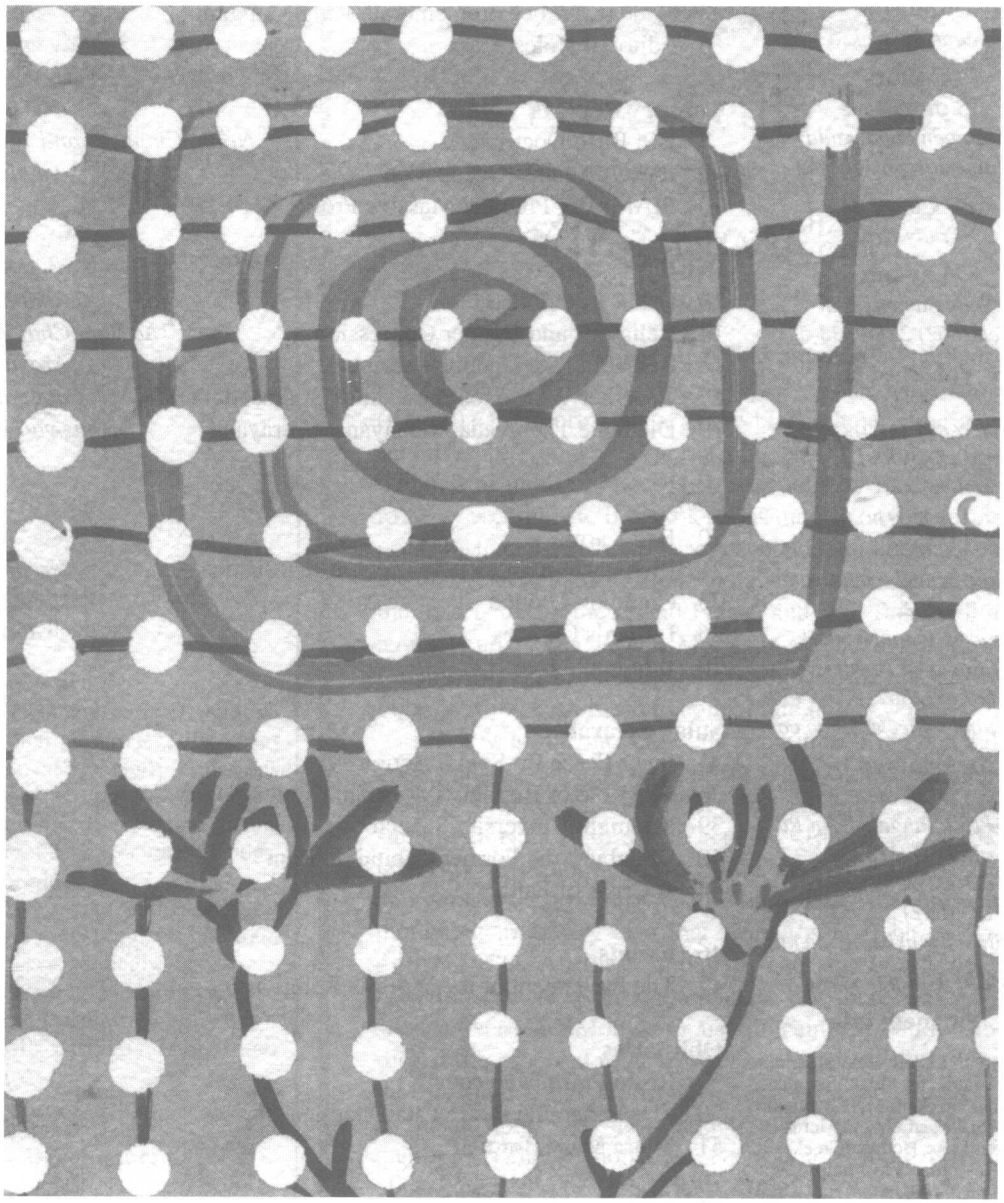
SEEDS OF PEACE

Vol.20 No.3 Sept.-Dec. 2547 (2004)



In Honour of the First King of Siam

SEEDS OF

C O N T E N T S

Publisher
Sulak Sivaraksa

Editors
S. Jayanama
Lapapan Supamanta
Blaine Joseph Johnson

Cover
Trudy Kraft

Lay-out
Song Sayam., Ltd.
Tel. (662) 225-9533-5

Published by
SEM
Tel. (662) 438-9331-2
Fax: (662) 860-1277
&
TICD
Tel. & Fax: (662) 314-7385-6
email: ticd@hotmail.com
&
International Network
of Engaged Buddhists
Tel. & Fax: (662) 437-9450
email: ineboffice@yahoo.com

Distributed by
Suksit Siam
113-115 Fuangnakhorn Rd.
Bangkok 10200
Tel.(662)2259536-40
Fax: (662) 222-5188
email: spd@bkk.a-net.net.th

Baht 100 per issue

Payment info

US, Euro and UK checks should be made payable to Sulak Sivaraksa. Australian checks for INEB can also be sent to Jill and Graeme Jameson, 50 Daveys Lane, Hoddles Creek, Vic. 3139, Australia. This helps avoid excessive bank fees on small transactions.

3 Time to Truly Commemorate King Mongkut
6 Editorial Notes

Country Reports
7 US: Bush Doctrine — *Noam Chomsky and Jeremy Paxman*
9 IRAQ: Against Occupation — *Chalmers Johnson*
10 SIAM: Big Pharma, Massive Profits — *Walden Bello*

INEB
13 Letter from INEB — *Lapapan Supamanta*
14 Religions and Gender Oppression — *The Ven. Chai Waradhammo*
16 Rereading the Buddhist Scripture — *Araya Payungpong*
17 Together We Go, on the Path of Bodhisattava — *Lapapan Supamanta*
19 Dialogue Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana — *Hans van Willenswaard*

SEM
20 Bad Karma — *Kenneth Kraft*
21 Living Through the Eyes of Spiritual Justice — *Alfredo Sfeir-Younis*
23 Common Ground — *Vasana Chinvarakorn*
26 Lillian's Choices — *Gregory Barnes*
29 Life in the Desert — *David Reid*

Sulak Sivaraksa
31 Inner Peace for Social Action
36 The Role of Buddhist Monks in Contemporary Society
39 Midnight University Speech
40 Dhonburi, the Former Capital of Siam
44 A Crisis of Faith

46 **Events**
47 The Parliament of the World's Religions

Obituaries
50 Roshi Philip Kapleau — *Kenneth Kraft*
50 The Venerable Dr Rewata Dhamma
51 Sitara Mary Brutnell

52 Letters
54 Book Reviews
59 Recommended Readings

* The crown means Mongkut, Rama IV above the White Elephant representing Siam

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 and the Spirit in Education Movement as well as the International Network of Engaged Buddhists. In order to subscribe a $50/year donation is suggested. Personal checks from the UK, US, and Euro are accepted.

To contact *Seeds of Peace*:
666 Charoen-Nakorn Road
Klongsan, Bangkok 10600
Tel. (662) 438-0353
Fax: (622) 860-1278
email:spd@bkk.a-net.net.th
www.siam21.org/sop
www.sulak-sivaraksa.org

INEB
666 Charoen-Nakorn Road
Klongsan, Bangkok 10600
Tel. & Fax: (662) 860-2194
email: ineboffice@yahoo.com

The goals of INEB are to:

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

Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development (TICD)
29/15 Ramkhamhaeng 21 (Nawasee)
Ramkhamhaeng Road
Wangthonglang, Bang Kapi
Bangkok 10310
Ph: (662) 314-7385-6
email: ticd@hotmail.com



Time to Truly Commemorate King Mongkut

The most brilliant king of the Chakri dynasty—perhaps with the exception of its founder (Rama I) —is King Mongkut (Rama IV). Unfortunately, as the bicentennial natal anniversary of King Mongkut is approaching on 18th October 2004, the outburst of public respect is conspicuous by its absence. His Majesty is coming to Bangkok from Hua Hin on this auspicious occasion to pay tribute to his august great grand father. To mark the bicentenary there is a plan to have a royal plaza created on the land between the Grand Palace and Wat Rajapradith, the temple built when Prince Mongkut ascended the throne as Rama IV in 1851, but the plan cannot be fulfilled because the Foreign Minister refused to collaborate in this venture.

Last year the government submitted King Chulalongkorn's name (Rama V) to UNESCO in order to commemorate the king's 150th natal anniversary. In 1980 the Thai government submitted King Vajiravudh's name (Rama VI) to receive UNESCO's recognition to celebrate the centenary of his natal anniversary. And four decades ago the Thai government thought it necessary also that King Rama II be recognized by UNESCO. All these initiatives and acts by various Thai governments are to be commended. But there was a virtual silence over King Mongkut's natal bicentenary until someone rushed the proposal to UNESCO and received its approval at the last minute. In fact, King Mongkut contributed much more to the prosperity of the kingdom than the three previously mentioned Chakri monarchs. He was also more brilliant in almost every respect. His father, Rama II, were superior to him in poetry but not in running the country. His literary skills, especially in prose writing, surpassed those of his grandson (Rama VI). He was devoted to the administration of the kingdom more than any other Chakri king. Although his son,

Chulalongkorn (Rama V), ruled the country as wisely and justly as he did, King Mongkut was more patient and deliberative than was his son. King Mongkut was responsible for laying many educational infrastructures that subsequently enabled King Chulalongkorn to launch his 'modernization' programs. King Chulalongkorn also took a tragic step: he incorporated absolutism into the body of the king leading to tension with the court. In other words, he tried to silence or block the participation of the aristocracy (especially members of the Bunnag clan) in policy-making and deliberative processes. King Mongkut, on the other hand, had consistently relied on the advices of his top officials when making important decisions. This was the essence of democracy then, however elitist it was. It might seem that King Mongkut had a more visionary or modernist outlook than his senior officials. But here appearance misleads. They were as modern or visionary as the king. Many of the senior officials had maneuvered King Mongkut into power in place of his brother, Prince Chudamani; they feared that they would not be able to exert influence on the latter. (Initially, however, King Mongkut wanted the country to be run by two kings—by him and his brother.)

Rama IV carefully studied history and made wise use of it in the effective administration of the kingdom. Compared to other Chakri kings, King Mongkut's historical knowledge was unparalleled—King Chulalongkorn's was merely a distant second. In preparation for the visit by Sir John Bowring, envoy of H.M. Queen Victoria, King Mongkut examined many historical chronicles since the times of King Narai of Ayuddhaya in order to make his reception as impeccable as possible. And indeed Bowring was very pleased.

During the reign of King Mongkut, the kingdom became known officially as Siam for the first time. Previously, the land was called "Krung Sri Ayuddhaya." Increasing foreign contacts and the expansion of the national consciousness and territory (well beyond the boundaries of the old Ayuddhaya kingdom) contributed to this name change. King Mongkut also created a new divinity to protect and nurture all lives in Siam, whether they were living in the center or the periphery. The new divinity was called Phra Syam Devadhiraj, and it remains a source of respect and worship for Thais to this day. King Mongkut had thus created a wise ploy to foster solidarity among the diverse people in the Siamese kingdom.

We won't be able to appreciate the ingenuity of King Mongkut if we fail to realize the negative cultural impacts the kingdom went through (and is still experiencing) as Siam became Thailand in 1939. In my view, the name Thailand signifies the wrong kind of nationalism. It is a nationalism that is rooted in blood, in the Thai ethnicity—witness the first line of the national anthem. In other words, this undermines the status of Siamese of Malay, Chinese, Lao, or Cambodian descent, for instance. The brain behind the kingdom's name change from Siam to Thailand incorrectly cited the findings of an English book on the Tai race; the book itself was also seriously flawed in itself. That person attempted to overturn the nation-building initiative of King Rama IV. In fact he blindly followed the rise of Nazism, not only as a national but a racist ideology. Indeed Thailand was an immitation of Hitler's Deutschland.

I am aware that King Mongkut had many flaws; but so did other Chakri monarchs, including the ones UNESCO has recognized. All things considered, however, King Mongkut was a Buddhist gentleman, a worthy and righteous person. Inevitably, he had many enemies —those who wanted to disrupt or undermine his positive endeavors. Some scholars have pointed out that King Mongkut faked the Ram Kamhaeng's inscription in order to impress Sir John Bowring that the Siamese King of Sukhothai period, over 700 years cared for the welfare of the people, democratically. I feel that there is insufficient evidence to support this assertion however. In other words, I think we should hold him innocent until proven guilty.

According to the Buddhadhamma attaining the truth goes hand in hand with examining our minds; that is, critically reflecting on our prejudice, ignorance, and self-attachment. We tend to be driven by the desire or arrogance to prove our stories, assumptions, hypotheses, theories, etc., correct. The dhamma calls for self-reflexivity. With the absence or cessation of arrogance we will not resort to the demonization of our opponents to prove the virtues of our ways. And we will be mindful that the decisions we make are often intertwined with love, hatred, fear, and delusion. At this point we will be able to liberate our minds from the cage of self-attachments and we will attain wisdom: the ability to see reality as it is.

I won't elaborate on the numerous contributions King Mongkut made when he was

leading a celibate life; he was in the monkhood for twenty-seven years. Suffice it to say that he established the Dhammayut Order and emphasized the importance of the *vinaya*. He encouraged monks to listen to the recital of the *Patimokkha* (the fundamental rules of the order) in the *uposatha* hall every fortnight. He promoted the performance of morning and evening chantings, which eventually became prevalent and spread to other Buddhist orders as well. These chantings were based on an ideal concept especially designed for practitioners of celibacy and for the cessation of sufferings of all beings.

Even after he had disrobed, King Mongkut still adhered to the three-fold training in morality, meditation and wisdom despite certain lapses, which were an inevitable part of lay life. In particular, at the moment before he passed away King Mongkut cultivated inner peace and equanimity: he confronted death mindfully and peacefully. His example is highly pertinent these days as many people are interested in the spiritual ways to face death.

In any case, King Mongkut was most responsible for heralding the advent of the so-called new Buddhism. In *A Modern Buddhist Bible* Lopez argues that a new Buddhism emerged in Sri Lanka as a result of the debate between Christian missionaries and Sinhalese Buddhist monks near Colombo in 1873. Lopez seems impervious to the existence of a book entitled *The Wheel of The Law* published in London in 1871. It was a literal translation by Alabaster of Chao Phya Dipakornvong's *Sadaeng Kitjanukit*, which was heavily influenced by the 'new' Buddhist thoughts of King Mongkut at the time when he was still a monk during the reign of King Rama III (1824-1851). Christian missionaries in the kingdom refused to publish this work because its ideas contradicted Christian teachings even more so than those of the Sinhalese monks in the Colombo debate. Put another way the new direction in Buddhism, which veered towards science, was first manifested by King Mongkut. The king tended to look down on the religious beliefs of the Christian missionaries but greatly admired their efforts to spread Christianity. He encouraged Buddhist monks to emulate the missionaries in this respect. In various ways, the king was partly responsible for trailblazing the spread of Buddhism worldwide.

As is well known, the king proved his skills in astronomy to Western observers by exactly predicting the coming of a total solar eclipse and went to observe it at Wako; he passed away shortly after this arduous journey. We must not forget that astronomy contributed to the split between the Catholic Church and science. Buddhism, on the other hand, seems to be able to cohabitate with science. But Buddhists must be mindful not to be dominated by science. Lamentably, among other examples, many contemporary Thai Buddhists have thrown away the belief in the law of karma and rebirth, seeing it as unscientific. King Mongkut challenged the traditional worldviews of the Thai people of his generation as encapsulated in *The Three Worlds* which was first written down by King Ruang of Sukhothai over 700 years ago. However, he did not completely abandon occultism and Brahminism. The king himself was a renowned astrologer. Instead he subordinated them under Buddhism and the dhamma. The king also surrounded himself with virtuous companions, comprising of monks as well as lay people. Among them were Somdej To of Wat Rakang and the Supreme Patriarch of Wat Rajhapradith. They were the external voices of his conscience.

King Mongkut had many able sons and daughters, and they inherited elements of his ingenuity. He guided them to be humble and honest. He was perhaps the first monarch to have had ample time for his children; and here he was a rare case. Small wonder that he was well loved by his children. Except for one, all of his children were not educated in the West, though most of them were well-versed in the western knowledge systems. The king did not want his children to feel superior to others—monks, officials, the common people, etc.—simply because they were members of the royal family. King Rama V, on the other hand, sent almost all of his sons to be educated abroad. Many became arrogant and saw themselves above others. The bright ones even ignored or rebelled against their august father. Western education for the princes eventually contributed to the death of the democratic spirit among the nobility and the advent of absolutism, dismantling many of the initiatives and institutions that King Mongkut had engendered.

At present the mainstream cannot fathom the brilliance of King Mongkut and therefore cannot appreciate his contributions. The mainstream has disavowed King Mongkut rather than attempt to learn many precious things from his life. As a result, there is little motivation or will to commemorate his bicentennial natal anniversary appropriately.

Editorial Notes

In this issue, we honour King Mongkut, Rama IV, who is in fact officially the first King of Siam. The west only knows of him through *The King and I* which is very much distorted. In this country, the government also doesn't really understand his uniqueness in contributing to the modernization of the country. Not to mention his contribution to modern Buddhism. Hence, we dedicate this issue to His late Majesty on his natal bicentenary—18 October 2004.

The final issue for this year revolves around a cluster of themes. A persistent theme carried over from previous issues is the American invasion and then 'liberation' (read occupation) of Iraq. Once again the reader will find dissenting views—often lacking in the mainstream mass media—on this act of aggression in the Chomsky interview and the articles by Chalmers Johnson and Kenneth Kraft. From an engaged Buddhist perspective, Kraft criticizes the human rights abuses of Iraqi POWs by American soldiers in the infamous Abu Graib prison. The book review of James Mann's Rise of the Vulcans examines the ideas that make the neoconservatives in the Bushworld tick.

Seeds of Peace continues to propagate the concept of nonviolence to break the cycle of violence. In this issue Gregory Barnes narrates the peace activism over the decades of the elderly Willoughbys, and Greg Guma eulogizes the passing away of a leading American peace activist, Dave Dellinger. Dellinger had fearlessly fought against the atrocities perpetrated by his government—such as during the Reagan era. Former US president Ronald Reagan also passed away in the previous months. In his obituary of Reagan, Bill Blum argues that we should not cave in to the mainstream's projection of Reagan as the president who ended the Cold War and brought peace to the world. Rather, we should carefully reflect on the atrocities he had committed. Seeds of nonviolence are also sown in the articles by Sulak Sivaraksa.

An international AIDS conference was recently held in Bangkok—with world leaders making a deluge of vague promises to arrest the AIDS situation. Walden Bello examines the political economy of the AIDS crisis, especially the dark roles of Big Pharma.

The Queen's Birthday

On the auspicious occasion of H.M. the Queen's 72nd birthday anniversary, some of her loyal subjects offer three big Buddha statues to Parbatya Bouddha Mission, Khangrachari Hill Tract, Bangladesh per request. Thai Airways International Plc. will fly those statues *gratis* by Royal Orchid Services. They all wish to offer the merit gained on this worthy karma to Her Majesty—Long live The Queen.

On the same day, some members of the Thai Sangha have been especially recognized by promotion in the hierarchy with new titles, for instance, the Venerable Payutto has been promoted from Phra Dhammapitaka to Phra Brahmagunabhorn, the highest level of the rajagana rank, only below that of a Somdej. The Venerable Sumedho of Amaravati in England has been promoted from Phra Sumedhacariya to Phra Rajasumedhacariya. We extend our sympathetic joy to those worthy monks.

US
Bush Doctrine

If George Bush were to be judged by the standards of the Nuremberg Tribunals, he would be hanged. So too, mind you, would every single American President since the end of the second world war, including Jimmy Carter.

The suggestion comes from the American linguist Noam Chomsky. His latest attack on the way his country behaves in the world is called Hegemony or Survival, America's Quest for Global Dominance.

Jeremy Paxman met him at the British Museum, where they talked in the Assyrian Galleries. He asked him whether he was suggesting there was nothing new in the so-called Bush Doctrine.

NOAM CHOMSKY:

Well, it depends. It is recognised to be revolutionary. Henry Kissinger for example described it as a revolutionary new doctrine which tears to shreds the Westphalian System, the 17th century system of International Order and of course the UN Charter. But nevertheless, and has been very widely criticised within the foreign policy elite. But on narrow ground the doctrine is not really new, it's extreme.

JEREMY PAXMAN:

What was the United States supposed to do after 9/11? It had been the victim of a grotesque, intentional attack, what was it supposed to do but try...?

NOAM CHOMSKY:

Why pick 9/11? Why not pick 1993. Actually the fact that the terrorist act succeeded in September 11th did not alter the risk analysis. In 1993, similar groups, US trained Jihadi's came very close to blowing up the World Trade Center, with better planning, they probably would have killed tens of thousands of people. Since then it was known that this is very likely. In fact right through the 90ûs there was technical literature predicting it, and we know what to do. What you do is police work. Police work is the way to stop terrorist acts and it succeeded.

JEREMY PAXMAN:

But you are suggesting the United States in that sense is the author of Its own Nemesis.

NOAM CHOMSKY:

Well, first of all this is not my opinion. It's the opinion of just about every specialist on terrorism. Take a look, say at Jason Burke's recent book on Al-Qaeda which is just the best book there is. He runs through the record of how each act of violence has increased recruitment financing mobilisation, what he says is, I'm quoting him, that each act of violence is a small victory for Bin Laden.

JEREMY PAXMAN:

But why do you imagine George Bush behaves like this?

NOAM CHOMSKY:

Because I don't think they care that much about terror, in fact we know that. Take say the invasion of Iraq, it was predicted by just about every specialist in intelligence agencies that the invasion of Iraq would increase the threat of Al-Qaeda style terror which is exactly what happened. The point is that...

JEREMY PAXMAN:

Then why would he do it?

NOAM CHOMSKY:

Because invading Iraq has value in Itself, I mean establishing...

JEREMY PAXMAN:

Well what value?

NOAM CHOMSKY:

Establishing the first secure military base in a dependant client state at the heart of the energy producing region of the world.

JEREMY PAXMAN:

Don't you even think that the people of Iraq are better off having got rid of a dictator?

NOAM CHOMSKY:

They got rid of two brutal regimes, one that we are supposed to talk about, the other one we are not suppose to talk about. The two brutal regimes were Saddam Hussein's and the US-British sanctions, which were devastating society, had killed hundreds of thousands of people, were forcing people to be reliant on Saddam Hussein. Now the sanctions could obviously have been turned to weapons rather than destroying society without an invasion. If that had happened it is not at all impossible that the people of Iraq would have sent Saddam

Hussein the same way to the same fate as other monsters supported by the US and Britain. Ceausescu, Suharto, Duvalier, Marcos, there's a long list of them. In fact the westerners who know Iraq best were predicting this all along.

JEREMY PAXMAN:

You seem to be suggesting or implying, perhaps I'm being unfair to you, but you seem to be implying there is some equivalence between democratically elected heads of state like George Bush or Prime Ministers like Tony Blair and regimes in places like Iraq.

NOAM CHOMSKY:

The term moral equivalence is an interesting one, it was invented I think by Jeane Kirkpatrick as a method of trying to prevent criticism of foreign policy and state decisions. It is a meaningless notion, there is no moral equivalence what so ever.

JEREMY PAXMAN:

If it is preferable for an individual to live in a liberal democracy, is there benefit to be gained by spreading the values of that democracy however you can?

NOAM CHOMSKY:

That reminds me of the question that Ghandi was once asked about western civilisation, what did he think of it. He said yeah, it would be a good idea. In fact it would be a good idea to spread the values of liberal democracy. But that's not what the US and Britain are trying to do. It's not what they've done in the past. Take a look at the regions under their domination. They don't spread liberal democracy. What they spread is dependence and subordination. Furthermore it's well-known that this is a large part of the reason for the great opposition to US policy within the Middle East. In fact this was known in the 1950's.

JEREMY PAXMAN:

But there is a whole slur of countries in eastern Europe right now that would say we are better off now than we were when we were living under the Soviet Empire. As a consequence of how the west behaved.

NOAM CHOMSKY:

And there is a lot of countries in US domains, like Central America, the Caribbean who wish that they could be free of American domination. We don't pay much attention to what happens there but they do. In the 1980s when the current incumbents were in their Reganite phase. Hundreds of thousands of people were slaughtered in Central America. The US carried out a massive terrorist attack against Nicaragua, mainly as a war on the church. They assassinated an Archbishop and murdered six leading Jesuit intellectuals. This is in El Salvador. It was a monstrous period. What did they impose? Was it liberal democracies? No.

JEREMY PAXMAN:

You've mentioned on two or three occasions this relationship between the United States and Britain. Do you understand why Tony Blair behaved as he did over Afghanistan and Iraq?

NOAM CHOMSKY:

Well, if you look at the British diplomatic history, back in the 1940s, Britain had to make a decision. Britain had been the major world power, the United States though by far the richest country in the world was not a major actor in the global scene, except regionally. By the Second World War it was obvious the US was going to be the dominant power, everyone knew that. Britain had to make a choice. Was it going to be part of what would ultimately be a Europe that might move towards independence, or would it be what the Foreign Office called a junior partner to the United States? Well it essentially made that choice to be a junior partner to the United States.

