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Pridi Banomyong and Puey Ungphakorn
Santi Pracha Dhamma

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Statue of Pridi Banomyong at Thammasat University, Rangsit Campus. Unveiled on 11 May 2000.

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PEACE

Seeds of Peace is published thrice annually in January, May and September, in order to promote the aims and objectives of the Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development, the Alternatives To Consumerism network and the Spirit in Education Movement as well as International Network of Engaged Buddhists. In order to subscribe a suggested $50/ year donation is suggested. Personal checks from the UK, US, Australia and Germany are accepted.

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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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Letter from Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra

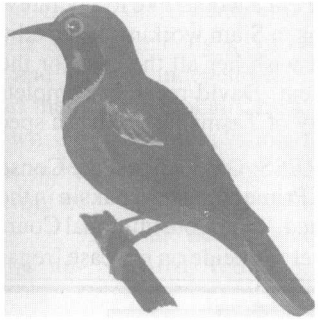
11 May 2000 marked the 100th natal anniversary of Dr. Pridi Banomyong, the Thai elder statesman. And on 16 November 1999, during its 30th general session, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization named two Thai individuals, namely H.R.H. Princess Srinagarindra and Dr. Pridi Banomyong, as among the world's great personalities for the year 2000-2001. UNESCO's decision was made pursuant to the nomination received from the Thai government. The decision is a great honor to the Thai people and country.

Throughout his lifetime Pridi Banomyong was a giver to Thai society. Even though he was born into a farming family, he rose to the apex of various political positions. He earned his barrister-at-law domestically and his doctorate in law from France. Due to his competence and knowledge in various fields—governance, law, economics, and foreign affairs—Pridi assumed many important political positions at various points in his life. He served as prime minister thrice. By royal appointment, he was made the elder statesman, whose task was to give advice on the affairs of the kingdom.

Dr. Pridi was a visionary educator. In 1934 he founded the University of Moral and Political Science, the kingdom's first open university, to broaden the opportunity of the people to have higher education. He was the university's first presidet. Later on, the university became known simply as Thammasat University. This educational institution is renowned for its promotion and protection of democracy, humanism, and justice in society via nonviolent means. When the country was in war, Dr. Pridi also took part in the Free Thai Movement, safeguarding the country's interest and security. He was the first Thai to be honored by the Smithsonian Institution in 1945; a new species of bird discovered in the Thai kingdom was named after him and designated a symbol of peace bird.

Dr. Pridi Banomyong is thus one of the leading personalities of Thai history who has performed great deeds for the Thai people and society. Therefore the collective effort of various individuals and groups of individuals to commemorate Dr. Pridi Banomyong on his 100th natal anniversary is meritorious, commendable, and worthy of widespread support. I wish the project for the national celebration on the occasion of Dr. Pridi Banomyong's 100th natal anniversary great success. I also wish all those who are involved in this project great happiness and prosperity.

11 May 2001



Editorial Notes

Shortly before this issue went to press the Indonesian parliament voted to impeach President Wahid. After months of struggling to remain in power Wahid seems to have accepted the parliament's decision. Ramu Manivannan's article in this issue was written while Wahid remained in power. It raises some important points about democracy and the power of the media. It also puts out a call for leadership in the Third World. A leadership based on moral authority rather than economic or military power. Wahid was a powerful figure who sought to provide that leadership. Despite his lofty position he still maintained strong connections with the grassroots. No doubt Wahid will continue to lead the grassroots movement. He will also continue to play a key role in organising the Bandung II conference. Although the days of the Soeharto regime are well and truly over in Indonesia, the struggle for a genuine democracy there continues. Megawati may turn out to be a Cory Aquino, fostering a low-intensity democracy that provides a favorable investment climate for foreign investors—hence the round of international applause as Wahid fell. There are also fears that Megawati will give free rein to the military with disastrous consequences in Aceh and West Papua.

World leaders recently met in Genoa for the G8 summit. The meeting was accompanied by large anti-globalisation protests. It seems that whenever world leaders meet these days to discuss globalisation large protests follow. While the violent actions of some protestors cannot be condoned they must be seen in context. The state, in representing the interests of capital, employs para-military forces to control the protests. Hence, while the violence of the protestors is unacceptable so to is the violence of the state in their attempts to control the protests. The media also tends to focus on the violence of the protestors while ignoring the far more destructive structural violence brought about by the process and agents of globalisation.

The upside of the protests in Seattle, Melbourne, Prague and most recently Genoa is that the ground is shifting. Those in power are beginning to at least engage with moderates and discuss some of the issues surrounding globalisation. While the commitments of the G8 leaders to do more for the poor may be hot air they at least encourage activists to continue their campaigns and expose the hypocrisy of the leaders. The failures of globalisation are becoming obvious to more and more people, the tide is turning.

In this issue we honour two great leaders of the Santi Pracha Dhamma movement, Pridi Banomyong and Puey Ungphakorn. Celebrations of Pridi's 100th natal anniversary will continue until their official closing on December 10 this year, domestically as well as internationally. Dr Puey was also honoured by the recent opening of the Puey Inter-Cultural Forum at Pathumkongka temple on the second anniversary of his death. Lady Poonsuk Banomyong, Pridi's wife, presided over the opening ceremony and M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra, the ex-foreign minister, gave a keynote address on santi pracha dhamma. The Puey Forum will serve as a platform to openly raise and discuss alternative and thought-provoking ideas as well as other pertinent issues. It is part and parcel of a movement to help restore the centrality of temples (as religious, educational, and cultural centers) in Thai society.

The internet, for those fortunate enough to have access to it, is changing the world as we know it. *Seeds of Peace* is now available online at www.siam21.com/sop. We would welcome any comments and suggestions about the website. Please also see the related story, "Online activism", in this issue.

Seeds of Peace would like to say farewell to Sonali Chakravarti. She has returned to the US after 10 months in Siam working as the editor of *Seeds of Peace*. We thank her for everything she has done and wish her all the best for the future. We welcome David Reid from Australia as her replacement. David recently completed a Graduate Diploma in Environmental Studies at the University of Tasmania. He has a special interest in the links between Buddhism and activism.

STOP PRESS: On 3 August the Constitutional Court of Thailand, in an 8-7 decision, decided in favour of Prime Minister Thaksin in the case regarding concealment of his assets. Sulak Sivaraksa commented, "The Constitutional Court decided on Mr. Thaksin's case after three months, but they are still yet to decide on my case [regarding the sit-in at the Yadana gas pipeline] after one year."

INDONESIA:
A Greek drama in Jakarta

A Greek drama is gradually unfolding in Jakarta. The philosopher-king is to be tried by the failed but powerful system representing the vested interests of the Indonesian polity. The national media is singing hymns everyday in praise of the ambitious lot and the international press is writing obituaries for the leader who refuses to go. But together they have been asking him to read the writing on the wall and he denies seeing anything but God's own message for him. He is faithful and none dare challenge him for that. He would have been Plato's choice for the king in his native city-state but the people of the largest Islamic nation have elected him.

It is difficult imagine a trial on corruption charges to be decided by the voting of opposition inside the national legislature in the name of impeachment. It is even more curious that the opposition does not want a secret ballot to decide the outcome. It is easy to isolate in the game of power struggle but to base the question of human integrity on the strength of numbers is a tragedy of democracy. In brief they want to eliminate a threat and challenge to the system that the country has long been used to.

Abdurrahman Wahid is busy collecting blessings and counting them. He knows that he is not alone in his struggle against the system and the status quo in Indonesian politics. The common people and the intelligentsia both at home and abroad acknowledge the fact that his tenure has been a breath of free and fresh air for democracy in the country.

The newspaper leaders have a word of appreciation for his initiatives towards restoring democracy in the nation and it also seems as though they are sad to see this experiment coming to naught when he is gone. But they want to see him go. Why? The media in Indonesia is controlled by the traditional capitalists of the country. The international press is singing the same tune. Then how do we differentiate the international press from the national media that is singing the same song. It is simple. The song of capital is the same everywhere.

Let us face the realities. Wahid may have won the elections and is still holding the reins of power but he does not represent the system. The State power is only a means to his end and not an end in itself like in the case of many others wanting to wield power. He comes from the other side of power-the people. He emerged from the grassroots.

Wahid represents the voice of transition in Indonesian politics and society. He carries with him the seeds of change and a potential to achieve the change of heart within the system. Indonesia has been facing the crisis of disintegration for some time now. Wahid has been able to convince the people that seeking a separate identity and independence is not an end in itself. He offered to meet them by walking half way down the bridge with proposals for more autonomy and devolution of power.

He demonstrated the humane face of the country at a time when East Timor was soaked in blood and he did not pretend when he criticised the armed forces for the excesses committed in the new island nation. He has shown even greater maturity in undertaking a visit to Australia recently after the bilateral ties between the neighbours had soured considerably since the East Timor crisis. It was a reconciliation mission and the Australian government accorded him a truly warm reception at a time when his own parliament back home was snaring to impeach him.

His government could not attract the huge foreign investment, which all Third World countries consider as a sign of good and prosperous economy but he has enhanced the export earnings for the country in his short tenure. He also wants to develop the people's economy that will cater to the domestic market of Indonesia. The declining value of rupiah against the US dollar has been cited as one of the reasons for the mounting pressures against him. Indonesia is not an exception to the ways of money market in the world.

Abdurrahman Wahid is deeply committed to the ideals of justice and compassion. He understands the problems and challenges before his country as an independent nation in the age of globalisation. He shares a common vision of 'development with dignity' with other countries in the developing world. He is the new 'sage counsel' for the Third World movement for

justice in international economic and political relations. His wisdom is much valued in the meetings of the South. He has emerged as the leading spokesperson of the South.

At a time when Fidel Castro wants to know the kind of burial he would get after his remarkable career with astonishing abilities to survive, the burden of orchestrating the Third World awaits a new leader. Mahathir Mohammud does not possess the moral courage or political conviction to lead the South. Nelson Mandela is the natural choice but he has opted to keep out of power and still wields enormous influence among the world leaders. He is highly respected too. But he is judiciously involved in some serious tasks of social, political and economic reconstruction in South Africa and in the African continent. Hence Wahid has no contender for that role at an official level at least.

He has added confidence and a new dimension to the quality of leadership available in the Third World when he offered to mediate between Israel and Palestine. Do we ever think of mediating in a conflict situation in the Third World? We have always conceded this ground to the West without any question of political or moral legitimacy and waited for the so-called global powers to communicate even with our neighbours.

This is nothing but a continuation of the colonial legacy and the mind-set of a victim of oppression. Our social elites and political leaders in the Third World are worse hit by this psyche of a dependent culture. Wahid's offer to mediate in the Middle East conflict situation may not have attracted the



world's attention or even the attention of his own people in Indonesia. He represents the voice of humanity in raising his concern for peace in the Middle East. It speaks for his global vision not based on the military or economic might of his country in international relations. It is based on the power of his moral authority.

Wahid is a mass leader who came to power not to distribute favours to his friends and supporters in the country. His supporters are therefore not a disillusioned lot that you usually notice soon after the emergence of a new power centre and the consequent fall of the same after some time. His political and social base remains in tact. The political and social class that is critical of him now has never approved of him even in the beginning of his ascendancy to power. He is a scholar-activist from the grassroots. He is also a man of very high moral, spiritual and social standing known for his vision and work among the people. His supporters are a little impatient and they are even preparing to draw the battle lines. He would not need that.

A tragedy waits to be enacted in Jakarta whose script belongs to the text books of political science. But Wahid has always demonstrated his abilities to overcome the challenge of odds at a time it would seem as improbable. He cannot be dismissed as a fallen idol. He has potential to transform the polity of Indonesia. The political leadership in the country and the military understand this reality. They want to humble him politically through the parliament on moral grounds of corruption and inefficiency. They are little exhausted by the fact that he has refused to yield to their game plan.

Wahid also is running out of options. The declaration of national emergency does seem like a last post he can rest before dissolving the House for elections. He has far more potential to transform the system than mere retention of power and the time has come to measure this challenge. Let us include the people in this game of numbers that will determine the future of Abdurrahman Wahid's tenure in power and, in turn, the politics of Indonesia. People have to choose between democracy and the nepotism of the past. Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa considers that Indonesia beleaguered by years of misrule and lack of accountability in the system needs Abdurrahman Wahid to survive and transform itself as a genuine people's democracy in the years to come. He is also of the opinion that Wahid's tenure in power will contribute for the progress and development of democracy in the region. People are very aware, as Wahid would often say, that Indonesia is in the beginning of a new renewal.

Ramu Manivannan

An edited version of this article was published in the *Bangkok Post* on 22 July 2001. The following day the Indonesian parliament voted to impeach President Wahid and Megawati was sworn in as Indonesia's new President. A longer version of this article is available on the *Seeds of Peace* website.

TIBET:
Peaceful path to Tibet expected

The exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, is hopeful of a peaceful resolution to the vexed Tibet problem through dialogue with China.

"Through the middle path that we have adopted, we are hopeful of a solution that is mutually beneficial to both the Tibetans and Chinese," he told a group of journalists and intellectuals in New Delhi.

"China is changing, all countries are changing. They have to move along the global trend—no totalitarianism, no closed societies. Everybody is moving towards democracy, openness, free press, respect to human rights and religious faith. It is a question of time [before China changes," the Tibetan leader observed.

The Tibetan cause, he said, is not a dead issue. "I am very hopeful that within a few years, there will be a negotiated settlement with China."

Referring to his elder brother's visit to China a couple of years ago, the spiritual leader said he had offered to send a delegation for talks with the Chinese government, but there was no response so far.

He pointed out that Tibetans were seeking a solution within the Chinese constitution. Autonomy to Tibet within China was the best way for stability within China itself. "We are seeking our own legitimate right, keeping the Chinese interests in mind." A settlement of the Tibet issue will greatly boost China's image internationally.

The Dalai Lama these days is following a strategy of engaging Chinese people everywhere. He says he has asked Tibetans all over the world to talk to overseas Chinese, and not avoid them.

"Wherever I go, I teach them Buddhism. I tell them we are not anti-China. This is a wrong impression created by the communists, the spiritual leader said.

Quoting some Chinese political analysts, the Tibetan leader said, "they feel that China will change in the next 15 years. If that is so, I hope I can return to my homeland in my lifetime". He clarified that he had no political ambitions. "The day I return to Tibet, I will hand over all my authority to the local government."

Asked to comment on the Chinese plan to construct three railway lines to Tibet from different Chinese provinces, the Dalai Lama expressed concern and said it was an attempt to change the demographic structure of Tibet.

Dinesh C. Sharma
New Delhi, *Bangkok Post*
26 July 2001

TIBET:
Beijing 2008: the Tibetan response

On July 13 members of the International Olympic Committee voted to award Beijing the right to host the 2008 Olympic Games. The Tibetan government-in-exile was quick to condemn the decision.

"We deeply regret that Beijing is awarded the 2008 Olympic Games. This will put the stamp of international approval for Beijing's human rights abuses and will encourage China to escalate its repression. The people who will suffer because of the action of the IOC will be ordinary Chinese, Tibetans, Uighurs and Mongolians and others who work for fundamental rights and freedoms," said Tsewang Tethong, Minister for Information and International Affairs in the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamsala.

In the months leading up to the vote His Holiness the Dalai Lama had maintained an ambiguous position on the issue. He neither spoke out in favour of Beijing's bid nor openly opposed it. This may have been part of an attempt to gain the trust of Beijing amidst ongoing attempts to begin a dialogue.

Tibetans-in-exile and the

worldwide Tibet movement were less generous in their attitude to the Beijing bid. They had actively campaigned against the Beijing bid highlighting China's poor human rights record and continuing attacks on Tibetan culture.

Alison Reynolds, co-chair of the International Tibet Support Network and Director of the Free Tibet Campaign, said, "We are outraged that the IOC has chosen to overlook the systematic destruction of Tibetan culture and human rights abuses committed by the Chinese government." She went on to say that the campaign would continue. The IOC members would be forced to account for their decision and the situation in Tibet would be subject to greater public scrutiny than ever before.

A report released by Amnesty International on July 6 showed that China executed at least 1,781 people in the past three months — more than the rest of the world combined in the past three years. On June 23 an American photographer, from the French news agency AFP, was beaten by police after photographing a lone protester at the Tian'anmen gate near the portrait of Mao Zedong. The photographer received treatment in hospital for his injuries. Chinese officials were unwilling to apologise for the incident, blaming the photographer. Obviously many members of the IOC were happy to overlook Beijing's poor human rights record and award it the Games.

However, there are arguments in favour of Beijing 2008. Not awarding the Games to Beijing would also have done little to improve China's human rights record. At least the Games now provide some sort of leverage for those campaigning against the Communist regime. China is certain to come under close scrutiny by the international media in the months before and during the Games. However, Beijing would be likely to keep a tight lid on any internal dissent in the lead up to the Games.

China will also have new President by 2008 and there are likely to be other significant changes in the Communist Party leadership by this time. Whether these changes promote reform or continue to push the current hard line remains to be seen.

The Games are still seven years away. No doubt this will be a time of continued intense campaigning by the Tibet movement. There is always the hope that during this time there could be major changes in China and Tibet.

While it has now been decided that the Games will be held in Beijing the spectacle of the Games cannot be allowed to overshadow the memory of those who died during the Cultural Revolution, in Tian'anmen Square and in Tibet. The struggle for freedom and democracy in China and Tibet will continue.

David Reid

INDIA:
Dalit Hindus seek solace in Buddhism

In a not so remote village in the state of Uttar Pradesh, bordering the national capital New Delhi, a young couple was lynched to death a few months ago. The boy had eloped with a village girl and had secretly married her.

Marrying someone one loves is not a crime anywhere. The couple was "punished" to death because they dared to challenge the centuries old caste system prevailing in India. The boy belonged to the so-called upper caste and the girl was low-caste Hindu (referred to as Dalits). The village headmen could not stomach this match, as it went against the rigid caste system that the Hindus follow. This caste code does not allow marriages between the upper and lower castes.

This incident in Uttar Pradesh is not isolated. Several such cases are reported every year from North India. Upper caste Hindus do not allow their children to marry someone form the Dalit community. Still, so many villages follow the norm of keeping Dalit homes away from the main cluster of houses in a village. Dalits are not supposed to drink water from the same well as the upper castes, nor are they allowed to enter all Hindu temples. In another northern state, Rajasthan, Dalits are barred from wearing coloured turbans or headgear and from wearing slippers in the village.

Though untouchability is banned by law, it is still being practised in several places. Dalit leader, Dr B.R. Ambedkar had launched a movement against untouchability and discrimination against Dalits several decades ago. As the ultimate step against the caste ridden Hindu society, Dr Ambedkar renounced Hinduism and embraced Budhism some 45 years ago. Since then scores of Dalits have embraced Buddhism all over India. Buddhism is almost considered a religion of Dalits in India.

"Ambedkar's appeal for Buddhism was grounded in its rational approach to the predicament of the human condition and the rejection of caste-based hierarchies. In a sense, he reinvented the Buddha in the light of his own egalitarian thoughts. He was resorting to an age old answer to caste: conversion which has been a pattern with tribes and lower caste menial groups converting to Christianity and Islam. But in this case, he single-handedly revived Buddhism in the land of his birth," notes Dr Mahesh Rangarajan, a New Delhi-based political analyst.

After so many decades, the spirit of conversions is being revived by a Dalit group called "All-India Confederation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Organisations." This body claims a membership of four million Dalits.

It plans to convert one million Dalits to Buddhism on October 14, 2001. The same day 45 years ago that Dr Ambedkar embraced Buddhism at Nagpur in central India. The confederation says that the day has been chosen with care to hammer home the Dalit rage against the social stratification.

The objective behind the mammoth conversion is not only to rebuff the caste Hindus and the Brahmanical order but also to remove the internal contradictions dogging the Dalits, who are divided into various camps representing the Balmikis, Paswans and so on.

Mass conversion

"Buddhism is a casteless religion. That is the primary reason why we want to embrace it. We have no enmity with anyone. It (the conversion) is for human rights," says Mr Ramanakutty, a leader of the confederation. Mr Ram Raj, the national chairman of the confederation, terms the proposed mass conversion as the "biggest cultural event in the world."

