the name of the Committee appointed by the Prime

Minister and I am the Chairman of the private section for the centenary celebrations of Mr. Pridi Banyamong's birth anniversary. I speak also on behalf of the Spirit in Education Movement which has organised this conference and the new college of Moral and Political Sciences which will be revived in Thammasat University in collaboration with non-governmental organisations. I hope this group of organisations do something, not only for Mr. Pridi, but for alternative politics and social justice in the future which may be beneficial not only to Siam but to the whole world.

Sulak Sivaraksa

A Summary Report of the Conference on “Social Justice, Democracy and Alternative Politics: An Asian-European Dialogue”

This Asian-European dialogue on social justice, democracy and alternative politics has been a remarkable experience in more than one way. First, the opportunity for dialogue on issues that we consider as crucial for current political discourse in both Asia and Europe. They are deeply rooted and hence the discussion was totally absorbing. The challenge of social justice, democracy and the search for alternative politics are common experiences for our lives today. The historical circumstances and the sociopolitical and economic conditions that accompany this pursuit may vary but our objectives are the same. Therefore the most important task before us is to understand each other. It is here that I found the need for change not at the global level but at the per-

sonal level. I recall M.K.Gandhi when he observed that ‘in our struggle to change the society and the world the first step is to change ourselves’. We cannot chisel a stone with a toad inside. Secondly, I began to experience a unique feeling that my past was before me. I understood later that the past preceded the present and future in the overall discussion(s) of the conference. Our past, pride and prejudice were actively present in the conference. We are, after all, human beings, aren't we? I was therefore not surprised when we moved from an initial peace and consensus to a more open disagreement and confrontation. There were also moderating influences which helped to bind people and issues together. Under these circumstances the middle path it seems is the most

enlightened one. The end bargain that everyone is engaged for is the better and just world. Lastly, it was a learning process for all the participants. One of the most important outcomes of the conference was the emphasis on mutual respect and recognition of our diverse conditions and experiences. There is more than single truth in this world. The challenge is to know and understand them. It will reveal itself only if we are little more sincere, honest and committed to our goals. A true dialogue is sharing this experience of revelation. In this sense we have made a good beginning and this dialogue between Asia and Europe is a successful one.

The basic guidelines of the dialogue emphasised the need for building common understanding

of our future. It however became increasingly difficult to make vastly diverse issues converge. Though related there were infact, too many and each of them deserved a more patient and serious treatment than passing judgments or strong vocal defences. One of the major shortcomings of this conference was that we attempted to have a say on too many things in too short a time. There is a need for more equitable opportunity and ground for a dialogue like this. This requires a much more specific definition of the subject and clarity of the concepts in usage. Only then it is possible to make some meaningful recommendations for future as well as monitor their progress. Chandra Muzaffar and Erfried Adams shared the impression that we could have achieved far more concrete results from this Asian - European dialogue only if we had established a more clear and specific objectives and concepts. What did the dialogue contribute amidst the diverse issues and discussion?

The first panel on Asian values was actually the silent pace setter for the entire conference and its impact could well be imagined from the fact that a panellist from the final session thought it necessary to clarify certain (mis) conceptions about Asian values. It is important for us to remember that this discussion on Asian values was held under the shadow of the recent Asian crisis. This is crucial considering the fact that the real meaning of Asian values was left to anybody's guess and interpretation. There was a measured assault on freedom and democracy in several countries of Asia in the name of Asian values. Randolph S. David observed that 'none of the basic values of



democracy, social justice, sustainable development, or even national freedom were strong enough to prevail over the seductions of economic growth'. A far more serious concern was that the rapidly expanding economies in Asia were under authoritarian rule in one form or the other. It is the political leadership from these countries began to talk about Asian values and advocated the need for following the same without defining what they meant by them. Suharto, Mahathir and Lee Kuan-Yew became new exponents of this tradition which they neither understood its meaning nor they meant what they seemed to imply. They began to inspire several new recruits to their concept of Asian values and the Burmese military rulers soon became the most consistent defenders of this new found values of the authoritarian regimes in Asia. The phenomenon of globalization and the inherent contradictions within the liberal capitalist economy are equally responsible for this trend. A way out of the dilemma on Asian values was provided by Thomas Heberer when he quoted Aung San Suu Kyi who rightly argues that 'the values system of those with access to power and

of those far removed from such access cannot be the same'.

The second panel of the first-day on Western Social Democracy was probably the most peaceful and non-controversial of all the sessions in the entire conference. Thomas Meyer made a structural presentation of the successes and limitations of western social democracy. His observations of social justice and welfare state are important reflections of the present thinking among the social democrats in Europe. It is not everyday we can hear from an European left that the welfare system is facing slight cuts and the success against unemployment is limited. It was puzzling. There is something more than what meets the eye Rene Cuperus next day in the workshop on 'Meaning of Social Justice' as well as in his paper on 'Social Justice and Globalization' gave a detailed account of the shift in approach among the social democrats in Europe, from rights to individual responsibilities, from benefits to recognising responsibility and from income to employment orientation. Thomas Meyer, Donald Sassoon and Rene Cuperus together would have made a more interesting and useful

commentary on the successes and limitations of the Western Social Democracy. Donald Sassoon's paper on 'The European Left in Comparative and Historical Perspective' is an extremely sensitive survey of the European Left. He touches upon their hopes, failures and dilemmas facing them like a sympathetic historian who could have helped to change the course of time if only he could.

The second day panel discussion on 'Vision for a New Political Framework: Learning from Each Other' caused a climatic change in the proceedings of the conference. It was not sudden as it was made out to be in the evening. It was only coming from the first session on Asian values. When it surfaced and became more clear it was not surprising that Ashis Nandy talked about the encounter of civilizations. He sought a different paradigm and the framework for a dialogue in the future. This was not anticipated by the European counterparts. They were looking for a more serious dialogue on issues outlined by the conference. They were sincere and committed too. But did not foresee the demand for change at a much more basic level and particularly the arguments touching upon the foundations of western enlightenment itself. I am quite certain that several scholars and thinkers in the West would be keen to rethink on the question of western categories and the framework for a dialogue in future. But it should have been more carefully planned and mutually agreed upon as part of the agenda for Asian - European dialogue. There was more in the suddenness with which Ashis Nandy approached the subject of this conference than what he



meant which anyway was shared by several Asian scholars and thinkers including Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa and Chandra Muzaffar in a different and probably in a more conciliatory tone. Donald Sassoon's response during the open discussion after this session was indeed a reflection of the deeper currents within the western social democracy. This can be clearly understood from his observation that 'what is happening now is that we are losing the battle in Europe. Though we believe that there is more than one pole and we are beginning to accept only one. If you do not think that there is any possibility of a dialogue between us on this then I really must despair'. The inspiration for our dialogue in future lies in understanding this reality and recognising such preparedness on the part of European scholars and thinkers. Dirk Beusch's paper on 'Targets of a New Global Environment Polity', emphasised the need for evolving a common approach to resolve one of the major challenges faced by the people and nations in the twenty-first century.

The Panel on 'possible Future Co-operation and Practical Proposal' was interesting in more

than one way. Saboi Jum and Holger Ortel represent a vastly different background and traditions. Their approaches were obviously different but complementary in terms of mutually reinforcing the need for social mobilisation at the grassroots level and the need for enabling institutional accountability within the political system.

The third day's panel on 'A View for Below : Politics And Social Justice in the Thai Cultural Context - Experiences of Thai Activists' helped to raise the most important question: what are the possibilities of building a future network of scholars, thinkers and activists both in Asia and Europe in order to share and build a system of common knowledge that will help us to learn from our mutual experiences and struggles as part of our search for a just and peaceful world? The panel discussion represented by the Thai activists from varied backgrounds and struggles clearly emphasised the need for a more frequent dialogue among the people involved in the grassroots movement not only from Thailand but also from other countries in Asia. There are interesting developments taking place in different parts of the

world including Europe. The indigenous movements all over the world are coming into their own. In view of these developments the presentation made by the Thai activists assumes greater significance. It is highly important for us to continue this dialogue at all the levels—local, national, regional and global.