So during the Cuban missile crisis for example, you look at the declassified record, they treated Britain with total contempt. Harold McMillan wasn't even informed of what was going on and Britain's existence was at stake. It was dangerous. One high official, probably Dean Acheson and he's not identified, described Britain as in his words "Our lieutenant, the fashionable word is partner". Well the British would like to hear the fashionable word, but the masters use the actual word. Those are choices Britain has to make. I mean why Blair decided, I couldn't say.

JEREMY PAXMAN:

Noam Chomsky, thank you.

BBC Interview by
Noam Chomsky and
Jeremy Paxman

The next meeting of Think Sangha will be held at Chiangmai 20-28 February 2005. Pleace see website www.bpf.org/think.html or Email: watts@jsri.jp

IRAQ
Against Occupation

1. Please tell us more about your notion of "full sovereignty" for Iraq. Will this be like our returning Okinawan sovereignty to Japan in 1972, when we retained exclusive control over the 38 military bases on the island and the deployment and behavior of American forces on them?
2. Please tell us: If we plan to return Iraq to the Iraqis, why is the U.S. currently building fourteen permanent bases there?
3. Presumably the American troops to be stationed on these bases will remain under the control of the Pentagon and beyond the legal reach of any "sovereign" Iraqi state. Such arrangements are usually covered by a "Status of Forces Agreement" (SOFA) that we normally impose on the government in whose territory our bases are placed. Who will sign the SOFA on the Iraqi side? What are its terms? Will it be binding on the new government you hope the Iraqis will elect early next year?
4. The sovereignty discussion has been focused mainly on the question of who will control the actions of what troops—Iraqi or American—in the coming months. But American advisers will be stationed in every Iraqi "ministry"; the new government will evidently be capable neither of passing, nor abrogating laws or regulations laid down by the occupying power; and the economy, except for oil, will remain open to all foreign corporate investors. Please tell us if this really strikes you as "full sovereignty"?
5. You say that we will tear down Abu Ghraib prison if the Iraqis so wish. What if they wish to preserve it as a monument to our cruelty as well as Saddam Hussein's?
6. Your administration has recently confirmed that while captured Taliban and al Qaeda fighters were not, in your eyes, covered by the Geneva Conventions, Iraqi prisoners and detainees were. The acts in Abu Ghraib prison contravened those conventions. We now know that teams of interrogation experts were sent by Maj. Gen. Geoffrey D. Miller, commandant of our Guantnamo prison from Cuba to Abu Ghraib to teach Americans working there "better" interrogation techniques. If these contravened the Geneva Conventions, should General Miller be brought to trial for this? If General Miller acted at Guantnamo and elsewhere on the basis of guidelines and urgings from his superiors in the Pentagon and the military chain of command, should they face the same? Your views on this would be appreciated.
7. If it turns out to be true that some of the acts of torture in Abu Ghraib prison were, in fact, committed by members of the Israeli intelligence services, who were placed in the prison via our independent contractors, does this not further confuse American policy in the Middle East with that of Ariel Sharon's Israel? Is this really a good idea?
8. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the war and occupation in Iraq by 130,000 U.S. troops now costs close to $5 billion per month, or $60 billion a year. So far the war has cost American taxpayers $186 billion in direct military expenses. You've asked for another $425 billion in defense appropriations for the 2005 Pentagon budget, plus another $75 billion for Iraq, $25 billion for the development of new generations of nuclear weapons, and untold billion for such things as military pensions and veterans' health care. Not included in these figures are the multibillions in secret amounts spent on the CIA and other intelligence activities, not to speak of other Department of Defense "black budget" activities kept out of the appropriations process. Where is all this money going to come from? Why is our government putting all this money on the tab for future generations to deal with?
9. Speaking of military pensions and health care, would you please address

the fact that something like 30% of the troops who participated in the first Gulf War are now seeking disability payments for illnesses contracted there—chiefly as a result of our use of depleted uranium shells. Would you please discuss some of these long-term dangers of modern warfare (even when our initial short-term casualties seem relatively modest)? How will our military hospitals be able to care for all the soldiers who are likely to develop cancer or give birth to children with birth defects as a result of the current war?

10. On June 1, 2002, in your West Point speech enunciating your new doctrine of preventive war, you said there were 60 countries that were potential targets for regime change. Would you please list those 60 countries for us, and are you still determined in a second term to proceed down this list?
11. If you are determined to start new wars, or if the Iraq war drags on and not enough soldiers re-enlist, will you reinstate the draft?
12. Why do you usually give your speeches to the American people before audiences of servicemen and women at military academies, on bases, and the like, where they have been ordered by their superiors to attend and to applaud? Why not give one of your speeches—especially if you're going to propose reinstating the draft—at a large state college?

Chalmers Johnson is the author of The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic and of an earlier volume, Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire, among other works.

Copyright C2004 Chalmers Johnson

[This article first appeared on Tomdispatch.com, a weblog of the Nation Institute, which offers a steady flow of alternate sources, news, and opinion from Tom Engelhardt, long time editor in publishing and author of The End of Victory Culture and The Last Days of Publishing.]

SIAM and the World
Big Pharma, Massive Profits

(Speech delivered at the debate on patents, drug development, and HIV/AIDS at the XV International AIDS Conference, Bangkok, July 14, 2004.)

Estimates on the accelerating rate of HIV infection underline the scale of the public health problem that confronts the world. Clearly, we need the equivalent of the World War II Manhattan Project to deal with HIV/AIDS, one that will, unlike the original Manhattan Project, be life-preserving instead of death-dealing. All actors—government, business, civil society, the medical community—need to be drawn into one massive coordinated effort.

Many people, however, increasingly have questions about one key group: the pharmaceutical companies or, as it is called in business circles, "Big Pharma." More and more people have asked the question: Is Big Pharma part of the problem of part of the solution?

Corporate Obstructionism

While the UN and other agencies have been working with governments in Africa, Latin America, and Brazil overtime to stem the tide, what has Big Pharma been up to?

Well, from 1999 to 2001, it sought to get the US government to use mechanisms like a cut-off of aid to pressure South Africa to overturn its new law on compulsory licensing that would allow the manufacture of cheap anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs. It also threatened to sue the South African government for infringing on patent rights. It even used then Vice President Al Gore to pressure South African President Thabo Mbeki on the issue.

When the Fourth Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) adopted, in November 2001, a declaration that public health concerns overrode intellectual property rights, Big Pharma spent the next two years trying to undermine the agreement by pressuring countries to attach onerous conditions to the sale of essential drugs by developing countries with drug manufacturing capacity to those without it.

When it comes to HIV-

AIDS, Big Pharma is less concerned about saving lives and much more concerned about protecting its patents and advancing its interpretation of the Trade-related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) agreement as restricting compulsory licensing, preventing export of drugs produced under compulsory licensing, and banning parallel imports.

What is behind this callous attitude? Well, Big Pharma's rationale goes this way: Without the very broad protection it wants for its patents, without the superprofits it derives from patent protection, there would be no research and development (R&D), no innovation, and thus more and more people would die from AIDS and other deadly diseases.

So when you learn from the World Health Organization (WHO) that most patented medicines retail at 20 to 100 times their cost of manufacture, don't get mad: Remember that this is not about market pricing but monopoly pricing to support continuing R&D.

Myths and Realities

Big Pharma's position on the necessity and efficiency of corporate R&D is based on a number of myths and outright distortions. Let us look closely at some of these.

Big Pharma tries to project the fact that it is its efforts alone that are key to drug development, and this is why we should accept its monopoly pricing of drugs. Typical of this was the claim of Burroughs Wellcome (now part of Glaxo Wellcome) that it discovered azidothymidine (AZT). In fact, it was the staff of the publicly funded National Cancer Institute of the US working with Duke University researchers that did it. Big Pharma boasts it is currently developing 73 AIDS drugs. Look more closely, and you will find that most of the firms doing this research are in fact receiving substantial government aid via publicly funded researchers with the National Institutes of Health! In other words, Big Pharma says it is doing R&D, but it actually is siphoning off taxpayers' money for much R&D on essential, life-saving drugs.

Big Pharma says strict patent protection is necessary because it takes $500 million to bring a single drug to market. As a prominent expert on the drug industry, Merrill Goozner, points out, this is a bogus figure for various reasons—not least of which is the fact that most of the so-called new drugs are *not* innovations. Indeed, in excess of 40 per cent of the industry's R&D is aimed at producing minor variations of existing drugs, not at turning out new ones.

Also, much of the alleged cost of drug development is accounted for by marketing expenditures designed to convince people to buy different versions of the same drug. The fastest growing sector of Big Pharma is the marketing sector, not R&D. There are now 90,000 sales people in the industry whose role is to pester doctors to recommend them to patients, with Pfizer alone accounting for 11,000 of these foot-soldiers. $12 billion of corporate expenditures, according to the *Toronto Star,* now goes to maintaining and expanding this non-essential layer in the form of wages and salaries.

A third cost, which is factored into the $500 million figure, is the massive salaries of the top executive layers of the different drug corporationsfia point to which we shall return.

Big Pharma makes a 20 per cent return on investment, making it the most profitable industry in the US. Yet even as its profits leap upward, the productivity of the industry has plummeted. In 1996, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved 53 new drugs. Last year, it approved just 17. Increasingly, according to the *Toronto Star*, "Big Pharma doesn't invent drugs. It licenses them from smaller firms around the world, or buys them outright by acquiring the firms that hold the rights, passing along the high takeover costs to consumers." Drug consumers all over the world bore the burden, in the form of higher drug prices, of Pfizer's recent acquisition of Warner Lambert and Pharmacia Corporation. Not innovation but making variations of the same drug or medicine or treatment is what the industry is settling into, which is why it must hold on tightly to existing patents, whether it is in HIV AIDS drugs or in tropical disease treatment drugs, or cancer drugs. It is, in short, turning into a *rentier* class.

Why Corporate R&D is not the Answer

As everybody knows, even with compulsory licensing, HIV-AIDS treatment costs are still too high relative to the resources of patients and governments. Bringing down treatment costs to $200 a year will not be enough since at that price many millions of poor people will still be priced out of the market. We desperately need R&D breakthroughs to come out with affordable drugs. But to expect

this from an increasingly sclerotic industry that is marked by a rentier mentality is maybe unrealistic.

But there is a more basic question: Does the industry really have an interest in developing drugs for which there is great need but from which one can derive little profit? Well, the answer is no. Despite the fact that tropical diseases were the main killers of the world's peoples, only 13 of 1233 new drugs that reached the market between 1975 and 1997 were approved specifically for tropical diseases. There was simply no market to support R&D in this area. I would venture to suggest that for Big Pharma, the market constituted by the millions of people suffering from HIV/AIDS in Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia simply pales in comparison to the market for rich peoplesû diseases in the North. Profits determine corporate R&D, not human needs.

It must be pointed out that it is not only HIV/AIDS groups that are up in arms against Big Pharma's regimes of monopoly pricing. Indeed, there is strong and vocal resistance in both the North and South. In the United States, for instance, senior citizens' demands for lower prices have become so strong that Republicans in Congress are spearheading legislation to legalize import of drugs from Canada that are priced much lower than those put out by Big Pharma. Not surprisingly, Big Pharma has opposed this legislation, raising the bugaboo that these imported drugs are "unsafe"—a familiar charge that they have tossed around in the case of cheap generic HIV/AIDS drugs.

Why We Need a new R&D Paradigm

Herein lies the reason why, despite all the humanitarian pleading on the part of NGO's, Big Pharma refuses to abandon its hard stance against loosening patents for HIV/AIDS drugs. This rentier industry (Is this a contradiction in terms?) worries that concessions in this area would undermine its whole structure of monopoly pricing based on TRIPS, leading to its eventual collapse and the end of corporate superprofits.

Now I have no problem with giving Big Pharma 20 or 30 years of strict patent rights to Viagra and other chemical toys to enable 70 year old white men and women to have another fling. But essential drugs to save millions and millions of lives, that is another matter. Having been drafted mainly by Big Pharma, the TRIPS Agreement is a rigid and blanket defense of corporate patents that cannot and will not make vital distinctions like this. Which is why corporate R&D protected by the WTO TRIPS agreement is simply an obsolete framework when it comes to the research and development of essential, life-saving drugs.

We need a new R&D framework, based on a people-oriented approach to patents, maybe coordinated by the UN, in which there is room for participation by many other actors, including governments, government institutes, and civil society organizations. This new Manhattan Project can be funded from a Global Fund, the bulk of which could come from a tax imposed on global drug sales. A 1 per cent tax on current global sales of $450 billion, for instance, would create a fund of $4.5 billion.

Executive Pay

But before ending, let me return to the matter of executive pay. Increasingly, more and more resources that could otherwise go to corporate R&D are being funnelled into pay packages for the top layers of the pharmaceutical industry. Here are the total pay packages for the CEO's of the top five pharmaceutical corporations:

Pfizer: Hank McKinnell, total annual pay package: US$28 million, plus US$30.6 million in unexercised stock options;

Merck: Raymond Gilmartin: US$ 19.5 million, plus $48 million in unexercised stock options;

Bristol Myer Squibb: PR Dolan, US$8.5 million, plus US$3.4 million in unexercised stock options;

Glaxo Smith-Kline: Jean Pierre Garnier, US$11.8 million; and Du Pont EI: CO Holliday, US13.5 million.

Now add the lower but still super salaries of a couple of thousand top executives in the industry, and you will understand why R&D costs have been going through the roof.

These are the very people who have been crying "intellectual property rights" and begrudging the millions and millions of people infected with HIV the radical price reductions that would save their lives.

HIV/AIDS can be licked, but only by undertaking today's equivalent of a Manhattan Project armed with new R&D paradigm that is not hostage to corporate waste and corporate profits.

Walden Bello

Letter from INEB

Dear readers and INEB members,

The period from May until August is a busy time at the INEB Secretariat Office in Bangkok. In May, INEB joined the Consultation on *Inter-religious Cooperation in Asia and Gender Justice*. We had a chance to host 30 participants from four religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam) at our Wongsanit Ashram in Siam. This opportunity helped us to understand more about gender issues from the different religious perspectives in our faith communities. We explored how our religions promote a genuine partnership, or perpetuate injustice and generate suffering to people of different genders, not only men and women at personal and structural level. In the following pages, you can read the report and paper from the Buddhist participant.

Some other activities held during the mentioned period were *"International Buddhist Leadership Training for Spiritual Resurgence and Social Innovation"* in July and *"Training for Trainers: Buddhist Approach"* in August. We have young Buddhists from 11 countries in South and Southeast Asia coming to the program. The main objectives of the program was to promote among young Buddhists the understanding and application of the Buddha's teachings for personal and social transformation, as well as to provide them with practical skill as trainers/facilitators to work for their communities, in a Buddhist way.

Since the last two trainings, it has been very exciting for us to get to know a number of promising young people within our Buddhist communities in Asia. On the surface, we see a tremendous amount of conflict and violence, unbalanced development, poverty, injustice, etc. rotting away our lives and hope. At the same time, we also witness the commitment of young Buddhists for social change here and there big and small, scattered throughout our region. INEB's work, therefore, will focus on providing support and capacity enhancing programs for them, and linking them together as a network as one of our long-term action plans.

If you would like to help INEB continue our work for the benefit of Buddhist youth/community leaders in poor countries, one way to express your care is to renew your subscription of *Seeds of Peace*. It is a media to communicate our activities and to fund our work. Please kindly note that this issue is the last one for this year.

Finally, the Buddhist rains retreat (*Vassa*), which has just started, reminds us that even though we might have contributed much of our effort for social engagement, we should not forget that we also need time for spiritual growth. The quiet moments for reflection and learning are equally important and helpful, not only for the ordained sangha, but for all Buddhists traveling the path of Bodhisattava.

Yours in The Dhamma,
Anne Lapapan Supamanta
Executive Secretary

P.S.
INEB office is now moving to a new location at 666 Charoen Nakorn Road, Klongsan, Bangkok 10600, Siam (Thailand)

Deep Gratitude to our Supporters

Mr Thomas Brown and Dr Stefan Collignon

We would like to express our sincere thanks to Mr. Thomas Brown of USA and Dr. Stefan Collignon of Europe. With their kindness, they offer to mail our *Seeds of Peace* to our readers in USA and Europe. Such generosity is very much meaningful for our survival and continuation of work to support INEB.

Ms Susan Conner

We would like to express our gratitude to Ms. Susan Conner for her generous donation of USD 1,000.00 for INEB activities. Contributions like hers assure that our work will advance.

Religions and Gender Oppression

During 14-19 May 2004, there was a consultation with participants from 4 religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam entitled *"Interfaith Consultation on Gender Justice and Genuine Partnership of Women and Men"*. Thirty participants came from 9 countries in Asia, namely Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, Pakistan, India, Burma, Laos, Cambodia and Siam. INEB was appointed as a host to provide accommodation and a venue at Wongsanit Ashram, Nakorn Nayok province, Siam. It also shared in the event as one of the participants.

The consultation was organized as a continuing activity following an Interfaith Consultation Program (ICP) which was launched in Parapat, Indonesia in April 2003. The ICP was arranged by the Asia Pacific Alliance of YMCAs (APAY), Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and Church Development Service (EED). In the Parapat consultation, gender injustice was one of the issues that was picked up. The participants expressed the need to investigate religious structures that are connected with patriarchic social structure. By doing so, we can improve status in terms of sexuality of those who are oppressed, provide them more choices in life and contribute to social equality. Such action will lead to a genuine equality and to a chance for the value and aesthetics of religion to create peace among people with different genders.

Oppression against Women

General observation from the consultation is that in fact manners of oppression against women in each religion are not much different. For instance, women in some Christian traditions are not allowed to ordained. Neither are Buddhist women allowed to become a Bhikkhuni. Friends from Cambodia and Burma share similar stories that even local woman ordained as Bhikkhuni from foreign countries, has to dress like an eight-precept holding nun, not as a fully ordained one.

Oppression via Culture

A Hindu friend informs us that woman is not allowed to get into temple because of her menstruation. The same rule is also practiced here in the north of Siam.

Dressing is another issue that shared by woman participants of all religions. In Muslim communities, women need to cover up their bodies. Many of us wonder whether we could have a chance to admire the hairstyle of our Muslim friend. She said, she would love to show us but it is not possible. Her covering-up is completely different from the casual attire of her male teammate. In Burma, women are not allowed to wear short hair.

From the Indian subcontinent, our friends tell us that according to their tradition, women must pay for dowry. Many brides and wives are murdered only because they cannot pay the full amount of dowry requested by bridegrooms/husbands. Imagine a house full of daughters, how much poorer the parents would become? Woman's chance to work is not much already to earn money for dowry. Added to that is the sati tradition that has persuaded some widow wives to jump into fire that cremating their husband's body. It still exists even today.

Another topic is rape. Some people question that instead of raping, why don't men masturbate? The answer we discover involves "power" issues. Rape makes the rapist feel powerful, superior and grand.

Reported here are only a few issues among many that we discuss. There are many more, in both number and complexity. But what makes me so amazed is how women are so tolerant and allow themselves to be oppressed. On the other hand, I also question how we as men allow religion, culture and society to do such bad things to our female fellows.

Hot issues

Menstruation and prostitution were discussed. Our Hindu participant sees prohibiting women to enter secreted places while having period as normal. To her, any kind of blood and bleeding should not be there. It stirs up the room because some participants see this as discrimination.

Regarding prostitution, the fact that the Buddha did not condemn a prostitute astonishes many participants. On the contrary, the Buddha opens chances for them to participate in merit making, learn Dhamma and even get ordained. Many feel excited by the open-mindedness of Buddhism. I need to add a sentence that in Siam, society no longer practice that open-mindedness, but abhorrence to the prostitutes.

Gay and Bhikkhuni

On an exposure visit, we travel to Lumpini Park which is

a meeting place for gays. Outside the park is where gay prostitutes find their customers. Then, we visited two organizations of gays and lesbians. From presentations by staff of both NGOs, we learnt that homosexuals are facing a lot of violence. They are not allowed to be teachers or to appear on TV. They are victims of domestic violence and forced marriage. They are not allowed public space to express themselves. Their existence is denied. For the poor ones, they are forced to enter the sex business. Some feel pressured to have a sex change operation, which cost them both money and pain. The gay and lesbian issue is one that shakes mind and belief of people regarding men-women gender.

Then we proceed to Watr Songdhamkalyani and listen to the story of The Venerable Dhammananda Bhikkhuni. She tells us about obstacles barring a progress of the restoration of Bhikkhuni sangha in Siam. Problems include resistance from the Bhikkhu sangha and education for bhikkhuni and upasika

Up to now, some of us, including Buddhist participants, could summarize that gender oppression is not only a matter of oppression against women. But, it expands to others, such as gays and lesbians. Again, it makes others confused. I need to add that gays and lesbians are people who are playing a role out of conventional understanding of man-woman. They are in fact oppressed, violated and taken advantage by fellow human beings. We need to be aware of this point.

No Self

Another point that perplexes the participants come from the proposal by Buddhist participants that the root cause of gender inequality and oppression is actually an attachment to self and gender. The way out, therefore, is to cultivate awareness of *anatta.* That is gender is no self. It is not good for us to take it too seriously. When people attach to self as woman or as man, there arise the oppressor and the oppressed.



Genuine and interfaith partnership between women and men running a raft in front of Wongsanit Ashram

Patriarchy

Involved in this kind of discussion, what seems to be unavoidable is an uneasy feeling of men when it comes to issue of patriarchy. But, is it true that men always have the upper hand from the patriarchal system? There of course are some men who also suffer from patriarchy. The third round of perplexion comes when the Buddhists say that patriarchy is not the ultimate cause of gender oppression. It is *akusalamula* embedded into patriarchy that perpetuates the suffering, for all genders involved.

Power Issue

During a gender sensitivity practice, our Buddhist facilitator introduces an issue of power to the participants. It is quite difficult for some people to link issues of gender and power together. The idea behind the session is that gender oppression is underlined by power struggle. Whoever, both man and woman, without clear understanding of power issues, can exercise power (and violence) over others, also man or woman, when the former is in an advantageous status. It is not simply a problem of men oppressing women any more.

To hear only what is wanted to hear

The conference's fundamental problem is that the participants' understanding of participatory learning process is limited. Many people expect to hear stories that they want to hear. When it happens to be different, the atmosphere became heavy. If a participant says that according to her village, women are well protected, the meeting almost turns to an interrogation. In addition, analyzing the issue from a religious perspective was not fully successful.

At the end, many feel relieved. The consultation of this issue is not only difficult, but there is a lot of confusion and puzzlement arising throughout. I hope that the interfaith consultation would provide them a chance to learn something new and strange from other approached to deal with this issue.

Translated from article written by
The Ven. Chai Waradhammo

Rereading the Buddhist Scripture, Getting Beyond Dualism

Buddhist scripture said much about the story of women but compared with men, women's story was less addressed even though many female monks are good practitioners and get enlightened. The interesting point to be address here is, when Buddha had given his Dharma Talk, instead of mentioning to both male and female monks, he began with "Dear Bikkhus" (bikkhus mean male monks), although at that time Bhikhuni sangha had already been established. We can imagine at moment Buddha was dying, a great important situation, the scripture said that (only) all Bhikhus went straight to the place Buddha was laying down and listened to his a last talk.

When the scripture was first written, it was done by only male monks who altogether came for a meeting and made decision what issues should be addressed.

According to the *Jataka*, a part of Buddhist scripture narrating about 500 Buddha's past lives, it did not address that the Buddha was born a women while he was born animals of various kinds, but never born woman.

Regarding the Buddha's teaching, the Buddha announced that Dharma is neither male nor female. He allowed women to be ordained and said 'women can be enlightened'. It is hard at the time when he was establishing Buddhism. Indian culture had it own concept of discrimination to women and a rigid caste.

With his teaching on Interconnectedness, Egolessness and Emptiness, The Buddha said all things are independent, connected to others. Furthermore, it just fluidity, relatively exists. So, all things are impermanent which we cannot hold on. If we attach to a fixed perception, we will get suffering. It sounds like there is no unmoving mover behind the movement. It is only the movement. What we should do is to realize a flow of movement and let go. There is nothing belong to us. It is just fluidity.

On the other hand, we are basically familiar with dualism (binary opposition), a system of thinking dividing all things into twoness as good or bad, white or black, Muslim or Christianity and women or man. Dualistic thinking goes against interconnectedness. That's because when we divide, we tend to compare between them and feel that one is more valuable than other. We are effectively judging with our own perception. We are missing the truth.

For the gender social structure, in term of patriarchy, men are assumed more valuable. So, he gets more benefits and opportunities. To protect his advantages, he may behave bad, cruel, etc. and get used to label himself as a dominator. Finally it increasingly causes the function of dualism.

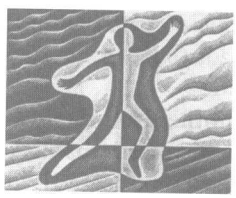
In general, we are usually affected by attachment. Thinking that everything is permanent, exists itself individually. Even one who works for women, we join the women's movement angrily. We might get angry with men and absorb anger within. We, women overemphasize ourselves as victims. Finally it increase the function of dualism.