He claims that the decision has the concurrence of Dalits' leaders from almost all Indian states.

The confederation is planning to organise a series of programmes, including "Rath Yatras" to prepare Dalits for cultural change. The body's target is to convert the entire Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population of 250 million to Buddhism.

The Buddhist spiritual head, the Dalai Lama, has also welcomed the proposed mass conversion event though he differs with the views of Dalits in some way.

"I have always been telling the neo-Buddhists, particularly those who come from the so-called low castes, that taking to Buddhism should not result in resentment among other religions or caste systems. In order to be more equal follow the Buddha dharma," the Dalai Lama told the press recently when he was asked to comment on the conversion event.

At the same time, he said "I describe Buddhism and Hinduism as twin brother and sister."

But a bigger question is whether conversion to Buddhism will give Dalits an equal status in society. Those propagating the conversion event feel it will do, but experts differ with them.

"There is no guarantee that conversion will bring full equality. The rest of society may just treat the converts as yet another caste, as has happened with the neo-Buddhists in Maharashtra. But no major movement in the reverse direction has taken place in recent decades. This is probably because the new faith also may give the person a sense of confidence and enable better self confidence," says Dr Rangarajan.

"Unlike other religions Buddhism does not have any place for rituals, gods or any permanent entity like soul, and is just a practicable moral code for living. However, in practice, all kinds of mumbo jumbo appears that sometimes appears to be exceedingly familiar but on-the-wane rituals of Hinduism, are followed, so much so that not only Buddha but even Ambedkar is not spared from the godhood," says Dalit scholar Dr Anand Teltumbde.

He points out that of late, the relatively upwardly mobile among the Dalits are increasingly getting attracted towards "Vipasyana" a kind of meditation that is said to have been practised by Buddha himself to get his enlightenment and so is "prescribed" in Buddhism to be a good Buddhist.

"It is amusing to see this mindcentric trend growing among Dalits. In all this, Am-

bedkar's attempts at rationalisation and redefinition of Buddhism are completely forgotten."

Improved lot

It is not as if the lot of Dalits has not improved since India's independence. They are given reservation in educational institutions, government jobs and even preference in grant of loans to start businesses.

Reservations and the constitutional guarantees against discrimination have indeed enabled the creation of a Dalit middle class and opened the doors to high political office.

In the political arena, says Dr Rangarajan, a new sense of self-awareness has grown in western and of late in northern India over the past two decades. This is very clear with parties like the Republican Party and the Bahajun Samaj Party.

"These are only the tip of the iceberg, and there are huge social movements to enable full benefit of reservations through better education and organisation," he notes.

Religious conversions have always been a touchy issue in India. In the past few years, it has also become a political issue.

For some Hindu outfits and a section of the ruling Bharitiya Janata Party, conversion is a major issue that is often used to whip up Hindu feelings. If the conversion plan comes through, it is certain to raise the hackles of these Hindu outfits.

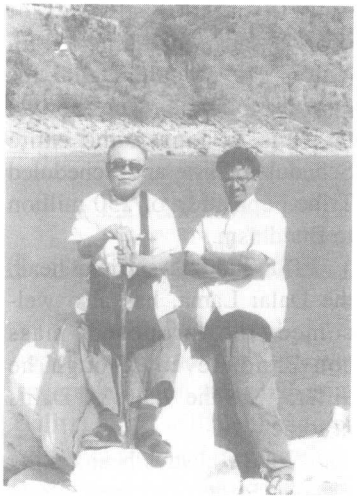
Hindu hardliners oppose the conversions, but find it difficult to answer charges that they have done little to dismantle the numerous social barriers in their religion. The conversion event in October will be seen as further proof of their perceived failure to nurture reforms in Hinduism.

Dinesh C. Sharma
New Delhi, *Bangkok Post*
10 June 2001

INDIA:
A walk along the River Ganga in Rishikesh

It was almost three in the morning when I saw the sacred bathing ghat Har-Ki-Pauri in Haridwar while on our way to Rishikesh. I counted my blessings and thanked heaven for the wonderful gift of life that I am once again able to see the river Ganga. I was more happy this time because my teacher Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa was here on a pilgrimage to the Himalayas. I cannot think of better way of paying respect to my teacher than to travel with him in the Himalayas and wander in the mountain forests and bathe in the holy river Ganga.

The chill wind and sparse rain of the Shivalik mountains gave us an unpleasant welcome in the early hours of the autumn morning. It was still quite dark though the dawn was only a few stones away. We stopped for a



hot cup of tea which we held tightly for more warmth due to cold and rain. We were drawn by the mellifluous sound of the river flowing near by. The earth was silent. There were no people or even the chirping of birds. The yellow lamps were shining in the distance and their reflection could be seen floating on the water. A cool air was blowing as we stood on its right bank wondering whether to go across the river before dawn or wait for the sunrise before we start walking through the forests.

We began to walk in silence towards the iron bridge. We heard our footsteps and saw the dance of trees along the riverbank. A heavy wind was blowing as we came near the suspension bridge 'Ram Jhula' built across the river. We soon were caught by the high speed wind which almost threatened to carry us away from the bridge. We held ourselves tightly and walked in total ecstasy and awe of the Himalayas. It seemed like a long journey into the night before we reached the left bank of the river. We soon found ourselves amid the forest trees

and an ancient trekking route to the higher Himalayas. Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa meditated on the bank of the river as the serene charm of morning river lay before us. The rays of morning light fell on the cold waters as the sun began to rise in the Shivalik mountains. We began to walk along the river on the Swarghashram side with conversations about the culture and traditions of India.

After a cold bath and early breakfast we started walking towards Phool Chatti which is about 8 km from Rishikesh. Our first halt was at Lakshman Jhula. We sat on the bank of the river enjoying the glow of morning light on the silently flowing water. We asked for a cup of tea and sat on the roof of a tea stall to watch the river again against the backdrop of the folding mountains until we remembered our walk. We were walking the grand Himalayan forest path surrounded by mountains and trees with the river flowing below. The sound of the river was becoming louder as we walked further upwards and inside the forests. Every turn along the river and forest path held a pleasant surprise of unending chain of Himalayan mountains even at the foothill. At times we simply stood watching the river and the mountain at distance without speaking a word for a few minutes.

The river was flowing emerald green in the higher reaches and from a distance it looked like silver flowing on the earth due to the deep sun. After two hours we reached Karud Chatti which has a beautiful earthern pond with spring water flowing into it from the mountain to its east. This is one of my most favorite spots in this forest path up along the river in Rishikesh.

We left Karud Chatti and started walking slowly towards the confluence little beyond Phool Chatti. We heard the sound of the mountain spring rolling like a forest river. The speed and the volume of water rolling down towards the river below made us halt for a while and wonder at the working of nature. We drank its water to our heart's content. Then I saw Ajarn Sulak start walking towards the waterfall overlooking the river Ganga and he sat beneath it with a smile in his face and song in his heart. We were playing like children and soon we reluctantly got up from the forest stream and began to walk towards the confluence.

The tree cover along the route from here and the play of Himalayan monkeys is a pleasure to watch. The river in this stretch is so deep and calm. The beautiful confluence of the river Ganga and the pristine forest river flowing from the mountains nearby emerges from nowhere. The speed of the river is very high and the currents are unpredictable. I always think with prayerful silence of my own struggle against the currents in the middle of the river almost a decade ago. The experience was both deeply spiritual and an acknowledgement of the humble truths of life. The roaring sound and beauty of the river with the charming tall mountains of the Himalayas can truly be a disguise if we begin to think that we have conquered nature. I learnt my limitations here and began to worship and respect nature. We began to walk back with our mind on the relationship between science and spirituality. In the evening after a holy bath we joined the prayers and worship of the river Ganga. We reclined on the stone seats along the river to watch the sunset and meditated in silence. We did not measure the time and only heard the rising sound of river flowing near as night began to cover the earth.

Ramu Manivannan

INDIA:
An Appeal Letter: BUDDHA SMILES

Subject: A Book Collection Drive

Dear Friends

Buddha Smiles-India, the programme on child education and development has taken a few small steps in the direction of its desired path. First, we have adopted two slums, MGR Nagar and Dr. Ambedkar Nagar in Baghayam, Vellore-632001, Tamil Nadu for our work among the poor. There are more than one hundred families living in these slums with several school going and drop-out children. We have evening classes for the children in these slums twice a week. Our night school for the working children in Vellore is likely to become operational

from 15th August 2001.

In Delhi our student volunteers are engaged in assisting the refugee children from Burma and the street children with the help and co-ordination of committed individuals and groups working in this area. We are planning to build an in-house library facility for the children in rural areas as well as a mobile library system for the urban poor and children in rural areas. We need your help and support. YOU CAN DONATE A BOOK.

It may be a new or an old one but we value your gift with equal respect. In case you possess an extra copy or are wanting to do away with your old collection do please consider donating your book for this cause. It would surely help someone.

We have no language barrier and we hope to co-ordinate our efforts with people speaking different languages and living in different countries. This initiative is part of a global campaign for creating better condition and opportunities for the poor and deprived children of the world. Every book is a treasure and we believe it can help change the lives. A signed copy with the donor's name and address can be sent by sea or air mail to the address below:

C/o Ramu Manivannan
BUDDHA SMILES- A Programme on Child Education and Development (Opposite Hotel Park Avenue)
Anna Nagar, Vellore-632001, Tamil Nadu, India.

Thanking you,

Ramu Manivannan

SIAM:
Court told to take caution before it acts

The Constitutional Court should carefully consider who would replace Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra before it removes him from office a social critic said yesterday.

"If there is any uncertainty in Mr. Thaksin's case he should be given the benefit of the doubt," Sulak Sivaraksa said.

The court should weigh up the pros and cons of its actions before it exercises its power to remove the prime minister, he said.

It should be able to regard the matter from a wide perspective since more than half of its members were economists.

Reform advocates like Sem Pringpuangkaew and Prawase Wasi should be listened to when they express support for the prime minister.

Mr. Sulak was speaking at a blessing ceremony for Indonesian President Abdhurrahaman Wahid, who could be impeached today by the Indonesian parliament.

Drawing an analogy from Mr. Thaksin's case, Mr. Sulak said the Indonesian people should also consider who would replace Mr. Wahid.

But Mr. Sulak was confident his friend, Mr. Wahid, would survive this political crisis. He said the Indonesian leader encouraged the region to stand on its own.

Nations like Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and South Korea should cooperate with one another instead of relying on rich countries, he said.

Post reporters
Bangkok Post
30 May, 2001

Gas pipeline brings no real benefits

Local residents are upset their electricity bills have not decreased despite the completion three years ago of the Thai-Burmese gas pipeline.

Songyuth Arsakit, 47, a construction businessman, did not care about environmental opposition to the controversial project but was angry the pipeline did not return any benefit to local people.

"The pipeline has already been built and there's nothing you can do about it," he said.

He attended a seminar yesterday organised by the Kanchanaburi Conservation Group to push the Petroleum Authority of Thailand into reducing electricity bills.

"I've just realised that after the pipeline construction, our province has got nothing but destroyed ecology and a rift in society.

"The country still has to pay for the take-or-pay deal and our electric bills are unusually high. My question is why the state still presses forward other projects like the Thai-Malaysian gas pipeline and power plants in Prachuap Khiri Khan while we have energy oversupply."

He said he was not impressed with the state agency's claim that it succeeded in its effort to rehabilitate the pristine forest and restore deteriorated forest along the pipeline. "The new trees cannot compare to the original forest. They are more of a showcase," he said.

Phinan Chotirosseranee, of the Kanchanaburi Conservation Group, said the group would maintain its opposition to the pipeline project.

Prominent social critic Sulak Sivaraksa slammed political establishments for "brainwashing" people into accepting globalisation and Western domination.

He once led a sit-in protest at a pipeline construction site and was consequently subject to a legal lawsuit by the PTT.

Mr. Sulak's remarks were criticised by Lt-Gen Ruamsak Chaikomin, a retired Third Army commander.

"S. Sivaraksa is a dangerous person. Do not believe him. He deceives children into denouncing their teachers and religion."

Mr. Sulak said the retired general should be more open-minded and stop ordering people around.

Lt-Gen Ruamsak said it would be more in Sulak's line to attack Burma for insulting Thailand instead of criticising Thai society. He said Mr. Sulak could criticise the expensive electricity without slamming the Yadana gas pipeline.

Anchalee Kongrut
Bangkok Post
11 June, 2001

Groups urge action after five deaths

Local groups have demanded the government ease conflicts over management of natural resources, following the murder of five activists. The call came at a seminar, "Human Rights Protection Measures in Fights for Natural Resources," held by three local and pro-democracy groups in Bangkok yesterday.

Campaign for Popular Democracy secretary-general Suwit Wadnoo said a national committee should be set up to ease conflicts. The government should move urgently to find the culprits in the separate murders of five people who led local moves to preserve natural resources, he said.

Bamrung Khayotha, adviser to the Assembly of the Poor, said violence in disputes over natural resources had increased. People felt insecure, fearing the people who plotted the murders could escape. "Police should be dependable. But most of them have ties with interest groups, most of whom are powerful persons and local politicians.

"These people are using state mechanisms to bully the people. That's why problems concerning natural resources are at such a critical point," he said. Mr Bamrung urged the government consider restructuring the police service to boost efficiency and help people intimidated by influential figures.

Saneh Jamarik, chairman of the national human rights committee, said communities should form networks to conserve natural resources and intellectual property. "In the case of the slain villagers, the panel cannot help much because we have no power. What we can do is to push for a swift judicial process to bring culprits to punishment," he said. The murdered activists were Jurin Ratchapol, of Ban Pa Khlok Conservation Group in Phuket; Narin Phodaeng, of Khao Chamao Conservation Group in Rayong; Pithak Tonwuth, who led moves against a quarry in Phitsanulok; Chaweewan Pueksungnoen, of a local body in Nakhon Ratchasima; and Suwat Wongpiyasathit, who led protests against a garbage dump in Samut Prakan.

Wut Nontharit
Bangkok Post
22 July 2001

An Open Letter to the Prime Minister of Thailand

His Excellency the Honorable Prime Minister Khun Thaksin Shinawatra

Kindly accept my humble respects and best wishes for you and the people of your country. I am a teacher from India who has had the opportunity of travelling in your good country with a mission of learning and understanding our ancient cultures and traditions. I had the privilege of visiting Ubon Ratchathani Province during my last visit.

I had heard about the determined resolve and struggle of the people against the building of Pak Moon Dam. The struggle and sufferings of the people in the Pak Moon region are now part of the global resistance against big dams and the model of development that has threatened our traditional cultures and societies all over the world. I have learnt to respect initiatives such as 'the Assembly of Poor', a unique but fundamental revelation of realities in our modern systems of democracy and development. This time to my surprise there was a glimmer of hope as I heard of the opening of the dam for four months, as I understand, to study and re-examine the entire dam project. There was celebration in the air and I could not have missed it. I decided to visit the villages and meet the people in the Pak Moon area as I am deeply aware of the struggle and emotions of people because of similar struggles in my own country against the big dams. But we have had no occasion to celebrate as our government gave us no respite.

I would not like to comment on the policies of your government or the technical aspects related to the study period as the announcement reads. I humbly seek your permission to share with you what I witnessed during my brief visit to the villages and the ceremony of the people in the Pak Moon Dam area. The people in the villages hold you in high esteem and your picture adorns their homes and make-shift camps. They consider you as the voice of the voiceless. What a great achievement in a very short time! This I understood was not a clever ploy or political strategy but a genuine appreciation of your open mind and preparedness to listen to the people. People want their leaders and governments to give them at least a hearing. The poor and marginalised want someone to listen to them. They are poor, deprived and even struggle for survival. You made a difference by going and listening to them. They do not consider their struggle is over but they are truly happy that they are also heard in the system. This itself is an achievement for the people in the Pak Moon region, for you and ultimately for the democracy in Thailand in the long run. I must congratulate you for this unique achievement.

I am yet to tell you the most precious thing that I witnessed during my visit to the villages in the Pak Moon region. THE RETURN OF SMILES on the faces of people, which they say had disappeared almost a decade ago. It seemed like a fairy tale coming to life as I watched the return of prayers, folk songs, dance, music, crafts, fishes and the market with the opening of the dam. This was one the most sacred moments in my life. I would like to appeal to your good conscience Mr. Prime Minister that the smile on their faces should not be allowed to disappear once again after the four-month study period. I cannot imagine the sorrow and gloom that would surround their lives. I have not seen the gentle resurgence of people anywhere in the world who seemed to have lost everything until you gave them a hope with your bold initiative. Let no man or the government take away in the name of development what God has given as a gift to these people and they do have a right to hold on to their ways of living and wisdom of life.

You have inspired people struggling against big dams in several countries through your bold initiative. There are many leaders in the world who would like to reconsider their position on big dams and other related development projects but they lack courage and initiative. They get bogged down and soon succumb to pressures from within the system and outside like the interests of the capital. They would do well to follow your initiative and I pray for God to give you more strength and support in your efforts to secure justice and dignity for the poor people of Pak Moon Dam area.

With humble respects.
Yours sincerely,

Ramu Manivannan

The Unambiguous Legacies of King Taksin and Pridi Banomyong

On 28 December 1967, some of us participated in the closing of a ceremony, which was held in Ayutthaya, commemorating the bicentennial anniversary of the kingdom's liberation from Burmese occupation. (The Burmese sacked and occupied Ayutthaya in 1767.) We paid homage to King Taksin, the leader most responsible for liberating the country. Despite the chaos and disunity in the country—in particular, despite the frivolous and selfish nature of the ruling elites and their wild-eyed followers —King Taksin and his motley crew of Thai-Chinese troops took less than a year to overthrow the Burmese invaders. He was only 32 years old then.

King Taksin moved the capital from Ayutthaya to Thonburi. During his 15-year-long reign, he consolidated the country and strengthened Buddhism. The ruling elites of the old order were like a thorn in his side that he had to deftly deal with both before and after liberation. Unfortunately, King Taksin signed his death warrant by being too successful in his reforms. Betrayed by close associates, he was assassinated on 6 April 1772.

At present, the 6th of April of every year is a national holiday. But it is not used to reflect on the virtue and lament the tragic ending of a great king. No, it is not a day we bemoan an infamous act. Rather, and this requires a degree of historical amnesia, it is used to venerate the birth of a new Siamese dynasty. As expected, the past is always distorted and sanitized to serve the interest of and fit the narrative circumscribed by the dominant and ruling class.

For more than 150 years the vital contributions of King Taksin have been denigrated or deliberately forgotten. His family members and loyal subordinates were all severely and wrongfully discredited and purged from positions of power. Several were savagely exterminated, including one of his pregnant daughters. Their sad fate brings to mind the unfortunate ending of Chaleo Pathumrot, Chit Singhaseni, and Butr Butamasirin, the three alleged murderers of King Rama VIII: they all faced capital punishment. In fact, the three were innocent victims of a highly corrupt and untrustworthy judicial system, of doctored evidence and powerful men's cruelty.

Interestingly, there are many similarities between King Taksin and Pridi Banomyong. As mentioned earlier, the former liberated the country from Burmese occupation. The latter, on the other hand, first liberated the populace from the iron fist of absolute monarchy and transformed the kingdom into a constitutional monarchy, thereby giving the monarchy a new lease of life. Was it not for the bloodless 1932 revolution, the unaccountable monarchy might have been violently overthrown or might have sowed the seeds of its own destruction. Then, as the leader of the Free Thai Movement, Pridi helped to liberate the country from the Japanese occupiers during World War Two. (Aside from his Tachang residence and Thammasat University, Pridi also used Khoom Khun Pan in Ayutthaya to conduct the secret meetings of the Free Thai Movement.)