The final question that emerged from this Asian - European dialogue was that 'where do we go from here?' There were several recommendations made including the establishment of a working group comprising people from both Asia and Europe. There is a need for closer ties and interaction among the activists, scholars and thinkers engaged in this search for alternatives. It is crucial to recognise that there is something more in common among them than with other forces within their own culture.

The plural basis of our values, cultures and traditions should be recognised. In essence the principle of unity in diversity should be emphasised. This allows scope for different ways and approaches to resolving our problems. But at the same time universal self of an individual should also receive due attention. There are universal concerns that if we do not recognise them, then we would have failed in our responsibility for the common good of the humanity.

This dialogue was conducted in three languages (mainly in English and Thai, occasionally in German too) with simultaneous translation. There were study and leisure tours organised with an excellent hospitality extended by the people of Ayudhaya, the Ayudhaya Committee and the Government of Thailand. Great credit must go to Spirit in

Education Movement, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and Thammasat University, for organising such an extraordinary event and the opportunity for dialogue between Asia and Europe. Lastly the Committee for the National Celebration on the Occasion of Centennial Anniversary of Pridi Banomyong also deserve enormous credit and appreciation for their planning and efforts in organising this dialogue which was held in honour of Pridi Banomyong. The peoples' resistance against the Pak Moon Dam and the indifferent attitude of the Government of Thailand to the sufferings of the poor fisherfolk and the indigenous communities provided an epic backdrop to the dialogue and, in brief, a crash course on development realities in the Third World.

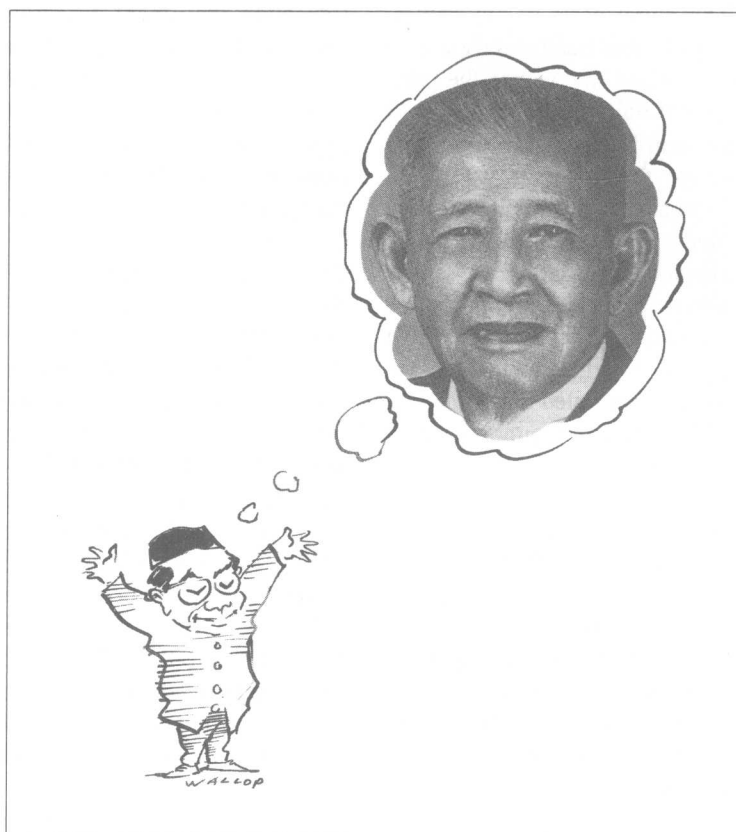
Ramu Manivannan

Abdulrahman Wahid's Keynote Speech At Thammasat University

I am proud to be here to deliver this keynote address as part of the centenary celebrations of the late Pridi Banomyong. I am also heartened to learn that Pridi Banomyong was the founder of Thammasat University. I had come to know about him since 1975 when his name was first mentioned to me. Ajarn Sulak always used to talk about Pridi and it is he who has invited me to speak to you on this occasion. I feel proud to join you on this memorable occasion of his centenary celebrations. Pridi Banomyong's legacy in the form of democracy and rule of law now begins to be implemented

in Thailand. My country has to learn from Thailand about how to establish democracy besides the benefit of learning from you the art of economic management in view of our urgent need to recover early. All these developments have great significance to the memory of Pridi Banomyong. He is not only known and respected in Thailand but also in other countries of Southeast Asia because of his contribution for the development of democracy in the region. In his own way Pridi was both a nationalist as well as an Internationalist at the same time. He had his other great qualities too. He was a man of

wisdom and possessed a practical knowledge of the world. In founding Thammasat University he sought to blend the academic excellence with an appropriate political consciousness which was the real need of his time. It is highly valuable to impart this tradition to other universities in the region and especially in my country. Pridi's life and contribution for democracy in this country and elsewhere in the region should always remind us that the rule of law which is a necessary condition for democracy cannot be created without any struggle. His life itself is a lesson in this regard. Pridi did



respect tradition as well as he sought new ideas and vision for future. It is quite important that we respect our traditions, social values and ethics. They provide us a sense of identity and direction to our lives. It is also important to recognise the need for positive changes that come with time. We need to think about our future too. I did welcome the opportunity to meet His Majesty, the King at Hua Hin yesterday. It goes to show that I respect the tradition of Thailand and its long history. I have no doubt that the Thai people will further enrich their tradition in the future. Today I am here to participate in this celebration of Pridi Banomyong's dream and contribution to the Thai people. Thereby I demonstrate the need for respect for the past and the future. Sometimes due to our grand vision of the future we tend to neglect our

past. But I believe that this attitude will not help us to build a strong and good future. It is highly important for us to achieve a balance between the past and the future. I told the young officers at the graduation ceremony a few months ago in Indonesia that you must respect the institutions but should not be afraid of taking action against those who misuse their power. People in power should also be aware that any abrogation of their duties or misuse of power will only expose them for punishment if found guilty. This reinforces the principle that the late Pridi Banomyong advocated in his life time - the need for respecting the rule of law. Pridi had worked very hard throughout his life because of his beliefs and values that he had held as his goals. I am quite certain that his spirit and legacy will continue to influence not

only Thailand but also others in the region. The challenge before the Thai people is to establish his ideas and dreams into a reality and I have no doubt that other peoples, societies and countries in the region will follow soon. It is very important for the people in power and the government in particular to respect the views of the minority. It is equally important to respect the dissent in politics and society. The life and works of Pridi Banomyong set an excellent example of this need for democracy to survive in any country. In this way democracy means the acceptance of different views as a natural path of life. Sometimes we are unable to differentiate between what we believe and what happens politically. People who want to secede from Indonesia (Free Papua and Jaya) expect me to go to open their congress. I told them that freedom of secession means that they are free to secede from Indonesia. But once they begin to organise themselves with that belief they will be against me. That still did not resolve the question whether I should open their congress or not? The people and other members of the government advised me not to go because in their view the act of opening their congress would mean recognition of free Papua. But the people in Papua were adamant that I go there to prove my democratic credentials. You can understand how difficult this dilemma is. On the one hand it is linked to the demand for democracy and on the other, it involves the security of the nation. I would not of course reveal here what decision I will make and I can only say as it is said in our language that it is the secret of the company. This clearly shows the kind of dilemmas we have to face everyday in

our walk of life. I can do well to remember the late Pridi Banomyong in resolving my dilemma. I am really grateful for the opportunity to come and join you in this centenary celebrations in honour of the late Pridi Banomyong and I also wish to take this opportunity to pay my respects for the lady he has left behind. May his memory linger ever in our conscience. I am also grateful for Thammasat University for conferring me with this honorary doctorate in law. It is neither easy for any-one to give it to me nor it is easy for me to accept it because

I was a university drop-out. I have tried to educate myself over the years. I am thankful that the opportunity has provided me the ability to attend to one of the most difficult jobs in the world. I can say this to you that working for the government and within the system is not an easy task. There is a story about four people who were debating about the first job of mankind. The economist said that people collected their food and also saved for the future. Therefore his was the first profession. The architect said that since you were talking about

collection and preservation of food you certainly need space. It is the work of the architect to create and make use of the space. Therefore his profession was the first one. Then the lawyer said that if you are talking about space it involves obligation and rights. Then you have to draft and establish rights otherwise chaos and disorder will prevail. Therefore his profession was the first one. Then the politician stepped forward to ask that who created chaos and disorder first of all?