At moment, men are identified as more important than women. Women are excluded as the OTHER. We are divided into two and fixate with the gender. This brings an obstacle for practicing the Buddha's teaching.

That is why people find difficulty when trying to connect between women and spirituality. As we are made to think along a scripture that women are already excluded, we might not easily think, imagine and believe that women can be a female monk or a spiritual teacher on the spiritual path like men. So, what does this message in the scripture say to us? How is it influenced by dualism? So, at time we join the women's movement and look deeply into the scriptures. We have to realize how women and men suffer by patriarchy. Both of us are still trapped by a kind of attachment that causes us suffering. We have to realize how biased the process of collecting and writing the sacred scripture is. The commentator is also affected by attachment and dualistic thinking.

We have to realize how feminity and masculinity work within us relatively. At the moment that women fail to recognize their masculinity, men are excluded. Likewise, if men could not recognize their feminity, women are excluded. Getting beyond dualism, therefore, is a heart of transformation. We then find where we can live in peace as one. Where the interconnectedness is affirmed.

Araya Payungpong



Together We Go, on the Path of Bodhisattava

Coming from eleven lands were young Buddhists represented or recommended by our members and friends to INEB's Youth Program *"The 2004 International Buddhist Leadership Training for Spiritual Resurgence and Social Innovation"* in Siam. The training was in its second year after the experiment training in November 2003.

The twenty six youth, monks, lay men and women, in the training were from HIKMAHBUDHI (The Union of Indonesian Buddhist Students), Dhammavedi Inst. in Sri Lanka, Parpatya Bouddha Mission in Bangladesh, PADETC in Laos, Dhammayietra Center in Cambodia, SEM Yangoon in Burma, in addition to those from Bhutan, Tibet in exile and Dalit communities in India, Nepal, etc.

For twenty days together from 11-30 July 2004, INEB provided them a chance to explore the Buddha's teaching that is helpful for their individual spiritual growth and the work within their context.



Challenge of Our Times

It is a surprise for some participants to discover that there are so many things that pose challenges to Asian traditional lifestyles and cultures in the modern time. Globalization and ecological problems seem remote for some participants. However, after getting more information from various resource persons on repercussions of the two upon the poor countries such as ours, they are just around the corner.

In many societies in Asia, democracy, self determination and human rights are threatened for a long time. People have no rights and freedom to choose the course of development even though their livelihood is at stake by the development pattern imposed on them. We invited resource persons to give us a clear picture of people's struggle in politics as well as in human rights situation in Asia.

Looking at our Buddhism, we learnt that Buddhism is contaminated by consumerism and commercialization. We are separated into different sects. Understanding and cooperation among Buddhists become a challenge for the young generation. On top of that, the role of Buddhist women, ordained and lay, are not equally recognized. Going without them only cripples our effort to maintain teachings of the Buddha.

As today, we are in the multi-religious communities, we also need to understand the essence of our neighbor's faith so that we can cultivate our respect and avoid unnecessary conflicts. The talks from Muslim and Christian resource persons about their perspective on development make us find something common. Respect of peace and human dignity is at the heart of all the three religions.

There are two topics that are difficult but necessary. One is on Buddhist economics. It provides us some guidelines for a Buddhist to understand the current economic theories that are destructive and autistic. Another one is principle and experience of socially engaged Buddhism by Sulak Sivaraksa, We kept his input to contemplate along the training.

Pema from Bhutan told us that her country fixes an eye on Siam as one of the development patterns. It therefore, frightens her very much to realize that here a lot of problem has been arising as a result of mainstream development. Phonexay and his friends from Laos gathered around the resource person at the end of ecological crisis class to

learn more about dams building projects along Mekhong and its branchrivers. This information is rare in his country.

Initiatives from Communities

After a heavy week of lectures and reflection, we set out a journey to observe initiatives from various communities on development efforts. The places we visited exemplified and visualized what we have learnt. Within three day we learnt from Holistic Health Foundation, Pathom Asoke Buddhist alternative community, Education center for poor children run by Dhammanurak Nunnery, HIV/AIDS hospice at Phra Bat Namphu Temple, alternative energy program, integrated farming and reforestation projects. Some are based on Buddhist teachings, some are run by Buddhist practitioners and some have nothing to do with any religious idea at all.

Back to Buddhist Values

The situation is, a chemical tank exploded, we all became blind and our school is on fire. We needed to evacuate from the school soonest, altogether, to get on a helicopter landing far away to escape. Understand? Yes. We started to cover our eyes with a piece of cloth and discussed a plan in a very noisy and chaotic manner.

No, we are not playing, but learning through experiential basis. After much effort, trial and error, getting out of the way, shouting, frustrating, angry, etc. we managed to get to the place. This is among many ways that we learnt about leadership, planning, cooperation, creativity and communication. After that we picked up Buddhist teachings that related to the issues to discuss. Participants find for themselves what a Buddhist should observe to become a leader who brings about development in his/her context that reflects Buddhist values such as compassion, equality and non-violence. Pracha Hutanuwatr made our learning process filled with games and laughter.

Transformation of Self

Together with theoretical knowledge of Buddhism that we learnt, plenty of time is allocated for meditation; early morning, qi gong session, midday and evening. Meditation is a powerful tool of learning to know our mind. It is one of the three mode of learning or *Tri Sikkha*. Without self awareness, we can be defiled by *akusalamula*, and become violent and wicked. Also, the inner violent structure of *akusalamula* will maintain outside structural violence such as poverty, human rights violation, war and conflicts and so on.

Fun and recreation

It is our expertise that, despite a long day of hard work, we managed to find time to have fun, make some jokes and spread some funny gossip. The atmosphere is very much friendly. We became good friend and help one another catch up with lessons since our knowledge are unequal. We got to know stories of exotic countries and live of friends. In cultural night, Tenzin from Tibet helped a Nepalese friend Riku to make "momo" and other Indian/Himalayan dishes for dinner. Games were under care of Jimmy from Indonesia and Nounou from Laos. Music and chitchat became one of the success factors of this training!

Action plans

Before departing, we discussed seriously what we could do together. Four points arose. Some we can do straightaway. Some we need more study. They are: mailing list, research group, learning center for prisoners and poor villager in rural Cambodia.

The evaluation gave tremendous encouragement to INEB. We are determined to provide learning space for young Buddhists as a long-term program. It is great that young Buddhists can share common essence of Buddhism and work together, regardless of orders they belong. We would love to see our alumni be able to lessen suffering both within oneself and in their communities. We hope to make available a path toward Bodhisattava for the next generation of Buddhists in Asia.

Lapapan Supamanta

The 2005 INEB Conference

Please be reminded of The 2005 INEB Conference to be held in India in October 2005.

Advanced Program for Youth Buddhist Leadership Training Alumni

Prior to the Conference, INEB will organize one month long Advanced Program for Youth Buddhist Leadership Training Alumni, also in India - featuring lectures, exposure visits, meditation retreat and working camp.

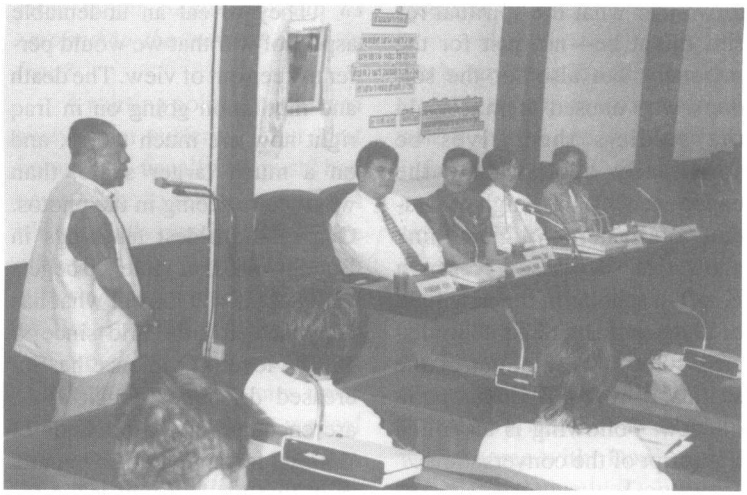
More details will be announced shortly.

Dialogue Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana and Interreligious Cooperation for Peace in Honour of H.H. The Dalai Lama's Birthday

Thammasat University, Bangkok, July 2004

This year the celebration of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Birthday attracted a great diversity of participants, including many lecturers and students of Thammasat University located at the city-centre of Bangkok. Earlier in the year a Thai delegation visited His Holiness in his residence in Dharamsala, India. The Dalai Lama expressed as his wish that the various streams within Buddhism should have more dialogue among each other. Not just for the sake of religious debate or to 'prove' that one is better than the other, but to unite forces in order to make the voice of Buddhism in interreligious cooperation for Peace stronger. Internal dialogue can be cultivated as an exercise for dialogue in the framework of local religious diversity and globalization.

The artistic invocation of the meeting was offered by a flutist and Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa introduced the theme for the audience. Ajarn Sulak's experience in interreligious dialogue and his commitment to engaged Buddhism that brings streams together for social justice and Human Rights offered a challenging perspective for the creative dialogue that followed. Prapot Asawawirunhakarn, Setthapong Jongsanguen and Krisdawan Hongdalalom, all scholars in the various streams of Buddhism clarified their insights, not only as scientists but as practitioners.



Sulak Sivaraksa introduces challenging questions to the panel members

Both the religious aspects and their respective socially engagement implications need more dialogue and action research.

As Thailand is opening up more and more to its interreligious realities and given the aspiration to be a Peace broker in the region it would be hoped for that His Holiness the Dalai himself will be welcomed one day to engage in dialogue on cultural challenges in Asia, both with the Therevadian leadership and with the Thai government. Concerned representatives of civil society may pave the way for what could become a momentum of healing and an initiation of new patterns of cooperation for Peace in the Asian continent.

Hans van Willenswaard

Congratulations to Prof. Donald K. Swearer

Prof. Don Swearer delivered a speech "The Ecumenical Vision of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and His Dialogue with Christianity" at the 10th SEM Annual Public Lectuere at Century Building, Suan Ngern Mee Ma, Bangkok on May 2nd, 2004. On the next day, he returned to USA. He is now appointed director of the Institute of the Studies of World Religions at Harvard University.

Bad Karma

Torturers are planting horrible seeds in their own hearts and minds. Unfortunately, the same is true for nations.

Interview by Deborah Caldwell

As the Iraqi prison abuse scandal has unfolded, we began to wonder what the spiritual result might be—not just for the prisoners, but also for the soldiers who abused them. Would the soldiers themselves be spirtitually degraded by the experience? What might a student of Eastern religion think about that? We asked **Kenneth Kraft**, a scholar in the new field of "engaged Buddhism," to discuss some of the fallout of the scandal—from a Buddhist point of view. Following is an edited transcript of the conversation.

Let's start at the level of an American soldier in Iraq. I have been struck by the story of the young woman from West Virginia, Lynndie England, who appears in several of the Abu Ghraib pictures. She's 21. Why is her apparent normalcy so disturbing?

The Abu Ghraib photos point to something larger than the specific scenes caught on camera. One of the lessons of this tragedy, from a Buddhist standpoint, is that she is us. That could be my daughter or your niece or someone we might know. It's not as it there were just a few bad apples in a big barrel of good apples. In the frenzy of war, cruelty becomes acceptable behavior. As a nation, we are putting all these good apples—our soldiers—into a very rotten barrel.

Buddhism emphasizes the interconnectedness of the world, and this "interbeing" has no limit. Since I am part of the system that produced this war and these atrocities, then I too share the blame.

What else do the scenes from Abu Ghraib reveal?

They reveal an undeniable aspect of war that we would perfer to keep out of view. The death and mutilation going on in Iraq right now are much worse, and on a much larger scale, than what we're seeing in the photos. One of the oldest teachings in Buddhism is that violence begets violence. If you look at what has happened in the world since 9/11, the level of violence has increased dramatically. Now we are encountering the bounds of "an eye for an eye." As Gandhi said, that method will leave the whole world blind.

The prison guards are victims along with the prisoners. The guards have been overcome by fear and hatred to the point of losing touch with their own humanity. They are not in their right minds. They have stopped thinking of the prisoners as fellow human beings. Albert Schweitzer put it this way: "War makes us guilty of the crime of inhumanity."

Buddhism is known for its advocation of nonviolence. Is that realistic in this situation?

Nonviolence is indeed at the core of Buddhism. The first precept of moral behavior is "Do not kill. Cherish all life." Contemporary Buddhists believe that this principle is as applicable today as it was 2,500 years ago. Nonviolence has a force of its own, not to be underestimated.

Policy experts might say, "Nonviolence would never work in dealing with terrorists." Perhaps not. But imagine, just for a moment, that the United States built up its nonviolent capabilities on a scale comparable to our current investment in the military—with the necessary money and training, backed by a willingness to make sacrifices... That would certainly yield a wider array of options.

Buddhism teaches that it is almost always possible to move in the direction of nonviolence, even though perfect nonviolence may be unattainable. This means that even in the midst of war, it is possible to honor the human rights of prisoners.

Does Buddhism have a "just-war" doctrine, as Christianity does?

Some Buddhists adhere to absolute pacifism; for them, all war is morally wrong. There are others who say that avoidance of war is always the ideal, but in some real-world situations the use of force may be required. Today's engaged Buddhists are working creatively on these questions. Whatever guidelines emerge, the starting point will remain the same: cause the least possible harm. Those who invoke just-war theory must also be willing to conclude that a particular war does not satisfy the necessary criteria, and therefore cannot be called just.

Is the notion of karma relevent here? Are we getting trapped in a vicious cycle of bad karma?

As you know, karma is about action and the consequences of action. All of our

actions—and even our thoughts! —are continuously creating new karma. It's a dynamic process, unlike "fate." Buddhism holds that the laws of cause and effect apply in the realm of morality as well as the physical realm.

One traditional explanation uses seeds as a metaphor. We plant seeds of happiness in ourselves and others when we are kind, and we plant seeds of unhappiness when we treat others badly. Often the effects are not immediate. For example, in parent-child relationships, seeds planted in childhood may not blossom until much later in life.

To return to the Abu Ghraib abuses, torturers are planting horrible seeds in their own hearts and minds. Unfortunately, the same is true for nations. There's nothing mystical about it—we can see it happening right now. And "collective karma" can play out for generations.

Where does individual spiritual practice—or religious practice —fit in?

The ability to act responsibly, to act ethically, is not simply a matter of having the "right" beliefs. Think of all the things that are being done in the name of God and Allah!

From a Buddhist perspective, there has to be some inner cultivation of character, a process that ideally continues throughout one's life. Buddhists make some radical claims in this area. For example, the Dalai Lama says, "Although attempting to bring about world peace through the internal transformation of individuals is difficult, it is the only way."

You have said that engaged Buddhists are trying to apply ancient teachings to present situations. How might Buddhism help us respond to the current crisis in Iraq?

A starting point is not to turn away from suffering. Our first impulse is usually to push bad news aside, to tell ourselves that it's not really our concern. We're afraid that if we were to let all the suffering in, it would overwhelm us. But Buddhism teaches that if you are able to stay open, even momentarily, what comes up is compassion. Not only do we feel horror at seeing these pictures, we can also feel sorry for the victims and the perpetrators. Feelings of empathy are reminders of our deep interconnectedness.

If Buddhists ran the world, how would they handle those who disrupt social harmony?

In other words, how would crime and punishment be handled in a Buddhist-inspired society? That's a good question. It's safe to assume that there are always going to be offenders and dangerous folks who need to be controlled. The current system relies on punitive justice, and it's not working very well. In contrast, transformative justice seeks to heal victims, heal offenders, and address the conditions that give rise to crime. Today, Buddhists are very involved in prison reform in the United States and elsewhere, so this is not just a hypothetical question.

Let's say that Buddhists were running a military prison in Iraq, and it was necessary to extract information from detainees to prevent more car bombs or other acts of violence. How would Buddhists handle the interrogation?

The Geneva Conventions have explicit rules about the treatment of prisoners. The basic guideline is one that all religions would agree with: Don't treat a prisoner inhumanly. Don't deny his or her humanity. That approach may in fact be more effective in getting information.

Shortly after the September 11 terrorist attacks, the Dalai Lama said, "The real antidote to terrorism in the long run is compassion, dialogue—peaceful means—even with terrorists." Is that hopelessly naïve, or is it a deeper kind of realism?

Kenneth Kraft

Living Through the Eyes of Spiritual Justice

Most religions and national constitutions embrace important notions of justice. The impressions I get is that both appear to have been somehow born in response to injustices. A point of departure that puts followers and citizens in a constant search for the "right thing". We embrace

them because we carry this deep feeling that 'something' must be brought into balance, individually or collectively. It says: the debate on justice goes far beyond the administration of legal instruments.

Justice is certainly much more than that.

We have realized that practically every aspect in our lives may become a source of injustice (e.g., economic injustice, social injustice, human injustice, legal injustice, institutional injustice, political injustice, religious injustice, environmental injustice). Thus, the potential existence of injustice breeds everywhere through the existence of opposites!

Often, the process of attaining some form of justice is dominated by economic and political interests and, for many people, the administration of justice seems to be mainly about the art of punishment and rewards with many of the rewards in the form of monetary compensation. Nevertheless, when a case is more serious, the system also decides whether the life of someone presumed to be the source of injustice may also become an integral part of the compensation process (ie., capital punishment). A major source of controversy that has plenty of moral and ethical issues involved. I am against capital punishment.

Most people put life on a high pedestal. They believe life is in the realm of the sacred. For us economists, this is something we are willing to question. Thus, we are exposed to the view that there is a price tag for almost everything, including our human life.

I remember doing some brief research while finishing my Ph.D. that consisted of looking at court records and collecting information/data on the level of monetary compensation people are willing to settle. For example, for the loss of an arm, the eyes, organ. As a new student of investment decision-making methods, the idea behind this actvity was to see the sort of price tag we put to our lives. This was an important figure, for example, in order to justify the investment in an overpass for pedestrians, a given speed limit, and more. This way of valuing life was quite puzzling to me, as human life has an infinite material and non-material value! But, I learned a lot about how people in practice are willing to accept and settle for a certain amount of monetary compensation. Yesterday, at La Guardia Airport, I read an article in a legal magazine telling us that people also settle for the loss of happiness—an article about *"a price for happiness"*.

My friend Rosa was put in jail for the possession of marijauna. She was given six months —without any commutation, although she was allowed to leave before the whole period was completed. During the time she served, she was not exposed to natural sunlight because the cell had no windows and with terrible accommodations. She underwent a tough form of punishment so that "justice be served" and, hopefully, so that "she finally learns what she did was wrong".

This idea that justice will be served through harsh forms of punishments has really bothered me for a long time. I have been told in many jails people live under inhuman conditions and, thus, they become a brutal way to address true justice.

How would justice be administered in the spiritual realm of life? Would it be different? Is there such a thing as *"spiritual justice"*, and is it different from the justice applied within our material world? How one is to conceive the so-called "final judgment"? Would it be as brutal and inhuman as we see justice being applied today?

Today, justice embodies deep suffering of everyone involved.

What is justice and how does anyone qualify to be an administrator of justice?

Let me move to the realm of *"spiritual justice"*.

Justice is a state of being. It is an inner state of human reality, which projects itself in our material world. Thus, in material justice, it seems that all the attention is paid to the administration of a system of punishments and rewards, of gainers and losers.

To me, *"spiritual justice"* is different. In the spiritual realm, justice is an inner process of 'erasing' various forms of karmic debts. These result from 'incorrect' actions, thoughts and intentions of the past (this life or previous lives), all of which are not yet in order. Justice is a spiritual state through which we address those aspects of our inner reality that must be corrected in order to become self-realized beings and to attain the highest levels of human consciousness.

Do you think that the aim of the Creator and the holy beings is to put us into a constant state of suffering in order to attain *spiritual justice*? Not at all.

At the center of *spiritual justice* is a deep, subtle, loving, compassionate and sophisticated process of *human self-realization* guided by the Spirit. Specifically, to truly become just and experience the absolute state of *spiritual justice* we must have the opportunity to *self-realize*

the opposites. The opposites of injustice, hate, greed, envy, racism, egocentricity, stinginess, abuse, disrespect, self-centeredness, suffering, ... For example, if I have violated human and spiritual boundaries through hate this implies that *spiritual justice* may be attained via the self-realization of pure love. Yes, it is through *the self-realization of opposites* (opposite to karma is yoga) that *spiritual justice* is attained.

Who is qualified to administer *"spiritual justice"*? How is this to happen in practice, particularly when those who administer justice have never experienced love?

How can anyone ask someone else to self realize peace if those dictating sentences have never experience peace? How can we experience the opposites? The qualification process is also embedded in *the self-realization of opposites.* For *"spiritual justice"* to become a reality, judges, and everyone involved in the administration of justice, must be *self-realized human beings.* Justice has to be self-realized if one is to be qualified to administer justice.

Therefore, a debate on social justice must acknowledge the need to focus beyond material justice. For example, more years in jail as an instrument of justice without *the self-realization of the opposites,* will simply not do. It would be a waste of time.

It is imperative that this notion of *"spiritual justice"* be brought to public policy making; i.e., processes through which individuals experience the inner self-realization of the opposites.

Rosa told me that a jail is the most fertile grounds to experience even more suffering, more brutality, more hate, and never experience the opposites. She is now out of jail, frightened, and with a tremendous inner anxiety of not having self-realized the opposite. She is scared to death of ending up again violating society's rules. It is well known that those who have been in jail once bear the highest probability to go back again and again!

I observed the same phenomenon within the reality many homeless people experience in shelters. They do not have the environment to self-realize the opposites. Thus, homeless people end up going back to the shelters, year after year, without any integration to society.

If justice is to be served in our communities, let us embrace it through the eyes of the spirit.

Alfredo Sfeir-Younis

Common Ground

On the surface, religion seems to be the cause, rather than the solution, of violence, tension and hatred around the world. Sri Lanka has been plagued by conflicts between Singhalese Buddhists and Tamil Hindus, Ireland by clashes between Protestants and Catholics, India by Muslims fighting Hindus, Kosovo by animosity between Albanian Muslims and Serbian Christians.

The list goes on and on.

At no other point in time, however, is the need for peaceful inter-religious dialogue more pressing. Among the very first Buddhist monks who raised the issue was Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, the late founder of Suan Mokkh forest monastery in southern Thailand.

In 1967, Buddhadasa delivered a series of public lectures on Christianity and Buddhism. More than three decades later, Buddhist scholar Donald K. Swearer presented a speech titled "The Ecumenical Vision of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and His Dialogue With Christianity" as part of the Annual Spirit of Education Movement Lecture programme.

The choice was apt. A renowned specialist in comparative religions at Swarthmore College, Swearer was born and raised as a Christian. Following his first meeting with Buddhadasa in 1968, the American professor has written several essays on the late reformist monk whom he considers to be one of his intellectual and spiritual guides.

"Buddhadasa's ecumenical vision demands our attention today even more powerfully than it did 36 years ago when I first met him," Swearer said at the beginning of his lecture.

"We are now reeling from unprecedented threats and challenges stresses and strains, that include the global menace of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism, seemingly intractable problems of ethnic and religious violence, widespread degradation of the natural environment and biodiversity loss, an ever growing gap between the rich and the poor, and a tidal wave of amoral

consumerism that sacrifices the long term common good for the immediate satisfaction of material benefit."

To many Buddhists and Christians, Swearer is quick to note, the term "dialogue" has negative connotations, and is often derided as a form of covert evangelism. When he was alive, Buddhadasa suffered charges of trying to "dhammacise God and theologise the dhamma". The late monk put forward several controversial theses, including those that describe God and the Law of Nature (Dhamma) as being one and the same. The great enemy of a religion, Buddhadasa posited in his 1967 lecture, is not people who subscribe to a different creed. Rather, it is the ardent followers who misinterpret the teachings and promote conflicts among different religious beliefs.

This does not mean that the late monk did not recognise divergences between numerous faiths—but that the differences, in his views, have more to do with labelling and cultural flavours than with the essence of individual teachings.

Buddhadasa often stressed how religions, not unlike human beings, differ and yet share a lot in common with one another.

To challenge the predominant view of religion as a wall that segregates humanity, Buddhadasa adopted several innovative concepts. Swearer pointed out that the very first, and novel, teaching technique the monk devised was to refute the notion of religion as an institution. By coming up with such an unexpected, audacious remark, that there is no religion, Buddhadasa effectively shattered the "doctrinal preconceptions" held by most devotees. Do we cherish fallen leaves at the expense of the sapwood of a tree? Stripped of myriad rituals and paraphenalia, Buddhadasa argued, all religions aim toward more or less the same goal: non-attachment. In other words, the heart of Buddhism, as well as of other religions, is to strive toward selflessness. Swearer contended that the parallel concept in Christianity is that of impartial, unconditional, love.



"In practical terms, Buddhadasa correlates nonattachment to a non-ostentatious lifestyle, an ethical teaching valued in both [Buddhist and Christian] traditions," Swearer elaborated.

"In contrast to the typical practice at Thai Buddhist merit-making ceremonies that often features public announcements of lavish donations to the wat [temple], Buddhadasa cites the Biblical teaching that charitable gifts should be given with no public knowledge of the giver. In his dialogue with Christianity, Buddhadasa not only uses Buddhism to exhort Christians to be better Christians but he appeals to Christianity to admonish Buddhists to be better Buddhists.