Furthermore, like King Taksin, Pridi was betrayed by his own compatriots. A military coup d'etat toppled him from premiership in 1947—after devotedly serving his people and kingdom in various official positions for 15 years (again like King Taksin). Similar to King Taksin, Pridi had many thorns in his side—individuals who neither shared nor understood his vision of a better society such as Phya Manopakornithitada and former friends like Plaek Phibunsonggram and Prayoon Pamornmonthri. It must be stated that since 1947 the kingdom has been a morally half-baked state, estranged from truthfulness and goodness, which are linked to beauty. A good illustration of this is the list of individuals who had assumed the mantle of political power: Sarit, Thanom, Prapas, and their ilks, including Prem and Chuan. None of these individuals mentioned as examples understood the essence of or even trusted democracy.

Pridi was not exterminated but faced life-long exile. And he was—and to some extent remains—heinously discredited in school textbooks, rumors, popular culture, etc. His only son served a prison term and was then prohibited from working for the civil service. His colleagues in the Free Thai Movement and fellow travelers in building

social justice and democracy were either socially marginalized or summarily executed. Names such as Tiang Sirikun, Chamlong Daoruang, Tawin Udon, and Thong-in Puripat were all thrown down the memory hole. This was the reward they got for having the moral courage to stand against social injustice and autocracy.

A monument of King Taksin was erected at Wong Wian Yai during the reign of King Rama IX. This is however insufficient even as a symbol of gratitude. At least, there should be a university named after him; Phitsanulok has a Naraesuan University. Likewise, there should be parks, bridges, roads, etc. bearing the name Taksin. It seems that these facilities and infrastructures are all named after members of the present dynasty and individuals whose contributions to the wellbeing of the country pale in comparison with those of King Taksin or Pridi Banomyong.

The King Taksin Bridge, which connects Thonburi and Bangkok, came into existence after intense lobbying by the inhabitants of Thonburi. They recognized the virtue of King Taksin. Over in Ayutthaya, the late Montri Pongpanich once intended to tear down the Pridi-Damrong Bridge and rebuild a new one bearing his own name. Fortunately, the Thammasat University alumni of Ayutthaya united to successfully opposed his initiative.

It took approximately 150 years to generate public recognition of King Taksin's contributions. During 9-11 May 2001, the curtains of the Pridi centennial commemoration were officially closed in Ayutthaya. Like the one organized in 1967 for King Taksin, the ceremony intended to rescue a great man's name from oblivion and to compel the dominant classes to redeem themselves by expressing their gratitude to him. After all, Pridi Banomyong was the protector of Nation, Religion, Monarchy, and Constitution. Indeed, showing respect to an honorable individual is an attribute of a genuinely good person.

The best way to express our gratitude to Pridi is to employ the light of dhamma to disperse the darkness of ignorance, delusion, fear, and other evils that camouflaged themselves with the leaves and branches of science, modernity, and progress.

We need to realize the construction of the Pridi memorial on the grounds of the Luk-chan Banomyong Foundation in Ayutthaya. We need to establish a Pradist Manudharm Institute as a think-tank and educational center to promote alternative development and politics, which uphold dhamma, culture, art, nonviolence, and nature. We need to strengthen the monarchy by making it more accountable; a *devaraja* will be crushed by its own weight. And we need to treat the poor, marginalized, ethnic minorities, and oppressed with justice along the lines of *santi pracha dhamma*.

Pridi envisioned the League of Southeast Asian Nations, which was headquartered in Bangkok, as a zone of peace and neutrality whose members would develop themselves by using socialist and indigenous models. ASEAN, on the contrary, has unequivocally adopted capitalism and has been rather callous towards human rights abuses in its member states. Perhaps, President Wahid's planned Bandung II, in part inspired by the League of Southeast Asian Nations, will help many ASEAN leaders realize that the time has come to make a U-turn towards *santi pracha dhamma*.

Let us not forget. Let us refuse to be like a sheep in sheep's clothing morally. Let us confront truthfulness.

Sulak Sivaraksa

(Translated from a lecture in Thai at Ayudhya on 9 May 2001. An edited version of this article was published in the *Bangkok Post* 20 May 2001.)

Pridi centennial still open to Thaksin

I would like to make something clear. I did not become Chairperson of the Steering Committee on the Occasion of the Centennial Anniversary of Pridi Banomyong solely on my own initiative. Rather, I was appointed by the Chavalit Yongchaiyudh government to assume that position and responsibility because I am the president of the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation (SNF), which has been at the forefront of the movement to commemorate the

Pridi centenary from the start. Of course, the SNF did not work alone. It received invaluable assistance from the Komol Keemthong Foundation, Pridi Banomyong Foundation, the Foundation for Children and various other civil and business organizations—even some members from the royal lineage.

The Chavalit government had the eyes: it could see the relevance of Pridi's vision and therefore sought to reexamine and adopt some of the elements of this vision. On the whole, the Chuan government maintained an ambiguous and ambivalent position towards Pridi: it was either blind or, worse, pretending to be blind. Luckily, the incumbent Thaksin government seems to be walking on the right track on this issue. For instance, it is receptive of advice from the private sector. Here I do not simply mean the business circles but other grassroots and civil groups as well. In particular, it seeks to foster a higher degree of economic self-reliance or independence from external intervention such as the developmental framework of such bodies as the IMF and the World Bank.

As I have mentioned numerous times before, a major impetus for organizing the centennial anniversary is to awaken the moral consciousness of the public, especially individuals in the mainstream, to recognize the important contributions and highly pertinent vision of Pridi Banomyong and his colleagues in the *santi pracha dhamma* movement. At the very least, the public should realize that Pridi sacrificed everything and devoted himself to the cause of freedom and dhamma in the kingdom—for example via the Free Thai Movement.

And Pridi was a leading advocate of de-colonization and independence in Southeast Asia. He supported the anti-colonial movements in neighboring countries and founded the non-aligned League of Southeast Asian Countries, which was headquartered in Bangkok, to help counterbalance the influence of the great powers in the region. It should be noted that the first secretary general of the League was a Siamese, Tiang Sirikun.

Thus, commemorating the centennial anniversary of Pridi also has international, if not universal, implications. Ironically, the metropole of a formerly far-flung empire seems to have acknowledged Pridi's contributions. When he died in Paris in 1983 the French prime minister sent a wreath to lay before his coffin. On the other hand, the Thai prime minister at that time only uttered one word 'Sorry'—without even sending a letter of condolence to Mr. Pridi's widow, despite the fact that Mr. Pridi was more or less the founder of Thai democracy, which was born on 24 June 1932. In a few weeks, I will be seeing the French Minister of Education in Paris to finalize the plan to erect a plaque bearing the name Pridi Banomyong in the house in Antony where he passed away.

Pridi is often accused of making an unnecessary revolution; the absolutist monarch, it is argued, was about to change the country's system of governance to constitutional monarchy anyway. This assertion is at best a half-truth—like the monument that is in front of the parliament. Were there a monument of Pridi with Phya Pahon standing beside King Rama VII instead it would be more truthful. The former was the civilian leader and the latter the military leader of the group of people who brought democracy to Siam on 24 June 1932.

The public is also taught that a person like M.R. Seni Pramoj was a democrat and leader of the Free Thai Movement in the US. Wonderful! Not mentioned is that M.R. Seni was a weak and gullible person who helped destroy democracy in the country because of his legalistic predisposition such as during October 1976. Besides both Pramoj brothers, Seni and Kukrit, together with Khuang Abhaiwong of the Democrat Party coalesced with the military to destroy democracy in 1949. This is a fact no one can deny. The reactionary group also started the accusation that Pridi was involved in the death of King Rama VIII. This can now be put to rest, as it is contrary to numerous primary sources and documents, some of which have been published in *Seeds of Peace* magazine. Even the present king has explicitly refused to believe in the allegation.

The resuscitation of Pridi and his colleagues in the *santi pracha dhamma* movement in the collective memory of the Thai people is a vital element for banishing moral cowardice and restoring truthfulness, fraternity, equality, and freedom in the kingdom. It is a task the Thaksin government must not hedge.

A point that cannot be overemphasized is that the Thaksin government should pick up on Pridi's vital regional conception and collaborate with President Wahid of Indonesia to organize the Bandung II conference; that is, if ASEAN does not want to be but a paper

tiger.

The philosophy behind Pridi's 1932 Draft on National Economic Policy is still inspirational. The Thaksin government is flirting with the idea of a welfare state, which was essentially what Pridi advocated. If the Thaksin government is able to set up something akin to a welfare system, it will be a genuine stride towards the goal of *santi pracha dhamma*.

That the present government contains many young and progressive individuals is a good sign. Several of them have fought against tyranny in the country and stood with the weak and marginalized. Let us hope that their ideals and good intentions are not lost as they walk along the corridors of power. Let us hope that they continue to treat the poor and grassroots people as their friends, reminding them of what justice should be about.

The order from the cabinet for the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) to open the Pak Moon Dam is a sign that the government has really exercised its power over the EGAT, which has hitherto been a state within a state, showing no transparency or accountability to the public. Likewise, the Petroleum Authority of Thailand and its maneuvering vis-à-vis the gas pipeline in Kanchanaburi and at the Thai Malaysian border is to be looked at carefully, and not to mention the nuclear power plants at Prachuab, the Klong Dan Waste Water Treatment Project in Samutprakarn, and the Nuclear Research Institute at Nakorn Nayok. Doubting the safety of these state and private enterprises, the local people have demonstrated against them. So far no government has shown any real interest in siding with the people. The Thaksin government still has to prove whether or not it has the moral courage to be with the masses and whether or not it has the wisdom to question or even challenge big development projects, which are on the whole harmful to the natural environment and people at the grassroots.

If the Thaksin government really has moral courage, it would collaborate with us, representatives of the private sector, and organize the final celebration for Mr. Pridi's centenary at Chiang Mai at the end of this year. The previous government agreed with UNESCO to jointly sponsor this great event in recognition of a man whom UNESCO had recognized as an exemplary person of the 20th century.

In May 2000, we began the centennial celebration of Mr. Pridi at Thammasat University, which was founded by him, and at the Parliament, which he also founded. We then carried on the celebration to almost every province in the kingdom as well as abroad. We used lectures, discussions, exhibitions as well as theatrical performances in order to return conscience to the Thai public, many of whom have been brainwashed at least since 1947 to believe that Mr. Pridi was a demon and an opportunist who was involved in regicide. I am glad to say that the public by and large are now aware of his contributions, especially his role as the founding father of modern Thai democracy and the liberator of our kingdom from Japanese 'occupation' during World War Two.

Between 8th and 10th of last December we commemorated Mr. Pridi's name at Chiang Mai as a champion of human rights; 10th December is not only our constitutional day but also the Universal Declaration of Human Rights day. We collaborated with artists from 65 countries and launched an international sacred music festival, which was under the patronage of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. We also gave the Pridi Award on human rights to Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim of Malaysia for his deep commitment to social justice, democracy and alternative politics.

Since the recipient is being detained in Kuala Lumpur, Dr. Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, his wife, came to receive the award on his behalf, and she received a standing ovation from the audience.

In May of this year we celebrated Mr. Pridi's 101st natal anniversary at his birthplace in Ayudhaya. A long procession of torch-lights with at least two thousand participants traveled from Kum Khun Paen, the place he used to organize clandestine activities for the Free Thai movement during World War II while serving as Regent of King Rama VIII, to the place where he was born. It was an unforgettable sight.

Since then celebrations have taken place in Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and San Francisco in the USA; many other cities in the kingdom and abroad will host similar celebrations. If the finale could be at Chiang Mai it would be most appreciated. And if Mr. Thaksin is still our prime minister, we should like to have him preside over the festivities. If he has been removed from office by the constitutional court before then, we would certainly

give him a Pridi human rights award as we gave one last year to Anwar Ibrahim of Malaysia.

Sulak Sivaraksa

(Translated from a lecture in Thai at Ayudhya on 11 May 2001. An edited version of this article was published as a letter in the *Bangkok Post* 24 June 2001)

* The French Ministry of Education has agreed to send a special representative to make a speech at Thammasat University on 10 December 2001. The special representative will bring a special message from the French Prime Minister eulogising the first Siamese *docteur en droit* who planned with his compatriots in France to replace absolute monarchy with constitutional monarchy successfully and nonviolently in 1932. Yet he had to live in exile and died in the outskirts of Paris in 1983.

The French Minister of Education has also agreed to organise a symposium on Constitutional Democracy in Paris from 19-20 February 2002, with a special evening dedicated to Mr Pridi Banomyong. His Holiness the Dalai Lama will be the chief guest of honour, with leading academics and politicians from Southeast Asia and Latin America.

Lord Mountbatten and Prince Dhani Nivat

Outward Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office
To: UK High Commissioner in India
(Sent: 23.15 hours, 22nd May, 1948)

MOST IMMEDIATE
No. 1592. SECRET

1. Your telegram No. 1534 of 21st May. Visit of Prince Dhani Nivat to Lord Mountbatten. Following is desired background and guidance.
2. Before Siamese Minister for Foreign Affairs officially informed H.M. Charge d' Affaires in sense of Bangkok telegram No. 319 of 11th May, Prince Dhani Nivat had seen Mr. Whittington privately and told him that Siamese Supreme Council were anxious for King Phumipol to return to Siam as soon as possible, but that, before doing so, His Majesty should gain wider experience notably by acquiring some knowledge of (a) Court life and (b) Army life in England. The Prince referred to the invitation which had been extended in 1946 to the late King Ananda (an invitation, which, as Lord Mountbatten will remember, was recommended by himself at the time) and expressed opinion that his task of persuading King Phumipol to return to Siam would be much easier if the King were invited officially to England and also to pay a visit to King George.
3. Our view is such that a visit would be of value, whether or not it resulted in return of King Phumipol to Siam. His return is desirable for a number of reasons, but, in any case, a six months visit to England would do him good. If this visit were approved we would suggest to the Palace that an invitation should be extended to King Phumipol to stay a few days with Their Majesties.
4. There is, however, one serious obstacle. Cause of mysterious death in 1946 of his brother, King Ananda of Siam, has never been satisfactorily established, and, of many rumours circulating, one is to effect that King Ananda was killed by the present King. Investigations into King Ananda's death are being carried out at the moment, and although they may well end in a blank, as have all previous investigations, it is possible that there may be unfortunate revelations about the part played by King Phumipol.
5. It would obviously be highly embarrassing if, after King of Siam had visited this country and had stayed with Their Majesties, further charges arose of his complicity in his brother's death.
6. We should be grateful therefore if you would explain situation to Governor-General and suggest that he should be guided by it in his con-

versations with Prince Dhani. We feel that, if there is any question of the King coming here as the guest of Their Majesties, we are entitled to and must know the facts or at least be reasonably satisfied that he is completely guiltless. We realise of course that the Prince cannot necessarily be expected to reveal the facts to Lord Mountbatten and that we could not necessarily accept his statements as the truth. We should therefore wish to avoid committing ourselves at this stage to an undertaking to have the king here on the basis of a simple assurance by Prince of his innocence. We accordingly suggest that Lord Mountbatten might put the difficulty somewhat on the lines that we have heard these rumours but have never been told the facts and it would be helpful to us in defining our attitude towards the King's visit here if we could know the truth. It should be added that we have not repeat not had time to consult Palace as regards general desirability of issuing an invitation and that in any case we should wish to know that the King of Siam would accept before issuing it formally. We are not, however, anxious in any case to act too precipitately since we should not wish an invitation to be linked in public mind with advent to power of Marshal Pibul. Though we have recognised the latter's Government, since it came into existence by outwardly constitutional means, we do not wish to show it too much welcome at least until it has proved the sincerity of its assurances of friendliness etc.

* This is a historical document. It does not reflect the view of the publisher or editors of *Seeds of Peace*.

Martyrdom Revisited:
The 101st anniversary of Pridi Banomyong

The martyr cannot be dishonored. Every lash inflicted is a tongue of fame; every prison a more illustrious abode.
Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–82)

The current debate on an attempt by a local educational office to produce a student textbook on the life of one of the most crooked and heartless dictators in Siam tells how short the memories of people in this country can be. To portray this general as a virtuous and honest ruler, whose tenure saw the untried executions of many political dissidents is a blatant betrayal of history. Meanwhile, we tend to conveniently forget those few who deserve the true respect and martyrdom, as the more they endeavored to serve the nation honestly and skillfully, the more vulnerable they became to the malicious political ploys by their rivals. Pridi Banomyong, a former regent, prime minister, minister of various key ministries, and most importantly the main plotter to implement a bloodless coup and democratize Siam, falls into the latter category. Despite all his good will and sacrifice, he ended up dying in a foreign land, and the official recognition for all his contributions in political, social, educational, and fiscal fields is long-overdue.

Born in a farmer's family, but fortunate to be further educated in France, Pridi, a young law graduate risked his life in planning the overthrowing of the monarchy and giving birth to the Siamese constitutional monarchy. Underground fighting led by him against the Axis troops during WWII, when Japan occupied Siam, saved the country from being declared a war loser, and thus waived a lot of war compensations. He served successively in different ministries to reinvigorate the economy and the politics and established the university of moral and political science to educate people about democracy. Pridi did not deserve his final destiny in exile.

The celebration this year for his 101st anniversary is therefore a symbol to perpetuate his legacy. That the event was organized in his homeland, Ayudhaya, a former capital of the Siam kingdom marked the efforts and gratitude of his fellow dwellers to remember his deeds. It also signified, as declared in the special oration of Sulak Sivaraksa, president of the private organizing committee for the celebration of Pridi Banomyong, on May 9, the first day of the three-day event that "the cele-

bration shall proceed so as to impose upon people's memories his immense services."

The combination of artistic and intellectual elements – theatrical performance and Siamese traditional pantomime and public discussions – colored the event and drew the attention of several hundreds of locals from all walks of life. The first public discussion was on Pridi's ideas on decentralization and its relevance to contemporary society. His time in the Ministry of Interior had borne fruit in the widely debated call for decentralization among local civil groups. The evening was filled initially with deep sorrow and reminiscence of his life and work, dramatized by the Crescent Moon Theater Group, which had performed similarly in Europe and USA. The Makhampom Theater Group, which opted for applying traditional Siamese pantomime to depict the bravery of Pridi in committing the coup against the monarchy, gave a more entertaining, yet meaningful account of him. Their performance was later staged in various cities in USA.

The following morning was the chance for local activists to discuss and exchange ideas on the practicality of decentralization based on the very active group activities they already have. In the afternoon, the field was crowded with hundreds of teachers to hear what several famous speakers had to say about education, and its reform, which has now become a buzzword. It was followed by a public debate and a rock concert, which drew even more young people to join the worthwhile celebration.

On the third day of the celebration, a keynote address was delivered by MR. Sukhumbhand Paribatra, a former deputy to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The poems recited by renowned poets were a cause for deep contemplation by the audience. The last day ended with a two-kilometer long march, the whole route of which was lit up with torches carried by a couple of thousand locals. The flames reminded us of the everlasting ideals to work in the service of people and the continuing celebration that shall be implemented until Pridi's achievements are made widely known in society.