The Last Word

I feel flattered and honored to be granted an opportunity to deliver a keynote address here [i.e., at the Thai Parliament], an institution which Mr. Pridi Banomyong founded. Unfortunately, when Mr. Pridi passed away in May 1983 the members of this institution did not even bother to pay a minute of silent homage to him. This was an egregiously ungrateful and disrespectful act to say the least. The decision of several leading members of parliament to commemorate the centennial anniversary of Mr. Pridi here today would help remove the ugly (moral) stains that have long tainted this institution. I hope that from now on the members of the house of representatives and the senators—who for the first time are elected by the people—will help foster meaningful as opposed to nominal democracy in the country. May the members of both chambers of parliament cherish goodwill and compassion, uphold and protect justice, cultivate moral courage, and

refuse to kowtow to any concentrations of power.

For starter, I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. Chaovalit Yongchaiyud. Of course, he is as fallible a human person as we all are. However, if he had not been serving as premier at that particular moment, I doubt that any government would have the determination and even less the courage to submit Mr. Pridi Banomyong's name to UNESCO for its anniversaries of great personalities and historic events calendar.

The celebration at parliament today is in fact the climax of the commemoration of the centennial anniversary of Mr. Pridi, a man who had willfully devoted his life to further the cause of human dignity and well-being in his country. The suffering he had to endure and the sacrifices he had to make were, by any standard, immense. He believed that the common people have the right to participate in governing the country as well as

to take charge of their futures no less than the rich and privileged. Aside from introducing meaningful and participatory democracy to Siam, Mr. Pridi also played a pivotal role in resisting the attempts by the great powers to colonize Siam, either formally or informally. Thus judging from his contributions and credentials, Mr. Pridi was as significant as the other great Thai leaders or rulers such as King Taksin of Thonburi and King Naresuan of Ayudhya. However, a major difference must be emphasized. Unlike the other great rulers in Thai history, Mr. Pridi was a commoner who did not aspire to reap personal glory: he simply wanted to serve the people, especially the oppressed and marginalized, and to protect the system of constitutional monarchy.

Making sure that the monarchy remains under the constitution is no small feat. There are always elements in the political, military, and business circles that opportunistically strive to vener-



ate the monarchy, blunting or preempting, in a knee-jerk fashion, any criticism of that institution. As such, the limited power of the monarchy as prescribed by the constitution can be easily transmogrified into something (more) absolute. This has now become a conspicuous trend ever since Mr. Pridi was illegally overthrown from power and the Siamese polity had deviated from the concept of *santi pracha dhamma* (peace, democracy, and justice).

Now that we are commemorating the centennial anniversary of Mr. Pridi, I hope the members of both chambers of parliament are sufficiently endowed with moral courage and intellectual capacity to grasp the importance

of upholding the system of constitutional monarchy—in both form and substance. The democratic constitution shall be the highest law of the land, guaranteeing equality, liberty, independence, and demanding and rewarding life experiences for all—including those seeking refuge in the kingdom. We must expect nothing less. Otherwise the monarchy will not be able to coexist peacefully and benignly with the Siamese, especially with the poor and unrepresented. Otherwise, the monarchy will be sowing the seeds of its own destruction.

Let me remind you that activities to commemorate the centennial anniversary of Mr. Pridi will continue throughout

the year in order to heighten the awareness of the Siamese and to combat against historical amnesia and revisionism. It is also hoped that the vision of Mr. Pridi and the People's Party would inspire the Siamese, encouraging them to set up a vibrant, compassionate, and responsible civil society.

As the chairperson of the Committees on the Project for the National Celebration on the Occasion of the Centennial Anniversary of Pridi Banomyong, Senior Statesman (private sector) I would like to highlight some of our activities. Activities in commemoration of Mr. Pridi have been going on since 24 June 1999 at both the national and international levels. They have been

kindly supported and assisted by numerous groups in the public and private sectors. I do not want to burden you all with every minute detail. Therefore, let me just focus on the main activities that have been held in this month [i.e., May]. The celebration began in Ayudhya province, the birthplace of Mr. Pridi. On 2 May, at Banomyong Temple, we held offerings to monks to make merit for the late Mr. Pridi.

Abroad, on 13 May, a conference and exhibition on the life and contributions of Mr. Pridi will be held in Berlin. This particular program will also be held in Paris on 15 May. Similar events will be organized in various cities worldwide until 11 May 2001. Furthermore, we are planning to hold a major commemorative event at UNESCO in Paris despite the fierce opposition from the Thai representatives to that organization.

Returning to the programs in Ayudhya province, a symposium on alternative politics, democracy, and social justice was held between May 5 and 8. Academicians and intellectuals from Europe and Asia participated in this symposium. On the opening day of the symposium, 5 May, the participants laid a wreath at the Pridi monument, which was located in the Pridi Banomyong Room of Ayudhya Vithayalai [i.e., Ayudhya School]. Mr. Pridi had studied in this school when he was young. Moreover, while serving as Regent, he obtained funds from King Rama VIII to construct a new building for the school. Regretfully, we did not have a chance to lay a wreath at the Pridi Memorial, the house where he was born in, because it was still under renovation.

M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra, the deputy foreign minis-

ter, graciously presided over the opening ceremony. Equally important, he delivered a heartfelt speech, extolling Mr. Pridi's ingenuity and highlighting the latter's sacrifices and benevolent contributions. M.R. Sukhumbhand stressed the fact that Mr. Pridi exploited his talent and great intellect for the sake of the common people, not for personal glory or benefits. In the deputy foreign minister's view, Mr. Pridi was also a visionary whose ideas on democracy and social justice were far ahead of his times. Lastly, M.R. Sukhumbhand emphasized that Mr. Pridi was a man of peace, and therefore worthy of our emulation.

Not only did M.R. Sukhumbhand participate in the opening ceremony of the symposium in Ayudhya, he also kindly invited all the participants to have dinner at Suan Pakard Palace. In an off-the-record conversation, the deputy foreign minister stated that the centennial anniversary of Mr. Pridi represented the final act of atonement: absolute monarchy is dead and buried, an observation which I agreed with. He then humbly proceeded to ask all sides or factions to work together for the cause of justice and constitutional monarchy in the country.

Anyone who is familiar with Thai history will know that the royal house of Paribatra was diametrically opposed to the 1932 revolutionaries. But now we have a leading member of the Paribatra family urging reconciliation and sincerely praising the civilian leader of the 1932 revolutionaries. Similarly, several members of the royal house of na Ayudhya helped facilitate the programs that were held in Ayudhya province. I think these gestures are crucial and very significant. Put differently, we

have received support from many sides. Today, a major celebration is also going to be held in Ayudhya. For instance, there will be a parade proceeding towards the Pridi-Thamrong Bridge. Once there was a motion to tear down this bridge. This is certainly not surprising, as there have been numerous attempts in the past to doctor or distort historical events, beginning in 1947 but especially after 1957. I hope that from now on we will undauntedly look at the truth in the eyes, stripped of any clothes. Otherwise, we will be wandering aimlessly and mindlessly in the labyrinthine present and future.