"The central lesson in both cases is to act and give selflessly and in doing so to eschew ostentatious living."

Integral to Buddhadasa's approach to inter-religious dialogue is his distinction between everyday language *(phasa khon)* and what he deemed as truth language *(phasa tham)*. At the level of convention, Buddhism is apparently different from Christianity, Islam, and so on. Focusing on the "spirit" of the teaching, however, Buddhadasa argued mutual learning could bridge, and enrich, understanding of the respective scriptures.

Take for example the idea of death. Many Buddhists tend to venerate Lord Buddha as a "physical man of flesh and bone who was born in India over 2,000 years ago, died, and was cremated". Similarly, the Bible narrates how God forbade Adam to eat the forbidden fruit otherwise "thou shall die".

But in the case of Lord Buddha, his passing away was only in the physical, sensual sense. His teaching, Dhamma, continues to live on.

The "death" of Adam was, on the other hand, in the spiritual dimension. The original sin started when the first human exposed himself to self-centred

dualism: good versus evil, merit versus sin, happiness versus unhappiness, gain versus loss, my religion versus their religion. Thus began the cycle of suffering.

Indeed, language may prove to be a pivotal barrier—the state of spiritual awakening has been described as essentially indescribable. According to Swearer, Buddhadasa often referred to Dhamma as "that reality whose very nature cannot be labelled". Call it what you may—Nibbana (Nirvana), God, Brahman or Tao—the terms serve merely as pointers.

In a similar vein, a typical concept of God as human like, with human qualities, capable of love and hate, has proved problematic. For how would we then explain to a child that the omnipotent God does not exist in something lowly like a dog? Buddhadasa raised this bold question in the 1967 lectures as a way to show the limitations of conventional, dualistic, way of thinking.

The monk proceeded to compare the Christian God to the Buddhist notion of *asankhata-dhamma,* the law of nature that is unconstituted, unformed and unlimited.

"It acts in everything," Buddhadasa wrote, "in every atom perceptible to the senses and to the mind, and in the actions and reactions of these psychological functions as well. To see the *asankhata-dhamma* is to cast off illusion and see God. To see it is to live in the kingdom of God without suffering."

Swearer admitted that some of the criticisms on Buddhadasa's glossing over fundamental differences between, say, Buddhist and Christian worldviews, were not without some validity. However, one should be aware of the monk's lofty goal of promoting reciprocal "sympathy, understanding, and cooperation among adherents of different religious traditions".

Don't the divisiveness, animosity and violence in interreligious relationships—and the world nowadays—stem largely from narrow, exclusivist views of religion?

In 1979, some 12 years after his Christianity and Buddhism lectures, Buddhadasa came up with an even more provocative thesis. He posited that certain Christian concepts might help Buddhists to strengthen their own understanding of Buddhism. How could that be?

Here, the reformist monk was shrewd in his pedagogical strategy, Swearer pointed out. Citing his well-known everyday/truth language distinctions, Buddhadasa systematically applied the principle to re-interpret Theravada Thai Buddhism: that the very word, Buddha, refers to the spiritual salvation that enables one to transcend the birth-and-death cycle.

He then moved on to the less familiar terrain of Zen, showing how its integration of meditation, wisdom and action in a single path can enhance the practice of Thai Buddhists.

Finally, the monk broadened his analysis to Christianity, arguing that concepts associated with Christian faith in God—love, obedience, supplication, and thanksgiving—do have ethical value for Buddhists. In one place, he wrote, "Seeking God's favour means to try to be the very best to please God, so supplication can be interpreted as doing our very best."

In another place, he said, "We are thankful for our daily bread and that we survived another day. For Buddhists this means we abide in the dhamma. Christians thank God *[phra chao]* ; Buddhists thank the *phra dhamma."*

"Even though [Buddhadasa's] interpretation of supplication sounds quite Buddhist," Swearer noted, "his representation of thanksgiving sounds quite Chiristian."

In keeping with the spirit of Buddhadasa, Swearer has come up with a challenging notion as well: "A good Christian is necessarily a good Buddhist." Far from a verbal jest, the American scholar has found that as much as Christian teachings allow Buddhists to "think deeply and in new ways about the nature of their faith", so too can Christians in Thailand enrich their own beliefs by learning from their Buddhist neighbours.

One such resourceful concept concerns the Buddhist teaching of not-self *(anatta).* Swearer contended its inherent meaning bears a striking resemblance to the Christian understanding of "new creation".

"The Buddhist concept of anatta denotes a state of existence contrary to a life of grasping, mental defilement, passion, hatted and delusion. Paul [one of Jesus's disciples] contrasts two types of being or states of existence. The old life is one of bondage to the flesh, dominated by sin and, therefore, regulated by the law. The new life is one of faith filled with the power of God and freed from the conditions of existence that the apostle characterises as the old creation or the old Adam.

"Despite differences in language and symbol between the two traditions, the structural similarity between Paul's under-

standing of the new creation and the Buddhist concept of not-self is striking."

More importantly, Swearer proposed that the idea of not-self can challenge, and deepen, the meaning of the conventional Christian view of the virtur of self-giving action. It goes beyond ordinary acts of service and generosity, but requires no less than a cutting off of an ego-oriented life—a total revolution from within.

"The Buddhist teaching of not-self has both negative and positive dimensions," Swearer continued. "On the one hand, it points to the utter displacement or negation of the self-centre; on the other, however, it denotes a new mode of existence filled by compassion and equanimity that flows naturally from this radical transformation."

Throughout his life, Buddhadasa continuously worked to fulfil his three life-long goals: to promote a better understanding among religions, to encourage individuals to understand their own religion as deeply as possible, and to promote liberation from materialism. It is the very last—rampant materialism—that the reformist monk considered to be the ultimate opponent of all religions. For it can, as it already does, emerge as a new religion that promotes self-centred egoism, instead of loving kindness for fellow beings who share the same cycle of birth, old age, suffering, and death.

Vasana Chinvarakorn
Bangkok Post, May 30, 2004

Lillian's Choices

A family Council took place in a large Manhattan loft on December 26, 2003. George and Lillian Willoughby were discussing their health and welfare with three of their children—the fourth joined in via speakerphone—and two of the children's spouses. They had all met three to four times a year since 2000, when George had heart bypass surgery. He had just turned 89; Lillian was only a few weeks away from her own 89th birthday.

The first item on the agenda was not their health but Lillian's arrest and presumed court date, and how she would respond. She was one of 107 activists who, on March 20, 2003, had blockaded the federal building in downtown Philadelphia in protest of the invasion of Iraq. As the police moved in, her daughter Sally suggested ironically that she should be handcuffed. One policeman, seeing the elderly protester sitting in a wheelchair, was moved almost to apologize. "Oh, we're not all that bad," he said.



Lillian and George celebrate their 60th anniversary in Costa Rica.

He seemed more concerned how to get Lillian on a bus that would take the demonstrators to the front of the federal building to be processed.

With Lillian were both Sally and George, as her support team. Over the course of many protests, George and Lillian had learned to commit civil disobedience singly, with the other spouse standing out of harm's way to provide moral support to the one facing the U.S. judicial system. This day—"a really cold, rainy day," she recalled—Lillian meditated in her wheelchair as se waited for the law to take its course.

The Willoughbys had been working for peace for as long as they had known each other. In 1939, Scattergood Friends Boarding School in West Branch, Iowa, which Lillian had attended for three years, took on

the role of a hostel and resettlement post for East European refugees. Lillian came on board to run the food service. George was then a graduate student at University of Iowa, only 13 miles away. Mutual friends arranged a blind date for the two of them. The dates continued, and after their marriage, six months later, George joined Lillian in work at the hostel.

They married in 1940, under the care of West Branch Meeting. George, who had been raised a Presbyterian, liked to say it "saved $5 that others paid to the preacher." After a year of teaching at a New Mexico college, they returned to real-life peacemaking. George worked, early in World War II, to help resettle Japanese Americans who had been interned in camps in the mountains of the West. This task took the couple to Denver, where they became active in Fellowship of Reconciliation and Congress on Racial Equality and met activists A.J. Muste, Bayard Rustin, and James Farmer. While George tried to place Japanese Americans in suitable jobs, Lillian participated in activities meant to imtegrate Denver's theaters. They had already found their calling.

They remained in Denver only a few months. Selective Service caught up with 28-year-old George and ordered him to report for alternative service as a conscientious objector. He entered an AFSC camp in Trenton, North Dakota. Lillian returned home to Iowa to give birth to their first child. Later, George arranged a transfer to Alexian Brothers hospital in Chicago, where Lillian (with infant Sharon) joined him and found employment as the hospital dietitian.

By the time Selective Service released George, Sally was on the way. In all, four children were born to the Willoughbys between 1944 and 1949. George became the chief breadwinner; Lillian was busy at home. They spent eight years in Des Moines, during which time George with others succeeded in establishing an AFSC regional office. For her part, Lillian was instrumental in setting up an unprogrammed meeting in the city.

The family moved to the Philadelphia area in 1954, so that George could take up work counseling conscientious objectors. For another three years, Lillian nurtured her family and worked on Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Religious Education Committee, together with three friends from Westtown School, where she had finished high school. She also helped integrate Woodbury Friends School, which some of her children attended. Her action did not endear her to all the members of meeting. This was the 1950s, after all, and even Quakers, she recalled, "were looking for communists behind the benches."

Her role changed dramatically in 1957, when she and George joined a protest at the Mercury Flats atomic testing grounds in Nevada. On August 6, 1957, she was one of 11 protesters—and the only woman—to trespass on the testing site and be arrested. Suddenly, her name was in newspapers and on television across the land and she had attained noted status in the peace movement. She was not jailed or fined, but barred from the test site for a year. In fact, it would be 31 years before she returned to trespass again.

In 1958, George made the headlines, when he and three other men attempted to sail a ketch, *The Golden Rule,* into the Pacific nuclear test zone and were imprisoned in Honolulu. Lillian did not sit home waiting by the phone. With others, she conducted a sit-in at the Maryland headquarters of the Atomic Energy Agency; the protesters stayed until the director, Admiral Lewis Strauss, agreed to meet with them. Meanwhile she fasted for six days, believing that fasting helped her clarify her thoughts. Before George returned from his six months' imprisonment, she had also joined a successful effort to integrate the new Levittown (now Willingboro), New jersey.

During the early 1960s, while George was acting globally, including forays into India, Lillian busied herself with service activites close to home. She helped to estalish a library in her hometown of Deptford, N.J., where there had never been one before. She was also instrumental in the establishment of the South Jersey Peace Center, which took the peace message to local schools and became a draft counseling center during the Vietnam War.

By the time of Vietnam, Lillian, a lifelong tax resister, had become well acquainted with the Internal Revenue Service; she liked to speak of herself as "educating the IRS." In one celebrated incident, after the IRS seized the Willoughbys' car, the couple raised sufficient funds to redeem it at auction. Indeed, they raised much more than enough, and so they could claim their car and a refund as well. Lillian had brought a cake and lemonade to the IRS offices on the day of the auction. Once their bid had been declared the

winner, she staged a party outside the auction room; one or two of the agents shared refreshments with them. When their refund came, she and George donated it to the peace movement.

During the early '60s, she had been comparatively inactive in the protests in which George played a central role. She was for much of that time chief family breadwinner as a dietetics consultant. And she still had children at home. The Willoughby children joined their parents in a variety of peacemaking activites: demonstrations at army arsenals, vigils, marches in support of various causes. Son Alan liked to say, "This was our way of going on vacation." As the children grew up and went out on their own, Lillian took on more and more responsibilities outside the home, and George and she increasingly became a team in peace activites.

In 1972, she participated in one of the first protest actions of the new Movement for a New Society (MNS). Sometime during that spring, MNS got word that munitions bound for Vietnam were to be brought by train to a ship in the port at Leonardo, N.J. That summer, with a host of other participants, Lillian carried a Star of David and a Cross from a nearby church onto the railroad tracks, where they mounted them to try to block the train, then sat down to worship. After being warned, those who remained in worship were arrested and dragged roughly onto a bus, until Lillian stood on the bus steps and admonished the arresting authorities: "Let's not have so much pushing here!"

When she was summoned to trial, she and another Quaker wrote a letter to the judge advising him that they would not rise at a judge's entrance, although they meant no disrespect. The bailiff instructed everyone to remain seated when the court came into session and the judge seemed predisposed to leniency. When he asked Lillian to account for her actions, she gave what had become her standard statement, that "we [the United States] should not be making war on people, and we [Lillian and like-minded taxpayers] should not have to pay for it." The judge levied a $250 fine; she announced that she had no intention of paying it; he gave her 30 days to think it over. As George put it many years later, "She's still thinking about it."

By the time of the Leonardo incident, the Willoughbys were living in an intentional community called the Life Center, in West Philadelphia. For a few years they were content to experiment with communal life, living in harmony with dozens of fellow activists the ages of their own children. They were content—but not complacent or locked in place. George had developed a strong affinity to India, and Lillian wanted to learn about it for herself. Twice during the 1970s they left the Life Center for around-the-world trips whose central point, physically and intellectually, was India.

Their main activity on these trips was to lead nonviolence training workshops. One of their topics addressed the need for women to assert their own independent spirits. Lillian modeled gender equality for her audiences. She insisted on equal billing on the podium, she spoke first in half the workshops, and she went her separate way at times. On the first trip (1974-5), for example, she briefly joined a pilgrimage by four women who walked from village to village promoting Gandhian concepts. There were occasional setbacks. When she asked a group of village women what message she could take to the women back home, one veiled listener replied, "Tell them to cover their faces."

The first trip lasted a year. The second, in 1979-80, was shorter but harder, as both Willoughbys struggled with dysentery, thefts, and scheduling and visiting problems that sometimes left them spending the night on railroad platforms. George contracted tubercular meningitis, which manifested itself after their return. Yet they never missed a workshop—not bad for two people who were now by U.S. standards senior citizens.

In 1984 the Life Center/ Movement for a New Society went into decline, and the Willoughbys moved back to their New Jersey home. It was not actually theirs any longer. Back in 1973, before most people had even thought of such matters, they had formed a land trust of their original three acres and deeded their house to the trust for a token amount. In time they acquired 35 more acres, and so created a beautiful wilderness area in the township of Deptford, Ne Jersey.

In the late 1980s, the Nevada desert called both Willoughbys back to peace activities, separately. There were annual protests at the Mercury Flats testing grounds. In 1986, George trained protesters for nonviolent direct action. As a pioneer woman in the anti-nuclear testing movement, Lillian was invited several times to participate again—to perhaps

"close the circle" on her lifelong antiwar commitment—and she accepted the challenge for a Mother's Day protest in 1988. She and Sally both trespassed on the site and were arrested. Release came quickly, but they were ordered to appear before a local court on July 5 and pay a $375 fine. They did neither; somewhere in Nevada there may be a bench warrant for Lillian's arrest.

The first Gulf War in early 1991 triggered another Willoughby protest. They were in Thailand at the time. Lillian wrote her granddaughter Ariella an account of their standing with another demonstrator, Yeshua Moser, outside the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok with protest signs. "As we stood holding our signs for the passersby to see, a tall, sour-looking policeman tried... to grab and pull Yeshua's sign away. I shook may finger at him quietly but firmly and he backed away." The scene caused a stir and the arrival of a larger, higher -powered police detachment. When the Willoughbys wouldn't yield, the police tried to drag Yeshua away. Lillian continued:

I grasped his wrist again, saying symbolically that where he went I also went. They had to confer again as this presented them with a dilemma—what to do now? The three of us continued to stand holding our signs for people to see. Then officials regrouped and backed a pick-up truck in front of us. They opened the cab door indicating Yeshua could get in voluntarily. When he didn't the police picked up Yeshua and George... But I still had hold of Yeshua's wrist.

The confronatation continued until two policewomen hoisted Lillian into the truck, saying over and over, "Sorry. Sorry."

So what would Lillian do when the summons came to appear before federal court for protesting against the newest Gulf War? Of the 107 protesters, a few had agreed to their $250 fines immediately. Twelve had their day in court on December 4, 2003, with Lillian taking part in a vigil outside. Of the twelve, five refused to pay, and then were given their chance to address the court. They were sentenced to a week in jail beginning December 17, 2003.

There were some who thought that, with Lillian turning 89, her summons would never come. What judge would want to look this almost-nonagenerian grandmother in the eye and sentence her to hard time? But Lillian expected a summons and in good Quaker fashion, she planned to call together a clearness committee to help her formulate her response. Should she ignore the summons, refuse to appear in court? If sentenced, should she refuse to appear at the jail? Should she fast? If she went to jail, should she refuse to wear the required orange jumpsuit?

One thing was certain, she told her family as they sat in daughter Anita's New York apartment the day after Christmas: she would not pay the fine. None of them seemed surrised.

Gregory Barnes
Friends Journal, May 2004

Life in the Desert

Friends of the Earth organised the Radioactive Racism Tour to inform and educate people about the impacts of the nuclear industry in Australia. The tour took 45 students and activists to the deserts of South Australia for ten days in July. They visited the state's two operating uranium mines and met with indigenous communities affected by the nuclear industry. It also gave the chance to see some beautiful desert and to go out on country with senior traditional owners of the land.

The tour began on a jubilant note with the news in the preceding week that the Federal Government had abandoned its plans for a nuclear waste dump at Woomera. While camping at Woomera the group was able to welcome the Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta to the camp with a large colourful banner saying, "KUNGKA TJUTA WINNERZ". The Kungka Tjuta are a group of women elders from Coober Pedy who had spent six years campaigning against the proposed waste dump. Their campaign was called Irati Wanti which means "the poison: leave it." They were awarded the prestigious Goldman Prize in 2003 for their efforts.

While there was time for celebration we also learnt there are still many issues to be dealt with. Andrew Starkey, representative of the Kukatha people

(traditional owners of the Woomera country), told us that his people were still dealing with the effects of the British atomic tests at Maralinga and the uranium mine at Roxby Downs.

Visits to the two uranium mines were both challenging and insightful. At both mines we were given guided tours by the mines' operators. This created a tension between actively challenging the mining companies and being passive observers. There was plenty of discussion amongst the group about this and the discussion will probably be ongoing.

During the mine tours there was no shortage of challenging questions and comments. The mine operoators were also forced to answer questions and make admissions that they would otherwise avoid.

Seeing the enormity of the operations at Roxby Downs left a strong impression. The tailings heap is enormous and it is only going to keep growing. It is the world's largest radioactive waste dump.

At the Beverley mine I got the idea that despite their confidence and belief in the in situ leach mining technique they really had little idea about what was going on under the ground. I also found it amusing when they said they were "an Australian company with American owners." Foreign ownership means the company has little incentive to be responsible for the site in the long term.

The day spent with Arabanna elder Reg Dodd was a contrast to the PR exercises the mining companies tried to put on for us. The Arabanna are the traditional owners of the mound springs and Lake Eyre country. The mound springs have been affected by



WMC pumping water out of the area for the Roxby Downs mine. The Arabanna have also been dealt with appallingly by WMC and the government in negotiations over land use in the area.

The day began with Reg taking us to the mound springs and telling us about the significance of the place. There was a gentle power in Reg's honest and direct storytelling. The ground there was rich in artefacts and Reg demonstrated how some of them were used. We all climbed to the top of a sand dune where we could fully appreciate the beauty of the landscape. It was also a chance to reflect on the fact that Aboriginal people had lived on this land for at least 40,000 years. The wisdom that Reg spoke with was an expression of that 40,000 years of experience.

We moved on to visit the old Finnis Springs Mission where Reg grew up. On the way we stopped and Reg showed us some bush tucker. At the old mission Reg continued to tell his stories. The mission was obviously a special place and one of the few places where there had been successful cooperation between the black and white people. However, the arrival of the mining companies in the 1970s disturbed the peace.

The experiences of this trip will remain with me for a long time. Uranium mining creates short term profits but it also creates a radioactive legacy which lasts for thousands of years. The mining companies obviously have little sense of responsibility for this problem and it will be left for future generations to deal with.

I was also deeply impressed by the wisdom of the indigenous people. The destruction of their culture has gone hand in hand with the environmental destruction of the land. It is only when the indigenous culture and knowledge is fully respected that the land can begin to heal.

David Reid



Inner Peace for Social Action

It does not take much talent to re-cognize that modern societies invest so much—in fact inexorably—in war and violence. For instance, every year the US spends more on their military budget than Russia, China, France, England and Germany combined. And we may be hard pressed to find a so-called Third World country that is "third world" militarily. Martin Luther King Jr. was straight to the point when he stated: "our scientific power has outrun our spiritual power. We have guided missiles and misguided men." It does take a bit of a talent to imagine otherwise. If similar investments were made in peace and nonviolence, the results would be beyond our imaginations. We may well learn to imagine peace rather than war as the natural state of human affairs. As Mahatma Gandhi said, "We are constantly being astonished these days at the amazing discoveries in the field of violence. But I maintain that far more undreamt of and seemingly impossible discoveries will be made in the field of nonviolence."

Glenn Paige's latest book, *Nonkilling Global Political Science*, is an important move in this direction-into the unknown, the undiscussed, the distorted, the hidden and the misunderstood. Contrary to mainstream academic currents, Paige insists that a nonkilling society and nonkilling political science is possible, not unthinkable. Paige paints a picture of a human society that refuses to disavow the possibility of cultivating peace and sustainable development. For instance, he points out "73 of the world's 195 countries and territories had abolished the death penalty by 2000 and 27 countries were without standing armies by 2001."

Throughout his book, Paige offers insights in nonkilling transformation (educational and training), nonkilling knowledge in practice (applied), transforming and creating organisations to facilitate nonkilling change (institutional), and creating and adapting methods of inquiry, analysis and action most suitable for nonkilling transformational tasks (methodological). Paige puts it well when he writes, "Violence-assuming political science tends to discourage nonviolent creativity. By dismissing it in professional training as deviantly 'utopian', 'idealistic' and 'unrealistic', political science intellect is condemned to confinement in perpetual lethality. Nonkilling creativity offers promise of liberation."

From a Buddhist perspective, violence has its origins in the three poisons of the mind-greed, hatred and ignorance or delusion - in order to act nonviolently you must overcome these three poisons. You must develop the mental attitude that is the opposite of greed, ignorance and hatred. So to carry out a nonviolent action you need an intention, an object and an act.

Hence, merely refraining from acts of violence only succeeds on a basic level in overcoming violence. To cultivate the good qualities of the mind and actively carry out nonviolent actions represents a higher level of understanding. So in order to truly practice nonviolence we need to eliminate the three poisons of greed, anger and ignorance and cultivate positive qualities transforming the three poisons with generosity, compassion and wisdom.

Buddhism also has the concept of Karma, which can be very helpful when we try to understand the eruption of violence. Everything we experience is the result of previous causes and conditions. We must be aware that how we act now will affect our life in the future. We reap what we sow and we cannot avoid the results of our karma. If we have this awareness then we will try our best to sow some seeds of peace.

For Buddhists the law of karma reminds us that when faced with violence we must not react against it violently.

You all may agree with me that education is not simply about learning and teaching. It is also about leading an appropriate way of life in society, about supporting oneself and others, about overcoming oppression and exploitation, and about nurturing wisdom. Unfortunately, this meaning of education had more or less disappeared. The brain and individualism have been overemphasized at the expense of sensitivity, sensibility, and spirituality. From Plato to Descartes, a mind-body dualism can be seen in western philosophy. The well-known Cartesian dictum "cogito ergo sum" is an exemplary case. In this dualism, the mind is seen as trapped inside or even enslaved by the alien body. Here the body is also depicted as traitor to or an enemy of Reason: it distracts the mind's pursuit of truth in various ways-lusts, hunger, sickness, fatigue, fantasies, etc. Thus the body threatens our ability to control:

the ultimate objective of control is literally transcendence, the triumph of the will over the body; that is, doing away with the body to attain what is called "the view from nowhere"-or in a more theological fashion, the God-eye's view. Equally important, the mind here is often associated with Man, and the body with Man's other - the woman. And through the history of imperialism and colonialism, the mind became associated with the White Man (the true human type), and the body, the irrational or hysterical natives-those mindless bodies. So the mind-body dualism not only creates a hierarchy, but also prescribes the control and disciplining of the others in name of superiority and disembodied objectivity.

"I breathe therefore I am," might have been the Buddha's response to Descartes. Here the mind and the body are seen as one; there is no splitting. I am embodied, and must always be acting from somewhere, and I must be aware of this fact. It is not about getting out of the world or about being thrown into the world. The body may often have its sensual attachments but it is not a prison-house of the mind. Hence it is not something to be punished, abused, tamed, and disciplined or sculpted a la plastic surgery; rather it has to be understood through compassion and nonviolence and live harmoniously with. Ultimately, Buddhism urges us to be "awake" or what is often called "enlightened." Being awake in part results from proper or mindful breathing. And the objective of being awake is not attaining the view from nowhere (or the view from everywhere for that matter). Rather, it is about being mindful, about being aware of one's limitations and prejudices, about Right Livelihood, about the here and now. It is this mindfulness that is vital when engaging with others and the world. David Loy has nicely clarified on what it means to be awakened based on Buddhist sociology. Loy writes thus: "To wake up is to realize that I am not in the world, I am what the world is doing right here and now. When Shakyamuni became enlightened, the whole world awakened in him and as him. The world begins to heal when we realized that its sufferings are our own."