Pipob Udomittipong

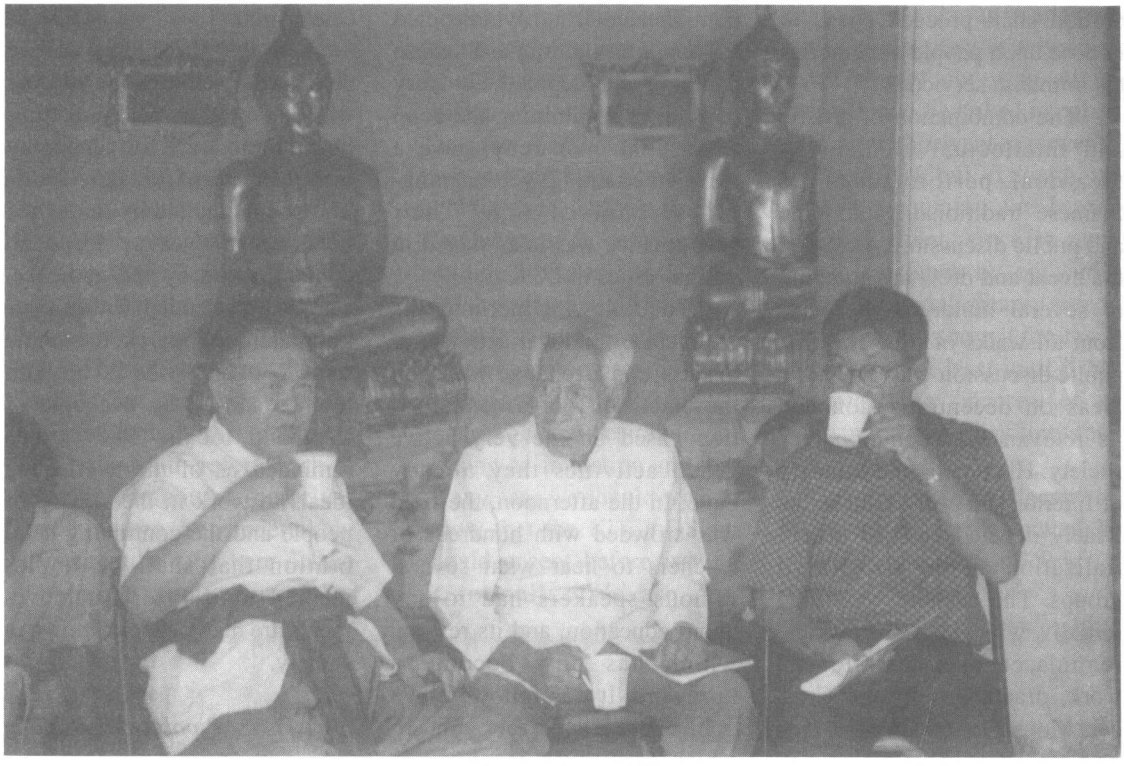
In concrete memory of Dr Puey

When Dr Puey Ungpakorn passed away two years ago, among the first few ideas to honour the late statesman was to build him a lifelike statue. But can a statue capture the essence of the great man's deeds and vision to see his motherland as a land governed by dhamma and peace? Today, the second anniversary of Dr Puey's departure, a different sort of "monument" will be officially launched. Called Puey Sevanakarn (Puey Forum), it's a small seminar hall located in a temple, a venue of alternative education in all disciplines, and open to everyone regardless of their social status.

Sulak Sivaraksa, who initiated the project, said the choice of location (Wat Pathumkongka) was deliberate. As a child, Puey was ordained as a novice there. His ashes were likewise buried underneath a Buddha statue at the same temple. "Moreover, I cherish a dream to see a temple become a community's centre once again. Besides the Puey Forum, we will also open the Buddhadasa Library, since Buddhadasa Bhikkhu studied Buddhist scriptures here before he returned to launch the Garden of Liberation (Suan Mokkh) in his hometown in 1932. Both Acharn Buddhadasa and Acharn Puey served as guiding stars, facilitating our navigation through the dhammic and secular worlds respectively." Since June this year, the Puey Forum has played host to several non-mainstream events, ranging from a talk on alternative media to an experimental play on infanticide. Next month's topics include a workshop on cultural management.

As Bangkok becomes increasingly cluttered with mega-shopping centres and nightly entertainment spots, a humble platform for those dissatisfied with a reckless lifestyle, to aid in the search for an alternative, is thus refreshing.

Historically, the Puey Forum is a successor to a pioneering



Sulak Sivaraksa, Prof. Sem Pringpuangkaew and M.R. Jutumongkol Sonakul

venue called Paritat Sevana, meaning the group on reviewing society, also launched by Sulak in the late '60s. Back then, progressive-minded students and intellectuals suffered political suppression under the dictatorial regimes of Sarit Thanarat and Thanom Kittikachorn. They resorted to exchanging their ideas—from arts to politics to international relations—at a mobile forum which move around to various locations.

Dr Puey was one of the guest speakers. Other prominent names include Sanya Dhammasakdi, Direk Jayanama, Chetana Nagavajara and Angkarn Kalayanapongse.

A number of Thai intellectuals attributed the subsequent activism among university students that led to the fall of Thanom's military government to this small, but not inconsequential, effort.

Dr Wichai Chokewiwat, among the first generations of Paritat Sevana "graduates", said the Paritat Sevana forum did not only cultivate a critical mind among its participants, but also set a model of an all-embracing education that stresses action and moral courage.

"The number of participants might have been small, but that was exactly what helped us to learn from each other in a more profound way. The (mainstream) university, then and now, only teaches students to accumulate and process data, but not how to achieve genuine knowledge, and in a spiritual sense, wisdom in life," said the doctor, currently heading the Food and Drug Administration. Dr Uthai Dulyakasem, his contemporary and a well-respected scholar in education reform, shared a similar view. The liberal approach of the Paritat Sevana forum—everyone was treated equally as an independent intellectual—reflects a genuine "child-centred" learning philosophy, now fashionable jargon among educators.

But are the young nowadays still brimming with curiosity to question the status quo? Can the Puey Forum become a new think tank to rekindle the sparks of decades ago? Perhaps one has to search for inspiration from Dr Puey himself. After fleeing into exile following the October 6, 1976 massacre of university students, he continued to express his confidence in his compatriots' ability to realise peace: "I do not know whether we can achieve it. But whether we can or we cannot achieve it, we must achieve it."

Vasana Chinvarakorn
Bangkok Post
28 July 2001

Thailand's Festival of Sacred Music

It was a stunning December night in Chiang Mai, and as my Swedish friend and I briskly walked to Wat Pra Sing, where the parade was about to begin, we could feel the enthusiasm in the air. A crowd had already formed at the temple. In the middle of the camera-clicking paparazzi stood Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa, dressed, as usual, in traditionally regal Thai clothes, with a three-quarter smile on his lips. Behind him, the colorful parade was assembling. No oversized floats or glorifying consumer products here—instead, bright maroon and yellow robes of Tibetan monks, and the white flawlessness of several rows of *maechees* (nuns), followed by a handful of precept-keeping Western women, also dressed in white. Next came young Thai women in sparkly sarongs and traditional tops whose beauty and poise were outshined only by the elaborate flower arrangements in their perfectly swept-up hairdos.

Even as the parade made its way through the busy streets, it remained strangely quiet, marked only by the occasional beat of a big bass drum or ceremonial gong. As I joined in, I felt that I was part of an eclectic religious ritual in the making. This parade, or "Procession of Artists," marked the opening night of the World Festival of Sacred Music. A Global Quest for Unison, held in Chiang Mai, December 8 — 10, 2000. The Chiang Mai concert was one of a number of festivals held throughout the world, starting in October of 1999.

Inspired by His Holiness the Dalai Lama's call to "bring together people of diverse backgrounds" in "humanity's search for harmony," the series of concerts has carefully remained "neither political nor commercial in nature," while seeking to promote compassion, rather than one religious doctrine or ideology. Although each event has been independently produced, the festivals have been overseen and managed by Tibet House, the Cultural Centre of HHDL, and HH's Foundation for Universal Responsibility. Concerts have highlighted religious and indigenous music from the regions in which they have taken place, yet have also made room for some out of town artists. Concert locations have included the US, South Africa, Germany, Korea, and Brazil. Patrons have included Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Pandit Ravi Shankar, and Czech President Vaclav Havel.

Not surprisingly, the festival in Chiang Mai had a distinctly Buddhist and Thai flavour, though there were also performers from other Southeast Asian countries and Tibet, India, East Asia, Israel, and the US. I was particularly impressed with a Thai group called Lai Muang, whose young members performed traditional Thai music, and a variety of folk, hilltribe and contemporary forms. They showed their talents on more instruments than I could keep track of, including flutes, droning strings (both plucked and bowed), gongs, drums and cymbals. Their ceremonial candle dance held the audience breathless, as a woman gracefully glided around the stage, with enough mindfulness that the hourglass-shaped brass oil lamps balanced between her fingers did not spill or go out.

In contrast, the Okinawa Eisa drum group from Japan had the crowd bursting with contagious excitement. Fortunately, audience members were eventually invited to join in their drumming, much to everyone's delight. Wonderful to watch were the interactions between young, chest-baring, drum-beating Japanese men and elegantly dressed, dignified, but quick to laugh and dance, elderly Thai women!

Nawang Khechog, an internationally acclaimed musician and composer from Tibet, also left the audience speechless in wonder at his vast array of musical talents. His overtone chanting and use of a wide variety of wind instruments (from Tibetan long horns to Native American flutes to the Australian didgeridoo) was an impressive treat for Thai, Western, and other foreign audience members alike. Ven. Lama Doboom Tulku, global chairperson of the festival, in his closing comments remarked, "All of these artists came here with a sacred mission in mind, and in that way, everything here has become sacred."

Phelps Feely
Turning Wheel
Spring 2001

Nun's calling takes many turns

It all began five years after the Buddha's enlightenment, when the Buddha ordained Mahapajapati Gotami. Mahapajapati Gotami received her higher ordination by accepting the Garudhammas, the eight observances of which the monks must be mindful.

The other royal ladies in her party, clad in yellow with shaven heads, were also ordained by bhikkhus. The Buddha's words in the Cullavagga are: "Anujanami Bhikkave, Bhikkhuni Bhikkhunia Upasampademtum." (I allow, Oh Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis to be ordained by you). Thus the first group of bhikkhunis blossomed.

Buddhism flourished in Sri Lanka. There were many bhikkhunis and bhikkhus. They shared the dhamma far and wide. In 429 AD, Bhikkhuni Devasana with bhikkhunis travelled from Sri Lanka to China and bought the bhikkhuni order.

The years passed in Sri Lanka and by the 13th century, there was no Sangha to be found. The Bhikkhu Sangha was revived a few times, but died out. As years passed, in 1753, the Bhikkhu Sangha was reestablished in Sri Lanka by envoys who had been sent to Thailand, Burma and Ramanna Country, a region in South Asia in ancient times.

In 1908, a well educated and wealthy lady born to a Catholic family, Mary Katherine de Alwis, travelled to Burma. She studied Dhamma and Vinaya for 14 years in Burma. When she returned as a nun of 10 precepts, she was honourably welcomed and offered a nunnery. Her ordained name was Sudharmacari.



On 15 April 2000, four Indonesian nuns were ordained in Sri Lanka. Three of them remain ordained. They face many difficulties in their practice and need support. Please contact *Seeds of Peace* for more information.

The nuns of 10 precepts developed and flourished throughout Sri Lanka as Sudharmacari was a most virtuous and capable nun. By the 1970s, women began to think about how to re-establish the Bhikkhuni Sangha in Sri Lanka. Hema Gunatlaka journeyed to China and Korea in search of the Theravada bhikkhuni lineage. She returned with the following findings: "The Bhikkhuni order has continued to exist up to the present time in China with an unbroken Upasampada lineage."

The Dharmagupta Vinaya tradition prevails in China. It is a sub-division of the Theravada. The Vinaya and Suttas, or discourse of the Buddha, of the Dharmagupta are essentially the same as in the Theravada. It later developed into the Abhidhamma, or commentaries. "All Vinaya rules found in the Dharmagupta Bhikkhuni Pratimoksa are precisely the same in content as those in the Theravada Bhikkhuni Patimokkha," noted Hema Gunatlaka. "The only difference is the order in which the rules appear, and the Dharmagupta tradition has many more rules than the Theravada..."

This lineage went from China and flourishes in Taiwan and Korea. Bhikkhuni Professor Havenpola Ratanasara Maha Thero selected Sri Lankan 10 precept nuns and went to Los Angeles, California in 1988 to have them ordained by Taiwanese bhikkhus and bhikkhunis. However, when they returned to Sri Lanka, people said this was Mahayana practice, not Theravada.

So, in 1996, Bhikkhu Mapalagama Vipulasara Maha Thero went to India with a group of 10 precept nuns with the help of the

Maha Bodhi Society. They studied and practised together for nine months. Then they were joined by Korean bhikkhus and bhikkhunis who came to Sarnath, India. They were ordained in the presence of a large group of Maha Sangha members from the Theravada and Mahayana lineages, along with laity. This created a nation-wide debate in Sri Lanka. There were many articles for and against the Higher Ordination.

Then Bhikkhu Inamaluwe Sumangala Maha Thero, the abbot of the Golden Temple in Dambulla, was selected as president of the Bhikkhuni Sangha, donated a monastic training centre for bhikkhunis. Thus, maha theros, or senior monks, planned to ordain the samaneris, or novice nuns, in Dambuna upon graduation, as the Cullavagga instructed the bhikkhus to ordain bhikkhunis.

Then an invitation arrived – an invitation to participate in an international higher ordination ceremony in Bodhgaya, India in 1998. Fo Guang Shan Temple in Taiwan organised the event. The maha theros accepted the invitation on one condition: The ordination would be conducted as described in the Cullavagga according to the Theravada tradition. Thus, 22 Sri Lankan samaneris went to Bodhgaya on February 14, 1998 and received the higher ordination according to the agreement in the presence of both the Theravada and Mahayana bhikkhus and bhikkhunis.

Then the group of Sri Lankan bhikkhus and bhikkhunis travelled to Sarnath and received ordination again, this time directly from the Sri Lankan bhikkhus. The Maha Sangha then gave concurrence to ordain the samaneris. The Maha Sangha then concerted three upajjaya (preceptor) bhikkhunis and eight kammacariya (instructors) out of those 22 bhikkhunis.

The group returned to Sri Lanka at the end of February 1998. On the full moon day of March 12, 1998, in Dambulla the bhikkhunis, along with the bhikkhus, ordained samaneris who had graduated from the monastic training centre for bhikkhunis.

Thus, the Theravada bhikkhuni lineage blossomed again. Now there is full opportunity for women to participate in the religious life and religious affairs of Theravada Buddhism.

Bhikkhuni Dr. Lee &
Bhikkhuni Bhadra Wekada
Bangkok Post
29 May 2001

Women of Faith

A simple but as yet unanswered question: "Why do nuns have to serve monks?" asks Chamnean Rattanaburi, 41, "when we all go to the temple for the same purpose - to study *dhamma* [the teachings of the Lord Buddha]."

Chamnean, a member of the association for the promotion of the Status of Women, is herself a Buddhist nun (*mae chi*). Her hair shorn, clad completely in white, she has lived at a temple in Samut Prakan province for the past nine years, adhering to eight Buddhist precepts, including celibacy. (A Buddhist layperson follows five precepts, a male Buddhist monk, or *bhikkhu,* 217, and a female Buddhist monk or *bhikkhuni,* 311.)

During her first two years in religious life, Mae Chi Chamnean, like the other nuns at her temple, had to rise as early at 4am, before most monks do, in order to prepare and cook meals for the monks and novices. "I was the only one who was labelled as 'lazy'," she recells. "You see I rebelled against having to work like a servant ... washing dishes, dusting and cleaning the temple."

All the housework she was expected to do left her feeling tired and with precious little time to meditate and concentrate on her own spiritual development, her sole motive for entering the nunhood. (The general perception among Thais is that most women become nuns to escape unhappy relationships or other problems in their lives.) When Mae Chi Chamnean refused to do any more chores, her food allowance and meagre pocket money were cut. So this strong-willed nun began to attend dhamma classes outside the temple. And, thanks to a pilot project initiated by a highly respected nun, Mae Chi Khunying Khanittha Wichien-

chareon, she got in touch with *bhikkhuni,* female Buddist monks, from Korea, Taiwan, Sri Lanka and Tibet. Before then she had thought it impossible for a woman to become a monk. The Sangha Supreme Council, the governing body of Thai monkhood, does not recognise *bhikkhuni* and under a 1928 ecclesiastical law even prohibits monks from ordaining *bhikkhuni.*

Next month Mae Chi Chamnean is planning to be ordained in Sri Lanka as a *samaneri,* a female novice monk. She identifies lack of education as one of the main obstacles for Thailand's estimated 10,000 *mae chi* (there are some 300,000 male monks); few Thai nuns have studied beyond primary-school level.

"They live in fear of monks ... they're afraid that they will be denied food and shelter," explains Mae Chi Chamnean, herself a graduate of Ramkhamhaeng University.

Seeking Acceptance

A Thai woman who expresses a wish to become a monk is often accused of egotism; sometimes it is suggested that all she can do is hope to be reborn as a man in her next life. Nuns themselves exist in a sort of official limbo. While the Ministry of Transport and Communications regards them as lay people thereby denying them the free transport on public buses to which monks are entitled, the Interior Ministry denies them the right to vote because it considers them as religious.

"Nuns are denied all rights," says Kulawee Prapapornpipat, 29, who is currently studying for an MA in Buddhist Studies at Thammasat University. "If I decided to be ordained, I would certainly choose to become a *bhikkhuni.* Even lay people enjoy a higher social status than nuns. It's not that I consider myself important but life shouldn't be that difficult for nuns."

For devout Buddhists, one of the highest forms of merit-making is *sanghathan,* making an offering to a monk of cash or, more usually, everyday necessities like robes, soap, a torch, umbrella, etc. This offering is never made to a nun.

According to Kulawee, who is doing a dissertation on "Concepts and Ethics on Sexuality in Buddhism", there is no mention in the Tripitaka, the Buddhist scriptures, of *mae chi,* and historians are unclear about their origins.

"The oldest evidence we have is from a Westerner who wrote in the Ayutthaya period about meeting a group of women with shaven heads dressed all in white."

Mae Chi Arun Pet-urai, 69, is secretary of the Thai Buddhist Nuns Institute. After 42, years in the nunhood, she believes that *mae chi* are now accepted by Thai society and cites as an example the time she was trying to organise a dhamma workshop at a temple. The total funds at her disposal came to only Bt 1,000 but she got so much support from monks and villagers that she was able to hold workshops in three different temples.

"What else do we need? We have achieved our goal of being able to study, practise and disseminate dhamma? When we nuns ask for shelter from monks, we should do something in return. I would get ordained [as a *bhikkhuni*] if it didn't violate *vinaya* [Buddhist discipline]," says Mae Chi Arun, "but in Thailand's Theravada heritage, there have been no *bhikkhuni.*"

Paths Barred

Vinaya regulations state that a woman who wishes to become a monk must be ordained by both the *bhikkhu* (male monk) Sangha and the *bhikkhuni* Sangha. However, since the latter body has never existed in Thailand, it is not possible to ordain female monks here. So, for Thai women whose need to develop their full spiritual potential can only be satisfied by elevation to the monkhood, the only option at the moment is to be ordained overseas.

One of the trailblazers in this respect is prominent Thai Buddhist scholar Chartsumarn Kabilsingh. A lecturer on Buddhist philosophy at Thammasat University for two decades, she has written more than 40 books in Thai and English on the subject. Earlier this year she was quietly ordained by Sri Lankan clergy as a *samaneri* (female novice), taking the name Dhammananda. After two years as a novice, she will be eligible for ordination as a Theravada *bhikkhuni.* There are currently only four *bhikkhuni* resident in Thailand compared to 200 in Sri Lanka. Women have been ordained as monks in Taiwan since 1988. Tibetan tradition also recognises the rights of women in this respect as do the Korean and Chinese Sanghas.

Claiming a Right

"Why shouldn't there be *bhikkhuni* when the Buddha said that the health of Buddhism depended on the existence of four pillars: *bhikkhu, bhikkhuni, upasaka* [male lay devotees] and *upasika* [female lay devotees]?" asks Dhammananda, 56, who says she wishes to become a *bhikkhuni* in order to carry on the historical Buddha's spiritual

heritage.

"It is a right which the Buddha offered to women. I don't think anyone else has the right to deny us this right."

Dhammananda's mother, Voramai Kabilsingh, was ordained in Taiwan 30 years ago as a Mahayana *bhikkhuni*. The Venerable Voramai then went on to found Thailand's first temple for women, Watra Songdharmakalayani, in Nakhon Pathom province. Its legality was later challenged by the Department of Religious Affairs but the case was dismissed due to the government's inability to prove any breach of the law.

As a professor of Religion and Philosophy at Thammasat, Chartsumarn was at the forefront of an international movement to revive the *bhikkhuni* order. Her pioneering efforts to raise the status of her sisters include the writing of an influential book entitled *Thai Women in Buddhism*. In a 1999 essay written to mark the 60th birthday of Venerable Phra Dhammapitaka (PA Payutto), she was described as "sharing with contemporary 'engaged Buddhists' the radical innovation that social activism in an integral component of spiritual life". Now, as a novice monk, Dhammananda's duty is to spread dhamma. "But if providing the right knowledge is a way of crusading for women, I'm still a crusader."