As for the main event at Thammasat University on 10 May, had the premier displayed even a modicum of sincerity like some members of his party who openly condemned the wrongs done against Mr. Pridi we would have been elated, if not awestruck. However, on that important day, the prime minister ridiculously praised a hodgepodge of individuals, few of whom—to the point of being nonexistent—were part of the *Santi Pracha Dhamma* movement. Worse some had even cynically participated in the demonization campaign against Mr. Pridi. Here I am referring particularly to the leader of the Progressive Party and the second head of the Democratic Party. If the Democratic Party—and here I see a very big question mark—would admit some culpability for its past mistakes, then it would be able to mitigate the crisis of legitimacy that is presently hounding the party. Let me remind you that the Democratic Party eagerly collaborated with the military junta during and after the 1947 coup d'état. Calling a spade, a spade, the Democratic Party partici-

pated in purging democracy from Siam. And I need not add that the party hired someone to yell in a theatre the infamous lie that Mr. Pridi assassinated King Rama VIII. The political future of the Democratic Party seems bleak, especially when one considers the fact that the masses at the grass-roots level are no longer easily swept away by pious rhetoric and vague promises. They have become more skeptical and therefore more involved in the public sphere. This is a boon to the Thai civil society.

Since the prime minister's speech at Thammasat University yesterday was stale and pathetic, if not completely disingenuous, the participants had to turn elsewhere for meaning, substance, and solace. It seemed that President Wahid of Indonesia provided the missing and badly needed ingredient in yesterday's event. At the very least, the presence of President Wahid was of great symbolic significance. Arguably, President Wahid is the only Indonesian leader so far with impeccable moral and democratic credentials. He has long been involved with grassroots politics, and he has infused religious teachings and ethical concerns into his political leadership. Phrased differently, President Wahid shares numerous similarities with Mr. Pridi.

President Wahid understood and appreciated the priceless contributions that Mr. Pridi made. Apparently, our prime minister did not. Were the premier and the Thai political leaders more visionary and morally courageous like President Wahid, the centennial anniversary of Mr. Pridi would be more meaningful. We received scant meaningful support from the government in our attempt to publicize the benefi-

cial deeds of Mr. Pridi. For example, to the government, it did not really matter that Mr. Pridi engendered the creation of municipal governments while serving as minister of interior or that he played a major role in abolishing unequal treaties (including extra-territorial rights) signed with foreign powers while acting as foreign minister. Would the government recognize—and this is long overdue—the deeds of Mr. Pridi and, for instance, name one of the rooms in the new Ministry of Foreign Affairs building Pridi Banomyong or Luang Pradist Manudharm? And of course there should be a Direk Jayanama room; Mr. Direk was essentially Mr. Pridi's right-hand at the Foreign Ministry. Needless to say, the independent and neutralist foreign policy that Mr. Pridi advocated is still worthy of emulation. We must abandon the previous policy of unequivocally seconding the foreign policies of the great powers, of allowing the rich and powerful to lead us by the nose. Also, our foreign policy must stress legitimacy and justice over the reaping of short-term advantages, especially economic ones.

As far as the Ministry of Treasury is concerned, pursuing or advocating an alternative policy that is independent of the World Bank, IMF, ADB, and WTO is practically out of the question. To expect that this ministry would support and alleviate the plight of the poor like during the times of Mr. Pridi is also illusory. The ministry cannot even stomach the idea of printing bank notes with Mr. Pridi's image on them. It must be pointed out that every civilized constitutional monarchy has images of those other than the royalties on their bank notes. We must not

forget that between 1932 and 1957 all Thai bank notes had the image of the pedestal tray supporting the constitution on them. The dictatorship of Sarit Thanarat not only stunted democratic development in the country forcefully, but also crushed it symbolically: the image of pedestal tray was removed from the bank notes. The Sarit dictatorship could not even tolerate a symbol of democracy.

Special postage stamps are often created, commemorating the centennial anniversaries of leading Siamese personalities—even the ones that have not been recognized by UNESCO. And of course, there are countless stamps depicting flowers and savage animals. However there is not a single Pridi stamp. If the honorable members of the present parliament are morally courageous, then they should introduce or bring back good and democratic things to Siamese society in terms of both symbol/form and substance. Abroad, many societies have national holidays in honor of their important figures—for example, in India for Mahatma Gandhi and for Ambedkur and in the United States for George Washington and for Martin Luther King. What I am trying to say is that, as far as Thai society is concerned, Mr. Pridi is no less important than these international personalities. It is greatly unfortunate for the Thai people to have a government that is unrepresentative of the masses, that does not care about the fate of those at the bottom. The government thinks it is too much to set aside a national holiday in honor of the father of Thai democracy and guardian of Siamese independence during the Second World War, not to say of simply declaring May 11 an

important day to be observed by the people in the country. I also doubt that the prime minister will broadcast on the relevance of this very day to the people of Siam. He himself is not even present here at parliament today.

What I have said so far is not because I am bitter. But I had to speak out the truth. And the truth is quite simple: in contemporary society, the people in the mainstream are indoctrinated to be afraid or wary of the good deeds and vital contributions of Mr. Pridi Banomyong. This is so because the mainstream values the attainment or accumulation of power and possessions at all costs. According to mainstream logic, the richer or more powerful a person is, the more 'successful' s/he is. It does not really matter how s/he managed to climb to the top. As if under a spell, the people

in the mainstream are attracted to half-truths and distortions and, without a whisper of protest, cower to the centers of power or dominant beliefs.

I hope that the centennial anniversary of Mr. Pridi will help open the eyes of many in contemporary society, encourage them to confront as opposed to deny the truth, and enable them to differentiate between myths and facts—therefore empowering them morally and intellectually to represent and stand with the marginalized, poor, and unrepresented.

In terms of aesthetics, the highpoint of this week's celebration is the musical performance, *Pridi Gitanusara*, on the evening of 9 May. The beautiful, artistic, and creative energy emanating from the performance may help to motivate the people to enter

into the realm of truths and honesty in ways that rational or logical means cannot do. The last song of the performance contains a touching Dhammic line, which in rough paraphrase, goes as follows: *Like a snow-capped mountain, the good deeds of a person can be seen from afar*. For over 50 years, a massive system of imposed ignorance has prevented the vast majority of the people, especially those in the mainstream, from appreciating the good deeds of Mr. Pridi. Let us hope that the centennial anniversary of Mr. Pridi will mark an important turning point in our political culture and moral consciousness and help to disperse the thick fog of prejudices and ignorance that has obscured the towering accomplishments of Mr. Pridi.

Sulak Sivaraksa

Beyond the Last Word

Having a wish list about what should be done in honour of the late statesman Pridi Banomyong could be tricky if not outright controversial.

In a land where the king is above criticism, no matter how positive, people ended up avoiding to appear too generous toward the memory of Pridi, the man who helped end absolute monarchy back in 1932.

Ask Sulak Sivaraksa, social critic and staunch supporter of Pridi if anyone has the slightest of doubt.

Earlier this year, on the centennial commemoration of Pridi's 100th birth anniversary, Sulak wrote an open letter to Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai. The letter, dated February 18, contains nine proposals-cum-requests about how the government

can help honour the memory of Pridi. It must be said that Pridi was not just a leader of the 1932 revolution but he also committed many other good deeds. He was the Siamese leader of the Free Thai Movement which secretly fought for Siamese independence from the de facto Japanese occupation during the Second World War, founder of what is now Thammasat University and so on.

No, and no, if not mute indifference seems to be what Sulak kept hearing in response to his proposals.

"Nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing at all," said Sulak on numerous proposals made to the prime minister.