If as Loy suggests, "I am not in the world, I am what the world is doing right here and now" and if "The world begins to heal when we realized that its sufferings are our own", then Buddhism urges us to substitute compassion and humility for narcissism, dialogues for monologues - in short, nonviolent social engagement. We will never be able to know what the world is doing right here and now and heal its sufferings without engaging with it. There is no such thing as personal or individual salvation in Buddhism. The process of understanding life therefore cannot be realized by rejecting the world, but by working for social justice and change. As Christopher Queen of Harvard University has recently observed, "There's been a sea-change in the Buddhist tradition....Buddhists have gotten up off their cushions, recognizing that collective sources of suffering in the world must be addressed by collective action."

With compassion one will be able to enter in continuous and active dialogues with others and overcome dualisms that pit "us" against "them", human against subhuman, rich against poor, man against woman, and so on. Indeed misrecognition can lead not only to aggression, but also to asphyxiating self-hatred. What others, especially one's significant others, think thus affects one's identity, potential for self-realization, and social position because it also impacts the fair and equal distribution of resources and opportunities. For instance, human beings are also cultural beings, and an attack on a culture is simultaneously an attack on the bearer of that culture. This is because identity is dialogical as opposed to monological. On this view, the sources of injustice must also be addressed at the cultural or spiritual level, requiring cultural, discursive, and symbolic remedies.

Compassion is not incompatible with competition. His Holiness the Dalai Lama makes the distinction between two kinds of competition when he says that one kind of competition is only for individual glory and the other kind of competition includes an awareness that other people must also be nurtured or empowered to succeed. Competition can be beneficial if it inspires us to be the best we can in order to serve others. Rituals and games are often built on competition but can serve also to strengthen the spirit. This discussion of competition and achievement parallels the discussion among Buddhist scholars about the purpose of *nibbana*. For some, spiritual enlightenment is a personal quest. For others, such as those in the Engaged Buddhist community, true enlightenment is built upon wisdom and compassion and is intrinsically connected with the well being of all others. The Mahayana tradition is particularly emphatic that all beings must be

liberated before the bodhisattva attains enlightenment. These discussions about the nature of competition and *nibbana* highlight how a seemingly minor difference in focus can shift the focus from an ego-centered attitude to a community-centered philosophy.

And with compassion comes forgivingness and reconciliation. With compassion, one has no fear to forgive (even the seemingly unforgivable). Forgiveness is thus the absence of fear. One does not simply tolerate or place conditions on one's hospitality, one truly forgives. Or as some put it, tolerance is akin to invitation, while forgiveness connotes visitation. Forgiveness has to be unconditional in order to be worthy of its name. His Holiness the Dalai Lama is exemplary in this case. Some social ills are so damaging and horrendous such as the Chinese invasion of Tibet and all the dreadful events in that country. Yet to have a simple monk like His Holiness and his followers insisting that we all learn to love and empathize the Chinese people and to forgive the Chinese government which has committed acts of aggression out of ignorance or delusion, not to mention out of greed and hatred, is profoundly illuminating.

Furthermore, if "I am not in the world, I am what the world is doing right here and now" and if "The world begins to heal when we realized that its sufferings are our own", we have to critically reflect on our collusion, ideologically as well as practically, in the sufferings of the world - on how we take part through our actions and omissions in perpetuating these sufferings. We have to see our collusion as collusion, not as liberation. For instance, not infrequently we unequivocally identify with the values and worldviews of the aggressor or the dominant group, seeing them as emancipatory as opposed to oppressive and there-by buttressing the patterns of hierarchy or segregation.

Another way of putting it is that we have to interrogate our collusion in structural violence. Social structures are also social constructions; they are not unchanging or natural givens. They have their political and historical developments. At the surface, they refer to organizations, institutions, laws, legal agreements, and viewpoints that have materialized. They influence or determine social action. But they also refer to a psychological category. Each structure will pressure the individual to adopt the canon or abide by the created norms. Each structure sets up the boundaries of the acceptable and the unacceptable, of the pronounceable and the unspeakable, the thinkable and the unthinkable-in short, of the truth. Social structures are thus also a worldview, in which we accept without questioning. Our minds become the sites on which they build their foundations, on which they lay their bricks. We follow the social structures tamely. We become their cheerleaders or at least passive spectators. We are afraid to confront the truth or to ask for it. We are afraid to look for hidden truths and reevaluate distorted ones.

In other words, the power of social structures is felt intensively, exerting influence over thoughts, actions, bodies, and even attitudes. Individuals who adopt the canon will enjoy a privileged status; those who do not will be marginalized. As such, social structures have become a reality even more so than human life and blood, than the jungles and trees, and than the water and the air. Social structures regulate or discipline our thoughts, bodies, and actions in our daily life. We have to establish the connections between social structures and self-surveillance and self-censorship.

Social constructions that are called the state or the nation may kill its inhabitants or jail them using various measures. The state may represent itself to others as civilized - always employing legal or juridical means, which constitute another form of social structure. Religion, another social structure, may make people believe that killing traitors or enemies is not sinful or may deceive people to spend an enormous sum of money every month in order to buy their way into heaven. Donating money or valuable personal possessions has been portrayed as the leading way of making merit these days. In my country, many temples have become terribly rich using this ploy while the communities surrounding them remain impoverished. These are just some of the examples of how each of us internalizes and individualizes the existing social structures. Inspired by the concepts of "national security" and "national development", citizens will support or at least tolerate the construction of huge dams, extensive gas pipelines, intricate networks of roads, and so on-even though the real benefits will only accrue to the privileged few, and even though the natural environment will be devastated in that process. All these will be presented as normal and natural, irreproachable and inevitable, as we move down the road of

modernity. This is not to deny the benefits of development and security. Rather, we have to be mindful of becoming collaborators in their abuses.

In particular, in this era whereby the global capitalist economy is bounded with modern technology, there is hardly any voice in the social structures inquiring whether or not the free market system is just or really free. Or is it only free to the big fish? There's little concern about labor conditions and workers' rights and about the effects of high capital mobility on labor and society. And what about animal rights in the livestock industries? No state or religion has really come out to speak for animal rights. Consumers also have very little bargaining power. They are compelled to consume impure food products, for instance; and to visit superstores and mega-malls, the new shrines of consumerism where we all can "amuse ourselves to death."

These constitute social structures that make people enamored with power. The education system is responsible for making people subservient to power intellectually, to accept the status quo and its injustices. Marxism, while opposing the capitalist system, forced its followers to raise the communist party to the altar. The military or defense department raises the specter of the enemy to legitimize the need for ever-increasing military budgets. The Thai soldiers, for instance, have never won against any external enemy. Destroying or controlling the enemies within (read: citizens) has been their main preoccupation. The government induces the people to feel insecure personally or collectively and encourages them to believe that its policies serve as the only anchoring in turbulent waters. The state is the only voice of reason. Patriotism means hyper-patriotism. Thus a traitor is anyone who opposes the state policies, and she or he must be exterminated or contained. The global mass media-comprised of extensive network of major conglomerates-are experts in legitimizing the actions of the powers that be, especially of transnational capitalism, a fact that has been heavily documented by many scholars. And opponents of the powers that be are represented as modern day infidels. One philosopher observes, "global communication networks provide every individual with a distorted image or a stereotype of all the others, either as 'kin' or as 'aliens', thus raising gigantic obstacles to any dialogue. 'Identities' are less isolated *and* more incompatible, less univocal *and* more antagonistic." Moreover, they make us believe that however inadequate the democracy we have is the best of all worlds, and so there is no need for change. Thinking about "democracy plus" beyond the boundary of the expressible.

The objective of present day education has become utterly parochial or self-serving: obtaining a degree in order to find a well-paid job. Present day education is dis-empowering, offering no tools to dismantle the violent social structures and rarely voicing the view from below-from the peripheries or the margins. Education has thus become "a system of imposed ignorance" reinforcing the internalized power structures. Put another way, mainstream education is a form of autoimmunity, whereby the self in a suicidal manner immunizes itself against its own immunity.

If education does not want to become "a system of imposed ignorance" it has to be dialogical, inclusive, and compassionate. It has to heal the rift between the mind and the body. Buddhism has pointed to a way in doing so, and it is incorporated into its education and practices. An alternative educational practice that has been introduced to the West is mental training or meditation. It is an essential training for all Dhamma practitioners. Meditation is used to tread or reconstruct the mind's winding paths, in order to pursue what are considered to be the normal states of the mind. We are often attached to our minds and our bodies (ranging from our worldviews to our appearances). As such we are often troubled by the five hindrances: sensual desire, hatred, indolence, anxiety, and uncertainty. These thoughts and feelings inhibit and whither the mind and the body. Meditation is used to enliven and nourish the mind and the body. When we have learned to calm our minds there will be inner peace. Our demeanor will be humble and caring. We will no longer dwell in our monologues and begin to engage with others compassionately. We will be able to give birth to true love that is not centered on lust and possessiveness, which are inextricable from greed, hatred and delusion.

In Buddhism the normal states of the mind are compassion, generosity, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. We will be able to perceive non-judgmentally and be awakened from the various forms of mental domination rooted in greed, hatred, and delusion, all of which are best manifested by capitalism, militarism, and compartmentalized knowledge systems. Meditation

leads to wisdom; that is, the ability to know various states in their reality, without self-attachment. This will instill compassion, sympathy, and forgivingness in us. We will live in freedom.

So what does it mean to be a Buddhist these days? We must find the appropriate light to interpret the teachings of the Buddha in order to awaken us from various forms of domination. We must understand the complexity of modern society, especially structural injustice and violence. We must ask ourselves what is the meaning of our lives: to have, to buy, to indulge, to possess, or simply to be? If we realized that the meaning of life is to be rather than to have we will know our role and identity in society. We will know how to appropriately behave to others and to the environment. Buddhist teachings in the past do not have power in themselves and cannot deal with the malaise of industrialized or globalized societies, of transnational corporations and planeterized capitalism. We must not treat mental training as a form of escapism or personal salvation. Rather mental training must awaken our wisdom so we will be able to wisely engage with society and deal with the multiple crises of greed, hatred, and delusion in the present.

A keynote address at the University of Main June 18, 2004. Later adapted as a public lecture at the YBA Hall of the Hilo Hong-wanji Bet Suin, Hawaii on June 25, where Aitken Roshi introduced the speaker as follows:

Sulak Sivaraksa as introduced by Aitken Roshi

I am happy to introduce Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa to you this evening. We first met at the founding meeting of the Buddhist Christian Society at the University of Hawai'i Manoa back in 1980. I remember that his plane was late, and he appeared at the entrance of the old Klum Gym after we were already started with our first session. Somehow the large assembly fell silent at his entrance. A personage has arrived, we all knew.

A personage indeed. Ajahn Sulak was born and raised in Siam, the traditional name which he prefers to use, and educated at the University of Wales, where he earned a degree in law. Returning to Bangkok in 1962, he established the Social Science Review, which became Siam's foremost intellectual magazine that dealt with political and social issues in that time of military dictatorship. It was through this work that he became concerned about grassroots issues facing his country. Accordingly by the 1970s he was a central figure in a number of non-governmental organizations, several of which he himself founded. Through these organizations he was instrumental in developing indigenous, sustainable and religious models for change. In recent years he has expanded his field to an international level, and co-founded the Asian Cultural Forum on Development, and the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, in which the Buddhist Peace Fellowship is an organizational member.

All this led to trouble with Siamese authority, and he has twice been indicted and tried for lese majesty, slander of the king, which is shorthand for being subversive. It is ironic that he should have been so charged, since he is really a conservative Siamese, very loyal to the Royal House, concerned about keeping traditional values endangered by consumerism and the other evils of acquisitive colonizing. He has spent years in exile, mostly teaching at British and American universities. He has been twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, and was given the Right Livelihood Award, often called the alternative Nobel Peace Prize, in 1995. He is with us on his return to Bangkok after an extended period of lecturing in the U.S.

Ajahn Sulak was a disciple of the late great Buddhadassa Bhikku, founder of what is now the progressive wing of Siamese Buddhism. Let me share with you a fragment from Buddhadasa's writing to give you a sense of what lies at the source of Ajahn Sulak's inspiration:

"The entire cosmos is a cooperative. The sun, the moon, and stars live together as a cooperative. The same is true for humans, animals, and the soil. Our bodily parts function as a cooperative. When we realize that the world is a mutually interdependent, cooperative enterprise, that human beings are all mutual friends in the process of birth, old age, suffering, and death, then we can build a noble, even a heavenly environment. If our lives are not based on this truth then we shall all perish."

This is the radical conservatism that you will hear in practical terms this evening. Please join me in welcoming Ajahn Sulak to Moku Hawai'i this evening.

The Role of Buddhist Monks in Contemporary Society

Buddhism has developed and grown over the centuries. Its teachings and practices have diversified into many sects and have spread into many countries. As a result, there are many different interpretations of the Buddha's teachings, contributing to different sets of the *vinaya* as well as different religious ceremonies. Some are tainted with occultism and Brahmanism. We must not forget that Buddhism developed in India more than 2500 years ago. Buddhist devotees and practitioners then were hardly immune to the worldviews of Brahmin culture; and these worldviews are still embedded in Buddhism. And therefore if we could not grasp the substance of Buddhism, we will only be left with superficial ceremonies and practices influenced by Brahmanism and occultism. The Buddha himself had warned us not to be unequivocally attached to *sila* or practices. Put another way, we must be able to contextualize Buddhism and make it suitable to present society.



Dhammayatra along Mekhong River to raise awareness on envinonment organized by Sekiyadhamma Group of Thai ordained and lay Buddhists.

In order to achieve this, we must understand that the substance of Buddhism is like a wise ploy to help awaken us from selfishness so that we will be able to serve all sentient beings. Once awakened, we will be able to transform our greed into generosity, hatred into compassion, and ignorance into wisdom.

Generosity not only entails the giving of material goods but also of the dhamma. Put differently, generosity also means the giving of truths to society, especially to a society that is full of deceits, half-truths, and impurities (such as moral absolutism, nationalism, monarchism, and other isms). When practiced consistently, generosity contributes to the absence of fear. If we have no fear we will have no enemies, will not see others as our enemies. Fear is the result of self-attachments. This is therefore the gist of generosity.

Compassion means love without selfishness. It is thus linked to social harmony and orderliness, justice, ways to mitigate exploitation and oppression, and natural preservation and equilibrium. Compassion is cultivated through moral training.

Wisdom entails self and social understanding. It means understanding how the realities of the world 'work' on us as well as the truth of the dhamma. Meditation nurtures wisdom.

If we are unable to understand the underlying messages of generosity, moral training, and meditation, we can easily lose our way because they will simply be empty practices. In fact, the basis of these practices is the reduction of selfishness in order to be enlightened. It is easy for generosity to be a mask for selfishness or for moral training to be a platform to boast one's superiority. Monks are not immune to this feeling. If meditation is not performed along the lines of Right Concentration, it can easily transform into various forms of perversity or derangement.

* * *

Before we talk about the role of monks in contemporary society, we must first be clear who what we call "monks" are. For most Thais, the category "monk" simply refers to bhikkhus and (if they are open-minded and have understood or eliminated their prejudices) bhikkhunis. In Mahayana Bud-

dhism there are four assemblies: the community of bhikkhus, the community of bhikkhunis, the community of male devotees, and the community of female devotees. These four assemblies do not constitute a hierarchy. In other words, the community of bhikkhus does not naturally sit at the apex.

Have we ever asked why the Thai bhikkhus enjoy a higher status than the lay people do? Is this an unchanging given or a matter of historical distortion or political maneuvering? My guess is that the higher status of the Thai bhikkhus vis-à-vis the lay people has something to do with the toppling of King Taksin and the establishment of the Chakri dynasty. Religion was used as a political tool in this incident. Especially since the times of King Rama V, Thai bhikkhus have been lavished with ecclesiastical titles and material benefits, making them willful servants or subordinates of the absolute monarchy. Later, they also kowtow to the power and whims of the politicians, technocrats, merchants, western-educated intellectuals, and so on.

A very important thing that monks must never forget is that the essence of celibacy is rooted in simplicity and humility. Both are gained from generosity, compassion and wisdom. A good monk is thus a simple monk. The Right Livelihood of a simple monk will influence the lifestyle of the lay people. He will serve as their role model. Even if the lay people do not practice celibacy like monks do, they will learn to cultivate generosity, compassion, and wisdom to reduce their self-attachments.

The Buddha opposed the selfishness espoused by Brahmanism. In fact, he denied the idea of an autonomous self, replacing it with his concept of non-self or the impermanence of the self. He established the sangha as an alternative community whose basis was equality; alternative, that is, to the segregationist and hierarchical nature of mainstream society. The Buddha stressed that in order to practice the three-fold training and be emancipated from greed, hatred and delusion sangha members must lead a life of simplicity and humility. He encouraged them to be wary of the lures of Brahmanism and its elaborate ceremonies. He emphasized the importance of self-reliance as opposed to divine intervention or occultism (which the faith in technology is its latest manifestation). Most Buddhists have forgotten these warnings. They are attracted to Brahmanism. Worse, monks see themselves as possessors of divine and magical powers. And they have become entangled with the powers that be in the political and economic realms.

How then can they be worthy models for novices? A monk who has led a celibate life for at least ten years also has a role in ordaining novices. And he is to serve as a spiritual teacher to novices during the first five years of the latter's ordination. The first five years serve as the time needed for novices to learn to take care of themselves. It will take another five years for them to become senior monks of the order. How can shameless monks even dream of ordaining others? How can they even be good spiritual leaders? Of course, they cannot. Small wonder that Buddhism is in a crisis in the country.

If monks are not able to play these roles in the bhikkhu community, how can they play a positive social role—how can they be socially responsible? They will simply be fooling themselves and others. In this scenario the lay people are better off practicing the three-fold training on their own rather than relying on the guidance of shameless monks.

We must also ascertain whether or not the devotees (of monks or otherwise) have ever had a "religious experience." Here a religious experience is defined as follows: practices that (1) facilitate the understanding of the magic and profundity of life; (2) that are continuously exhibited or manifested; and (3) that ultimately lead to the emergence of a religious livelihood based on understanding and the truth. The first became the teachings of the world's religions; the second, their ceremonies; and the third, their sets of moral conducts and duties to guide the devotees along the right path.

With the passing of time and the influences of culture and social praxis, these teachings became engraved in stone. They could not be challenged or questioned, only unequivocally and passively accepted. Ceremonies eventually became sheer formalities—perfunctorily performed—or became means of serving power. And religious guidelines on moral conduct and duties became compulsory customs. Without understanding this development we can easily miss the trees for the forest.

Before monks want to play any role in contemporary society, they must honestly ask who they are. They must ask why they decided to choose a celibate life. Was it to escape from poverty and the hardships it entailed? Was it a means to

enhance their social position? I dare say that only a few monks chose celibacy to emancipate themselves from greed, hatred and ignorance. The longer monks are in the order, the higher they climb the tall ecclesiastical order, and they can easily be overwhelmed by greed, hatred and ignorance. How then could bhikkhus see the merits of celibacy, especially in a society dominated by consumer capitalism and global media corporations?

Therefore, monks must first awaken themselves from social domination—from social constructions and structural violence. If monks are morally courageous enough to defy social constructions nonviolently and re-examine their roots, they will not be humiliated by their humble origins. They will be able to see that poverty is a by-product of capitalism, and they will begin to confront poverty and structural violence.

As long as they are monks, even if they are not determined to devote their lives to Buddhism, they must not lie to themselves and others. If they are mindful of the sufferings in society, the more they will see the vacuity in their dream of climbing the ecclesiastical order. And they will learn to devote their lives to society (that is, all sentient beings) and to the Lord Buddha.

For any one to embark on this path, they must have time for mental training in order to cultivate inner peace and critical self-reflection. They will then substitute simplicity, humility and sincerity for stress, aggression and arrogance. Aside from mental training, they must search for and gradually expand their circle of virtuous companions.

As our external voices of moral conscience they help facilitate our critical self-reflection, persuading us to come to terms with our wrongs and offenses and making us responsible for the consequences of our actions so that we may be more mindful in our future actions and ultimately transcend greed, hatred and delusion.

If monks begin to relate to themselves and society in these ways they may begin to see things holistically—and they will know what to do personally and collectively. If monks train themselves to achieve inner peace and noble practices they may start making temples simple and beautiful, purifying temples from pollutants such as shameless monks and preserving the arts and architectures. They will not be swayed by the lures of the concrete jungle lying beyond the temple's grounds. They will moderate their consumption of television—and the consumerism laden in its messages and advertisements. They will begin to have compassion for the poor and exploited in the run-down communities nearby the temple.

To develop society or the rural areas does not simply mean the provision of material goods. It certainly does not mean refashioning the people in the rural areas in the image of the urban folks or the middle class. Rather it means to make them proud of their wisdom, heritage and identities. It means persuading them to see the virtue of self-reliance and the truth of the dhamma—convincing them to rely on self-reliance and the dhamma in their struggle against consumerism and transnational capitalism. In the past, monks played a role in preserving and promoting the arts—music, painting, sculpturing, etc. Monks were also knowledgeable in the science of healing. The state gradually circumscribed and ultimately destroyed these roles, seeing the knowledges that monks possessed as primitive and unscientific. If some of these roles are revived and adapted to the needs of contemporary society, they may well be beneficial. This also applies to religious practices and ceremonies.

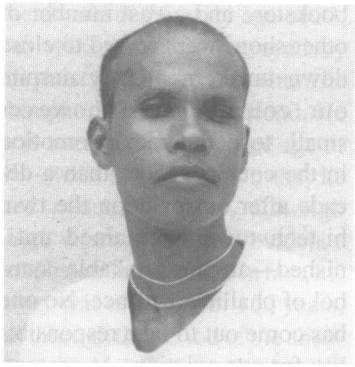
Monks once served as the paradigm of Buddhist livelihood, whose practices and ceremonies were suitable for simple agrarian societies and whose worldview was influenced by beliefs in the cycles of birth and death, heaven and hell, reincarnation, and so on. Now societies worldwide are increasingly complex. As a result, Buddhist teachings in the traditional patterns are increasingly seen as meaningless. Our younger generation is no longer interested in the substance of Buddhism, and is easily led astray by various pollutants, which contribute to the culture of violence. If we cannot reach our youth whither the future of Buddhism? If we cannot transcend the prevailing consumerism, materialism, and culture of violence how can we have a culture of awakening? Here it is important to understand social structures and structural violence. Adapting the substance of the ten *paramita* to the sufferings in contemporary may overcome our present predicaments.

(a part of this lecture was published in *The Bangkok Post* on July 25, 2004)

Midnight University Speech

A keynote address is not necessarily synonymous with a praise or glorification. It is not necessarily a site where only beautiful things are said, where flowery language flourished. I also see a keynote address as a place to speak the truth, challenge power, and raise embarrassing questions and facts.

First, let me commend the Midnight University for presenting Mrs. Jintana Kaewkao and Mr. Chareon Wataksorn with honorary doctorate degrees. Both have courageously and steadfastly stood beside their community members in the nonviolent struggle against injustice. Both have sought knowledge holistically and are guided by goodness. By presenting both individuals with honorary doctorate degrees, the Midnight University has shown that it does not segregate people along class lines. The Midnight University has shown that individuals whom the "decent" society considers ignorant or individuals who may not pass as educated according to the standards of mainstream education may in fact be highly knowledgeable and wise. This constitutes a redefinition of the idea of education. The Buddha insists that both the ignorant and the wise may attain Enlightenment. If mainstream universities have attained some degree of reflexivity they may decide to present the marginalized with honorary degrees like the Midnight University has done. Indeed, people from the grassroots and the periphery possess great local and traditional knowledge, which is often rooted in the dhamma. The ruling class however could hardly



Mr. Chareon Wataksorn who has been assasinated on June 21, 2004.

fathom this body of knowledge, denigrating it as useless or primitive.

Mainstream universities often grant honorary doctorate degrees to the rich and the privileged—to politicians, technocrats, billionaires, etc. It does not seem to matter that many of them have exploited their people or have participated in the destruction of the natural environment, directly or otherwise. If one is not from the privileged class, at best one will be able to receive an honorary master degree from mainstream universities.

I understand that one of the main objectives of the Midnight University is to cultivate knowledge and holistic teachings in order to attain truthfulness. To approach the truth, one must first confront the root causes of suffering. Our citizens have suffered immensely for too long due to our elites' obsession with capitalism, consumerism, cutting-edge technology, and progress.

Other universities also have a role to play in cultivating holistic knowledge, in steering away from compartmentalized knowledge. Professors and academics must step down from the ivory tower and confront the sufferings of the people—the poor who happen to be the majority in the country. Otherwise, the knowledge they seek or profess will not be able to approach the truth. When knowledge is delinked from the truth, it cannot enter into the realm of goodness. As such mainstream universities cannot teach goodness to their students: Buddhist studies are greatly different from the study of ethics. Unless one approaches the truth, one cannot be a good person. The less knowledge is rooted in selfishness, the more it will understand the truth—the more knowledge will be transformed into wisdom which is linked to compassion or love for the underprivileged. We must jointly find the roots of suffering in order to extinguish them.