The ordination of more Thai *bhikkhuni* is likely not only to improve the status of *mae chi* but also to strengthen the provision of social services for women. Traditionally, boys from poor families received bed, board and a free education at temples in return for helping with household chores. Girls were never accepted as *dek wat* (temple children). But at Watra Songdharmakalayani, where Dhammananda now lives, impoverished girls receive food, shelter and a chance to study.

And, in light of reports of women seeking shelter in temples being sexually abused and raped by monks, *watra* are surely safer places of refuge.

Pum, 38, a devout Buddhist, was ordained as a *mae chi* to make merit for her grievously ill father but spent less than a week at the temple. "The abbot was always acting in a sexually suggestive manner. He used to keep me typing documents until 3am."

So why didn't she seek spiritual guidance from a senior nun? "I was looking for the one who could answer all my questions," she replies. After a 20-year quest, Pum is finally getting those answers at Watra Songdharmakalayani.

There is an alms service and chanting at the watra at 10.30am every Sunday and an afternoon talk on dhamma by guest speakers on the first and third Sunday of the month. The temple is at Km52, Petchkasem Road, about three kilometres outside Nakhon Pathom town.

Aree Chaisatien
The Nation
May 15, 2001

On the path to monkhood

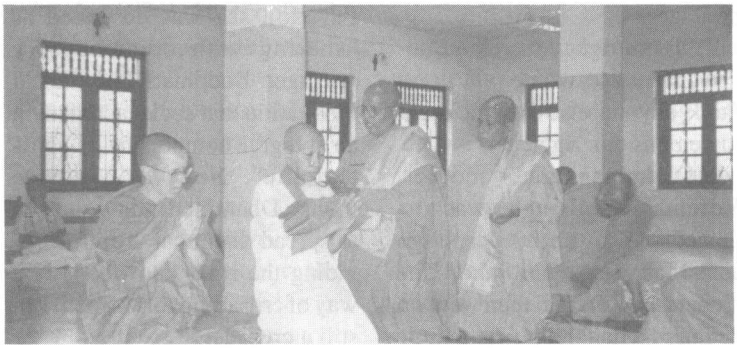
The courtyard of the Golden Temple in Dambulla, a half day's journey northeast of Colombo, was packed that day in late June. The heavy scents of incense and frangipani blossom and a definite sense of anticipation filled the air. The crowd watched as a single file of 26 women in white robes, heads shaven, walked towards the temple. Later, after donning saffron robes, these samaneri, female Buddhist novice monks, were ordained as monks (*bhikkuni*) in a ceremony closed to the



general public. It was only the third such mass ordination to take place in Sri Lanka since the female monkhood, the Bhikkuni sangha, was revived there in 1998.

In a separate and much more low-key ceremony on the same day a 41-year-old Thai woman named Chamnean Rattanaburi took the first step in the same direction. She was ordained as a *samaneri* by a group of senior monks led by the Venerable Pandith Dhammaloka Nayake Thero. Taking the name Rattanavali, she joins a very

select group—the handful of Thai women received into the Theravada Buddhist monkhood. For although the Buddha himself created female monks, ecclesiastical law in Thailand forbids the ordination of women.



In Lord Buddha's Footsteps

"I have devoted my whole life to following the Buddha's path. I want to learn more about *dhamma* [Buddhist teaching]," said a clearly moved Rattanavali shortly after the ceremony. "The nine years I served as a nun have meant very little to me. And since it is impossible for me to be ordained in Thailand, I decided to come here."

After graduating from Ramkhamhaeng University with a degree in education, this strong-willed women served for six years as a lay administrator at Wat Dhammakaya in Pathum Thani before becoming a *mae chee* (Buddhist nun). Last year, while working at the Association for the Promotion of the Status of Women (which, incidentally, is headed by another another *mae chee,* Khunying Khanittha Wichiencharoen), she met and was strongly influenced by the feminist views of an American *bhikkhuni* usually known simply as Dr Lee. Later meetings with other *bhikkhuni* from Sri Lanka and Taiwan cemented her resolve to enter the monkhood.

"Another reason for making this move is that I want to upgrade my status," said Rattanavali. "Thai men have the right to be ordained as monks. Why are Thai women not accorded the same right? The status of a nun in Thailand is even lower than that of a lay person. Our society does not support and encourage nuns."

As a novice monk, she will have to follow 10 precepts and undergo three to six months of orientation and basic training at the newly opened international unit of the Board of Bhikkuni Sasana in Dambulla. Instruction will be given in English by a senior *bhikkhuni,* the Venerable Bhadra, who noted: "According to the Theravada tradition in Sri Lanka, *Samaneri* Rattanavali will be required to spend three years studying Buddhist history, *dhamma* and other subjects relevant to a *bhikkhuni* both here and in India.

Language Hurdles

After she finishes this intensive course Rattanavali will have to pass an examination before she is eligible for ordination as a *bhikkhuni.* The process will be especially difficult for her since she speaks very little English. And although she can chant in Pali, the language in which the Tripitaka is written, monks in Sri Lanka chant in Sinhalese.

"Although language will be a major barrier, I intend to try my very best," said the new samaneri who, during her first week in Sri Lanka, got by with a mixture of Pali and sign language.

The day after her ordination Rattanavali and a few of the new *bhikkhuni* were given a spectacular welcome when they arrived at the international unit. More than a hundred devotees of all ages walked behind them in a procession to the temple which was led by a group of men dancing a traditional drum dance. At the *vihara* (main hall), she and the *bhikkhuni* were greeted by girls dressed in white blouses and sarongs who offered them white frangipani blossoms. The chant of welcome echoed around the building, the refrain being "sadhu ... sadhu ... sadhu."

"It's hard to express how I feel ... delighted ... overjoyed," said Rattanavali, tears of happiness moistening her cheeks.

Later the group was taken to visit other temples around the country led by the Venerable Bhadra, and another prominent *bhikkhuni,* the Venerable Siri Sumedha, secretary to the Bhikkuni Sangha. According to the Venerable Bhadra, there are 188 *bhikkhuni* and some 6,000 *samaneri* registered in Sri Lanka. She also knows of seven Mahayana *bhikkhuni* who were ordained in Los Angeles in 1988, another seven who were ordained in Saranath, South Korea, in 1996, and a further 22 ordained in Taiwan last year.

According to the Venerable Seelananda, a *bhikkhu* based at Wevaldenjya Temple in Kandy, there is still quite a lot of resistance by conservatives to the re-establishment of the Bhikkhuni Sangha in Sri Lanka. "Bhikkhu [male monks] have dominated Buddhism here for a long time.

A lot of them still do not agree with *bhikkhuni* although they *are* getting moral support from some of the younger monks. We do have some corrupt *bhikkhu* here, Personally I think that the presence of upstanding *bhikkhuni* can serve as a good alternative for lay Buddhists. *Bhikkhuni* can help *bhikkhu* teach *dhamma*... especially to women."

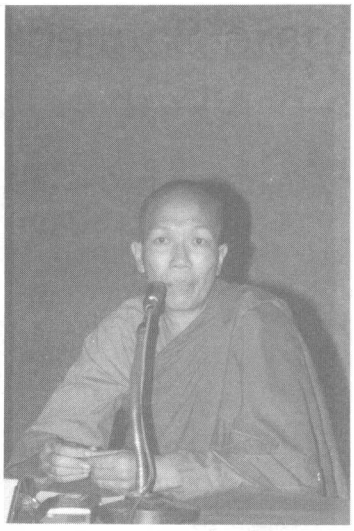
There are even a few female abbots. "Although many people don't agree with the re-establishment of the *bhikkhuni* order, in my village, Haltota ... that's near Kandy, many people, including men, support the abbot, the Venerable *bhikkhuni* Madampe," said M J Wichramasinghe Nandana, an English teacher. "She has done many good things for us. She gives *dhamma* classes on Sundays and has also started a preschool for girls."

Certainly, Rattanavali is impressed by what she has seen of the country so far.

"Although I will have to adapt myself to a new culture, I do sense strong support here for the ordination of women. I'm sure this will inspire me to work hard at my *dhamma* studies and learn as much as I can. I will try to bridge the cultural gap and share love, compassion and kindness with women from different walks of life. Additionally, I want to follow the example of the *bhikkhuni* I have met here; they not only teach *dhamma,* they also work in the community."

Dr Lee, the American *bhikkhuni* who has been something of a mentor to Rattanavali, is also encouraged by what she has found in Sri Lanka.

"In Sri Lanka, we see fully empowered women spirititual teachers. We don't see the prostitution and the AIDS epide-



mic which are affecting parts of Southeast Asia. In Taiwan and Korea, the same applies.

"Our development as a region or a nation is dependent upon appropriate uses of religion. Religion can become tainted. If a religion is not being taught in accordance with *dhamma,* then suffering increases for people."

Rattanavali's parents have bought a three-rai plot of land in Thung Song district in the southern province of Nakhon Si Thammarat where, after she becomes a fully feldged *bhikkhuni,* she hopes to build a small temple. "When I return to Thailand, I want to help improve the status of Thai nuns and do community work, especially with women and girls. Our society is very ill. Drug abuse and Aids is spreading among the young people. I think that teaching *dhamma* can help people understand things more clearly and help them solve their problems."

In February this year, Dr Chatsumarn Kabilsingh, a longtime lecturer in Buddhist philosophy at Thammasat and Maha Chulalongkorn universities, was also ordained as a *samaneri* in Sri Lanka, taking the name Dhammananda. She is currently teaching at a temple for women in Nakhon Pathom called Watra Songdharmkalayani. Since she was considered to already have an extensive knowledge of Buddhist doctrine, Dhammananda only has to complete a two-year course of studies before she will be eligible for ordination as a *bhikkhuni.*

Although it does not recognise her *samaneri* status, the Sangha Supreme Council, the governing body of Thai Buddhism, has so far kept silent on the issue. Does Rattanavali worry about not being accepted in her home country?

"Not really ... although this does bother my parents and some *mae chee* whom I know. A few friends of mine who are nuns originally planned to come to Sri Lanka with me and become *samaneri.* But, after the media controversy in Thailand about the ordination of women, they changed their minds. They might still follow my example if I can prove to them that it is possible to lead this spiritual path successfully. My goal is to be a good *bhikkhuni* and to use *dhamma* as a tool to help Thai women."

Given the likelihood of other Thai women following the lead set by Dhammananda and Rattanavali, one wonders for how much longer the Sangha Supreme Council will be able to keep its own counsel on this issue. Surely the time has come to re-evaluate the need for a piece of ecclesiastical legislation which was brought in almost a century ago.

Phatarawadee Phataranawik
The Nation
July 11, 2001

Female Sacredness

Seated at the foot of Kwan Yin.
I feel my heart filled with sacredness.
Tears moving through my veins.
-a Buddhist Bhikkhuni-

As an international news reporter, I see so much beauty and such a deeply rooted spirituality in Southeast Asia, but I also see something missing from the core – an acknowledgment and love of womanhood. In all of Thailand's 30,000 temples, how is it that there are only two devoted to a female Buddist deity? There would be none at all if not for the vision of one woman. When I met with the Great Master, Ajahn Yai Guong Saeng, she explained, "You think of a good idea and execute it with dignity," and she has done just that.

In her lifetime of loving devotion to Kwan Yin, a female Buddhist deity and historical Chinese personage, the Venerable Great Master created two magnificent temples, the only two female sacred sites in a sea of male Theravada Buddhism.

Her temple is the largest honour in Southest Asia to Mahayana Buddhism, and certainly to Kwan Yin. It is run by women. They not only manage temple business. They sculpt statues in the gardens and paint the murals on the walls. The joyful energy of the temple grounds is proof of the Venerable's compassion, love and spontaneity. If women are looking for a master to study with, she is a precious gem.

Why is female sacredness essential in culture? Each culture needs to know that both its male and female members are worthy of love and respect. Christians



can turn to Mother Mary. Native Americans can turn to Mother Earth. Mahayana Buddhists can turn to Kwan Yin. And Vajrayana Buddhists (Tibetan) may turn to a variety of female deities. Yet, in Southeast Asia images of female sacredness gather dust in museums.

Could the lack of female sacredness be a spiritual contributor to the lower status of women in this part of the world, and thus fuel the prostitution and AIDS epidemic? Of course there are many factors involved. However, I cannot help wonder what it would be like in Thailand if there were 15,000 temples operated by women and 15,000 temples operated by men. Wouldn't things be a little different? Women and girls would have role models to emulate, counsellors to confide in, refuges of solace and community. And, why not just allow it to occur —female sacredness in Southeast Asia, temples with women teachers who are fully-ordained and fully-empowered? It could cure this region of the world of so many social problems, healing men and women alike.

Well, in any case, I feel joy when I am here at Kwan Yin Temple. The smell of incense floats on the breeze. The tree leaves move gently. A mantra resounds in homage to Kwan Yin and blesses the temple, surrounding neighbourhood, and all beings near or far. Female images abide in all directions. There is something that I can connect with here as a woman.

The Great Master Ajahn Yai Guong Saeng's message to the world is, "All women are mothers of the Earth. So, please do good deeds and love others. And, understand forgiveness so deeply."

The Great Master's next projects are a hospital and a school for children. Ajahn Yai Guong Saeng empowers women and inspires people to be socially engaged in the communities we love.

Catherine Altman

Grassroots Leadership Training
Empowering marginalised communities in South East Asia

In South East Asia, development promotion over the past 50 years has over-emphasised economic growth without adequate consideration for environmental sustainability, social justice and cultural integrity. The result of this approach has been the degradation of the forests, indigenous forest communities and rural communities, in terms of quality of life, cultural values, natural resources and material wellbeing. Many of these communities have become direct victims of development projects such as big dams, expanded road construction, promotion of cash crops, chemical dependent agriculture, unsustainable and illegal logging and so on. The consequences of this structural violence in the name of development include endless indebtedness of the farmers to government banks and private loan sharkers and the decline of local culture, hence the disintegration of rural communities. These disappearing communities are the social security of all traditional ways of life. In addition, severe environmental degradation and the loss of natural resources have robbed people of their sustainable traditional livelihoods.

There is much discussion about the importance of "sustainable development" and "income distribution" for present needs as well as the needs of future generations. Yet during the last few decades various governments and their technocrats, educated in the western paradigm of thinking, have made very few policy changes towards sustainability and social justice, for fear of jeopardising economic growth.

For over 30 years the NGO movement in most of South East Asia has been promoting non-violent, bottom-up sustainable community development and has had some success at a micro-level. Even in the difficult conditions of Indo-China and Burma, some community-based organisations have emerged in the last ten years. In this part of the world there are a large number of traditional rural and forest communities still functioning well enough to give material and moral support to their members to live with some dignity. However these communities tend to become much weaker and in danger of disintegration in the context of modernisation and globalisation. Since 1996, the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) has run regular 12-week Grassroots Leadership Training (GLT) courses for indigenous forest communities and the rural poor in the region. The aim of the courses is to empower communities to be: self-reliant in terms of basic needs; maintain their cultural integrity; and sustain a healthy environment. A non-violent and participatory approach is advocated in all activities. Thus, the SEM programmes aim to reduce poverty through environmental protection and ecological recovery, and by encouraging sustainable income generating activities with appropriate indigenous and modern technology and management.

SEM is now embarking on a more ambitious project; an ongoing Regional Centre for Sustainable Communities. The basis will be a two-year GLT curriculum and supporting educational materials for both participants and their communities. The course, including field work and classroom education, will be offered to community leaders to enhance their confidence, broaden their environmental and social perspectives and develop their skills for sustainable livelihood and community development projects. Part of the training will support participants in developing participatory local projects that help to alleviate poverty, sustain forest ecosystems and preserve indigenous cultures. It is expected that a code of best practice for grassroots community development will emerge and this will be replicated in other villages and shared with a wider audience for public education and policy impact.

SEM works with hill tribe groups where the indigenous knowledge of living in harmony with the forest is alive. This way of living coupled with appropriate and cautious modernisation, can become a model of good forest practice. SEM has been involved with training the leaders of the Assembly of the Poor, who are direct victims of inappropriate development po-

licy in Thailand. Both these groups have been involved with direct action including large-scale non-violent protest for land rights and self-determination although the present focus is on rebuilding their communities in a sustainable way. A further interesting group is Engaged Spiritual Leaders who have cultural influence at village level. In our experience, those with social concerns can use their strength very effectively to mobilise villagers. Changes are coming quickly to isolated communities all over South East Asia. It is planned to expand activities to prepare grassroots leaders to cope with changes so that they can become more pro-active rather than victims of modernisation.

In South East Asia higher education is not usually an option for marginalised community leaders. The SEM programmes offer appropriate follow up and community support. This enables community leaders to understand what is going on in the present political-economic system, including how the decisions that directly and indirectly influence their communities are made. Global and local interaction needs to be deeply understood so these communities will not fall victim to the negative aspects of globalisation and will be prepared to cope with rapid change. They need appropriate modern skills to organise and manage their communities as well as confidence in their own cultural and spiritual roots to give a solid base to their transformational activities. If they are well prepared and empowered, they will be able to preserve indigenous knowledge and skills as well as to adopt and skillfully adapt appropriate new tools from outside. These communities may not want or be able to live a consumer lifestyle on the scale of the modern sector. However, they can have a culturally rich and dignified community life, with security in the provision of basic needs and a harmonious relationship with a healthy natural environment.

In the broader spectrum of approaches to social change, SEM draws strongly from Gandhi's ideas of reconstruction programmes and the Buddha's ways of organising the early sanghas. This means a lack of trust in the state mechanism alone to bring about desirable social change. The socialist approach of capturing state power through revolutions and reforms in Eastern Europe, China and Indo-China have shown the limits of government mechanisms. SEM aspires toward a strong and self-reliant community based movement, largely autonomous from the state. This is to ensure that the state role is supportive rather than domineering and mechanisms should be in place to ensure that local communities have the power to direct state policy. Most modern nation-states are getting weaker and weaker in relation to multinational corporations. When there is a conflict between multinationals and local communities, most governments side with the multinational corporations. The Western European model of social democracy that has contributed a great deal towards social justice in Europe is admirable. However, we feel this strong state approach has been achieved in tandem with environmental degradation, exploitation of the Third World, disintegration of communities and alienation of people in Western society. We believe that the community empowerment approach will move towards social justice and sustainable development as well as maintain the community life without which human existence has little meaning.

Jane Rasbash &
Pracha Hutanuwatr
May 2001

Interfaith Solidarity Forest Walks
In support of the indigenous people of Northern Siam

Between November 2001 and February 2002 the Spirit in Education Movement is organising another series of interfaith walks in solidarity with the struggles of the hill-tribe people in the north of Siam. This will be the seventh year that these walks have taken place. The intention of the walks is to bring an international and interfaith moral witness to the struggle of indigenous peoples in their efforts to evolve their sustainable way of life and to

protect their sacred lands in the face of modern development.

The walks are led by forest monks, tribal leaders and activists and over the years have become a rallying point for the PgazK'Nyau* people. The contemplative nature of the walks bears witness to the lives of tribal people as we join with them to listen to their stories and celebrate their culture. A few years ago when asked what they most wanted from the walks village elders replied: "To have our story heard."

To bear witness is to put aside our preconceptions and experience others' truth with and open heart and mind. Our presence and intention provides an opportunity for tribal people to reflect on and articulate values and ways of being they wish to nurture and protect and to discuss strategies for the challenges they face. This is also a chance to contemplate our own nature through experiencing the silence of the forest and the simplicity of village life.

This is a rare opportunity to experience and support the indigenous people of Siam on their terms. It is a chance to experience unique ways of bringing spirituality and social and environmental activism together in ways that celebrate traditions and the beauty of tribal peoples' lives.

Participants must be able to live with last minute changes, lack of accustomed foods and comforts, basic camping and forest home-stays. Participants are expected to carry their own packs although if you have a physical limitation you can hire a porter. The walks are not exceptionally strenuous and there are opportunities to rest and feel the rhythm of the life of the forest dwellers.