Amongst those turned down are: proposal to make a democracy park in each province in the kingdom which will also

serve as a democratic gathering place. Sulak said he added that if the people want a monument it should be a monument for local people who played a significant role in bringing democratic changes to the Kingdom. Sulak hoped that such parks will strengthen the young democracy that Thailand is. "It's a great shame," said Sulak. "[for] Pridi is the founder of all municipality."

"Nothing," said Sulak on any response toward his proposal to name an Important Meeting Room at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after Pridi, especially any rooms which will serve as a bilateral or multilateral agreement signing venue. Sulak reasoned that Pridi had been instrumental in ending many unjust agreements that Siam willingly or unwillingly committed herself

in agreements with foreign powers.

"I made a speech in parliament house on this issue and [there was] a big applause," said Sulak who however added that there was no response from the government.

Nothing is also the answer to what happened to Sulak's proposal to have the symbol of democracy be placed back on semi transparent areas of Thai banknotes. "No reply, they put the king on," he said, referring to the fact that only the king seems worthy being a symbol of reverence.

Sulak even went further to also propose that some of the banknotes' denomination can feature the portrait of Pridi, a common practise in many kingdoms and empires. "Oh, that's even worse," said Sulak. "That's not possible."

Nothing is also Sulak's conclusion about his proposal to have postage stamp made in honour of Pridi. "They (the Ministry of Communications) reply (saying) It's not possible." Sulak asked why then do different royalties have their portrait featured on stamps when was told that no man or woman can appear on postage stamp. "They say royalty is an exception. I asked are we in absolute monarchy? They didn't reply."

Sulak said he had the assistance of former Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun of this matter, but to no avail.

Nothing at all, was another reaction of Sulak on his proposal to have the Thai Airways' Inflight magazine to run stories about the life and time of Pridi on this special year. "They put the king and Princess Mother [on] every issue, they put monkey on but nothing on Pridi. There are at least 100 letters [to Thai Airways] and they don't even reply," the

old man lamented.

Despite all the silence and deaf ear, Sulak received a few positive response such as a Bt10-million fund was set by the Bank of Thailand for what will be Pridi Fellowship. The fellowship would enable promising middle-ranking officials of the bank to spend a sabbatical year or half a year do some reading, research and reflections.

Another better news is that the Ministry of Education had also sent proposals letters to three Indochinese countries to jointly celebrate the centennial of Pridi Banomyong who made some contribution to these countries during his lifetime. There was nothing coming out of it, however. "The National Commission [for UNESCO] are not cooperative," Sulak concluded.

That was not the end of bad news, however. Sulak had also proposed the prime minister to ask the Crown Bureau to turn the Ta Chang Mansion, which is the historic house of Pridi into a museum for the posterity. "No, that's the last thing they would. And [historian and former rector of Thammasat University] Charnvit [Kasetsiri] propose a very modest one to put a plaque on," said Sulak who added that the government have not done it either.

What's more, Sulak's request to have the government host a party in honour of all who fought for Thai democracy. This, said Sulak, would include those involved with the May 1992 uprising that overthrew the military dictatorship of Gen Suchinda Kraprayoon.

"No, the PM refused," said Sulak. Concurrently, Thammasat University hosted a similar function on May 10 and some foreign dignitaries were also invited. "Prime Minister Chuan said he could not because he was asked by the palace to host a similar

function for the [late] Princess Mother as he couldn't do it twice. I don't understand his logic," said Sulak who added that the prime minister asked him to please not compare the two figures despite the fact that both would turn 100 this year and have been honoured by UNESCO.

Sulak also proposed that a movie be made on the life and work of Mr Pridi. "No reply, I asked Chuan and he just laughed —In Thai [it] means no. Anyhow I've talked to Richard Gere and he said he will lend [his] name if [I] need help."

Last but not least, was this: "I also asked if he [Chuan] could have something [on Pridi] on public broadcast once a month, twice a month. He also said 'please do not compare'. You know how unusual [the government] gave nine million baht [for Pridi's Centennial celebration] and how much he spent on the Princess Mother?

"And I argue that you don't have to think of Pridi as the father of Thai democracy, as the liberator of the country but money" he said referring to the fact that Pridi set up the Bank of Thailand, and helped the country saved a lot of money on numerous occasions. "When the Japanese [during its occupation] wanted money from the Thai treasury he [Pridi] said okay. But we must put the value in gold in the central bank of Tokyo. This gold came back [after the war]."

Sulak said despite all these only Bt9 million was given by the government. "And I was laughing," said Sulak.

The old man will not give up, not just yet however. "No, I will wait for the new government. I never give up. The government must not be afraid of Pridi, [it] must be proud of Pridi."

Pravit Rojanaphruk

Victor Anant

Many journalists in Asia, especially those who learnt the craft under Victor Anant in Kuala Lumpur in 1963-64, will remember Anant for long.

He was one of three British instructors sent by the International Press Institute for its first Asian training programme. All the trainees were Malaysian, though some of us had to call ourselves Singaporean a few years later. In Malaysian public life then religion was not an issue but the general ethos was that good people trusted in God. Communists did not. If anyone outside the jungles and politically influential thought that faith in God was not essential to being good, he kept it to himself. In the first drinking session we trainees had with Anant, he declared that he was an atheist. This bothered some of us, especially my Malay colleagues. We have had some exposure to Anant's instincts by then. He used to lead the sessions on news and views analysis and accompany us on assignments. We had found him to be a truth-seeking, fair-minded and compassionate person. By the time the six months of intensive training was over, we realized that he had made that declaration just for the "shock effect". Just to make us think.

Seven years later I had the pleasure of working for Anant on *The Asian* and the related Asian News Service. I was less certain of the world around me. I had more questions to put to him than when I first met him. I learnt that he faced as many dilemmas as I had. I was not surprised. After all, the first lesson I learnt from Anant was not to be surprised by dilemmas, yours or others.

Through your pages I would like to convey my sympathies to Zuleikha, Anant's good wife who was always generous to Anant's students and friends.

Arun Senkuttuvan

William J. Gedney

April 4, 1915 - November 4, 1999

With the passing away of Ajahn Bill Gedney, an era has truly ended. For Ajahn Gedney was an intellectual *rara avis* beyond compare. His linguistic genius extended the boundaries of scholarly research in the Thai and Tai languages and opened up new worlds for all those interested in exploring the mysteries of the languages and culture of Thailand and its neighboring countries. Yes, the world of scholarship is seriously diminished by the physical absence of this remarkable man. But in another sense, there is no loss for he lives on in all those he touched and inspired. All who came under the spell of his seemingly endless knowledge of Thai language and literature and his abiding commitment to plumb their depths pursue their own studies with a sense of endless gratitude to their mentor, Ajahn Gedney.

I, personally, will forever, remain in a meritorious debt to Ajahn Gedney. In the early fifties, I studied the Thai language at Yale, and Bill's wife, Choy, was one of my teachers. With her never failing smile and *joie de vivre*, she epitomized *sanuk*. Sitting at Bill's feet, I gained my first glimmers of understanding and appreciation of Thai culture. Through the decades of our friendship, both Bill and Choy provided hospitality, compassion and, perhaps, most importantly encouragement to pursue my own commitment to Thailand in my work and scholarship.

Ajahn Gedney strived for perfection and, perhaps, that explains why he published so relatively little. But it was that thirst for perfection that served as a goal for all his disciples to follow and emulate. I remember visiting Bill in the early seventies in the somewhat decrepit Seta Palace hotel in Vientiane. He was interviewing speakers of various Tai languages, endlessly recording, questioning, challenging. The intensity of his intellectual curiosity burned like a torch costing a brilliant glow in the dark and dingy confines of his room. That torch, his memory, continues to glow, beckoning and guiding all of us who knew and were touched and influenced by Ajahn Gedney.