When knowledge has attained one-ness with the truth it approaches goodness. The manifestation of knowledge will thus be delicate and beautiful—will be akin to a form of art, including the preservation of nature. It is a form of knowledge that is not delusional or deceitful. It cherishes simplicity and humility. And it is open to marginalized views, to subjugated knowledges, to the views from below. This is what I consider a knowledge process that is truthful and filled with goodness. The Midnight University upholds this form of knowledge. Midnight University professors are open-minded, always willing to learn from the poor—of Pak Moon, Bo Nok, Kanchanaburi, and so on. The Midnight University and the poor have entered into a harmonious relationship based on

equal respect. The attitude of the Midnight University is in stark contrast to that of mainstream universities, whose administrators are often condescending to the poor. The latter often feel superior to the underprivileged, even though they may feel a deep sense of lack inside especially vis-à-vis the West.

Take Chulalongkorn University as an example. It was the first university to be established in the kingdom. Before, there was a symbiotic relationship between the university and the Samyan community nearby. The Samyan area was where students gathered to find food and good books and intermingle with their professors. The university however evicted a great number of shops and tenants in the area in the name of promoting progress: it wanted to build a hi-tech research and technological center for scientific development. My bookshop stood in the Samyan area for 25 years. It was a place to cultivate wisdom and moral courage among the younger generation: many of them went out to protest against the dictatorship on 14 October 1973. My bookstore and a vast number of other shops were forced to close down unceremoniously despite our contributions, however small, to democracy promotion in the country. More than a decade after our eviction the twin hi-tech towers remained unfinished—an unmistakable symbol of phallic arrogance. No one has come out to take responsibility for our eviction. At present, Thammasat University is trying to relocate its campus from the Ta Prachan area to Rangsit, a move that is likely to destroy the surrounding community and the historical legacy in which it was rooted.

Small wonder that mainstream scholars and academics produce works that are devoid of truthfulness because they lack goodness. Their works even veer towards evil—greed, hatred, and delusion. Many have prostituted their intellect to the ruling class and mega-corporations.

It is heartening and inspirational to see individuals and communities from the margins striving to decenter the center, to debunk established truths that are inseparable from power through patience, persuasion, dialogue and nonviolence. They deserve to be commended, to say the least. Their actions may contribute to the moral awakening of society. And they have closely collaborated with independent scholars, responsible intellectuals, and nongovernmental organizations. All these may well contribute to social and spiritual transformations—of greed into generosity, hatred into compassion, delusion into wisdom, compartmentalized knowledge into holistic knowledge, etc—from the bottom up. If successful this will constitute a victory not only for the people of Bo Nok, Pak Moon, and Kanchanaburi, but for all citizens.

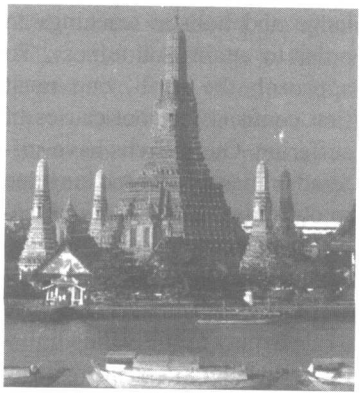
(Excerpted from Sulak Sivaraksa's keynote address at the Midnight University in Bangkok.)

Dhonburi, the Former Capital of Siam from Past to Present

I

After the destruction of Ayudhya in 1767, Dhonburi was the capital of Siam for 15 years, before it moved to the present site on the opposite side of the river with the establishment of the Chakri Dynasty in 1782.

There was only one king of Dhonburi, who was not only a commoner but was also of a Chinese descent. He was very courageous and charismatic, and was considered the liberator of the country.



Temple of Dawn
an important temple in Dhonburi

One has to realize that when the Burmese destroyed the old capital and occupied the central part of Siam, the country was divided into six autonomous regions. The King of Dhonburi, who had fled Ayudhya before the fall of the capital, went to the east, as far as Chandaburi, near the Cambodian border. He gathered a small troop of Thai and Chinese and traveled by sea to attack Dhonburi, which had been a

strong fort even before the 17th century. He then proceeded to defeat the Burmese garrison at the old capital of Ayudhya. This new charismatic leader did it so swiftly that he indeed proclaimed national independence and sovereignty within less than a year. Ayudhya lost its glory in April 1767. The Burmese burnt down almost the entire capital. Yet the new king re-conquered Ayudhya before the end of December of the same year. However, a former King and members of the royal family as well as many Thais were taken to Burma as captives and national treasures were looted and transported to Burma. The new king felt that it was impossible to reconstruct the former capital, especially since there were five other chieftains within the kingdom all proclaiming themselves to be independent of one another. Hence the charismatic leader declared Dhonburi the new capital and from there he managed to subdue all the other five rivals. As a result, he became the supreme king of Siam, which expanded its territory incorporating Laos and Cambodia as its protectorates, despite the fact that the Burmese periodically attacked the kingdom. Yet they could never again successfully defeat the Thais.

The King of Dhonburi is also known as King Taksin. 'Sin' was his original name, and he was the governor of Tak, a small northern province, before he was ordered to Ayudhya to defend the capital. Witnessing the corruption of the royal court and the hopelessness of Siamese administration at the top level, he felt that the end of the dynasty was inevitable. Hence he left the capital with a small group of courageous admirers and followers to return to save the country after the dreadful destruction.

The King of Dhonburi ably ruled for 15 years. He ascended the throne at the early age of 33, but was ultimately betrayed by his most trusted general whom he thought was his good friend. He was executed at the prime age of 48—with the accusation that he had mental disorder, although there was no historical evidence to substantiate the fact. In fact, his glory was eclipsed for 150 years, all through the period of the absolute monarchy of the Chakri dynasty.

It was gossiped that before he was beheaded the King of Dhonburi prophesied that his usurper would be in power for 150 years—in fact he was very generous as his reign only lasted 15 years. He was also supposed to have said that if a bridge was built to link Dhonburi with the new capital on the other side of the river, that would indeed be the sign of the end of the new dynasty.

To celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Chakri dynasty on 6th April 1932, it was deemed essential to build a memorial bridge to honor the founder of the dynasty as this would be the symbol of progress in the age of modernisation and advanced technology. Even an air-conditioned cinema was to be built near the new bridge—the first of its kind in Asia. Yet the curse or the prophecy of the King of Dhonburi was still haunting (at least subconsciously) the top members of the royal Chakri dynasty, although this was not documented anywhere. However compromises were reached, and the bridge built was a suspended one. The argument was that the naval base was still at the former capital of Dhonburi above the bridge, which had to be suspended every time the battleship sailed to sea. Besides the bridge was constructed in the shape of an arrow, shooting from the new capital to the other side of the river, almost directly to the temple where the ashes of the late King of Dhonburi was kept.

Rumor had it that there would be a *coup d' état* in 1932. The then king might even be assassinated on 6th April, the day he would inaugurate the memorial bridge. But nothing happened on that day. In fact the celebration went on for weeks, until the king was exhausted and retired to Hua Hin, the seaside resort, for his annual vacation. Then on 24th June of the same year, there was a bloodless *coup* in Bangkok which really ended the absolute monarchy of the Chakri House.

Had it not been due to Pridi Banomyong, the brain behind the plan for Thai democracy, the military leaders would have declared Siam a republic at the time. Pridi argued that we needed a constitutional monarchy, for continuity of our culture and identity. Yet the king would be only the first among equals, among all the citizens. There would no longer be divine right, which was part of the Buddhist worldview.

Pridi, like the King of Dhonburi, was a commoner from Ayudhya. Although a civilian, he was a brilliant intellectual with strong moral courage to serve the people and the country. With his friends he successfully established a constitutional monarchy in Siam in 1932. He was then 33 years old. He was the first secretary general of the new parliament before moving to join the cabinet, which underwent much reformation and decentralization, augured fiscal improvement in the country, and ended extra

territorial rights imposed on us by imperial powers since we opened our country to the west in the 1850s. He also founded the University of Moral and Political Sciences to prepare the younger generation to be politicians in the new democratic regime with a sense of service, honesty, dedication and dignity. He even produced an English film, entitled *The King of the White Elephant*, to warn the peoples of the world about the danger of looming global war, stating that the best way was to avoid armed conflict by diplomacy and reconciliation. He had the Royal Thai government declared its policy of neutrality. Yet the then prime minister, being a field marshal who admired Hitler and Mussolini, agreed secretly with Japan to allow Japanese troops to occupy Siam on its march to Burma, Malaya, Singapore and Indonesia. Hence Pridi had to leave the cabinet to join the regency, since the young king was a minor still studying in Switzerland. Eventually Pridi was the sole regent and in that capacity he organized the Free Thai Movement operating clandestinely against the Japanese occupation and working in collaboration with the Allies. Despite the fact that the Thai government had declared war against Britain and the USA, Pridi's hard work during World War II was ultimately recognized. In the wake of the war, the country was not classified in the same category as Japan, Italy, and Germany. In fact Siam joined the UN before Sweden.

Unfortunately when King Rama VIII returned to Bangkok after the war during the premiership of Pridi, on one fine day the king was found dead in the royal bed chamber. Pridi had many rivals who wanted to maintain their feudal privileges or preferred the expediency of a dictatorial regime. These people could not accuse Pridi of corruption or sexual misdemeanors: he was a true gentleman. So they accused him of plotting for regicide and there was a military coup in 1947 which ousted Pridi from Siam for good. He was 48 years old, the same age when the King of Dhonburi was executed. He lived in exile for over three decades until he died in Paris in 1982. Hopefully, it will not take another 150 years before his contribution to Thai democracy and freedom will be recognized. Yet right now the elites are still by and large afraid to acknowledge Pridi's greatness. Although the greatness of the King of Dhonburi is not really denied, the rumor of his madness, which was supposed to be the real cause of his execution, is still published in most text books. Although the rumor of Mr. Pridi as a regicide is not published in any text book, the rumor is still widespread in many elite circles interested in preserving the status quo.

II

The reason I compared the King of Dhonburi with Pridi Banomyong is for the sole reason that unless we seriously seek the truth in order to uphold the truth so that we can really honor those worthy of honor, we will not really understand the past. And without understanding the past properly, the present would really be controlled by biased views imposed on us by our own prejudices or the prevailing ideology through the propaganda network of those in powers, politically and/or economically, via the mass media and even textbooks.

Besides, Pridi being a mere civilian, how did he manage to maintain the balance of power for 15 years, despite the fact that the military became more and more dictatorial? The fact was that the navy, with its headquarters in the former palace of the King of Dhonburi, supported him. When the leaders in the navy lost their loyalty to democratic principles and quarreled among themselves, Pridi was overthrown; and eventually the navy itself was almost entirely destroyed, stripped of its power and prestige.

Some of us in the NGO movements organized a big celebration at Ayudhya on 28th December in 1967 to mark the bicentennary of our independence from the Burmese as well as the accession to the throne of the King of Dhonburi. We asked the then government to declare that day a public holiday, just for that year, to honor our national hero. But the government denied our request. Yet the day King Taksin was dethroned (6 April 1782) is still an annual public holiday. Luckily on that very day of 28 December 1967, H.M. the king graciously performed a special offering at Wat Indaram, where the ashes of the late King of Dhonburi was kept. However no Thai government has ever thought of submitting the name of the King of Dhonburi to UNESCO for its recognition as a great personality in world history. They certainly did not do so in 1967. Yet since 1962, successive Thai governments have asked UNESCO to declare eight members of the Chakri royal family to be recognized internationally, plus three Thai commoners, one of whom was Mr. Pridi Banomyong, for the centenary of his birth in the year 2000. Even so the then Thai government cel-

ebrated the event half-heartedly. Indeed there was even an attempt to remove his name from UNESCO at the eleventh hour, because he was born in the same year as H.M. the King's mother. Some felt that a commoner should not share the glory internationally with a member of the royal family, despite the fact that the royal mother was also born a commoner and in Dhonburi. Most of you may not be aware that Dhonburi ceased to exist as a province since 1971, when the then dictator incorporated Dhonburi into Bangkok, despite the fact that Bangkok was only a village when Dhonburi was a prosperous city at least two hundred years before it became our capital in 1767.

The name "Dhonburi" itself means the city of wealth—not only materially, but also culturally and spiritually. Many excellent Buddhist monks in the kingdom used to reside in Dhonburi, especially when it was our capital. The best known one is Somdej To of Wat Rakang. His amulets are still highly prized, yet his contribution was much greater than that. In fact he could challenge the king and the nobility as well as westerners in the 19th century; he argued that spirituality was much more significant than western science and pointed to the egoistic nature of western imperialism.

The Temple of the Dawn, with its elegant and beautiful monument in the *prang* style, is not only the best monastic temple in Dhonburi. Wat Rakang itself has the best wooden library with mural paintings. The library was in fact the former residence of King Rama I of the present dynasty when he was still a commoner.

Last but not least is Wat Kalayanamitra, the replica of Sam Po Kong, the most sacred temple for the Chinese of Ayudhya. The patron of the temple was of course a Chinese, the best friend of King Rama III who also served His Majesty as prime minister.

I do not want to speak more on temples, churches or mosques of Dhonburi . They are all symbols of our spiritual wealth as well as the wealth of our culture, reflecting its diversity and religious tolerance. Besides Dhonburi was famous for its klongs or canals, which by and large are still in use, whereas those on the other side of the river have more or less disappeared. With fresh water in abundance, Dhonburi was full of fruit trees of many varieties. The orchards there were in fact the best in the country, together with its neighboring province of Nondaburi. Unfortunately, in the name of progress and development, the orchards of these two provinces had to go. Indeed ecological balance is much to be improved—not to mention social justice.

Earlier I mentioned about the Chinese prime minister of King Rama III, who was also the king's best friend. Hence his descendants bore the family name of Kalayanamitra.

In Buddhism, a kalayanamitra is not only a good friend. He or she could be your external voice of conscience. He or she could help you to develop critical self- awareness—to be humble, to be less egoistic and to find out the best of your potentials to serve others.

I am happy to say that many Chinese merchants, who married Siamese wives for many generations, have produced good Siamese citizens. So were the Muslims of Persian origin, Catholics of Portuguese origin, and Protestants of English origin. They have all become proud Thai patriots.

The overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia on the whole remain Chinese, whether they are in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia or the Philippines, although they may adopt the citizenship of those countries. Only in Siam, do the Chinese assimilate almost completely. Even for one generation the process of Siamization has already become evident due to two main factors:

1) Siamese mothers are so influential that their offspring are proud to be Thai rather than Chinese.
2) Thai Buddhism stresses so much on generosity rather than acquiring wealth and power.

With these two main factors that the Siamese could really be decent people and if these two factors are weak, we may become dehumanized, merely becoming an economic animal or merely worshipping the new religion of capitalism and consumerism—no longer being proud of our Siamese identity, despite our various ethnic origins.

As long as Dhonburi maintains its ecological balance on land and water, and with its wealth in cultures, morality and spirituality, it could indeed contribute greatly to this country—and perhaps even to the world. In such case, we must seek deeper into the uniqueness of Dhonburi itself, and probe beyond the surface level. The temples and the floating markets have deeper meanings for those who wish to understand the meaning of life beyond materialism, tourism and capitalism.

(A speech given at an international symposium held by Rajabhat University of Donburi on May 25.)

A Crisis of Faith

BANGKOK Mr Montree Leelavichitchai, a 25-year-old resident of Thailand's southern commercial hub at Hat Yai, this year followed a well-trodden path to a Buddhist temple to sample the disciplined life of a monk.

As Thai tradition has dictated he was instructed in Buddhist values and principles—waking at the crack of dawn, eating one meal a day, meditating and listening to senior monks.

But to this age-old quest, Mr Montree added a modern twist—a week later, he was back at his office in town working on his family business.

His story is more typical now than it was even just 10 years ago. Once, young Thai men lived at temples for three months during the rainy season.

Today, time is precious, many staying only briefly—and some not bothering at all.

"People are in a hurry now, to finish their degrees, or to work," says Phra Bhante Kantasilo, a senior monk in Wat Boworniwet, a royal temple in Bangkok's Banglamphoo district.

"Many don't really understand anything of the practice."

Phra Bhante, a US native of Indiana who came to Thailand 24 years ago, says he agrees with what many social critics say that Buddhism in Thailand is in crisis.

"Since I came in 1979, there have been many changes. And almost in the blink of an eye, many sacred values have fallen by the wayside. Today you see things totally unheard of before," he told *The Straits Times*.

Like many, he has been appalled by a constant stream of scandals involving monks.

Stories of sex, drugs, women, corruption and violence emerge from temples and find their way in gory details to the front pages of newspapers.

Each sentence drives another nail into the coffin of the credibility of the sangha, of the community of monks.

The lurid scandals are an extreme example of what can happen when a religion that is a way of life becomes rigidly hierarchical and unaccountable to outside authority, and fails to modernise its ancient teacher-disciple structure.

The awe and deference with which laymen treat monks offers opportunites for some to exploit power.

Temple finances are not subjected to external audit and are therefore usually controlled by a cabal of monks—who again may fall under the influence of a charismatic individual.

"Crossroads" and "crisis" are words that are in danger of being overused today in any discussion about Buddhism in Thailand. Essentially, the religion and culture that are synonymous with Thailand's national identity are feeling the pressure of change.

In the throes of the country's adjustment to a new, fiercely competitive globalised world, cracks are appearing in that in tegrated sense of identity.

For many, religion and national identity are peeling away from each other.

The traditional teacher-disciple relationship characteristic of Thailand's educational system—of which temples have always been a part—and the sangha is being coerced by the demands of the new world: competitiveness, debate and innovation.

Academic Chaiwat Khamchoo writes: "Though Buddhism remains a powerful political and psychological force in Thailand, the religion is undergoing some difficult changes.

"All government publications state that more than 90 per cent of the Thai population is Buddhist and the Constitution mentions Buddhism explicitly. Nonetheless, according to the Asia-Europe Survey (2002), only four out of 1,000 people considered themselves part of a religious community or group.

"People have become increasingly disillusioned with the government-supported Buddhist clerical order and have moved closer to 'personality-based' religious practice associated with particular Buddhist monks."

"People do not view the government's role or legitimacy as resting on Buddhism, judging the government instead on its success in making and implementing policies."

"The government is also unwilling or unable to exert control over religious organisations and personalities.

"In early 2002, a draft law to change the structure of the sangha's leadership council elicited such heated debate that the government withdrew the law from Parliament, presumably to mediate a compromise between various groups before introducing it again."

"Overall, while Thai people are still quite religious, religion has become increasingly less connected to the government and

more of a personal pursuit."

Outspoken social critic and iconoclast Sulak Sivaraksa, a staunch nationalist, not popular with the government and some others, put his opinion across with customary bluntness when he told *The Straits Times*: "The sangha in this country is dead."

"Mainstream Thais from the Prime Minister onwards feel success is to be prominent in the age of globalisation. That uproots us from our spiritual-cultural tradition. To use Buddhism for consumerism—something even some monks are doing—is to lose our soul.

"The sangha... is only in form, not substance. Take these young people who ordain for just a few days—I don't think there is any point teaching them about Buddhism."

Amid all the scandals and the sectarian backbiting within Thailand's Theravada Buddhist sangha, there are many senior monks whose integrity is intact and who are widely revered.

Buddhist monks in rural areas are often the voices of their communities; in the north, monks have ordained trees to prevent a dam project from submerging a forest.

Phra Paisal Visalo, in his early 40s, far away from any city in his forest temple in Chayaphoom, writes in Thai and English, runs a website on Buddhism, and translates literature from other schools of Buddhism into Thai from English—something older traditionalists shrink from.

He lives a simple life and believes in reviving the traditional role of monks in the community—offering counselling, education and even shelter to those in need.

In short, the sort of "socially engaged Buddhism" that Dr sulak also advocates.

Another respected senior monk, Phra Payom Kalayano, in his mid 40s, runs a plethora of social, community-related activities from his busy temple just outside Bangkok.

On a busy afternoon minutes before a scheduled lecture to a busload of visitors, Phra Payom —known for his directness and sense of humour—told *The Straits Times*: "Yes, people are less interested in Buddhism and seek happiness in other ways, like in sex shows."

But he said he was not pessimistic and preferred being proactive. One of his methods is to tape sermons on CDs and cassettes and send them by the thousands across the country.

He said it was well known that thugs and criminals manipulated the sangha, taking refuge in monks robes. But while many said they should be barred, he could not refuse them if they wanted to ordain.

But he was in favour of some sort of monks' police organisation.

"Sometimes parents come and leave their boys here. I have to accept them and try to help them," he said.

"Some of them don't have money and need shelter and education, even if they are bad people. In this Wat we help people and teach people, we don't hire ourselves out for funeral ceremonies."

Phra Bhante said it is not just Western influence that is to blame.

"It is a global phenomenon," he says. "There's a nasty modern culture developing. People forget that the message is important, not the messenger."

"Young men in need of free education come to the Wats, get degrees and then disrobe and leave, absorbing nothing about the faith."

"The sangha is in crisis, but there are no simple answers or solutions."

The Straits Times
October 1, 2003

If we could shrink the earth's population to a village of precisely 100 people, with all the existing human ratios remaining the same, it would look something like the following. There would be:

57 Asians
21 Europeans
14 from the Western Hemisphere, both north and south
8 Africans
52 would be female
48 would be male
70 would be non-white
30 would be white
70 would be non-Christian
30 would be Christian
89 would be heterosexual
11 would be homosexual
6 people would possess 59% of the entire world's wealth and all 6 would be from the United States.
80 would live in substandard housing
70 would be unable to read
50 would suffer from malnutrition
1 would be near death
1 would be near birth
1 (yes, only 1) would have a college education
1 would own a computer

Phillip M Harter, MD, Stanford University, School of Medicine

The Revolutionary Award On the 72nd anniversary of The 24th June 1932 Revolution

To commemorate the 72nd year of the change of regime from absolute monarchy to democracy in Siam on 24th June 2004, The Committee for Celebration of The 72nd Anniversary of The 24th June 1932 Revolution unanimously agreed to present "The Revolutionary Awards" to the following persons who have taken part in radical social change. They are the senior citizens who have been fighting for democracy and righteousness in society. They are the ones who have fearlessly been acting as guardians of truth in history against dictatorship and social injustice

Mr. Sampat Phungpradit

After the 10th November 1952 Coup d'état, Mr. Sampat Phungpradit joined the student movement in demanding a return of Thammasart University which was confiscated by state. The event led to wiping-out of progressive politicians, students and people. He was arrested with a charge of what is known later as "The Rebel for Peace" After 4-year imprisonment, he started his career by publishing a newspaper and organizing activities to promote sovereignty and democracy.

During the dictatorship era in 1959, his name appeared in the government's blacklist. He had to flee from town to spend the next 11 years in forest and rural areas. During that time, he kept on organizing a movement for social justice with rural people. After coming back to town, he became a lawyer, always helping the oppressed. Recently he is a member of the Journalist Council, advisor to Law Council of Thammasart University and member of The Bar Association.

Mr. Supot Dantrakul

Mr. Supot Dantrakul was born to a retail trader family in the south of Siam. He had to leave school when studying at secondary level. Since then he has been learning on his own. During the Second World War, he was working with Japanese Army as a store clerk. When the war is over, he was doing journalist work with many newspaper publishers. He was arrested in the charge of rebel at the 10th November 1952 Coup d'état, and was put in jail for 20 years.

After 5 years in jail, he was granted amnesty. Then, he wrote a book "A movement to reestablish a nation" recording the coup d'état. Later he was sentenced to imprison again for 3 years with the charge of an act of communist and rebel. Being free again, he started to compose numerous documents concerning history of Thai politics during the change of regime in 1932, particularly those related to Pridi Banomyong. He is now continuing his writing career with more than 70 books already launched.

* * *

The Second and Final Event Series of "Bridges—Dialogues towards a Culture of Peace"

November 2004—April 2005
Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Nakorn Ratchasima, and Chonburi, Siam

As a contribution to "the Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence" initiated and promoted by the UN's General Assemble, Thailand has been chosen as the host country for the event series "Bridges—Dialogues towards a Culture of Peace", initiated by The International Peace Foundation, which is under the common patronage of the 21 Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, based in Vienna.

The first series, November 2003—April 2004, featured over 100 events with 10 Nobel Laureates, other keynote speaker and artists. The audience reached totally 30,000 participants include those from government, business, media, NGO and public sectors. For the second series, 16 Nobel Laureates for Peace, Physics, Economics, Chemistry, Medicine will participate, together with former UN Secretary General, Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, etc. It creates platform for dialogue where representatives of variety of disciplines can meet, share their viewpoints, listen to each other and find mutual ways of understanding and cooperation in the intercultural and trans-disciplinary approach toward peace.

Information about the detailed program is available at www.peace-foundation.net or via phone +02 267-3177, fax + 02 267-3077 or e-mail office@peace-foundation.net.

* * *

Summer gathering 2004 workshops & concerts

Richard Glyn Foundation at Gaunts House, Wimborne, UK.