The walks cost US$500 per participant, however we are flexible enough to be able to negotiate a discount if you cannot afford the full price. If you pay full price, you will be supporting another activist/conservationist from a neighbouring country to join this walk. If you pay a reduced price your participation will give support to a sustainable way of life.

For further information see the official Forest Walks homepage www.siam21.com/walks or e-mail Wongsanit Ashram atc@anet.net.th.

The dates of the walks are as follows:

Walk 1 - 29 November to 10 December 2001

Walk 2 - 28 December 2001 to 6 January 2002 (fully booked)

Walk 3 - 19 January to 28 January 2002

Walk 4 - 16 February to 27 February 2002

* The PgazK'Nyau tribe. This is their own spelling for their name. Meaning humans, it is pronounced pa-ka-yaw. By outsiders they are often known as the Karen people.

Sekhiyatham:
Socially concerned monks, novices and maechee meet at seaside temple

"There are three ways people form groups in Thailand," Abbot Witthaya of Wat Khao Sap in Rayong told me as we talked about the group Sekhiyatham. We were sitting in a pleasant open-air chapel on a hill not far from the Gulf of Thailand. The monks, novices and maechee had just left for the morning session, on the occasion of Sekhyatham's 12th annual meeting, from May 18-21, 2001. "First, many groups form around a charismatic or powerful individual," he went on. "Second, there are groups that form around some immediate difficulty, like the building of a new dam. Third, you sometimes find that people who are independently doing the same kind of work come together for mutual support. They try to use good thinking to unify their separate efforts so as to have a greater impact on society." "And Sekhiyatham is the last kind, right?" I asked. "Yes," he said with a look of concern. He had just argued that Sekhiyatham was too loosely organised, but conceded that its attempts to bring people together in a new way were significant.

The monks who were later to form Sekhiyatham met for the first time in 1990 at this very temple to rest and share their experiences. They were a group of rural monks experienced in applying Buddhist principles to

community development and conservation. Since that time, several have become well known for their efforts and successes in reviving the role of the rural Buddhist temple in an era of rapid and sometimes devastating change. They are now thought of as elders of the group.

In addition to these senior members, Sekhiyatham includes younger monks who form the core of the present group, and who are now becoming leaders at one level or another. Some are writers in the forefront of Thai debates on the proper role and direction of the Buddhist sangha. Others are leaders of local or regional projects, founders of schools for young people from poor backgrounds, initiators of conservation walks, and coordinators of local networks of monks.

Sekhiyatham is also made up of novices; an ever-changing group of newcomers, both young and old; supportive lay people; and maechee. Since 1996, Sekhiyatham has invited socially concerned maechee to participate in its annual meetings and to serve on its coordinating committee.

Two orientations that set the tone for all the activities of this diverse group are egalitarianism and flexibility. Egalitarianism is evident in the attempt to give everyone a voice and a hearing, including novices and maechee. It is also evident in the critical discussions about the hierarchical structure of the sangha, from the national to the local level. Flexibility, in the positive sense, is present in the assumption that each individual who associates with Sekhiyatham is free to explore the possibilities of correct and fruitful Buddhist practice. There is no unifying dogma about how to run a wat, which ritual forms to use, or which meditation practice is best.

Since the beginning, the members of Sekhiyatham have come together around three concerns: the corruption and decay of the Buddhist sangha in Thailand, the challenge to traditional forms of community life and spiritual values as a result of consumerism and top-down development, and the destruction of the natural environment. Much of the work of Sekhiyatham is an attempt to develop and share models of Buddhist practice that successfully engage each of these areas. This year's meeting was no exception.

On the morning of the first day, individuals from different regions of Thailand had a chance to introduce themselves and talk about the kind of work they were involved in. In the afternoon, the 12 maechees and 38 monks and novices split into groups to talk about contemporary issues facing the Thai sangha. These included the possibility of ordaining bhikkhunis in Thailand, how to set up viable forms of alternative education, and how to respond to the commercialisation of temple rituals.

The issue of bhikkhuni ordination became the focal point of the discussions on the morning of the second day. Organisers had invited Samaneri Dhammananda to tell her story and present her views to those present. Samaneri Dhammananda (see *Seeds of Peace* 17(2): 42) is a prominent Thai academic whose recent ordination as a female novice in Sri Lanka has created headlines and a storm of controversy. She is an outspoken public figure, and her ordination is seen as a challenge to Thai customary practice (and law) which prohibits the ordination of women. One television channel has refused to air interviews with her, several monks have criticised her publicly in harsh terms and the silence of the Council of Elders seems to have communicated a simple message, "There is no issue to be discussed."

In this context, the discussion that took place at the Sekhiyatham meeting was markedly open and positive. All the maechees and most monks present looked favourably on the possibility of female ordination in Thailand. Genuine give-and-take revealed a willingness to bring the issues up in wider forums and to think about ways that monks could facilitate the acceptance of women's full ordination here. Along with cautions to move slowly, there were critiques of the hard-line position against women' ordination and many words of encouragement for maechee to practice well so as to help cultivate wider social acceptance.

Another focal point of this year's meeting was the issue of alternative education. Abbot Witthaya told vivid stories about his experiences setting up a school for novices from poor families on the afternoon of the second day. The school he started from scratch at Wat Khao Sap now has more than 400 pupils who study both religious and secular subjects. How to create effective forms of alternative education is generally a central concern of Sekhiyatham monks and maechee. This is partly because they see education as a key tool both for reviving the sangha and for empowering young people and adults in rural communities. The overall role of Sekhiyatham as an organisation

is also largely one of facilitating learning and dialogue among ordained men and women. This it does in part through its quarterly journal and annual meetings, and in part through a variety of workshops and regular courses it now offers along with SEM and TICD in the form of "Sekhiyawitthayalai" or Sekhiyatham College.

On the morning of the third day Doctor Phenpa gave a talk on the many uses and values of traditional herbs. In the afternoon, participants discussed how to make Sekhiyatham's organisational structure more efficient, and in the evening a new, smaller executive committee, with one maechee representative was elected.

The visits to local temples and places of historical interest that have become traditional last-day activities at Sekhiyatham's annual meetings help achieve something that is stated explicitly as a goal of such meetings: "to build friendships." It is the openness with which Sekhiyatham participants from different regions and backgrounds make the effort to listen to each other, share ideas, and create friendships that makes this group a still fresh institutional voice for ordained men and women of Thailand.

Ted Mayer

Faith and works

Abbot Nan Sutasilo's life and work are at odds with what most people understand about Buddhism and Buddhist monks. The head monk of Samakkhi Temple in the province of Surin has set a laudable example of how religion can be geared toward the liberation of society, and not merely to serve an individual's spiritual needs.

A recent seminar was held to celebrate the sixth-cycle birthday anniversary of the northeastern monk – he's now 72 – and to look at what the present generation of clerics could do to shore up the poor image of the Thai Sangha.

Over two decades ago, when any show of public activism was eyed suspiciously by the authorities, Abbot Nan led villagers in the Ta Sawang subdistrict to undertake several projects to boost communal ties and the spirit of fraternity.

Most of these projects are still in existence, ranging from a village rice bank – copied by many other communities – to a cooperative and a savings group.

Despite being branded a "communist," Abbot Nan pushed successfully for a revival of traditional pooling of labour dubbed "friendship farming." Villagers donate labour to plant rice on a communal piece of land, which was also donated, and the yield goes into the rice bank in order to help poor people, both in their own communities and neighbouring areas.

Thanks to his leadership, several other monks in the Northeast have been following suit. Together with a non-governmental organization called the Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development (TICD), Abbot Nan became the first chairperson of the Sekhiyadhamma Network, which now includes about 100 monks engaged in similar social development work.

"I hold only to one principle," Abbot Nan said. "Anything that truly benefits the villagers and does not go against morality, I will continue to do. It does not matter even if I get beheaded. I will not retreat even one step.

"Holding myself steadfast to such a principle, I can always smile at whatever activity I'm engaged in. Problems or obstacles are nothing. By following the virtues of truth, endurance and sacrifice, I can be carefree. I want to help other beings, otherwise life, in itself, is completely meaningless."

To combat the growing materialism in his village, the monk first invited his village peers to attend a session of meditation. Abbot Nan tirelessly urged his audience to develop "spiritual immunity" and not to succumb to any kind of temptations – truly a stepping stone toward self-reliance.

Phra Paisal Visalo highlighted Abbot Nan's achievement in re-positioning the temple as the dynamic centre of a community as in the old days. He noted how many monks today passively wait for the laity to take the initiative to enter the temple, unaware of their increasing loss of relevance in present-day society.

Worse, Phra Subin Paneeto observed how certain monks, who may excel in religious rhetoric but are slack in conduct,

have contributed to the public's distrust.

"Not surprisingly the more they preach, the poorer people have become. And the more they engage in worldly vices, the greater the antagonism against monks. If the trend continues in this way, the future of Thai Buddhism could be reduced to a religion of [blind] rituals."

Besides bridging the gaps between homes and temples, Phra Paisal said socially-engaged monks like Abbot Nan have also helped shorten the distance between secular and religious spheres.

"One common misconception of Buddhism is that the two realms should be completely separated from each other. Thus dhamma practice has been misconstrued as incongruous with daily life, to the extent that it becomes no more than an individual pursuit.

"But Abbot Nan and the subsequent generations of 'development monks' have demonstrated how social works are also an integral facet of spiritual practice. This reveals the long forgotten social dimension of Buddhism."

Phra Paisal added that the "myths" have been prevalent in not only Theravada Buddhism, but also in the Mahayana sect. The latter has a well-known saying: "If the root is good, so are the branches."

Phra Paisal, however, said this was not necessarily so – society was more than just a collection of individuals.

The Lord Buddha often stressed the significance of a proper environment (*sappaya*) in propelling monks toward supreme enlightenment, Phra Paisal said.

Similar principles could be applied to the lay people, and when the masses are faced with misfortune, what they need are not sermons but concrete assistance.

Vasana Chinvarakorn
Bangkok Post
27 May, 2001

INTERBUDDY
creating a culture of nonviolence

One of the most exciting initiatives to come out of the Ariya Vinaya conference was the formation of INTERBUDDY (International Buddhist Youth Movement). The group aims to build a network of Buddhist youth and youth from diverse spiritual traditions to discuss creative approaches to nonviolence.

INTERBUDDY recognises that young people have a special contribution to make to creating a culture of peace and nonviolence. The group aims to promote human rights, cultural diversity, inter-religious understanding, economic fairness and environmental sustainability.

According to INTERBUDDY member Pakorn Thummapruksa, "If the youth come and join each other it has some power. The future of the world depends on youth. Young people can view problems from new perspectives and imagine creative solutions to problems. INTERBUDDY can play an important role in the future in terms of the creation of a nonviolent and peaceful world." INTERBUDDY aims to function as a way of bringing together youth from many countries. While groups in each country can organise their own activities, INTERBUDDY forms a central point where members can come together to share their ideas and experiences. Presently, INTERBUDDY has members from Thailand, Indonesia, India, Japan and Mongolia. Any people from other countries interested in becoming part of the movement should contact INTERBUDDY.

INTERBUDDY has created a website with more information about the group (interbuddy-centre.tripod.com/home.html). They also have a bank account and are looking for funding to support their activities. If you support INTERBUDDY's vision and would like to make a financial contribution please write a cheque or money order to International Buddhist Youth Movement (Thai Farmer's Bank, 014-2-46162-5). INTERBUDDY can be contacted by e-mail: interbuddy@hotmail.com.

* The next Ariya Vinaya meeting will be held in Siam from the 9-11 February 2002. The next INEB conference will also be held in Siam from 6-8 February 2002.

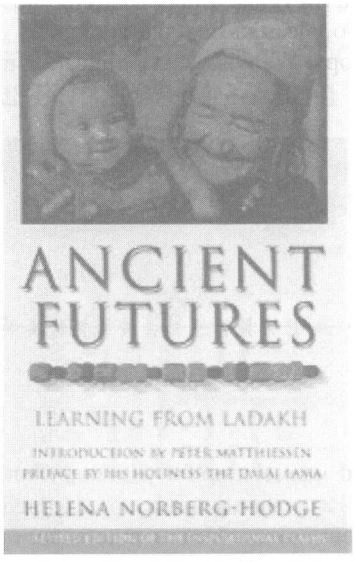
Globalisation and Sustainable Communities

"Today we have the opportunity to change the direction of progress that is a historical opportunity. We haven't had this opportunity for 500 years," said Helena Norberg-Hodge, author of *Ancient Futures*. These were Helena's opening remarks at a seminar on globalisation organised by the Spirit in Education Movement at Chulalongkorn University on 2 August.

Helena went on to say that historically it has been very difficult to resist the forces of European colonisation because it has affected communities that are isolated. While decolonisation has taken place, the economic enslavement of people has actually gotten worse. However, today there is an international movement of resistance to this colonisation.

Despite all the difficulties that the world faces Helena feels very positive. She said, "The big picture analysis is the most empowering, positive change happening in the world today." If we can understand the processes involved in globalisation then this can help people at a personal level. While the present society is dominated by economics it doesn't have to be that way. If people take the time to look at what really makes them happy "we can go forward to a post-industrial, ecological and spiritual culture that makes us happy," she said.

Helena said the best way to understand globalisation is to study food production. "In a 'real economy' a tomato from the other side of the world would have to cost more than a tomato grown one mile away. By studying food and farming we can study the 'real economy'. The distancing between the production and consumption of food enriches the middlemen and impoverishes the small farmer," she said.



The situation that has come about is largely the result of free trade treaties which have given increasing power to business. People have only begun to understand this recently. One of the biggest obstacles to overcoming this is that we are trained to think small and specialised and we can't see the global perspective. Helena said, "I am not saying there needs to be an end to trade, but an end to unnecessary trade in essential products." The average American meal travels more than 1,500 miles before it reaches the plate. The globalisation of the food economy not only enriches giant agribusinesses it is also a major contributor to increasing carbon dioxide emissions and therefore climate change.

Helena suggests there are two key things we can do on a personal level to resist globalisation. The first is to educate ourselves about it. She suggests forming small community study groups. The meetings can provide both education and support and help renew a sense of community. "There is a need for both resistance and renewal," Helena said. An understanding of the big picture of globalisation will lead to political pressure on governments.

The second thing is the local food movement. This should not merely be a commitment to buy local food, but to be an activist and put local food networks in place. Local food provides the benefits of both ensuring small farmers have a good livelihood and providing people with fresh, healthy, affordable food.

Despite the seriousness of the topic at one point Helena suggested that everyone should sing a song. After the Thai people had sung, Helena sang a song in Swedish and then two Burmese sang in their native languages. Helena suggests that singing songs together can be part of a renewal, previously everybody in all cultures knew how to sing and dance.

As the seminar ended several young Thai women approached Helena carrying well read copies of *Ancient Futures* to be signed. They all revealed that they were studying or working on projects inspired by *Ancient Futures*. They are certain to be part of the resistance and renewal Helena talked about.

David Reid

For more information visit www.isec.org.uk

May 7, 2001

Dear Sulak Sivaraksa,

I trust this will find you in the best of your health and also hope that your project is progressing well. Thank you for the latest issue of Seeds of Peace. But concerning subscribing to it annually, I am sorry that we are not in the condition to pay. So, please accept our apologies.

Thank you once again for the copy. We wish your publication many more years of success.

With best wishes to you.

Sincerely,
Lobsang Dechen
Project Co-director
Tibetan Nuns Project
Sidhpur, H.P., India

April 10, 2001

Dear Sulak Sivaraksa,

I write to express my thanks and appreciation for your contribution to this year's Pfeffer Peace Prize selection process. The Fellowship of Reconciliation is honored to have such experienced and distinguished veterans of the peace movement as our judges. We are grateful for the opportunity to work with you, and hope that you will agree to continue serving as a judge in the administering of this important award.

Your ballots reflected overwhelming support for Pierre Marchand, founder of the French association Partage. The award honors Marchand's work to assist children in areas of war and natural disaster and on achieving the assent of all the living Nobel Laureates in an Appeal to the United Nations to declare the first decade of the 21st century as the Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World. Lou Ann Gaunson presented Marchand with the award on February 25, 2001 in Manila, during ceremonies and events celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of the Nonviolent People Power Revolution in The Phillipines.

I thank you again for your support and assistance in making this year's Pfeffer Peace Prize a meaningful event. By recognizing the achievement of an individual or an organization working to end the economic sanctions in Iraq, you have not only promoted nonviolence, but have given hope to a community of people who very often feel isolated in their work. I hope you will agree to serve another term on our judges panel.

Sincerely yours,
Laureen Fleer
Awards Coordinator
Fellowship of Reconciliation
Nyack, New York

July 9, 2001

Dear Sulak

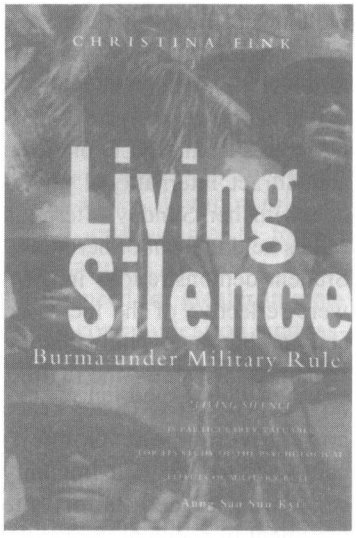
Thank you for your great and generous contribution to the Sythesis Dialogues. I was so impressed with everything you had to say. I do hope we can all work together in mind as well as in the world to bring about the needed changes in our society. I know there are millions of Americans who want to help make this transformation happen. I would like to be kept informed of anything you think is pertinent and to be updated on your activities if you have the time.

Peace and blessings,
Rev. Carol Carnes
Association for Global New Thought
(by e-mail)

Living Silence:
Burma Under Military Rule

by Christina Fink
London: Zed Books. 2001
ISBN: 1-85649-925-1

Living Silence: Burma Under Military Rule by Christina Fink is a concise and insightful look at the current political climate under the Burmese military regime and one of Fink's great strengths is her ability to convey a multitude of research, observations, and personal experiences in a highly readable way. She previously served as the editor of BurmaNet News and her familiarity with the journalistic coverage of events within and outside the country enlivens her historical narrative. She provides valuable background to understanding the culture of military authoritarianism that has dominated Burmese history since it gained independence in 1948. In looking at the emergence of government military power (known as the *Tatmadaw*), she writes, "Along with the AFPFL (Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League), the *Tatmadaw* was credited with playing a significant role in bringing about independence and in rescuing the country from dismemberment by insurgent forces." Building on this sense of legitimacy, the *Tatmadaw* set up a profit-generating corporation selling military supplies that later expanded to an import-export business and solidified itself as a major economic force. The military further encroached on the government bureaucracy when thousands of civil servants were replaced with military personnel under the leadership of General Ne Win and the



Revolutionary Council.

Beginning in 1963, the "Burmese Way to Socialism" was part of Ne Win's vision for economic development and entailed land reform, the nationalization of all banks, industries and large shops. Many of the agricultural programs paralleled Chinese programs during the time of the Great Leap Forward—land redistribution, a policy of buying back products from farmers, and the subsidization of daily necessities—yet Burma* did not experience the early success of the Chinese plan and soon encountered problems of lack of motivation, government shortages, and inadequate machinery causing both industry and agriculture to suffer. Fink writes that "Burma had been ahead of both Malaysia and Thailand in industrial production in the 1950's, but declined steadily from 1964 onwards."

As the economy faltered, the Revolutionary Council co-opted all independent organizations, trade unions, and political parties under the name of the Burmese Socialist Programme Party; the BSPP also created censorship boards, a nationalized school curriculum, and hastily executed public safety projects. For the next two decades, the BSPP faced only occasional resistance from monks, students, and urban workers. The general public, made up of a majority of ethnic Burmans and many ethnic minority groups, including the Karen, Karenni, Mon, Kachin, and Shan peoples, were preoccupied with the survival of families and communities and were vulnerable to the "divide and conquer" techniques employed by the regime. The regime also skillfully managed to foster racial hatred and xenophobia: Chinese and Indian residents were not allowed to matriculate in institution of higher learning, Muslim residents (Rohingyas) were forced into Bangladesh, and many ethnic groups saw their culture slandered on the one hand, and forced to sign agreements with the regime on the other.