William J. Klausner

Bangkok, 10 April 2000

To the Editor of
Postbag - Bangkok Post
 Klong Toey

Dear Editor,

For those who are indeed devoted to Thai affairs with no ulterior motives, the magnificent text by Sulak Sivaraksa on Pridi Banomyong (Guest Column, 9.IV.2000) constitutes a source of inspiration. That is why this new *mise-au-point* by Khun Sulak deserves our warmest congratulations. I also wish to underline here how proud I feel of my Government giving full support to UNESCO's inclusion of the great Thai *rattaburut awuso*'s name in the organisation's XX century Calendar of worldwide personalities.

Out of any idea of creating suspense, I have only two slight remarks to the article that, for mere diplomatic reasons, I would prefer to discuss upon in details with its honourable writer. They are related to a wording aspect, regarding the concepts of "occupation" by an ally and of "welcome" (why not "backing"?), to a coup-d'etat, say the one made by the *Soi Rachakru Group*, by another (and exceptional situations to follow thereafter). By the way, it is my purpose to meet the author of *Powers that be...* to exchange views on the matter and to announce to him my intention to translate his book on Pridi's democratic saga of frustration into my Brazilian tongue.

I shall take the 11 May 2000 as a real national date, thus a day-off for me at my Chancery, in order to attend all events being in program for the Centennial Commemoration of the People's Party's seven co-founders leader, the brain Promoter of the 1932 Revolution and afterwards successively Minister of Interior, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Chakri Throne Regent and Head of Government. His Six Principles adopted at the Parisian rue de Sommerard, reformation and new laws, the 1946 direct elections and Constitution are still works in progress, because their spirit remains, after so many outraged assaults to their democratic commandments.

As an author, educator and film-maker, he is for all a crossed cultural reference on the best Thailand has ever produced. Like Dr. Puey Ungphakorn—the "Asian Raul Prebisch", as I informed my friend Rubens Ricupero during UNCTAD X—, as a patriotic activist against the alliance with Tokyo's nazi-fascist regime (1941-45) and undeservedly an exile for decades up to his death in 1983, Pridi Banomyong will always be a Thai example for the whole world. He is highly respected in his homeland, in all neighbouring countries, in China, Britain and many others, among them Brazil, where we also had foreign backed military coups, coups inside other ones, and had to thrive strenuously to recover fundamental freedom out of 21 years of political darkness and distress.

To cultivate Pridi's memory, as so decided the international community last year, will help so many good-will people to look critically at "official" versions of history and correct many of their ill-minded manipulations. Among the most absurd and unhappy wrongdoings of our times, one stays on the ordinary common place *that's history!*, meaning a dead past. No, no : history is quite alive and Thais know that, Asians as well, for our fragile presents are built with old bitterness and ruins without which it would be impossible to have dreams of any future.

The electronic audio-visual technologies of this information era have at last dissolved the old-fashioned diplomacy of lies, covert actions and bluffs. There are no hidden games any more, because their irregularity became loud and clear. If reality may sometimes be unbearable, truth brings a sense of relief and beauty and shows the best patterns for bilateral and multilateral relations. Happy are those nations that have the privilege to record great personalities in their past. Pridi Banomyong is one of them and therefore always alive, with all my consideration.

Thank you, Editor, for the publication and, please, accept my best regards.

Arnaldo Carrilho
 Brazilian Ambassador

Dear Sulak,

Thank you for your letter and copy of your talk in Kosovo. I have only just got your message, so cannot answer except briefly by email. I am sorry about this, as there is a lot to say about your excellent talk and I don't have a chance to make the comments it deserves, except that is very interesting and I think will be of great interest to many people, but I don't know about the people in Kosovo, except a few of those interested in peace and with the necessary level of education—and I fear not many of them will still be alive. But even if one or two hear it and are in a position to do anything with the understandings they glean from your wise words, it will be worth while.

I hope you are well and happy as we are—but what a violent world most of us now live in. Like you, I do my small best to bring a few drops of peace into it—but I am now in my middle eighties and there is not a great deal I can do.

With warm wishes

Adam Curle

Pridi Banomyong
Dr.Puey Ungphakorn

Lucien and Jane Hanks were in London and they met with their friend, Dr.Puey Ungphakorn, who was at that time living and lecturing in Cambridge. Learning that the Hanks were about to leave for Paris, Dr. Puey said, "Let me give you a letter of introduction to Dr.Pridi Banomyong who, in exile, is living in one of the suburbs."

A week later, the two Hanks called on Dr.Pridi in his home and were graciously received. The details of the interesting conversation cannot now be recalled, but as the Hanks stood up to leave, Dr.Pridi spoke these words quietly and clearly:

"Government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth." The Hanks recognized at once that these are the final words of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg address. Dr.Pridi must have read that famous address many times for he knew those words by heart.

Jane R. Hanks

Date: Bangkok, April 5, 2000

Dear Acharn Sulak Sivaraksa,

We would like to thank you for your performance at the opening ceremony of the community currency system, "Bia Kud Chum". We believe your presence and your talk has been of important value to the community members in Kud Chum.

The system has started, but of course there is still a long way to go to make it really successful. Nevertheless we believe the process of preparing the system has in itself been of immense value and the final actual realisation of trading using a community currency is prove of community members committed to think and analyse their social and economic lives of their own and act upon this.

Your speech fuelled into this. Rethinking or reconsidering the notion of "value" and what is "valuable" (role of technology, Laos is our brother not small brother), fits perfectly into the picture of a different approach to development. We certainly hope that the "Bia Coupon" system, *not* being an end in itself, will be helpful as a tool for community members to empower themselves through self-learning.

May I also add that we are grateful that you mentioned that community currency systems do

not represent an isolationary vision, but that exchange with other communities or outside organisations will still be very important. As "outsiders" ourselves we have certainly learned a bit from working with the community members in Kud Chum and we hope that this gained knowledge will be useful in our future work.

Many thanks once more for all your time allowed to spend at the community. We hope you found it also a valuable visit and that in the future you will keep supporting the project and this community. It was very important for all of us that you were there to support the community.

On behalf of the Thai Community Currency Systems project (TCCS),

Sincerely

Menno Salverda

Wat Pathumkongka in Bangkok was where Bhikkhu Buddhadasa once studied Buddhist scriptures prior to 1932. It was also where Mr. Puey Ungphakorn served his novitiate and played around as a child. The ashes of Mr. Puey are also kept beneath a Buddha sculpture in this temple. Both Ajarn Buddhadasa and Mr. Puey served as guiding stars, facilitating our navigation through the Dhammic and secular worlds, respectively. Hence, we deem it most appropriate to construct the **Buddhadasa Library** at the temple as a reservoir of all his works and wisdom. We also plan to build the **Puey Forum** at the temple as a place for young people to exchange opinions and ideas and explore the different ways to lead a noble life as well as the meaning of truth and honesty. The abbot of the temple has completely consented to our plans.

If you wish to financially support both or either one of these two plans, please contact Ms. Ladda Wiwatsurawet. You can transfer money to or send cheque payable to the following bank accounts.

Puey Forum

Account name : Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute, Thai Commercial Bank, saving account, Bang Kor Lam branch. Account number : 019-2-73380-2

Buddhadasa Library

Account name: Ariyavinaya Project, Thai Commercial Bank, saving account, Charoen Nakhon branch. Account number : 024-2-46191-5

If you desire a receipt for tax reduction we will write one for you. For further information, contact Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute, 666 Charoen Nakhon Road, Klong San, Bangkok 10600; Fax 860-1278

For those who live abroad you can make your cheque payable to Sulak Sivaraksa as the local banks charge too much for foreign exchange.



*Mr. Anand Panyarachun,
former Prime Minister,
at Wat Pathumkongka
performing ceremony
in memory of the late
Puey Ungphakorn.
28 July 2000.*

Pridi Banomyong, Pridi by Pridi Selected Writings on Life, Politics, and Economy (Silkworm Books, 2000)

Translated and Introduced
by Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit

This volume contains a fair selection of primary documents in English that provide glimpses into the personality, vision, beliefs, and illusions of Pridi Banomyong, a founding father of Siamese democracy. Reading about Pridi in his own words, a number of remarkable things stand out.