Friday 6th August
talk: Sulak Sivaraksa
Mental, physical (medical), emotional, spirtual challenges in the 21st Century and the Buddhist perspective on suffering, our own, and supporting other people.

Saturday 7th August
talk: Sulak Sivaraksa
Inner Peace and Outer Action for realising self-worth and purpose

Sunday 8th August
talk: Sulak Sivaraksa
The three jewels and their relevance for everyone within and without a Buddhist context.

May 14-15. The Ahimsa Center, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, California. G.D. Paige and CGNV Associates A.T. Ariyaratne (Sri Lanka), Sulak Sivaraksa (Siam), Balwant "Bill" Bhaneja (Canada), and Clayton Edwards (USA) participated in the inaugural conference of the Ahimsa Center. Founded by history professor Dr. Tara Sethia, who has Jain roots in Rajasthan, India. Her inspired leadership has evoked strong support from the Cal Poly faculty and administration as well as from members of the Jain community and others in the Pomona area and beyond.

Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement Convener A.T. Ariyaratne, renowned Buddhist-Gandhian comprehensive social development leader in Sri Lanka, opened the conference and surprisingly recommended that world universities should be shut down to read the book *Nonkilling Global Political Science*. The closing address was given by the renowned London legally trained Thai lay Buddhist leader Sulak Sivaraksa—founder of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM), editor of *Seeds of Peace*, writer, publisher and courageous veteran of struggles for human rights, environmental protection, and against greed and consumerism. Sulak refers to himself as a Buddhist with a small "b" and prefers the traditional name of "Siam" to Thailand which was created by a modern military coup. A respecter of monarchy and of the wisdom of revered Buddhist monks, his approach to social change has been termed Radical Conservatism. In his closing talk Sulak again called attention to the practical optimism of *Nonkilling Global Political Science*.

Another special blessing of the Conference was the opportunity to confer in person on CGNV development plans with recently retired Canadian science diplomat Dr. Balwant "Bill" Bhaneja from Ottawa. Since retirement in March 2003, Dr Bhaneja, a political scientist, has generously devoted great effort to making *Nonkilling Global Political Science* known to political scientists, peace organizations, and others around the world. Partly through emailing his book review, "Violence Against Violence Fails," which has been published in *Social Alternatives* (Australia) and other sources. Dr. Bhaneja has volunteered to assist with the Research and Communication functions that are part of the eight-person CGNV organizational development plan. He is also pursuing a pilot study of nonviolent capabilities and contributions of Canada as an example for the future CGNV *Handbook of Global Nonviolence*.

The Parliament of the World's Religions

(Barcelona, 7-14 July 2004)

As the Parliament of the World's Religions came to a close after a week of debates by nearly 8,000 members of diverse religious communities centered around commitments on the issues of religious violence, access to safe water, the fate of refugees worldwide, and the elimination of developing countries' debts, religious leaders who convened the gathering deemed the event a success.

The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religion's Executive Director Dirk Ficca said that one fundamental difference between this gathering and others discussing the same subjects was that, "when people of faith commit to address religious violence and other pressing issues facing the global community they follow through. We make a commitment not only to the world, but out of a deeply rooted religious or spiritual conviction. That is what makes the Barcelona Parliament commitments so special, and why this year's Parliament in Barcelona is going to make an impact."

Andre Porto, a 34-year old social activist from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil who pledged at the previous Parliament in Cape Town, South Africa in 1999 to organize an interfaith coalition to address the illegal gun trade in the Favelas of Brazil reported that the Rio religious community's lobbying and social activism campaign resulted in a strong law halting illegal gun sales. "Our progress and success in Rio de Janeiro's Favelas is an example of the feasibility and effectiveness of commitments made at the Parlia-

ment of World Religions."

Rev. Dr. William Lesher, Chair of the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions' board pointed out the immeasurable outcomes of the Parliament. "Along with the strong commitments made this week, the mere presence of 8,000 people from so many different religious and spiritual traditions and places in the world is a meaningful outcome in and of itself. The impact of this is perhaps not as measurable, but equally remarkable in today's world."

The Parliament's priorities over the next five years are to assist the world's religions in meeting their commitments. "Our organization's work does not start or end here", said Ficca.

"The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions has established a network of interreligious movements in partner cities around the world", said Diane Goldin, founder of the Annual Goldin Institute for International Partnership and Peace. "These strong grassroots partnerships are a powerful vehicle for implementing these commitments."

Ficca continued: "The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions has also developed a process to monitor and support the implementation of the Barcelona Parliament commitments, including best-practice manuals and a web-based communications network in order to support and assess the impact on the world's pressing problems. We are also exploring partnerships with other sectors of society such as organizations within the UN system, the World Bank and organizations that promote corporate social responsibility."



The Barcelona Parliament Commitments include what Ficca called "simple and profound acts", often developed in concert with civil society organizations. Some examples include:

Religious violence

"Organize the interreligious community in Sarajevo to bring Palestinians and Israelis to the House of Peace in Ratna Monastery in Bosnia, and develop approaches to building relationships in order to provide peace and prevent future conflicts." - Vjekoslav Saje, Center for Religious Dialogue, Catholic, Bosnia Herzegovina.

"Include 'religions and peacemaking' in my program related to preventing deadly conflict and engage our congregations and policymakers in Washington DC." - Bridget Moix, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Christian, USA.

"Work with the Israeli Jewish community in Jerusalem to publicize the TV series "Search for Common Ground", especially a one-hour special on Palestinian refugees. I will organize screenings and turn out Israeli Jewish people to watch it." - Sharon Rosen, Jewish, Israel.

"Continue to organize an interfaith community in Rwanda to help genocide survivors, prisoners' families and released prisoners." - Saleh Habimana, Rwanda.

External (International) debt

"Raise $10,000 to support the Jubilee USA advocacy effort and establish a Center for Global Awareness to link local and global issues and provide international people-to-people contact on the debt issue and interfaith dialogue." - Pastor Bill Harman, Bethlehem Lutheran Church, USA.

"Coordinate with the Jubilee Foundation to strengthen the internal voice within India for debt forgiveness. I have already begun creating a micro-credit Pilot Model Village in West Bengal." - Swami Shuddhananda Brahma Chari, India.

"I will join an organization campaigning for debt cancellation from Spain." - Anna Balaguer, Spain.

"To speak more about issues of this Assembly in my own community and in my own job. My first step is to educate my church community about the impact of debt in developing countries, the

need for clean water in many parts of the world, legislation regarding refugees and immigration and the networks available to impact these issues." - Archbishop Jukka Paarma, Evangelical Lutheran church of Finland, Christian, Finland.

Water

"Work with the women in my community to develop a strategy on how to increase access to clean water by building wells and covering bore-holes. I will also organize young women to form small groups and develop trainings for them on how to accomplish their goals." - Carmeline Achieng, Kenya.

"Engage the Unity Community and our interfaith group to plan and implement a project to make clean water accessible to communities in Haiti and West Africa." - Rev. James Trapp, Unity, USA.

"Engage Mediterranean people involved with mountain conservation to promote a network for protection of Mediterranean mountains as a source of water, natural resources and spiritual values." - Puri Canals, President of the Catalonian environmental organization DEPANA, Catholic, Spain.

"Reduce water pollution by promoting care and concerns from the public to the government of Taiwan and create trust and commitments between all religions in Taiwan." - Dharma Master Hsin Tao, Taiwan.

Refugees

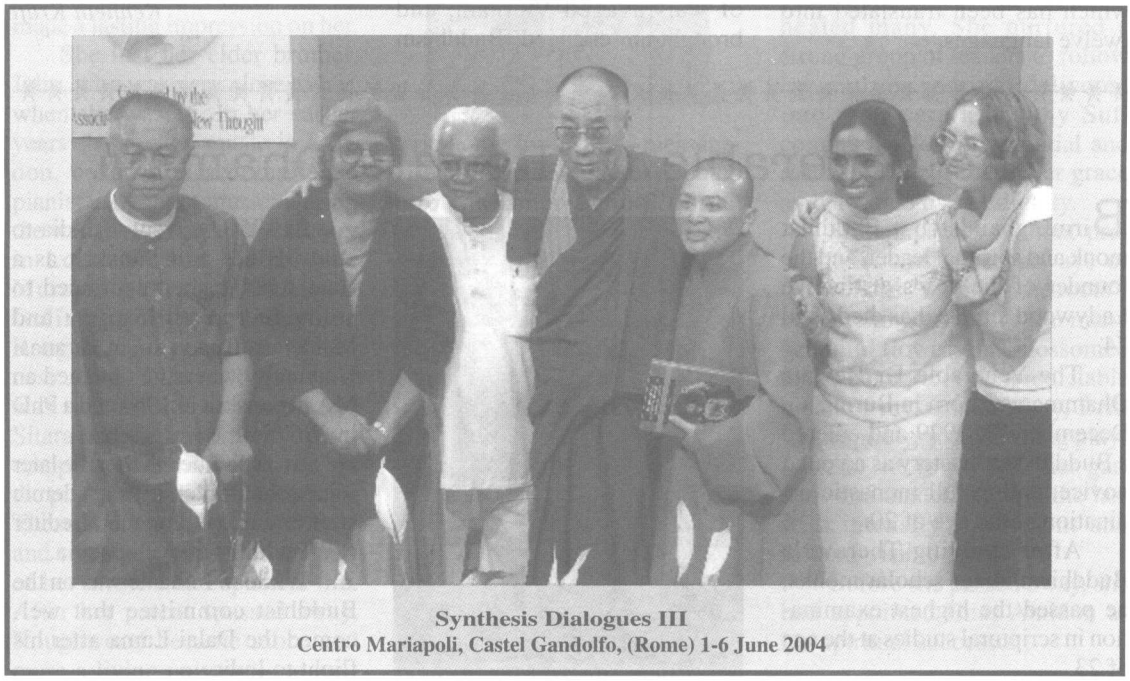
"Engage the spiritual leaders of the Hindu and Sikh communities of my country in making people aware of the refugees and telling their stories of suffering so that hearts are touched and people have an irresistible urge to help them. We will mobilize the community to volunteer in the medical facilities of refugee camps with the help of other doctors." - Dr. Inderjit Kaur, All India Pingalwara Charitable Society, Sikh, India.

"Engage my church community to research what is happening to arriving refugees at the international airport and begin working with agencies to ensure that they are treated fairly." - Rev. Johanna Boeke, Christian, UK.

"Engage the Office for Ethnic Ministry of the Archdiocese of Chicago to lobby the legislature to grant drivers licenses for those who do not have legal papers and to refugees."- Bishop Francis Kane, Vicariate II/Archdiocese of Chicago, Catholic, USA.

"To help new migrant community members who do not have enough food or shelter. I will educate other young people to open their mind and hearts to accept people from other communities who need help because of their suffering." Meas Sokeo, Muslim, Cambodia.

"Organize interreligious prayers and humanitarian help for people in areas of earthquake, drought, flooding and war." - His Holiness Mahamandaleshhar Paramhans Shami Maheshwaranand, Austria.



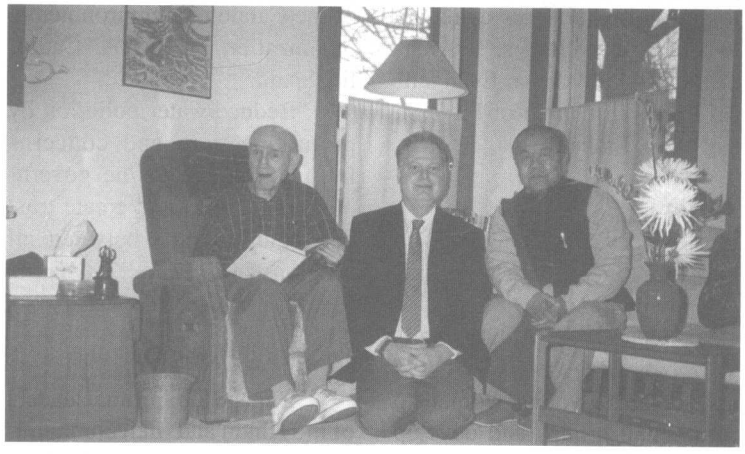
Synthesis Dialogues III
Centro Mariapoli, Castel Gandolfo, (Rome) 1-6 June 2004

Roshi Philip Kapleau

Roshi Philip Kapeau, a leading figure in the transmission of Zen Buddhism to the West, died on May 6, 2004, in Rochester, New York. His passing marks the end of an era, during which Zen shed its exotic foreign image and was embraced by ordinary Americans as a living spiritual path.

Philip Kapleau was born in 1912 to a working-class family in New Haven, Connecticut. In 1945 he served as chief court reporter for the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, Germany. Later he covered to Tokyo War Crimes Trials, and it was there that he became interested in Zen. For thirteen years he devoted himself to rigorous Zen training in Japan.

A Chinese Zen master once said, "First I went following the scented grasses; then I returned following the falling flowers." In 1966, Kapleau returned to the United States and founded the Rochester Zen Center in upstate New York. He is most widely recognized as the author/editor of *The Three Pillars of Zen,* which has been translated into twelve languages.



Philip Kapleau was also prescient about the need for an engaged Buddhism. "The object of gaining an insight into the inner truth of things," he said in 1974, "is really to qualify oneself for greater compassionate action in the world." That year he contributed an introdution to a new book, *Zen Keys,* by a little-known Vietnamese monk, Thich Nhat Hanh. Kapleau wrote, "Thich Nhat Hanh... has taken himself into the market place, into the twentieth-century hell of war-ravaged Vietnam, and brought an 'engaged' Buddhism into the mainstrem of life."

Philip Kapleau died peacefully in to garden of the Rochester Zen Center on a sunny spring afternoon, surrounded by family and friends.

Roshi Kapleau keeps losing
his Zen keys,
yet he comes and goes with
uncommon case.
"Watch carefully-" he
smiles, one eyebrow cocked,
"the Pure Land has doors
but they're never locked."

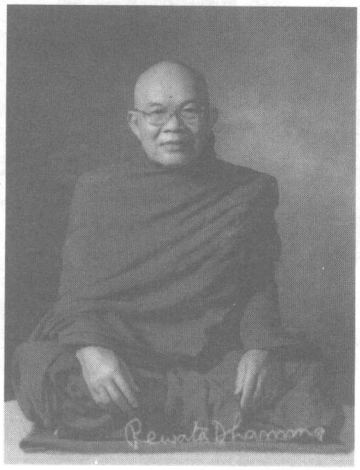
Kenneth Kraft

The Venerable Dr Rewata Dhamma

Birmingham's first Buddhist monk and spiritual leader, and the founder of the city's distinctive Ladywood temple, has died aged 74.

The Venerable Dr Rewata Dhamma was born in Burma, on December 12, 1929 and entered a Buddhist monastery as a young novice, taking full monastic ordination at the age of 20.

After studying Theravada Buddhism under scholar monks, he passed the highest examination in scriptural studies at the age of 23.



In 1956 he went to India to study Hindi and Sanskrit as a state scholar, then continued to study Indian philosophy and Mahayana Buddhism in Varanasi University where he obtained an MA in Sanskrit in 1964 and a PhD in 1967.

An acclaimed author, he later joined the university's academic staff and acted as general editer of a Buddhist encyclopaedia.

While in India he was on the Buddhist committee that welcomed the Dalai Lama after his flight to India.

He got to know the eleven year old Aung San Suu Kyi, the future leader of the democratic movement in Burma, whose mother was the ambassador to India.

He was also invited to Peking at the very height of the Cultural Revolution to attend the death-bed of Prince Sihanouk's mother.

Importantly for his future plans, during this period he also became custodian of the Buddha relics once belonging to the Burmese royal family.

In 1975 Dr Rewata Dhamma was invited to England where he established a Buddhist monastery with Birmingham as his base. From there he journeyed to lead retreats and teach Buddhism at various centres in Europe, North, Central and South America.

In 1998 he founded the Bhamma Talaka Peace Pagoda in Ladywood alongside the gleaming gold and white Birmingham Buddhist temple.

He placed the Buddha relics - ashes from the Buddha's funeral pyre - into the spire of the temple, which saw Birmingham achieve the unlikely status of holy city and pilgrimage site.

During this time Dr Rewata Dhamma's non-political stance and dedication to the cause of reconciliation also gained him the confidence, not simply of bodies like Amnesty and the UN, but also of the Myanmar military authorities.

He helped in establishing the International Network of Engaged Buddhist in 1989.

Yann Lovelock, senior devotee of the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara, Siad: "His gentle, humorous and compassionate demeanour won him friends and esteem all over the world.

"From the very beginning he was insistent that Buddhists should be at the forefront of dialogue and that we should not be looking on ourselvess as competitors but colleagues of those of other faiths."

Sitara Mary Brutnell

Sitara Mary Brutnell was born in London at the start of the First World War. Her parents were mureeds of Sufi Inayat Khan, founder of the International Sufi Movement, and Sitara was introduced to Sufi ideals and practices in a natural way while growing up. She met Inayat Khan several times as a child and he made a lasting impression on her.

She lost her elder brother, John, who was very close to her, when she was 15. In her earlier years she studied music in London, became an accomplished pianist and taught music. During the war she worked as a secretary in London while her parents, Murshid Akbar and Murshida Gulinar, built a house called Roughwood in Shalden Green, near Alton. Life at Roughwood was rich in Sufi activities, and Sitara had the opportunity to accompany Murshid Ali Khan on the piano in recitals of Sufi songs. These songs touched her deeply and remained an important part of her musical and spiritual life. After her parent spassed away, Roughwood became more and more a living universel, an esoteric home for the Sufi message.



Murshida Sitara was initiated into the Inner School of the Sufi Movement by Murshida Saintsbury-Green. After 1968, she became a friend and confidante of the newly-appointed Pir-o-Murshid Fazal Inayat-Khan. She was a true mureed to him, and Roughwood was his second home and refuge. In time she was appointed Madar-ul-Maham of the Inner School. When Murshid Fazal passed away in 1990, it was she who gathered up the mureeds mourning the sudden lose of their guide. She became the Pir of the Sufi Way and with great courage and patience brought the community onto a path of self-direction and new inspiration.

During this time she turned to music both to reach others and within. She composed beautiful zikrs and often expressed her deepest feelings in her exquisite playing of Brahms. Over the years her wisdom and lightness healed many. She nurtured a strong group of leaders to follow her and, in passing, delivered into their care a healthy Sufi community full of potential and maturity, touched with her grace and elevated by her dignity.

Murshida was without pretensions, and talked always of her work as "watering the roots", never taking credit for the many beautiful flowers that blossomed under her care. An unpredictable blend of mystical subtlety, British propriety, and charming playfulness, she loved both her gardens and tended them to the last with intensity, enjoyment and seldom-visible pride.

Before she passed away, she had appointed Elias Amidon as her spiritual successor.

Dear Sulak

I've just been reading your essay in *Seeds of Peace* on *"The Interfaith Movement for Peace and Social Justice from the Perspective of a Socially Engaged Buddhist"*. It's a wonderful essay and as always poses questions in a stark and unslippery way. I liked very much your idea of the word terrorist as a slippery world.

I also enjoyed the account of the seminar in Thimphu on *Gross National Happiness*. Were you there? I can't remember whether I told you that Adrienne and I spent some two weeks there in January 2002 and had a wonderful trip around the country, spending quite a bit of time with the then Foreign Minister and now Prime Minister Lyonpo Jigmi Y Thinley. We also had a marvellous conversation with the King and lunch with the Royal Family including the Crown Prince. It is indeed a remarkable country and their idea of gross national happiness is a wonderful reminder of the clear 18th century enlightenment meaning of happiness. Unfortunately, people have forgotten that happiness was a reference to the public good and the well-being of the *other*, and have confused it with consumers.

I'm not sure whether you saw it, but in case you didn't, I'm sending you a copy of a recent cover story I did for *Harpers*. I thought you'd enjoy it.

All best wishes to you,
John Ralston Saul

His Excellency John Ralston Saul
Rideau Hall
1, Promenade Sussex Drive
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0A1

Greetings

I received your letter. Kindly excuse delaying my reply.
I am very much inspired by your selfless efforts towards world peace.
I read your magazine, it is very useful to us. You will be happy to know that
I have translated on the great leader of Thai demegarocy Pridi Banomyong.
I printed 1200 copies from my own expenses a free of cost distributed to all
public libraries and other important persons in India.
I now have a plan to bring out the second edition of the book.
I also propose a free distribution of the book to the students of Tamilnadu schools and colleges.
The book release function was kindly be planned by you in Bangkok may 2005 the Birthday of Mr Banomyong.
If it is possible for you to sponsor the second edition of the book, I request your kind
financial assitance for the same.
In turn it shall be possible to offer you about five hundred copies of the book
which you may distribute to Thailand tamil public.

Thank you

yours
Dr. V.M. Muthuramalinga Andavar, Ph.D

Pachaiyappa's College (Affiliated to University of Madras) Department of Tamil, Chennai, India

Dear Sulak

I just wanted to send you a line to say a big 'thank you' for contributing to our sessions at the World Parliament of Religion at Barcelona, first the panel with Katherine and myself and then the discussion with the young people. I realise you had a very busy programme with lots of demands on your time and energy, but you came to be with us as promised and I am very grateful. I am quite sure that the young people were inspired by your conversation with them and learned a lot from their meeting with you.

I hope you arrived home safely and have time for a little rest? I am now getting ready to hand over WFDD to the trustees who have decided to move the office to Washington in the hope that it will receive more funding. If the move is successful they will then appoint a director to take my place.

I am remaining here in the University of Birmingham and my email and contact details will be the same as before. I hope we can keep in touch.

Thank you once again, and warm greetings to everyone.

Michael (Taylor), Birmingham, U.K.

Letter from a Concrete Jungle

I am a Londoner. I have lived most of my life in the city, and in many respects have benefited from a cosmopolitan upbringing. Yet every coin has its flip side, and the side effects of city life can include alienation, paranoia and the very real threat of failure to make ends meet or, even worse, a breakdown into mental illness. We are adaptable, us human beings, managing to cope with appalling levels of stress on a daily basis, but this has a way of wearing a person out. As if a daily struggle wasn't enough, we also have to contend with the inequities apparent through the machinations of big government, big business, and a general insularity among the population at large.

How ready are newspaper editors to pander to popular ignorance and general apathy, citing refugees from a war zone (More often than not from a part of the world formerly under the auspices of the British Empire) as a threat to the British way of life. These views are challenged of course in the liberal newspapers, and most British people on the whole are a tolerant bunch. It just always amazes me that people are ready to be suckered, even our members for parliament, quite ready to support Tony Blair and George Bush, when, as nasty a thug as Saddam obviously is, was he really such a threat? Well we know now that he wasn't, except of course, to his own people, but we can think of plenty of places where leaders like that are in charge.

It does speak of good nature, to want to believe, but the adage of nice people being the most dangerous springs to mind here. How is it that democracy, one of the most useful tools gifted to humanity by the ancient Greeks, has been hijacked by the vicious opinion makers of the day? When the edge between myth and reality is blurred by rumour and innuendo, and most people don't attempt to try and change things because they don't feel it will change anything. That is a society that has lost its way. And it is or should be an omen of foreboding for the meagre democracies of the orient, having struggled through bloodshed and protest. The more I think about it, the more I like the idea of the Dhammaraja, the righteous ruler, whom, having been groomed for leadership, exercises power calmly and with forethought.

The reality is that the systems in place are evolving, and evolution is better in my opinion than revolution. It is personal evolution that holds the key, through whatever medium, religious practice, psychological development, and a development that spreads outwards, reaches others, does not seek to bully or cajole, that is inclusive. A fine example of which would be the INEB organisation responsible for *Seeds of Peace* magazine, a forum for right thinking. Anyone who has read anything I have had to say in the past will know my spiritual homeland is in the jungles of northern Siam, but for practical purposes (being a family man) my home is London. I try to carry the spiritual lessons learned with me as I lead an ordinary life, struggle to make ends meet, resist alienation by keeping an open mind and smother burgeoning paranoia by controlling fear, one of the root causes of suffering from a Buddhist perspective.

Danny Campbell, London.

Dear Mister Sivaraksa,

I was glad to meet you at the Parliament of World Religions in Barcelona. I was happy to hear you insisting on how attentive awareness should lead to commitment for justice and non-violent action with the oppressed: compassion in action, not only in social welfare, but in prophetic engagement. This issue is also, as you know, an important debate in my christian tradition. I myself feel close to liberation theology. And as you said, one needs to cultivate non-violence within oneself in order to act non-violently outside.

As I told you, your lecture in Sweden two or three years ago on what you as Eastern Buddhist expect a Westerner to discover in the Buddha caught my attention and I had it translated into French for our Bulletin. As I didn't know where to reach you at the time, I don't think I was ever able to thank you and to send the article to you. So I'm sending the Bulletin now.

If ever you come through Belgium, please let us know: it would be a great pleasure for us at the *Voies de l'Orient* (Ways of the East) to greet you here at the house of our association which is working in dialogue with Eastern traditions. Please receive our greetings.