Fink entitles her chapter on the years 1988-1990 "Breaking the Silence" to refer to the protests led by students and monks which included dock workers, artists, housewives against the military regime. The weeks of protest and violent conflict between the protestors and military set the stage for a military

coup and the resignation of General Ne Win. The new ruling junta called itself SLORC (State Law and Order Restoration Council) and held elections, not realizing that the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who had just returned to the country a few years earlier, U Tin Oyo and U Aung as the party with the would be able to unite the people and would win 392 of the 485 parliamentary seats. SLORC refused to adhere to election results and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was arrested in July 1989 without legal justification. This period of blatant disregard for democratic procedure catalyzed the Burmese sangha, who in August 1990 began a nationwide boycott in which monks refused to accept alms from soldiers and their families. Although soldiers were not allowed to fire on the monks, small scale violence erupted during the two-month boycott and was the boycott was eventually ordered to disband by the regime. The order was followed by a raid on over one hundred monasteries and a retreat of the sangha.

The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi caused a brief resurgence of pro-democracy energy but the 1990's were largely a time of unfettered consolidation of military strength. The SLORC regime pursued a new path of economic development and encouraged private enterprises, joint foreign investment, infrastructure projects and tourism, as well as an increase in forced labor to execute these projects. Fink interprets the unexpected release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in 1995 as the result of economic incentives between SLORC and the Japanese government and states that "Japan was promising to resume full scale development aid if the regime restored greater political and economic openness in Burma. The SLORC felt confident that with the economy picking up, people would soon lose interest in Daw Aung San Suu Kyi". The regime underestimated her power to rouse domestic interest in the NLD platform and attract international coverage with her Sunday afternoon rallies held in front of her house. Student demonstrations in 1996 were reflective of the increased activity, but the overall situation remained the same—the regime, now called SPDC (State Peace and Development Council) continues to act with impunity regarding forced labor, the treatment of political dissidents, corruption, and drug trafficking. The NLD, along with ethnic leaders' attempts to build a coalition in support of greater political freedoms, but their attempts at constructive dialogue with the regime, along with the attempts of the United Nations and various investor countries, have been unsuccessful.

The historical overview is well done but the uniqueness of *Living Silence* comes with its examination of the internalization of military authority and the cult of silence in different communities: families, the military itself, educators, and artisans. Each of these communities has experienced the total control the regime has been able to exercise over activities, professional and personal, and the creation of a peer-policing where loyalty to the state must be performed and punishment for disloyalty is the result of mere suspicion. Fink emphasizes that the 50 year legacy of authoritarianism and a hyper-awareness of the power of the state has created a sense of predetermined fate and the belief that there is no alternative. Only a few elites have access to the Internet and this is still heavily censored. The constant shutdowns of schools and universities have killed the spirit of intellectual inquiry and the empowerment of young people which was at the core of the 1988 protests; now, only the most dedicated and assertive young people have access to books and private tuition.

In praise of *Living Silence*, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is quoted as highlighting the author's study of the psychological effects of military rule and this is most clearly seen in the chapter on family. With her selective use of anecdotes and case studies, Fink is convincing in her description of the climate of conformity fostered by most families. The risk of imprisonment and torture is too great and the futility of past protests too apparent for most families to encourage their children to pursue a path of resistance. By profiling two families who are supportive and even demanding in their expectations of resistance from their children, the author shows how much effort and commitment to an alternative ideology is required for even the smallest acts of resistance.

The chapter on prison universities is perhaps the most optimistic in the book. The comaradery and scholarship which are allowed in prison have given rise to the term "prison university". Fink profiles Tun Way, a man imprisoned for protesting against the SLORC regime:

In Tun Way's cell, one of

the older prisoners translated articles on foreign politics from Time magazine and explained them to other inmates—'Then free discussion followed,' said Tun Way. "All had the right to speak, discuss and give different opinions."—He also began to study English and modern Burmese poetry and to develop his talents as a poet. As time went on, he and his fellow prisoners began to put together magazines in their cells.

The activities which flourished at the prison universities were impossible to continue outside prison because of the intense surveillance and military scrutiny of former prisoners and in some cases, their desire to start a new, less revolutionary life.

Fink reports the periods of involvement and passivity by monks and briefly mentions that the values of democracies are "deeply rooted" in Buddhism, but she does not use the lens of engaged Buddhism to place Burma in comparative perspective. Similarly, she does not place her hope for political change in the leadership of the sangha and a transformation of religious/political practice. Perhaps reflecting an overall sentiment in the Burmese Theravada Buddhist tradition, the project of self-enlightenment seems to be more viable and sustainable than the task of societal progress and to pursue the latter may all but eradicate the possibility of the former. The case of the Burmese sangha points to an issue that was raised at the Ariya-Vinaya meeting: the need for an international sangha consult. The autonomy of national sanghas and the varying traditions of Buddhism would make it impossible, as well as unadvisable, to form a supranational monastic body, but the need for greater international communication and assistance once again emerges as a tool for helping Buddhism meet societal needs.

In her conclusion, Fink intimates that a schism between high-ranking military officials and a subsequent opportunistic alliance with the democracy movement is the most likely scenario for political change. She uses the ousting of Marcos in the Philippines to point out that economic mismanagement can lead to military infighting and economic despair can lead to public outcry and the consolidation of an alternative leadership. She concludes that such a tenuous alliance between interest groups in Burma appears to be the only plausible hope for change.

A sequel to *Living Silence* would include a closer look at the experiences of minority ethnic communities and the simultaneous struggles and debates over cooperation between the regime and the NLD, the need for self-determination, and systems of democracy which occur within the ethnic and religious minority leadership. Fink does not elaborate on the relationship between the NLD and ethnic groups although she writes that tripartite dialogue is necessary for creating a democratic system, she does not look at the reality of the current debate. *Living Silence* is a valuable addition to the current influx of information about Burma and provides a historical and psychological overview of the current political climate and, most strikingly, Fink is able to be both somber and hesitantly optimistic when writing about a country and a regime which have thwarted all attempts at peace and justice.

Sonali Chakravarti

* The author uses the term Burma following the pro-democracy movement, rather than Myanmar. She writes, "Although in Burmese 'Bama' and 'Myanma' are used interchangeably for the name of the country, the choice of names in English has political connotations."

The New Global Investors

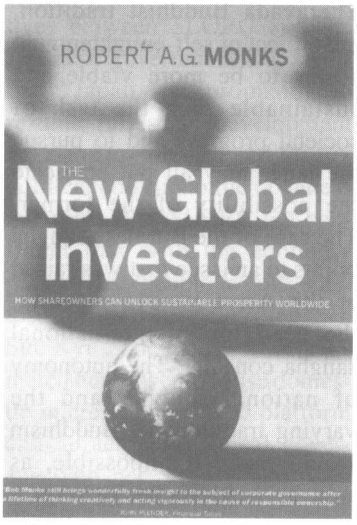
by Robert A. G. Monks
Oxford: Capstone Publishing, 2001.
ISBN: 1-84112-109-6

Robert Monks is the world's highest profile shareholder activist. The subtitle of his book, "How shareowners can unlock sustainable prosperity worldwide" gives some hint about its content. Monks calls for greater corporate accountability and returning the control of corporations to shareholders. He argues that the separation between control and ownership of cor-

porations has lead to the death of corporate social responsibility.

This insight is a powerful one. For while it has become clear that the power of transnational corporations often exceeds that of national governments, exactly who controls that power? The corporation embodies a life of its own and the corporate managers are accountable to no one. Monks sets out to explain how such a state of affairs came about.

Beginning with the first East India Trading companies Monks charts the rapid rise of the corporation to its present dominant position in our society. He identifies the discontent with multinational corporations most outwardly expressed at protests in Seattle and Prague, but also observes that this feeling of discontent is shared by many traditional supporters of capitalism. He makes reference to his home state of Maine where people have been left behind by "corporatization". People living in the traditional way have become impoverished both in spirit and in means. Yet he fails to extend these observations beyond the borders of the USA



to the Third World.

Monks sees a class of institutions that he labels as Global Investors, which are the public and private pension funds in the US, UK, Canada, Netherlands, Australia and Japan, as being the key to unlocking the power of ownership in corporations. Pension funds represent the interests of individuals who will typically retire in about twenty years and the interests of these individuals are to live in a safe, morally just world.

There is no great difference between the interests of shareholders and the interests of society so, as Monks puts it, "Ownership involvement can provide a valuable 'creative tension' disciplining corporate energy to be compatible with needs of society." He believes that activism (by shareholders) can actually add value to and improve corporations. He cites Ford as an example of a company where the owners have maintained an interest in controlling the company with some positive outcomes. Although I would suggest that while the business practices of Ford might be better than some of their competitors, this does not necessarily mean they are good *per se*. The problem is that the activism of shareholders will always maintain some level of self-interest, in contrast to the grassroots activist whose motivation will be more altruistic.

My main criticism of the book is that while it provides a strong critique of corporate capitalism it fails to go further in its critique of the capitalist paradigm. However, as an attack on corporate hegemony this book provides an interesting analysis.

David Reid

The Transnational Capitalist Class

By Leslie Sklair
Blackwell Publishers, 2001.

Economic globalization is popularly depicted as an inevitable process and any attempt to explain it in terms of vested or class interest is often derided as a conspiracy theory. Leslie Sklair offers a powerful rebuttal to this simplistic and deterministic conception. He asserts that the processes of globalization are the "contested outcomes of struggles over economic, political, and culture-ideology resources."

The novelties of Sklair's work are essentially two. First, contrary to orthodox scholarship, he argues that it is possible for classes to be conceived outside the nation-state. As he put it, "[A] transnational capitalist class is in the making. It is domiciled in and identified with no particular country but, on the contrary, is identified with the global capitalist system." Second, Sklair sheds greater light on the process of globalization *from* the viewpoint of globalizing elites and corporations;

interviews conducted with scores of global corporations provide valuable insights into the mindset and agenda of the transnational capitalist class. In other words, he does not neglect the role of human decisions and objectives in promoting globalization: "It was clear from interviews and documentary research that in most globalizing corporations the main human...driver of globalization was the visionary CEO"—the David Hewletts and Bill Packards, the Rupert Murdochs, the Helmut Mauchers, and so on.

Sklair contends that the intricate and expanding web of the global economy has a spider, which he calls the transnational capitalist class (TCC). He reminds us that capitalism is not the only globalizing system; other systems that have similar aspirations include the international system of states, the global environmental system, the world systems of religion, and so on. But the capitalist has attained global dominance "precisely because the TCC owns and controls of most of the planet's means of production" and has successfully propagated the culture-ideology of consumerism.

The members of the TCC do not necessarily share the same interests and there are constant intraclass struggles. But they are bound together globally by consumerism and "their common interest in the protection of private property and the rights of private individuals to accumulate it with as little interference as possible." Members of the TCC can be broken down as follows.

1. TNC executives and their local affiliates (the corporate fraction)
2. Globalizing bureaucrats and politicians (the state fraction)
3. Globalizing professionals (the technical fraction)
4. Merchants and media (the consumerist fraction)

In short, the capitalist system has achieved global hegemony because the ownership and control of money is emboldened by the control and ownership of political, organizational, cultural, and knowledge capital.

The interlocking positions of the core members ensure the cohesiveness and integration of the TCC. Corporate directorates have extensive connections with other sectors of society. For instance, they are on the boards of think-tanks charities, sports, and culture associations, universities, medical foundations, and so on. They penetrate the political realm by, among other ways, cultivating public opinion, lobbying, supporting friendly political parties, trade associations, and public affair groups, and so on. Moreover, many major global corporations are beginning to denationalize themselves by bringing in more nationalities on to main and subsidiary boards.

Abandoning the state-centric conception of the international system, Sklair cogently remarks, "[W]hat distinguishes the global capitalist project from the age of imperialism, is that potential partners can come from all parts of the global system."

* * *

Globalizing corporations believe that globalization entails the following trends: the changing nature of foreign direct investment, world best practice, global corporate citizenship, and a (professed) concern for the environment.

Although they are commonly called transnational corporations most *Fortune* Global 500 companies see themselves as in a transitional phase, changing from multinationalism (national companies with units abroad) to transnationalism (denationalized companies moving from market to market). The process of globalization is only beginning. Compelled by "shareholder-driven growth imperative," corporations in all the five main business sectors of the global economy—consumer goods and services, financial services, heavy industry, infrastructure, and electronics—see no other way to survive and prosper other than by globalizing their activities. Even Japanese corporations, which are often depicted as highly nationalistic, are not the exceptions to the rule. Mitsui, for instance, has expressed the desire to expand "its presence and scope as a global enterprise."

The nationalist baggage may be a major impediment to growth and profit. For transnationalizing corporations, globalization means primarily acting in the general interest of shareholders and global consumerist capitalism, not protecting the 'interest' of their countries of citizenship. Mergers are a good example. For example, when Daimler-Benz merged with Chrysler whose interest is served, the US or Germany? Is the merged corporation a reflection of the national competitive drive of the US or Germany? And so on.

Hence corporate interests are clearly distinct from real or imagined national interests. Sklair writes, "Globalization bears a contradictory relationship to the concept of national interest." Interestingly, in mains-

tream parlance the corporate interest is often synonymous with 'the national interest' while the interest of ordinary people is downplayed as 'special interest.' This is a showcase for Orwellianism.

Here Sklair's analysis clearly differs from that of many radical critics of globalization. To him, McDonaldization or Coca-Colanization is *not* the same as Americanization or Westernization. Globalizing corporations seek profit, not homogeneity. The rule of the game is now "Thinking globally, acting locally", which is also known as "glocalization." Foreign direct investment is no longer simply about opening new factories and offices, acquisitions, and joint ventures of various types. It now entails "making the brand part of the local culture and even, in some extreme cases, identifying globalizing brands with the local culture." Small wonder that globalizing corporations tailor their images and marketing style to meet local expectations and slightly alter their products or services to cater to local needs. They also sponsor various local events (sports, cultural, environmental protection campaigns, etc.) in order to be seen as a natural and inseparable part of the local fabric. As a senior executive in Nestle put it, the key to successful foreign investment is to be "part of the industrial tissue" wherever the company does business.

The preoccupation with the world best practice (WBP) and benchmarking such as the ISO series is also driving or facilitating the activities of globalizing corporations, often incorrectly in the name of improving national (or regional or urban) competitiveness and increasing national prosperity. "Benchmarking," Sklair notes, "is the measure through which all social institutions, including the state, can discover whether they are world class." Thus the idea is to become world class. For the corporation, this means comparing itself with the top dogs in its business sectors. For the state this refers to how well it attracts 'foreign investors' and supports the investment abroad of its 'national companies.' All things considered, WBP "is used to impose standards of performance relevant to the profitability of globalizing corporations on workers and citizens." As a result, the quest for WBP strengthens the alliances of globalizing politicians, globalizing professionals, and the corporate sector.

Globalization also necessarily leads to what is called "global corporate citizenship." Soulless corporations have to wear a human face and they have to assume responsibility "not just for the ways they conduct their business but also for the consequences of their products and business practices, wherever they occur and whether intended or not..." As Sklair keenly observes, "This is because corporate crimes and misdemeanors can cost market share to those who are discovered perpetrating them and cost elections to those who are too closely identified with the offenders." Put differently, no trade-off exists between profit-maximization and global corporate citizenship, but globalizing corporations are making a virtue out of necessity. In part global corporate citizenship is "a preemptive strike" against movements for a tighter regulation of corporate activities. In part it is a PR and marketing stunt, for example when corporate philanthropy for community development is concerned. Here it is terribly difficult to discern "the dividing lines between advertising, promotion, and philanthropy." And therefore "the boundary lines between business (especially globalizing business) and everyday life has been progressively blurred...." The policy statement of Sumitomo Life well captures this policy: "Our goal is to be a full-fledged member of each community in which we operate."

Although globalizing corporations spend millions of dollars supporting philanthropic and cultural activities worldwide, factory closures and layoffs are happening all the time. Not infrequently, communities that rely on the activity of these plants for their livelihood are destroyed. Therefore one can conclude that if glocalization and corporate philanthropy do not provide satisfactory profits, they will be discarded.

The professed concern for environmental sustainability is the final element that globalizing corporations share. However, through various means such as propping up the Global Environmental Management Initiative and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and penetrating the agencies of the UN, the TCC has essentially hijacked the airplane of environmental sustainability, forcing it to divert from its original destination. Environmental sustainability has moved away from the idea that small is beautiful, that there is a limit to growth, towards the concept of "sustainable growth." P&G' s observation is a powerful example: "We believe progress

lies not necessarily in 'consuming less,' but in consuming differently"—i.e., products that are so-called environmentally friendly. Thus according to globalizing corporations, humanity is facing a series of manageable environmental problems, not an impending singular ecological crisis that is being catalyzed by, among other factors, consumerism. As Sklair incisively questions, "Is global consumerist capitalism, as represented by the practices as well as the policies of the major corporations, sustainable?"

Sklair also documents instances where the rhetoric on environmental concern of globalizing corporations does not live up to their actions. Here he lines up the familiar culprits such as Monsanto, Dow, Intel, BP, Mitsubishi, and P&G.

In a dialectical fashion, Sklair argues that no discernible synthesis has yet emerged from the thesis of "the historical local of communities" and the antithesis of "the emerging global, of which the global capitalist system driven by the [TCC] is the dominant...force." Lest the reader feels fatalistic and overwhelmed in the face of the TCC, Sklair ends with an empowering timbre, pointing to the importance of social movements in challenging the policies and activities of the globalizing elites and of "the centrality of democracy to any viable challenge to global capitalism." This is a call for transnational political activism.

S.J.

Online activism
www.sulak-sivaraksa.org

We constantly hear about the dot.com revolution and the potential for the internet to revolutionise the way business is done. However, the internet has also had a great impact on activism and the operation of NGOs. For example, the successful campaign against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) was largely organised via the internet. The internet has become an indispensable tool for activists everywhere. It provides an extremely efficient means for rapid communication and dissemination of information and it allows alliances and coalitions to form among groups even though they may be geographically disparate.

According to Hamish, designer of www.sulak-sivaraksa.org, "the West puts a lot of importance on all things related to the internet. Many people equate the existence of a homepage with the existence of a company or organisation. The internet now has in excess of 2 billion pages so it is quite forgivable for people to assume that everything important is on the internet, somewhere or other. The internet is now the foremost research tool, and many people will research a topic solely via the internet. The internet is like a secondary dimension to the physical world and without being a part of this we only half exist."

The launch of www.sulak-sivaraksa.org helps to communicate the activities of the Sathirokoses Nagapradipa Foundation (SNF) and its sister organisations (such as the Spirit in Education Movement and the Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development) to a wider audience. The website, designed by Hamish at the Wongsanit Ashram, provides information about the SNF and its sister organisations in Siam, as well as groups that SNF has links to, both in Siam and abroad. It also includes details of publications produced by the movement and information about the movement's founder Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa. A number of Ajarn Sulak's speeches are online and it is hoped that copies of all his recent speeches can be made available. By providing a lot of essential information online it is hoped to cut down on postage and e-mail. Much of the information that is now commonly requested will be provided on the website.

Future plans for the website include a discussion forum and online bookstore. The website's designer, Hamish, says that he hopes the website "will help to expand the network and to create and maintain friendships across the world. It will help make links

that we can use to further our joint cause. I don't expect this to happen overnight but it is a worthy goal never the less.

"The website will be a public service, a free resource of information that we can share with others to help them with their projects across the world. People can learn from our ideas, our philosophy, our successes, and our failures. Although this might not help us directly, it will help the world as a whole, by helping people to live their lives better and to help people and nature around them, in their area. For me this is by far the most important aspect of the site: not personal gain for the organisation, but giving for the betterment of all life."