One, it seems that he admired and, to some extent, was 'infected' by the spirit—as opposed to the model—of the Bolshevik revolution. An important reason why the Bolshevik spirit sent shivers down the spine of the ruling class worldwide was because, in the words of Robert Lansing (Woodrow Wilson's secretary of state), it appealed "to the proletariat of all countries, to the ignorant and mentally deficient, who by their numbers are urged to become masters, ... a very real danger in view of the process of social unrest throughout the world." Phrased differently, were the spirit to spread, it would leave the "ignorant and incapable mass of humanity dominant in the earth." It was the loathsome, incapable, and ignorant common people in Siam whom Pridi represented and 'urged to become masters' of the kingdom. Pridi's sentiment was buttressed by his knowledge of law, European models of constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy, socialism, and Enlightenment ideals.

Two, although a sizeable

number of Siamese in the 1920s shared convictions similar to Pridi, he was not simply content with launching a rhetorical revolution and imagining democratic changes in society as most of them were. Rather, he worked to democratize Siam, despite the personal costs it entailed. As he told Lieutenant Prayun Phamonmontri, a founding member of the People's Party, in 1925: "I heard that the people who wanted to change the absolute monarchy were already many in numbers, but there was nobody who had decided to do anything committed. Thus we have to go beyond mere talk" (p. 135). Seven years later, and a week after the revolution, Pridi wrote his wife as follows: "What I have done this time was for the nation and for the majority of the people. I thought we are born only once, and when there is a chance to do something, we should do it" (p. 80).

Three, humanitarian and even moral imperatives drove Pridi to engineer the 1932 revolution. For instance, in his view, launching the revolution was akin to performing a *kuson* for the Siamese people (p. 81). Nevertheless, and this point must be stressed, Pridi never really demonized his opponents—e.g., the king and aristocrats. (He even respected King Rama VII.) They were not represented as inhuman, subhuman, lesser human or a species apart, thus barring

any reconciliation and demanding total annihilation. To him, the oppressive legal and economic structures of the country were the primary cause of "evil" in Siamese society, enabling the privileged class to "farm on the backs of the people" (pp. 70-72) and making the abuse of power predictable and acceptable. However once they are corrected, Pridi believed that a "full democracy" would firmly take root in the kingdom. Moreover, he hoped that (however wild-eyed it seems in retrospect) the old guards could ultimately be cajoled into supporting the objectives of the revolution—hence his "beg" for a "fair state of mind" and love in a series of post-revolution radio broadcast speeches (pp. 183-96). As such, many bureaucrats from the *ancien regime* were invited to join the government—an action that Pridi would eventually regret (pp. 169 and 241).

Four, Pridi's concept of "full democracy" entails both process (i.e., formal democratic elections) and outcomes (i.e., opportunities and improved livelihood of the people). The old guards were willing to indulge (grudgingly of course) Pridi in the former, but not in the latter. Hence, they bitterly opposed, among other things, his national economic blueprint. Pridi's "full democracy" is of even greater importance and relevance today as we have reached a higher stage in the "the highest stage" of capi-

talism and imperialism, to borrow a Leninist idea. For instance, trade, debt management, international 'law,' multilateral financial institutions, and proxy armies are entrusted to cement 'Third World' countries in their dependent positions. Alternative developmental strategies and independent nationalism are denied—at times forcefully. Corporate profits are prized over human and environmental wellbeing. And so on. All these are festering against the backdrop of the spread of nominal democracy worldwide.

In a speech delivered in 1934 Pridi likened the revolution to a situation where the Siamese people are in "a boat together in the middle of the ocean. The boat is trying to find its way

through wind and waves to reach landfall. If there is no compass on the boat, the boatmen do not know which direction to steer. It will be impossible for the boat to reach safety" (p. 184). The compass is the democratic constitution, which Pridi also perceived as "the highest dhamma" of the land (p. 196).

In the late 1930s and throughout the Second World War, Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram hid the compass, took over the ship, and maneuvered it towards the shoals of fascism. For a fleeting period after the war, the compass was found and Pridi was declared the new skipper of the ship. He tried to steer the ship into the calm sea of neutralism and independent nationalism. Unfortunately, in

1947 a mutinous and autocratic group of sailors seized control of the ship, transforming it into their personal fiefdom and catapulting Phibun (yet again) to power. They demonized and hauled overboard the captain, navigating the ship into the turbulent waters of the Pax Americana. Eventually, Siam became a hit man of Washington, participating in such 'noble cause' as pounding Indochina to smithereens.

At the dawn of a new millenium, Pridi's vision of "full democracy" and independent nationalism may again prove a vital compass, guiding us through the labyrinth of inequalities, injustices, and oppression and towards an approximation of what human life should be.

S.J.

Voice of protest

the story of the Pak Moon Dam protest comes alive
through the voice of one woman

VOICE OF THE RIVER : One Thai Villager's Story of the Pak Moon Dam

Interviewed by Jessica Friedrichs, Sofia Olson, Kaia Peterson, and Lydia Shula. Translated by David Streckfuss and Arunee Chupkhunthod.

Drops of water can, together, raise a storm. Thus comes this new book, recording the voice of an Isan woman the shedding insight on the 12-year struggle of Northeastern villagers against a dam project that has since grown into one of Thailand's strongest grassroots movements.

Voice of the River : One Thai Villager's Story of the Pak Moon Dam is welltimed, launched as

the long saga over the state-initiated project hits the headlines again.

For more than a year, thousands of fisherfolk suffering from the loss of their livelihood have maintained a "protest village" at the Pak Moon Dam site. Last week, hundreds of protesters took control of the dam's power plant, demanding the government review the impact of the dam and consider the possibility of de-commissioning the concrete blocks altogether.

This thin volume was the result of a collaboration between four young students from American universities. On an exchange programme with Khon Kean University, Jessica Friedrichs,

Sofia Olson, Kaia Peterson, and Lydia Shula have been paying visits to the Mae Moon Man Yuen (Moon River Forever) protest village since late last year, learning about development issues first-hand from the locals themselves. Their teacher, David Streckfuss, and a Thai Woman, Ms Arunee Chupkhunthod, helped translate the transcripts into English.

"We came up with an idea to write a book on these villagers as a way to help them, to let the world know about their plight," said Sofia, one of the interviewers.

"At first, we thought about doing a series of slide shows. But then we decided the best

way was to tell the story through one person's voice, rather than us trying to explain what was happening. And as we are familiar with Mae (Mother) Sompong—talking to her reveals how brilliant she is in analysing the issues she's been dealing with—we chose to focus on her narratives."

The choice was, indeed, an apt one.

Mrs Sompong Wiangchand has been spearheading the Pak Moon Protest since the project's inception over 12 years ago. From a simple fishing background, Mrs Sompong's rise to leading thousands of other villagers is a prime case study in how state-imposed development can trigger grassroots animosity—and the determination to challenge it.

"We have come to understand the issue as being much bigger than the Pak Moon case," noted Kaia, another collaborator on the book project.

"We've learned about the people's ideology, the connections to other dams, the broader issue of poverty, and people's alliances."

New Zealander Lydia Shula added the Pak Moon case also unravels how international organisations like the World Bank, the project's main financier, can drastically disrupt the self-sufficient lifestyle of rural villagers. The concept of development and associated materialism, she said, should not be imposed on other people, as that may not be what they really want.

"Even back in high school, I was always interested in becoming involved in helping the poor, particularly those in developing countries," added Sofia. "However, I have since come to view poverty reduction as just not about giving away medicine and food, but more as a fight against

global institutions that have led people's lives to be more and more difficult around the world.