John Borremans

Voies de l'Orient

69 Rue du Midi 1000 Bruxelles

Liberating Insight

Introduction to Buddhist Psychology and Insight Meditation
Frits Koster

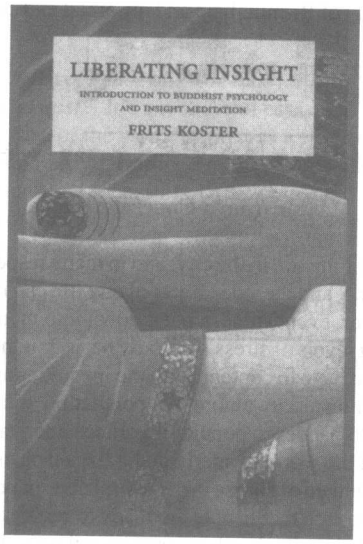
The benefits of meditation—and the mental obstacles that can obstruct the meditation's path—are explored in a thoughtful new introduction to Buddhism and psychology by psychiatric nurse and former monk Frits Koster. Here he talks to Sanji Dei

You have written an introductory book about Buddhism, meditation and psychology for Westerners. Why do you think Buddhism is proving so interesting to people in the West?

The West is quite developed economically. Westerners tend to work hard, and efficiently. But in the West, we often forget to take care of ourselves. We work and work, but we don't take rest. Many people suffer from stress and fatigue. Buddhism—with its many meditation techniques—can help us to rest in the moment and to be at ease with ourselves the way we are.

Many Westerners are interested in the psychological aspects of Buddhism. That is, in the techniques it teaches for the mind, and for better living—rather than in the religious aspect. Is this a good thing for Buddhism itself? (For example, many Westerners don't 'buy in' to key aspects of Buddhist thinking, such as reincarnation, or even the idea of the non-self.)

I think it is a good thing. Religion can easily turn into dogmatism, with fixed rules and regulations. The Western psychological approach to Buddhism can provide a refreshing new dimension, helping against any tendency towards dogmatism.



The Dalai Lama has given support to studies by scientists seeking to find out whether meditation has specific effects on the brain. The results so far seem to indicate that it does have real effects. What is you opinion of the "marriage' between western science and ancient Buddhism?

To my understanding it is a good marriage. Not particularly in relation to myself, because I have had faith and confidence in the healing aspects of Buddhist meditation since I started to meditate. But many Westerners have a sort of belief that everything has to be proved scientifically. If something has no scientific grounding it is not real to them. For such people the scientific research on the effects of meditation can be inspiring. It can help to overcome scepticism and make people start to investigate their own life and mind.

Why is meditation often so difficult for beginners and even, differently, for long term practitioners? To put it another way—why is sitting alone with one's own thoughts so difficult?

To me, it can be difficult because ignorance is such a strong force. Even when we sit down fully intending to observe everything that is happening, from moment to moment, we still experience gaps in awareness. We can be unaware for quite some time before we 'wake up again' and recognise ourselves being caught up in dreams and judgements. This shows the strength of ignorance. It overwhelms us even when we fully intend not to be overwhelmed by it. Because of ignorance we become blind and afraid, or we try to ignore things that are actually good for us. Whether we are just beginning to practise, or have a lot of prior experience, ignorance can always overwhelm and blind us. It causes fear and resistance and makes it difficult to observe pain and suffering.

Is part of why, say, insight meditation, is so difficult is the fact that we don't like what we see when the contents of our mind are paraded in front of us? Our surface mind turns out to be filled with chatter. Beneath that, we find murky conflicts and fears. Meditation is not for the faint hearted, is it?

Indeed, it requires courage to observe our own mind. I must say that I've been quite faint-hearted myself. During my first retreat in Holland—under the guidance of the Venerable P.K.K. Mettavihari from Thailand—I almost ran away three times. I was 21 years old and afraid to observe to inner chaos I was experiencing. And during my first long-term retreat in Thailand—at the age of 25—I stopped for some time because I was afraid to go on. An Indian monk in Wat Mahadhatu with a lot of meditation experience helped me to overcome the fear and continue the practice. So the faint-hearted can practise. but we

all need some guidance and support. It is not easy to understand and observe wakenesses and dark forces in the mind. It requires courage and patience.

At one point in your book you describe people who have achieved a sort of mental purification, a "great spaciousness", that "creates room for wholesome forces to flourish, such as compassion, unconditional love and wisdom". You describe such people as "a shining light in a neurotic society". How many such people do you personally know in real life?

I know at least a hundred people who have achieved deeper wisdom. It's not necessarily that they are perfect and fully enlightened, but I know many long-term meditators who—in a very direct way—show wisdom, compassion and a type of case in the way they live.

How many of those people are not monks?

I would say 50 percent of them. It is my understanding that it can be meaningful to ordain as a Buddhist monk or nun for some time, but it is not necessary. It depends on the person. Some very well known meditation teachers and friends have never ordained but have integrated the Dhamma deeply in their life.

You describe some of the barriers a typical meditatior may find on a retreat in Thailand, apart from the chatter in their own head. These include: a) Coconuts falling with a terrible bang on the corrugated iron roof of the meditation hut; b) pigeons clattering on the same roof all day, sounding like chalk on a blackboard; c) the meditation teacher going on holiday. How important is humour to meditation?

I think it is very important. It allows a person to look at a situation without identification, without attachment. Humour creates a healthy type of relativity and shows the broadmindedness of a person. This is something quite remarkable. Most of the wellknown Buddhist meditation teachers are not depressed. They live with a lot of humour. My Burmese teacher in Thailand—Acharn Asabha—would always be joking but at the same time would teach the Dhamma in a very profound way.

To where would you recommend beginning Western meditators go in Thailand?

Thare are a few places I can recommend:

- Wat Bhaddanta Asabharam, 118/1 Moo 1, Ban Nong Pru, Nong Pai Kaew, Ban Bung, Chon Buri 20220. Telephone: 038-292-361. Mobile: 07-062-1834 (Phra Ratha Mahaviriyo). Email: Wat—asabha@yahoo.com
- Wat Vivek Asom, Soi Prachanukul 7, Banbung Road, Muang district, Chon Buri 20000. Telephone: 038-283-766.
- Wat Sorn Thawee, Sametnua, Bangkla, Chachoengsao 24110. Telephone: 038-541-405.
- Wat Mahadhatu (section 5), 3 Maharaj Road, Bangkok 10200. Telephone: 02-222-6011.

In your book you talk about the difference between detachment and non-attachment. Can you explain the difference?

There is a subtle difference. When we think about aiming for detachment, we can easily interpret that in such a way as to develop a negative attitude towards thoughts, feelings, emotions and so on. Our experience can easily be interpreted as bad.

But mindfulness doesn't judge [things] as good or bad; it just acceptingly recognises and notes whatever is predominant at the moment.

In order not to create a negative approach towards what is being observed, I believe it is helpful to think in terms of non-attachment rather than detachment. The state of non-attachment is present in every moment of mindfulness. It helps us not to be imprisoned by thoughts, feelings and emotions, and at the same time not to automatically fall into reactive emotions like greed or aversion. It creates coolness in the heat of ordinary life and broadens the mind by supervising experiences we are usually involved in.

You discuss how the awareness that accompanies insight meditation can reduce stress. Can you give some concreate examples of how this awareness has worked for people?

I have observed many people who work hard and don't rest enough. Some experience difficulties in their private life. They carry on and on, unaware of their fatigue unitl they burn out. Awareness can work as a guardian angel. It can help us to recognise fatigue and other difficulties much more quickly. Awareness creates a space in which we can choose to change patterns and to take care of our health more wisely. In this way awareness can prevent stress-related health problems.

How or why did you start meditating yourself? Where did you mainly learn and where do you mainly practise now?

I started to meditate when I

was 21. I was very restless and unhappy with my life. I was at a point where I could have started university, but I didn't know what to study. So I just travelled around Europe, earning money at seasonal work to calm down, I started doing yoga and reading about India. I read the romantic life story of the Buddha by Hermann Hesse, the famous German author. This was the first thing to have inspired me in quite a few years.

Not long after, I met a Thai monk and meditation teacher, the Venerable. P.K.K. Mettavihari, in Gronigen, a large city in the north of Holland. I immediately felt that meditation would be something of real value in my life even though I was initially very restless and uncomfortable doing it. I persisted and meditation became an important part of my life.

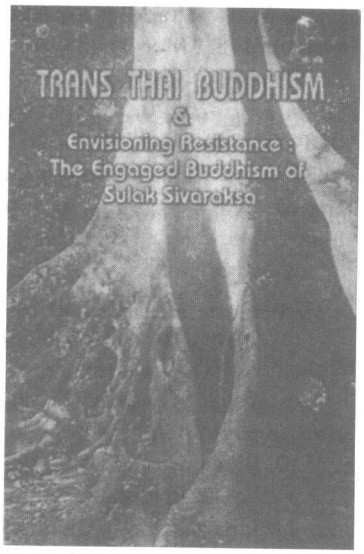
After a few years I travelled to Asia I visited pilgrim sites in India and then entered a meditation centre in Thailand, with a recommendation letter from my Thai teacher in Holland. Just when I planned to retuen to Holland, I got the opportunity to ordain at wat Mahadhatu in Bangkok, first as a novice and a year later as a monk. I practised as a monk in Thailand, Burma and Sri Lanka, with different teachers.

In 1988 I returned to Holland and started to teach. But I then fell in love and decided to disrobe. Now I work on a part-time basis in a psychiatric hospital and in my free time I practise and teach meditation. I still come to Asia almost every year; to meditate intensively for about six to seven weeks. Meditation has become an important part and guide in my life; it helps me to understand myself and others, and to make wiser choices. I can say that mindfulness has become a guard ian angle for me

Sanji Dei

Trans Thai Buddhism

& Envisioning Resistance: The Engaged Buddhism of Sulak Sivaraksa



What is Buddhism? The question is not easy to answer. Since Prince Siddharta founded the religion, Buddhism has spread to many countries. Today there are many branches of Buddhism—Mahayana Buddhism, Zen Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, Theravada Buddhism. And within Theravada Buddhism there are Sri Lankan Buddhism and Thai Buddhism.

Sulak Sivaraksa's new book titled *Trans Thai Buddhism* provides a very clear perspective on Thai Buddhism and the political thought of the internationally famous author. Like many of Sulak's books, *Trans Thai Buddhism* has the virtues of clarity and brevity. Written in English, the book is comprised of four chapters written by Sulak and two appendices written by Ip Hong Yuk and Professor Nidhi Aewsriwong. The first chapter, "Thai Buddhism Transformed", attempts to sum up the highlights of Thai Buddhism in a nutshell.

Many Thais may be surprised to learn that Buddhism in Thailand has not always been Theravada Buddhism. Sulak claims that the Siamese people were converted to Theravada Buddhism from Sri Lanka at the decline of the Khmer empire about 800 years ago. The pre-Theravada Buddhism must have been Mahayana or Vajrayana. The latter, which came to Siam via Indonesia and Cambodia, incorporated Brahmanist elements and local indigenous beliefs.

The uninitiated visitor to the shores of Thai Buddhism, perplexed by the scandalous rumours surrounding the competence of the ailing Supreme Patriarch Somdet Phrasangkaraj, may find Sulak's views on the Mahanikaya and Dhammayutika orders helpful for understanding the background of the long standing rivalry between the two Thai Buddhist orders.

The earliest coherent explanation of Thai Theravada doctrine is that of the Mahanikaya School based on the Thai language manuscript *Te Bhumi Katha*. *Te Bhumi Katha*, otherwise known as The Three Worlds of King Ruang, held its own, as the most important doctrine of Thai Buddhism for about 500 years. Unlike the later Buddhist

philosophy which came to challenge it, the earlier doctrine of The Three Worlds of King Ruang, was highly syncretic, mixing Buddhism with Brahmanism and indigenous animistic beliefs.

The Buddhist reformation led by King Mongkut in the nineteenth century resulted in the founding of the Dhammayutika School, aimed at purging Siamese Buddhism of its impure Brahmanist and superstitious beliefs. King Mongkut used original Pali sources to discredit the doctrine of The Three Worlds.

King Mongkut's reformation sought to bring Siamese Buddhism closer to the Dhamma, or Buddhist logic. Hence his new school of Buddhism, said Sulak, came to be known as Dhammayutika.

The result of King Mongkut's reformation was to make Siamese Buddhism more modern, rational and scientific and make the Sanhga more puritanical.

He acknowledges that local Thai Buddhism contains many superstitious beliefs. But abandoning the doctrine of The Three Worlds in its entirety may throw out the baby with the bath water. A purely rational and scientific Buddhism purged of all mystery and transcendental elements would be a boring as well as, impoverished Buddhism.

One consequence of King Mongkut's reformation has been to split Siamese Buddhism along class lines, with the popular monks and peasants clinging on to the doctrine of The Three Worlds whilst the elite professed a more modern, rational and scientific Buddhism. But for Sulak, the latter at best promotes a highly individualistic form of personal transformation and at worst degenerates into a kind of ceremonial, ritualistic personal escapism.

Apparently, both are unsatisfactory though aesthetically pleasing, and because he is temperamentally inclined towards a more rural, grassroots centred definition of Thai culture, Sulak may feel more comfortable with the Mahanikaya School as opposed to the more elitist Dhammayutika School. For better or for worse, the Mahanikaya School appears to be the people's Buddhism.

Engaged Buddhism

Sulak, however, would like to take Thai Buddhism beyond ceremony, individual transformation and personal escapism. He would like Thai Buddhism to play a more active role in making a better society. Sulak founded the movement of Engaged Buddhism in Thailand and the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB). Currently, Thailand has a very robust Buddhist inspired people's movement, which actively networks with counterparts in other countries throughout the region.

For a deeper discussion of Engaged Buddhism the reader may refer to an earlier publication, *A Socially Engaged Buddhism* by Sulak Sivaraksa (1988), which attempts to relate social activism to Buddhist theory and concepts.

Besides offering historical remarks on Thai Buddhism, Sulak also expounds, in "Buddhism and Democracy in Siam", on Pridi's failed attempt to create a Siamese democracy by drawing on sources of Buddhist tradition.

In the third chapter, titled "Trans Thai Buddhism in the West", Sulak explores the contribution of Siamese meditation masters who inspired their Western disciples to establish the Sangha in the West. Because the modern world lives in the shadow of the West, the struggle to overcome the Western culture of aggression and accumulation can only succeed by converting the West to the trans Thai Buddhist culture of awakening and non-violence.

In the fourth chapter, titled "A Buddhist Response to 9/11/01", Sulak reaffirms Buddhism's relevance to the 21st Century by demonstrating that Buddhism, as a religion and a way of life can speak eloquently to the phenomena of global terrorism. Humanity in the 21st Century needs a peace centred religion more than ever.

Besides Sulak's own writings, *Trans Thai Buddhism* also contains papers written by Ip Hong Yuk and the famous Thai historian, Professor Nidhi Aewsriwong. The paper by Ip Hong Yuk is an analysis of Sulak's political thought. It is comprehensive and thorough, employing the language of social science. Professor Nidhi Aewsriwong tries to give the reader an appreciation of Sulak-the man. It is written sensitively, in the style of a man of letters.

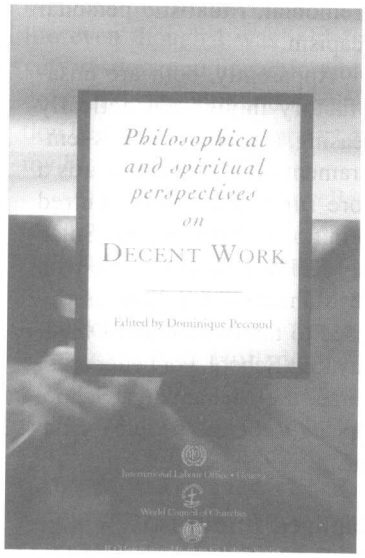
Another difference is that Ip Hong Yuk tends to make Sulak out as a Buddhist inspired neo-Marxist confronting global capitalism. Whereas, in Nidhi's *Sulak Sivaraksa: An Appreciation,* Sulak emerges as a Thai Buddhist seeking solidarity with international fellow sufferers of transnational forces and global capitalism. Both are right. Sulak is a Buddhist who sounds like a Marxist, and vice versa.

Jeffrey Sng

available at Kledthai Co., Ltd.
e-mail: kledthai@kledthai.com
Retail price: U$ 10.00

Philosophical and Spiritual Perspectives on Decent Work

Edited by Dominique Peccoud



This volume reflects on the values behind the ILO's Decent Work Agenda and provides a forum for contributors from various humanistic, philosophical, spiritual and religious traditions to express their views on the significance of work at all levels of society, from the individual person to the global community. Common, universal values are explored, as well as differences, in order to shed more light on the concept of Decent Work.

In all societies, there is an ethical dimension to work, connected to the rights and entitlements of those who perform it. This also includes spiritual values such as dignity, personal identity, a sense of purpose in life, the "divine call to work" and so on.

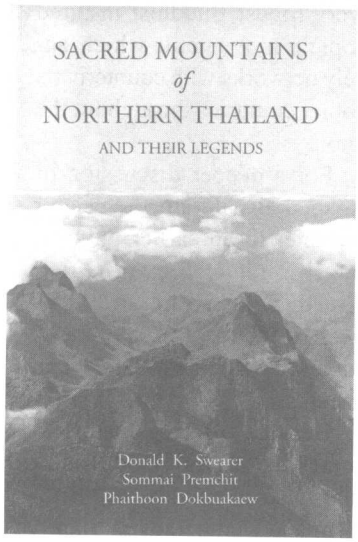
In this book, contributors—from the Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, and various secular traditions—come together to exchange comments and reflections on the "floor" of decency as defined by the ILO freedom of association; eradication of forced and compulsory labour; abolition of child labor; and elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

It is hoped that this type of approach will be inspiring. Before embarking on major international strategic papers, legal instruments and public policies, the systematic consultation of an interfaith and humanistic forum would enable cultural and religious views to be taken into consideration. In this way such instruments would be anchored in shared values and not influenced by any dominant conception of human existence in the world.

Sacred Mountains of Northern Thailand and their legends.

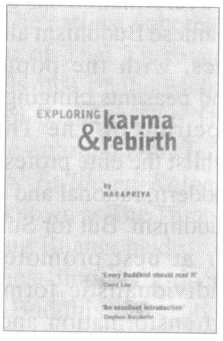
Donald K. Swearer,
Sommai Premchit,
Phaithoon Dokbuakaew.

Silkworm Books, 2004.



This well-researched book tells us the stories of mountain areas and their sacred places. They risk to become tourist commodities or the prey of 'resources management' and agricultural exploitation. Even 'modern' Therevada Buddhism seems losing out on direct understanding of the intrinsic qualities of nature. Subsequently 'deep-ecology' is an important element of a revitalized and engaged Buddhism. Not only is it important that the facts of ancient beliefs and even superstition is recorded, this meticulous research contributes to unveiling the great principles. "The Buddha's enlightenment unfolds in a specific sequence: from an understanding of the *particular* (his personal karmic story), to the *general* (the karmic history of mankind), and finally to the *principle* underlying the cause and cessation of suffering. Subsequently, this principle is further.

Exploring Karma & Rebirth by Nagapriya is being translated to Thai and the review by David Loy will appear in the next issue.



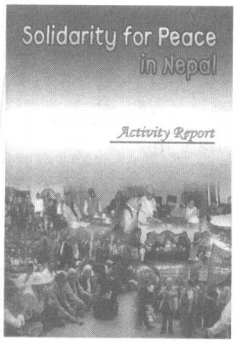


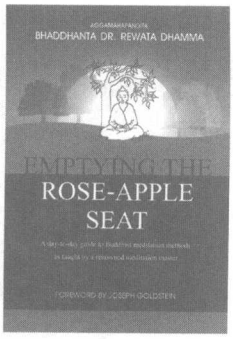
Burma: Freedom Behind Bars

Ramu Manivannan
Contact for copies:
ramu_manivanan@hotmail.com

Solidarity for Peace in Nepal

Informal Sector
Edited by Bal Krishna Kattel and Ranjana Thapa





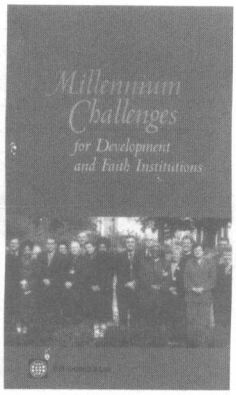
Emptying the Rose-Apple Seat

Bhaddhanta Dr. Rewata Dhamma
Triple Gem Publication, USA

Buddhismus Aktuell

www.buddhismus-aktuell.de





Millennium Challenges for Development and Faith Institutions

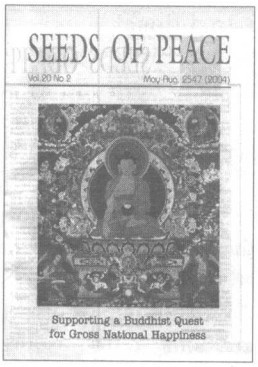
Edited by Katherine Marshall and Richard Marsh
The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank

Seeds of Peace is approaching its 21st year!

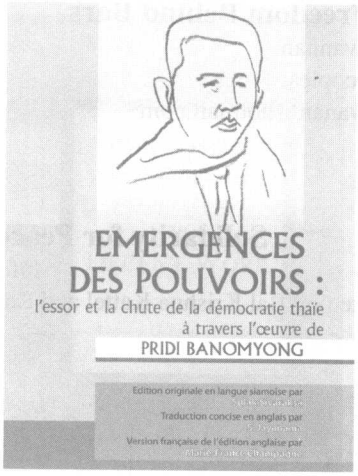
For two decades that it linked together socially engaged Buddhists worldwide. We rely entirely on your subscription and donations for support.

Please help us to continue ***Seeds of Peace*** by renewing your subscription. The suggested rate is USD.50.00 per year.

If you can support more, we would be very grateful for your generosity. Your money will go to support INEB activities for grass-root people in poor countries.



Powers that be: Pridi Banomyong though the rise and fall of Thai democracy (French edition)



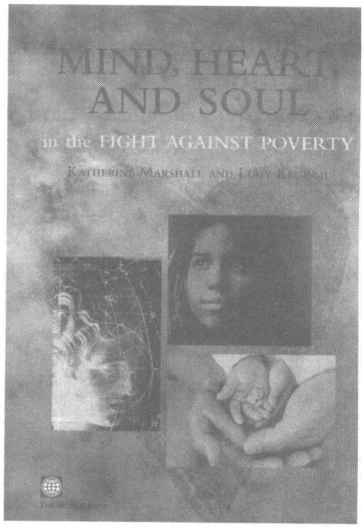
In 1900, a Siamese was born as an ordinary farmer. Being the brain of the People's Party who transformed absolute monarchic kingdom of Siam into a constitutional state, and being the key man in Seri Thai movement to liberate Siam from the occupation of Japan during the second World War made this man an extraordinary one. He, Pridi, was once a supreme stateman who paved the way toward democracy for his motherland and was exiled in his down. He was dishonored and his twisted story was still in the memory of many Siameses. In this book, the legend of Pridi was told from the eyes of Sulak, who was once his enemy but finally found out the truth and tried to expel the falsification.

Sulak wrote the original edition in Thai on the decease of Pridi in 1983. The book was concisely translated into English in 1999 to commemorate the centennial anniversary of Pridi. The English version was later translated into different languages, e.g. Indonesian, Singhalese, Hindi, Tamil, Chinese. Masterminded by Sulak, it is now translated into French under the name "Emergences des pouvoirs: l'essor et la chute de la démocratie thaïe à travers l'œuvre de Pridi Banomyong". Sulak worked mindfully to have this version published as a masterpiece of the series. In addition to honor the patronage of the French Republic which educated the young Pridi and refuged the exilic Pridi, this version would reveal the truth to the francophone and promote the intercultural understanding as well as the other versions.

available at Kledthai Co., Ltd.
e-mail: kledthai@kledthai.com
Retail price: Euro 10,00

Mind, Heart, and Soul in the Fight Against Poverty

Katherine Marshall and Lucy Keough



Religion is a pervasive and vital force that has for centuries inspired bold efforts to educate, feed, heal, and house those who are poor and excluded. Faith institutions also influence land use and direct investment of assets. But the world of religion has often gone unnoticed by development practitioners, and the traditional approaches of economic and social development have seemed far removed from the central values and concerns of faith institutions.

Multilateral development banks, which by mandate interact with governments, are only recently finding ways to reach out to a broad range of civil society institutions, religious organizations among them. What is emerging is a set of new partnerships founded on a mutual commitment to the welfare of the poor and to social justice. Where development institutions have recognized the commonalities between their work and that of faith organizations and have found combined efforts, they have achieved remarkable results. But these efforts are too little known and the lessons, good and bad, have engendered too little reflection.

Mind, Heart, and Soul in the Fight against Poverty explores the diversity of collaboration between development and religious institutions. It includes a wide range of case studies from all over the world. The narratives cover community-level interventions in support of excluded populations; work on education, health, and HIV/AIDS prevention; restoration of communities after conflict; and global efforts to bring greater clarity and meaning to such challenges as poor country debt, HIV/AIDS, and employment. Recent decades of development experience have taught vital lessons about creative partnerships in the struggle against poverty. This book delves into these lessons, stressing the centrality of faith to change in the human experience.