Seeds of Peace is also now online. Former editor of *Seeds of Peace*, Sonali Chakravarti, designed the website. It can be found at www.siam21.com/sop. At present there are only a few issues online, although it is hoped over time to put more back issues online. The *Seeds of Peace* website can give the magazine a much larger audience and also help cut distribution costs.

www.sulak-sivaraksa.org is also looking for people with computer graphic design skills or experience with e-commerce in Thailand to assist with the website. Anyone who may be able to assist should contact the Wongsanit Ashram (e-mail: atc@anet.net.th).

David Reid

Santi Pracha Dhamma: Essays in honour of the Late Puey Ungphakorn

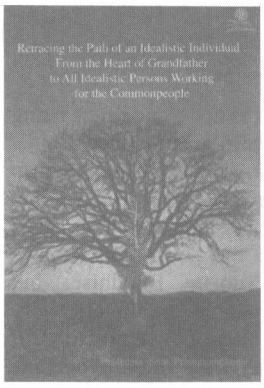
In this world, there is a select group of individuals, whose wisdom and commitment to the collective interest of society, distinguishes them from ordinary human beings. Dr. Puey Ungphakorn was one such individual in Thai society.

From the foreword by Anand Panyarachun, former Prime Minister of Thailand.



Santi Pracha Dhamma was published to mark the second anniversary of the death of Dr. Puey Ungphakorn, whose lifelong integrity and dedication saved Siam from being declared loser of World War II and from the economic demise further accelerated under the grip of successive dictatorial regimes in 1950's and 1960's. Despite his enormous contributions he was forced to live abroad in exile until his death. His legacies remain following the three-pronged principle, *santi* (peace), *pracha* (public participation), *dhamma* (righteousness) and inspire many of the present avant-garde academics and activists working in various fields including political science, economics, democratization, rural development and environmentalism.

The book includes contributions from John Seed, Sulak Sivaraksa, Santikaro Bhikkhu, Walden Bello, Donald Swearer, Martine Batchelor and David Loy. A full review will appear in the next issue of Seeds of Peace.



Retracing the Path of an Idealistic Individual

Professor Sem Pringpuangkaew
Komol Keemthong Foundation, 2001.

This book celebrates the 30th anniversary of the Komol Keemthong Foundation. It includes Professor Sem's Komol Keemthong lecture for 2001 which remembers the life of Komol Keemthong and the ideals he stood (and died) for. The Komol Keemthong lecture is an annual event, the first lecture was given by Dr Puey Ungphakorn in 1974. The book also gives details of the recipients of the Honorary People Awards 2001 and includes several additional essays. A wonderful tribute to the life of Komol Keemthong, this book promotes the youth idealism for which Komol is remembered.



Liew Lang, Lae Na Panyachon Thai

(The Contribution of Thai Intellectuals)
Sulak Sivaraksa
Kled Thai, 2001.

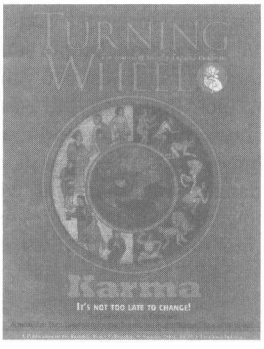
A collection of essays first published in *Sangkhomsart Parithas*. It is about the role intellectuals should play in the development of democracy and cultural integrity. (Published in Thai).



Prateschart Pen Khong Rasadorn

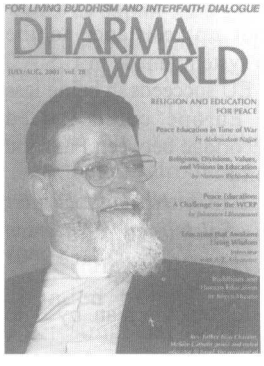
(The Country Belongs to the People)
Sulak Sivaraksa
Kled Thai, 2001.

This book is a collection of articles on various topics ranging from the plight of the poor, the author's note about the failed attempt to invite His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Thailand, and his view on the controversial ordination of women as bhikkhuni. (Published in Thai).



Turning Wheel: The Journal of Socially Engaged Buddhism

Turning Wheel is a quarterly published by the Buddhist Peace Fellowship in the United States. The theme of the Summer 2001 edition is karma. The topic is embraced in perspectives ranging from theoretical discussion to anecdotes of daily life. The magazine also includes an interesting debate over the FPMT's plans to construct a 150 metre tall statue of Maitreya Buddha at Bodhgaya.



Dharma World: For Living Buddhism and Interfaith Dialogue

Dharma World is published in Japan and has a focus on peace education and inter-religious dialogue. It provides plenty of interesting reading on these topics. The July/August 2001 edition includes interviews with A.T. Ariyaratne and Rev. Elias Chacour who was awarded the Niwano Peace Prize for 2001.

Seeds of Peace

If we call the world a "global village", "that means, 20 per cent of the inhabitants own almost all; but the rest are of marginal importance and suffer enormously. Those 80 per cent recognize more and more that they must have rights and dignity; the structure of this 'village' is wrong." Sulak Sivaraksa analyzes the social dualism on our planet with great clarity. In exactly the same way the peace activist from Thailand knows where his place is in that world (dis) order. The poor as the majority of the earth should also be sure that their voice will be heard, he said. He will fight against the trend where the influential powers of the First World decide on the fate of our planet.

Sulak describes transnational corporations (mainly in the First World) as the great winner of the development towards a global market. They also control and use the media to convince people of the merits of globalization because it is a good business for them.

Globalization means first and foremost consumerism

"In truth globalization means first and foremost consumerism. More and more people stumble into the trap where just two values count in their life: firstly, to earn money; and secondly, to spend money, they believe. But there exists the great danger that mankind will move towards a 'monoculture' or to put it into other words towards a 'Mc World'," he said.

Sulak criticizes the U.S.A. for leading the way to globalization. Transnational corporations follow more or less the motto: the faster the better; the bigger the better. In this way we lose our quality of life because the "multis" (transnational corporations) hardly care for ethical standards and "spiritual dimension", the Buddhist complained.

At this point of our talk, Sulak pointed out his social ethic: "many of us are doing well but this well-being is based on exploitation of the poor and nature. That means we must come together with Christians, Muslims and all of those who fight for social justice and nature."

Democracy in Asia grows from the "bottom"

If human beings want to change the world they also need inner peace. Sulak has learned from many people; he has absorbed many influences in his thinking. Mahatma Gandhi was a model for him. Or take the Dalai Lama: Sulak describes the political and spiritual leader of Tibetans as his great model. He has helped me to become really "compassionate". But Sulak also feels close to Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the democracy movement in Burma. Despite much bad news, the man from Thailand thinks that democracy is growing in Asia and that is "encouraging". On the bottom, "on the grass roots", democracy is widespread because people want to have their own dignity.

For that reason Sulak can not accept the thesis of "Asian values", which some (authoritarian) leaders have spread on his continent, seriously. That would mean there exists a fundamental difference between ideas from the West and Asia. Especially that democracy belongs to the West and does not work in Asia. In no way, Sulak said those politicians who claim that are "hypocrites". For example, the Prime Minister of Malaysia Mahathir, in reality he is a dictator who uses elections to stay in power. Every form of corruption is right to achieve that goal.

Is democracy only a Western value? Are human rights only a Western value?

Sulak insists that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights must be respected by everybody. They are intended for everybody, that is what universal means. The basis of democracy is not only as defined by the West. Also Buddhist principles such as equality, consultation and true fraternity are the roots of democracy. We "need an Asian cultural background" to plant democracy shaped by the West on Asian soil.

Sulak is not afraid of the rising but still despotically ruled China. This country first followed Maoism and afterwards capitalism. That means Chinese people have lived apart from their own roots (Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism) but Chinese people are in all "very wise". If they will return to their own roots, they should become "decent people", that is my hope.

Furthermore, Sulak is certain that peace will be possible in this world. There exists the chance that mankind in the 21st century will avoid the mistakes of former times ("too much violence, too much competition, too strong emphasis on money and technology"), he said.

Europe: A bridge between First and Third World

Sulak is opposed to seeing relations between North and South, rich and poor, First and Third World in black and white. The West thinks "too dualistically". We should not be separated any longer but rather "working together much more", the peace activist pointed out.

The First World thinks they know everything but they know only what is quantifiable. They almost do not know about things on the other side. But any how the World Bank has started to listen to the poor, which the study "Voice of the Poor" proves. If the World Bank changes, who knows, perhaps America is also changing... Just as in Europe recently there has been an effort to take the issues of the South more seriously. Admittedly it is Sulak's fear that the European Union could become a "second America" if they do not put up resistance to the economic system "made in U.S.A". But if the EU succeeds in being less arrogant Europe could indeed become a "bridge between First and Third World".

Helmut L. Muller
Salzburger Nachrichten
2 June 2001

Translated from German by Tilo Wieser.

Yoshiyuki Tsurumi

Although Yoshiyuki Tsurumi was not my first Japanese friend, he was the Japanese friend to whom I was closest. For approximately three decades we kept in touch. On 16 December 1994, Yoshiyuki passed way while I was in a court facing the charge of *lese majeste*. He was only 68 years old.

Yoshiyuki was a scion of a leading Japanese family. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Yoshiyuki had a good command of the English language since he grew up in the United States. Most of his kindred were widely recognized and respected. Yoshiyuki himself was well known, but in a different way.

When I first met Yoshiyuki, he was working for the International House of Japan under the stewardship of Shigetaru Matsumoto. Yoshiyuki's main task was to foster a strong and lively intellectual community in Asia and, as a result, he came to see me in Bangkok. In 1967, the Quakers invited me to participate in a conference on the Vietnam War in Japan. I had another chance to meet Yoshiyuki. Although his organization was either neutral or tacitly pro-America on the issue of the Vietnam War, Yoshiyuki was a leading anti-war activist.

Soon afterward I was invited to Japan as a guest of the International House. I did the usual thing of meeting businesspeople, university professors, and so on. Yoshiyuki, on the other hand, introduced me to an intellectual circle that was outside of the mainstream. More importantly, Yoshiyuki surrounded himself with many interesting and capable youths who he eventually brought to the Thai kingdom to meet with Thai student leaders before the October 1973 mayhem. Yoshiyuki became increasingly interested in the Thai kingdom and Asia.

When I was the chairperson of the Southeast Asian study group on cultural relations for the future, I linked it up with our Japanese counterpart. I asked Yoshiyuki to act as the coordinator to facilitate intra-group activities. He adroitly coordinated the activities of the study group, enabling all of us to participate in a conference held in Italy in 1972. Subsequently, I met Yoshiyuki several more times, for example at the conferences in Sumatra (Indonesia) and Pattani (Siam). After Pattani, Yoshiyuki did not return to Bangkok with me; rather, he chose to carefully explore the Kra Isthmus by himself. It can be said that Yoshiyuki was an expert on the environment of the region. This eventually made him oppose the Japanese government's bid to 'develop' the Kra Isthmus.

As a knowledgeable person and an expert in many fields, Yoshiyuki started with *chanda* (resolve, aspiration) and cultivated *viriya* (effort), *citta* (thoughtfulness), and *vimamsa* (reflection) to rein his impulse. Not infrequently, he embarked on a study with absolute unfamiliarity. Soon after, however, his expertise in a new field would surpass that of many academics residing in ivory towers. His study on the sea cucumber, for example, was widely acclaimed and gained recognition from Kyoto University and other leading institutions.

Yoshiyuki Tsurumi was too independent-minded for Japanese society. Mr. Matsumoto tolerated and probably understood his worldviews, but he was probably under immense pressure from the Americans and conservatives in Japanese society. Subsequently, Yoshiyuki received only half of his pay for his 'work', which was essentially nothing, for the International House. Too bad that the International House did not listen to him and did not wisely employ his multi-faceted expertise. Not only would the International House have benefited, but also would have Japan.

In Asia, he bonded with intellectuals as well as with people from every walk of life. Yoshiyuki even unofficially established a group to study the different languages and cultures of Asia. This initiative is very interesting. Many of the members of the study group became his lifelong friends. And they are highly knowledgeable about (and respectful of) their respective areas or countries—in particular the peoples, languages, and cultures—of expertise.

Professor Hisachi Nakamura of the Ryukoku University in Kyoto should be applauded for inviting Yoshiyuki to teach there. Yoshiyuki had a very unorthodox and informal way of teaching. He often sent his students to do field research in Asia on unexpected subjects such as on cuttlefish. Outside of the classroom, the friendly Yoshiyuki held social events and often treated his students to beers.

Illness soon struck Yoshi-

yuki, and he underwent an operation to remove a malignant tumor. After convalescence his voice became hoarse, but he still actively engaged in his explorations and adventures; for example, he explored many of the islands in the Indonesian archipelago with a group of colleagues.

My family was also close to Yoshiyuki's. We never had any arguments. He was always warm and affectionate toward my family. On the contrary, some of his friends treated me with disdain when they perceived that I had lost my useful life. Yoshiyuki was also consistently nice to all the Thai friends and youths whom I introduced to him. He exposed them to alternative Japanese thinking, which is woefully scarce in Japanese society.

Reflecting his warmth and sincerity, Yoshiyuki visited me in England when I was in exile in 1976-77. Likewise, in 1984 when I was detained and on trial, Yoshiyuki and a group of his friends demanded the dropping of the charges against me. When the trial was over, they even hosted a party for me in Tokyo. When I clashed with the illegitimate National Peacekeeping Council in 1991 and went into exile, Yoshiyuki obtained a position for me at the Ryukoku University for six months. He noted that I have written extensively on the pitfalls of employing the Thai, Western, and Japanese models of development. The time had come to write on alternative models of development. I warmly accepted his invitation. There I strengthened my relationship with both Yoshiyuki and Hisachi Nakamura. My wife also bonded with the wives of my two Japanese friends.

Yoshiyuki was satisfied with the product of my intellectual endeavor and asked Yasuhito Asami to translate it from English to Japanese. He also planned to preface the Japanese edition. The Japanese edition was set to be published in 1995. Unfortunately, Yoshiyuki passed away before it was completed. When the Japanese edition was published, it could only be dedicated to the memory and goodness of Yoshiyuki.

I consider myself extremely fortunate to have had Yoshiyuki Tsurumi as a close friend. He was a *kalyanamittata*, a true benefactor. I am deeply moved and distressed by his loss. I can only hope that all his invaluable efforts and contributions—books, research, and many endeavors to create a compassionate and enlightened intellectual and youth community in Asia—will not be in vain, but will help foster peace, solidarity, and equality in the world.

Sulak Sivaraksa

(The Thai version of this article was originally published in *Pacarayasara* magazine, March-April 1995.)

Obituary
Rev. Brother Urbain – an appreciation

This year the Brothers of St Gabriel celebrates the centenary of its teaching mission in Siam. The first five young Frenchmen from the order arrived in Siam in October 1901, and by 1951 only Brother Hilaire was still alive. I was in my final year at the Assumption College when the brothers celebrated their 50th anniversary in the Kingdom. Brother Urbain was then director of the College.

He was born in France on 29 November 1914 as Louis Gloriau and took the religious name of Urbain when he entered the Brotherhood in 1939. He came to Bangkok in 1947 and left in 1954..

I was one of those who were always in touch with him and our former teachers. We were glad to learn that he returned to Khon Kaen, working with Brother Victorien, for the victims of leprosy from 1971-73. Later the St Gabriel Order wanted him to be in Rome because he was fluent in quite a few languages.

He retired in France in 1989, yet he was still able to look after the aged and the invalids who had served overseas. For those of us who cared to see him or phone him in France, he was always happy to talk to us, always with a few Thai phrases. He passed away on 2 April 2001.

Sulak Sivaraksa

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BUSINESS & SUSTAINABILITY
Amory Lovins & Gunter Pauli

October 7-26, 2001
BELONGING: FINDING OUR PLACE IN THE WORLD
Patsy Hallen, Stephan Harding & David Abram

November 4-23, 2001
FARMING FOR BETTER FOOD
Mark Ritchie, Jules Pretty & Tim Lang

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DIGITAL FUTURE? INFORMATION TECHNO-LOGY & THE EARTH
Chet Bowers, Langdon Winner, *Digital Futures* contributors

February 3-22, 2002
GLOBALISATION
Tariq Banuri, Wolfgang Sachs

March 3-22, 2002
SEEING WITH NEW EYES: SCIENCE AND THE NATURE OF LIFE
Chris Clarke, Rupert Sheldrake, Arthur Zajonc & Brian Goodwin

March 23-28, 2002
TEACHERS COURSE
Prue Leith, Learning through Landscapes, Common Ground

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BUSINESS & SUSTAINABILITY

April 14-May 3, 2002
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LIVING OFF THE SUN
Godfrey Boyle, Peter Harper & Dave Elliott

June 2-21, 2002
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John & Nancy Jack Todd & David Orr

June 30-July19, 2002
LIFE, MIND & SOCIETY
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Future events

2-4 September: Symposium in Bangkok to discuss Rajabat University (the 45 former teacher's colleges) preparing to be an alternative university.

5-7 September: small meeting in Chiang Rai to discuss a new university with spiritual dimensions as an alternative to mainstream education.

17-21 September: Global Dialogues, "The Human Condition in the New Century", London.

21-24 September: International Network for Cultural Diversity, "Towards a Global Cultural Pact", Lucerne, Switzerland.

25 September – 4 October: Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa is in India.

1-4 October: Opening of Vandana Shiva's new college, Bija Vidyapeeth,Dehra Dun, India.

26-27 October: Peace Brigades International 20th anniversary conference, Konstanz, Germany and Romanshorn, Switzerland.

15-20 November: Social Venture Network Asian Forum Meeting in Thailand

17 November: Spirit in Education Movement lecture on alternative research by Dr Gomart Jeungsathiensup, Bangkok.

26 November - 1 December: "Alternative Education - its role in transforming society", an international gathering, Moo Ban Dek Children's Village School, Kanchanaburi.

2-3 December: "Holistic education and the sciences", Chulalongkorn University.

8-10 December: International seminar at Pridi Banomyong Institute.

10 December: closing ceremony of Pridi's centenary celebrations, Thammasat University.

6 – 8 February – INEB meeting, Wongsanit Ashram.

9 – 11 February – Ariya Vinaya meeting, Wongsanit Ashram.

12 – 13 February – Bandung II planning meeting, AIT, Bangkok. (The first Bandung conference was held in 1955. The second Bandung conference, the vision of Adurrhaman Wahid, is planned for 2005.)

14 – 18 February – World Future Council, AIT, Bangkok. (The World Future Council is an idea of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. A series of prepatory meetings are being convened by Jakob von Uexkull, from the Right Livelihood Awards, which will lead to the formation of the Council in 2003.)

THE DALAI LAMA

Message

I am encouraged that so many people are lending their hearts and voices to the Interfaith Call for Religious Freedom and Human Rights.

I have for many years now engaged in interfaith dialogue and understanding with the basic belief that all the major religions of the world have the same potential to transform people into better human beings. The common messages of love, kindness, tolerance, self-discipline and a sense of sharing are in some ways the foundation for respecting the fundamental and basic human rights of every person. The world religions can therefore contribute to peace, harmony and human dignity. That is why understanding and good relations amongst the different religious traditions of the world is so important and that is why the Interfaith Call is so important.

I have since long stood for religious freedom and human rights for everyone, which I believe are fundamental rights all people should enjoy. The Interfaith Call specifically focuses on the tragic situation in Tibet – where the Tibetan people essentially have no religious freedom at all and where their basic human rights are brutally denied. The Call also points to similarly deplorable situations in Afghanistan and the Sudan, as well as for other peoples facing oppression and genocide.

For myself and the Tibetan people, it is gratifying to see how deeply this Interfaith Call has struck a chord in the conscience of humanity in such a short time since it was founded.

Finally, because the Interfaith Call holds good promise for building interfaith support for Tibet and other peoples facing genocide I want to encourage Tibetan Associations and Tibet Support Groups around the world to actively participate in this Interfaith Call and to offer their help to Richard Rosenkranz, the creator of the Call as well as of World Tibet Day.

July 18, 2001



Synthesis Dialogues II was held in Trent, Italy from June 27 to July 2, 2001.
It was convened by The Association for Global New Thought.