"One intriguing thing about doing an interview with Mae Sompong was how she kept talking about living with nature. At first, it was difficult for me to imagine life without a supermarket to be secure.

"However, for Mae Sompong, to be able to fish, to exchange her catch with rice from another village, or to collect bamboo from the nearby forest, was far more secure than having money to buy things," she said.

Having witnessed the protesting villagers in person, the young students said they have become aware of the fundamental differences between environmental movements in Thailand and in their respective countries. For example, Kaia said the demonstrations in the United States tend to revolve around the issues of commercial fishing interests, and the demonstrators are mainly from a middle-class background. On the other hand, local people here have more at stake, as they struggle just to maintain their subsistence lifestyle.

"The main lesson we should learn from the case is to give power back to local communities, that they should be able to control how they are going to live, that future development programmes should focus more on community sustainability and human spirituality," the young American said.

Sounds far removed from a tourist's vision of Thailand? It's exactly Lydia's hope to see the book as an opening into another side of the country that coexists with the white-sand beaches and the glitzy nightlife.

Sofia is slightly less optimistic, thought all hope to see their

book being used in development courses as a supplementary text, to enable more people to have a more direct channel to the voice of the poor.

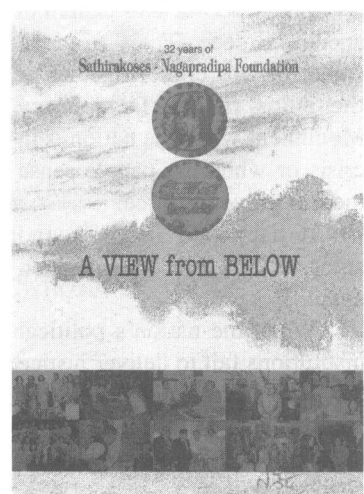
The initial print run is 200 for the Thai version, and a hundred more for the English translation. The amateur publishers are planning to post a shortened version on the International Rivers Network (IRN)'s Web site at <www.rin.org>.

Another aspiration is expand coverage of their future research to include representative villagers from the rest of Thailand, be they Muslim fishermen in the South, or hilltribe villagers from the North.

In *Voice of the river*, Mrs Sompong urges the authorities to "give a bit of a voice of the villagers, to see the importance of our humanness, to not violate the rights of the people or the environment of those who live with nature."

Perhaps the young students' hope to spread Mrs Sompong's voice will be met with a louder echo from the rest of the world.

Vasana Chinvarakorn
Bangkok Post,
Saturday, May 27, 2000



A View From Below

In Thailand, the art of non-violent protest, has been honed to perfection by exponents of populist and grassroots organization. The *Forum of the Poor* has carried the headlines again by spearheading on the last week of June protest on the issue of the Pak Moon Dam at Government House. The Chuan government's police crackdown, on the protestors, betray the politicians' lack of understanding of the way grassroots organizations have permanently changed the country's political landscape.

Government and political parties are learning to fear the populist organizations. Populist organizations have become an integral part of Thai style Democracy. Today governments and political parties can only ignore them at their peril.

The symbol which inspires and unites the populist movement is the Democracy Monument. Many of the leaders of the Forum of the Poor were initiated into politics on the steps of the Democracy Monument. Thailand is perhaps the only country in the world that has a Democracy Monument.

Like the Oracle of Delphi in ancient Greece, Thais from all walks of life come together at the steps of the Democracy Monument when the nation is in crisis or when the people sense there is grave injustice.

It happened in 1973 and again in 1992. It may happen again.

When the nation's political institutions fail to deliver justice the people have recourse to the Democracy Monument. It is the embodiment of Rousseau's *General Will*.

The spirit of the Democracy Monument affirms that in essence Thai political culture is democratic. When everything else fails the Thai people turn to raw democracy.

It is the bottom line of Thai politics. It is the conscience of government. The shadow of the Democracy Monument keeps imperfect governments, political parties and the military in line.

The roots of the political vanguard of the present day populist movement can be traced back to the politics of the Democracy Monument. The inspiration and leadership of the movement stem from the idealism of the 73-76 Generation. The prominent peoples' leader in the recent face-off between the Pak Moon Dam protestors and the government, Phipop Dongchai, symbolizes the style and values of the 73-76 political generation.

The great mobilizing power of the Forum of the Poor and its ability to stand down the government over many issues, like the Yadana gas pipeline, the Pak Moon Dam and many others have given the impression of a solid united front.

Whilst this may be true today, it was less than a decade ago when the movement was weakened by internal dissensions. The divisive issue was over priorities and strategy. Should the movement concentrate on grassroots work in the villages and slums or should it attempt to change government policies and the direction of economic development and risk political confrontation with the government and powers that be.

Through the influence of mentors like Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa,

activist intellectuals and veterans of the 1973 Democratic Revolution, the political advocates ultimately carried the day. The visibility and successes of the Forum of the Poor has vindicated that choice of strategy.

A View From Below represents one of the occasional publications emanating from the people's movement. There are not many publications about the movement. The fact that activists are doers rather than writers and shortage of funds for publications account for some of the reasons why.

Still for those who want a short introduction on Thailand's populist organizations, *A View From Below* would fit the bill. Its like a guidebook to the movement.

It presents the world-view of the movement, the important historical milestones, the role of Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa as the theoretician and ideological leader of the movement, its crusade against economic liberalism, its training programs, its good works in education, religion and social work, as well as, a capsule history of certain core organizations within the movement including, TICD, Wongsanit Ashram, SPDI, SEM and Kalyanamita Council. For believers it is a must reading.

Jeffery Sng
8/1/00



Recommended Reading

The Feeling Buddha: a Buddhist Psychology of Character, Adversity and Passion by David Brazier. Silkworm Books, Chiangmai, Thailand 2000

Searching for Absolute Values and Unity in the Sciences: Science for the Benefit of Humanity, Commemorative Volume of the Twenty-first International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences, Lexington, Kentucky USA 1999

The Coming United Religions by William E. Swing, United Religions Initiative, San Francisco 1998

Forest Path by Members of the Wat Pa Nanachat community, Ubon, Thailand 1999

Burma ~ More Women's Voices edited by the Thanakha Team, Altsean-Burma c/o Forum-Asia, Bangkok, Thailand 2000

Beyond Globalization: Shaping a Sustainable Global Economy by Hazel Henderson, West Hartford, USA 1999

DHARMADUTA: Journal of the Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace, Gandan Monastery, Tel/Fax 971-1 360069

Cultures of Peace: The Hidden Side of History by Elise Boulding, Syracuse University Press, NY USA 2000

The Mystic Heart: Discovering a Universal Spirituality in the World's Religions by Wayne Teasdale, New World Library, CA USA 1999

Thinking Like a Mountain. Towards a Council of Being by John Seed, Joanna Macy, Pat Fleming, and Arne Naess, New Society Publishers, 1988

The Buddha in the Eyes of Eminent Scholars by Phra Sripariyattimoli (Somchai Kusalacitto), 1999

Speaking of Religion & Politics: The Progressive Church Tackles Hot Topics edited by John B. Cobb, Jr., Pinch Publications, 2000

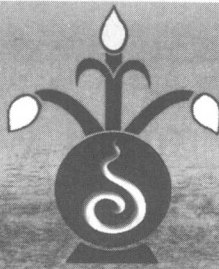
Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism edited by Stephanie Kaza and Kenneth Kraft, Shambhala, 2000

The Invisible Player: Consciousness as the Soul of Economic, Social, and Political Life by Mario Kamenetzky, Park Street Press, 1999

Buddhist Perspectives on the Earth Charter by Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, 1997

Human Rights Environmental Law by Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, 1998

For a Democratic Control of Globalization by Development and Civilizations (MIDEC), Paris, 2000



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In Collaboration with Asian Cultural Forum On Development and Committees on the Project for the National
Celebration on the Occasion of the Centennial Anniversary of Pridi Banomyong [Private Section]